AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT (NM)

The local Nutrient Management (NM) program is coordinated by Greg Simpson, a Maryland Nutrient Management Advisor. The NM Advisor conducts farm visits, processes soil, manure, and plant tissue tests and also provides technical support to any farm operator in the county who requests it. Upon gathering information from a farm operation, the advisor provides recommendations for the efficient use of both chemical and organic nutrients. These recommendations are provided to each producer in the form of a "Nutrient Management Plan." The goal of this plan is to maximize crop yields while minimizing nutrient losses into the environment. Upon receiving a plan, farm operators have the information and tools required to remain in compliance with Maryland Nutrient Management regulations.

Salaries, training, mileage, and program expenses are funded through a grant from the Department of Agriculture.

During 2019, NM plans covering a total of 14,332 acres were completed for 77 individual cooperators covering 444 tracts of land farmed within St. Mary's County. Of these cooperators, a total of 22 participated in the Maryland Cover Crop Program, and 13 had plans prepared for participation in the Maryland Manure Transport Program.

The NM Advisor also assists Ben Beale, the County AG Extension Agent/Educator, in conducting various farm visits and nutrient-related seminars throughout the year.

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND RESTORATION PROGRAM (WPRP)

WPRP is administered through the University of Maryland Extension—Sea Grant Extension Program through the work of the regional faculty member and local program assistant. These individuals provide programming in watershed management and restoration, watershed and environmental sciences education, and aquaculture within Southern Maryland. Specifically, they:

- Engaged with the local LUGM and DPW offices in WIP and MS4 directives
- Assisted the St. Mary's River Watershed Association in planning and implementing on-the-ground projects that result in quantifiable reduction in non-point sources of pollution
- Supported the St. Mary's River Watershed Association in the pursuit of funding opportunities for planning and implementation efforts
- Conducted Stormwater BMP workshops that have a direct connection to watershed improvements, enhanced water quality and habitat or environmental science education
- Participated in the St. Mary’s County Fair, Earth Day on the Square, and RiverFest at Historic St. Mary’s City, Plant-a-Palooza, STEM-ING, and STEM Festival
- Consulted one-on-one with homeowners and farmers on pond management strategies and provided recertification from local aquatic pesticide applicators
- Provided technical assistance to a new local watershed association, Friends of St Clements Bay, in support of watershed projects
- Collaborated with new, well and septage specialist on local outreach and education planning
- Collaborated with the Commission on the Environment on the third annual Environmental Stewardship Event
- Consulted one-on-one with residents and conducted site visits on properties with stormwater concerns

EXTENSION ADVISORY COUNCIL (EAC)
The St. Mary's EAC is a group of representatives from the county who contribute to the overall program development of the Extension Office in program areas. Members help in identifying problem areas and establishing program priorities. Members also maintain adequate fiscal internal control procedures, assist with informing the public about Extension programs, and assist in building support for Extension Programs. Members of the 2019-2020 St. Mary’s EAC are:
- Wes Cory (President), Weylin Anderson (Vice President), George Baroniak, Delores Magnani, Lisa McCoy, Bubby Norris, Ann Richards, John Richards, Jerry Spence, and Mary Wood.

WATERSHED STEWARD ACADEMY (WSA)

WSA program mission is to train and support community leaders in St. Mary’s County to serve as Master Watershed Stewards in the protection, restoration, and conservation of watersheds, working to reduce the negative impacts of stormwater runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. Master Watershed Stewards are leaders who engage communities to be proactive about local stormwater management. The Steward Certification Course typically includes 45-60 hours of classroom and field training culminating in a class project, capstone project and presentation. Certification is maintained through continued volunteer service and advanced training. Stewards can help identify areas in the St. Mary’s county that are in need of stormwater management and help the County to meet its Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) goals and MS4 permit goals. 10 Master Watershed Stewards maintained certification in 2019, and the second certification course will be conducted in 2020.

UME ST. MARY’S STAFF 2020:
- Shelley King Curry, Southern Area Extension Director
- Christine Allen, Agent Associate, 4-H
- Nicole Bassenback, Extension Program Amt., WS
- Benjamin Beale, Senior Agent, AG
- Jack Powell, Agent, FCS
- Maria Deans, Agent Associate, WS
- Barbara Dobkins, Program Mgmt Specialist, 4-H
- James Fanning, Administrative Assistant II
- Kalyan Prabhu, Agent Associate, FSNE
- Melissa Rosal, Administrative Assistant I
- Greg Simpson, Agent, FCS
- Jacky Takacs, Agent, Master Gardener
- Nicole Basenback, Extension Program Assistant, WS
- Christine Allred, Southern Area Extension Director
- Wes Cory (President), Weylin Anderson (Vice President), George Baroniak, Delores Magnani, Lisa McCoy, Bubby Norris, Ann Richards, John Richards, Jerry Spence, and Mary Wood.

