



7th Annual Tillage Survey is Currently Underway

Every spring, Capital RC&D coordinates a survey of tillage/crop residue practices on agricultural acreage in selected counties within the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Pennsylvania. The work is completed with support from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), and local support from the conservation district in each surveyed county. In addition, a survey team comprised of an experienced agricultural technician and a GIS intern support the consistency and reliability of the data collection process.

To collect statistically valid data, the team travels a predetermined route in each county and stops at regular intervals to capture information about land use and agricultural activity at each stop. At sites with crop fields, the team collects data about the crop type, cover crop remnants, indications of tillage or soil disturbance, and how much plant material (residue) is remaining from the previous crop. The teams return to the same points in each county, first, in the fall, to survey cover crop use and then in the spring for the tillage survey. The data collected helps show the extent to which farmers are using conservation practices that impact the