The University of Maryland Extension (UME) programs are open to all and will not discriminate against anyone because of race, age, sex, color, sexual orientation, religious or national origin, marital status, genetic information, or political affiliation, or gender identity and expression.

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Agriculture & Food Systems (AFGS)

St. Mary’s County is home to a variety of agricultural enterprises, including tobacco, row crops, vegetables, greenhouse and nursery crops, as well as hay and livestock. University of Maryland Extension strives to provide the practical tools and information that farmers need to maintain profitable and sustainable operations. Using non-biased, research-based information and the network of extension agents and specialists throughout the state, farmers and those seeking alternative crops have direct access to the latest technology, marketing, and production information.

2019 Program Highlights:

- Driving economic growth through knowledge gains and creative solutions regarding cropping practices and advances in technology are key components of increased farm profitability. Providing current, relevant information that producers can use to improve their operations is a cornerstone of the UME Agricultural Program.
- The program conducted 410 farm consultations at the request of producers, focused on solving a variety of production issues, such as insect, weed, disease, fertility or cultural techniques. On average, 50 fact sheets, bulletins, or written recommendations are distributed to agricultural producers each year. The estimated average annual economic activity ($ saved or $ earned) from individual field teaching events is $1,439,000.
- Six applied field research trials were conducted in collaboration with farmers across the county during the last year to address current production issues. Field trials include evaluating anaerobic soil treatment in vegetable high tunnels (2 locations), herbicide resistant Palmer amaranth weed control in field crops (2 farm locations), small fruit (blackberry, raspberry, and blueberry) variety trials, and tomato grafting trial in high-tunnel. The program is a partner on grant funded projects totaling $252,286.
- Increasing the number of successful beginning farmers in the region through participation in the Maryland Collaborative for Beginning Farmer Success. Participants receive regular newsletters, access to on-farm training and online training modules.
- Assist farmers transitioning to other enterprises including vegetable, cut flower, MD 609 and MD Broadleaf tobacco, greenhouse, nursery, forage and grape production.
- Conduct various workshops and conferences with the Southern Maryland Vegetable Conference, No-Till Field Day, Southern Maryland Crops Conference, Hay and Pasture Conference, Vegetable Production Twilight Tour and Grape Growers Workshop. In 2019, the program taught 72 sessions reaching 2304 participants.

Master Gardener (MG)

The Master Gardener program mission is to train and support volunteer horticultural educators who put their knowledge to work for the citizens of St. Mary’s County. They pass along safe, effective, and research-based sustainable practices to county residents through “Ask a Master Gardener” plant clinics, “Bayside” sites visits, St. Mary’s County community events, public presentations, and various other public events.

The program is maintained through advanced training and continued volunteer service. The program is supported by a part-time professional horticulturist. In 2019, the Master Gardener Program consisted of 70 active volunteers and 2 interns, who performed 2,825 hours of volunteer service in St. Mary’s County. Collectively, between plant clinics, public events, scheduled presentations, and public school related activities, Master Gardeners have interacted with approximately 1,686 citizens of St. Mary’s County in 2019.

Of the many projects undertaken by the St. Mary’s County Master Gardeners during 2019 included:

- Facilitated 48 “Ask a Master Gardener” Plant Clinics at three county libraries and three local Farmer’s Markets (in California, Lexington Park, and Hollywood (Sotterley Plantation)) during the growing season to encourage environmentally sound horticultural practices.
- Conducted the Bay-Wise Landscape Certification program to promote landscape practices that help protect our waterways. Certified 6 residential properties as Bay-Wise.
- Provided garden maintenance to 18 garden entrance signs at county parks, as well as historic and native garden beds at the Sotterley Plantation, St. Mary’s City, and Elms Environmental Center.
- Assisted in the detection and prevention of devastating invasive pests, including the Spotted Wing Lanternfly and Emerald Ash Borer.
- Renovated the St. Mary’s County Agricultural Service Center entrance gardens and replaced invasive plants with a native plant demonstration garden.
- Participated in County-wide public events such as Earth Day on the Square, Easter Egg Festival, Spring Plant Sale at both Sotterley Plantation and Summerseat Farm, Heritage Days at St. Clements Island in Colton’s Point, St. Mary’s County Fair, and River Fest at HSMC.

Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE)

Maryland’s Food Supplement Nutrition Education (FSNE) offers nutrition education programs to help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households and those eligible for SNAP. FSNE programs are provided at no cost to support the work of community agencies serving SNAP-eligible individuals and families, such as literacy centers, local food banks, soup kitchens, WIC offices, senior centers, community centers, neighborhood groups, and homeless shelters. Many materials are available in both English and Spanish.

In 2019, the following were reached through FSNE programs:

- 1292 low-income youth and adults participated in FSNE programs.
- 4 partnering schools.
- 41 classes were implementing FSNE Programs.
- 310 participants were reached at local Farmer’s Market.

4-H Youth Development

The 4-H Program provides youth opportunities to gain life skills and knowledge in order to reach their fullest potential as responsible, caring citizens. UME 4-H faculty and staff work directly with adult and teen volunteers to provide programs, guidance, and support for youth clubs and community activities in Agricultural Sciences, Citizenship, Environmental Science and Outdoor Education, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), and Healthy Living programs.

2019 Program Highlights Include:

- Over 1,200 youth served including 210 in 9 community clubs.
- More than 4,600 hours provided by 89 certified adult volunteers who provide or assist with 4-H programming.
- Partnership through Maryland 4-H Military Club with NAR Patuxent River.
- Opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills through club officer training and public speaking contests.
- Support for community summer camp programs focused on nutrition and exercise with a blender bike and healthy living curriculum.
- Day camp for youth 8 to 12 and leadership/counselor experiences for youth 13-18.
- New one-week residential camp for St. Mary’s County youth traveling to the Western Maryland 4-H Environmental Education and Camping Center in Garrett County serving 43 youth on grant-funded scholarship and 11 adult counselors.
- Partnership with Young Farmers and St. Mary’s 4-H All Stars to host Home and Farm Safety Day for over 75 youth.
- Two horse-mounted drill teams that perform at the St. Mary’s County Fair.
- Workshops providing youth hands-on learning opportunities in 4-H project areas such as animal science (e.g., horse, livestock, poultry, dogs, etc.), STEM, archery, photography, public speaking, and leadership.
- New teen group for learning skills and social development.
- Community service opportunities through club and group events.
- Engaged 1,236 children in short-term, special-interest, and 4-H clubs and activities, including more than 500 in agriculture and other STEM programs.
- 4-H members engaged 1504 County Fair exhibits including 416 livestock project animals; and recorded over 4600 volunteer hours including 32 club community service projects.

Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS)

FCS Educator, Erin Jewell, had a great year packed full of nutrition education, food safety, and wellness programs. The following are highlights of some of these events.

Dining with Diabetes Research Project Funded by the Maryland Dairy Council, this research project allowed FCS Educators to learn about different strategies for connecting with rural audiences. Eighty-four of Southern Maryland’s residents learned about the basics and complications associated with diabetes and health topics while providing low-cost, new, health-related ways to stay active and independent and even made some new friends along the way. Jewell offered an eight-month series at two senior centers and one senior living community across the southern tri-counties. In total 308 older adults attended 24 classes. Word spread about this engaging program. In 2020, Jewell will offer another series, and volunteers from interested sites will be trained to facilitate the program as well.

St. Mary’s County Fair – Fair patrons were able to ride the new Southern Maryland Blender Bike and make a pollinator themed smoothie—go bees, butterflies, and...bats? They also learned about creative ways to grow and eat vegetables while sampling a hot kale, raisin, and pine nut salad recipe.

Farm to School: Blue Catfish Tasting – This year Benjamin Banneker Elementary School students participated in four hands-on stations learning about nutrition, animals, agriculture, and marine life. Nutrition services not only served locally sourced produce and animal products in the cafeterias, but they featured a new menu item invasive to local waters—blue catfish! Jewell arranged a voting activity for students to share their thoughts about the menu item/samples. A resounding 75% said they liked it! This item was also offered during the week at 27 other public elementary schools. Approximately 37% of students buying lunch chose the blue catfish menu option. You may consider trying some yourself.

Mindful Eating - Mindfulness is a trending topic, but how exactly can you be mindful while eating? This year, Jewell showed youth and adults how to use their five senses and remove distractions while eating in order to listen to their body’s cues telling them when to eat and when to slow down and stop. Mindful eating can lead to a more satisfying and enjoyable meal, helping us eat less and form healthier relationships with food and our bodies. You might be in for a special sweet treat attending one of these lessons.

Kitchens for Kids – ‘Have you ever second-guessed if food has gone bad or wondered if your meat is done cooking? What about the old wives’ tales about putting hot food straight into the refrigerator? Whether an at-home meal or a school lunch, Jewell shared tips and tricks on ways for all), confidence, and knowledge to avoid kitchen calamity. Be on the lookout for this program being offered in the southern tri-counties in 2020.

4-H programs for youth and families in the Southern Maryland Counties and support for 4-H club and county events, including the 4-H All Star - All Stars program.

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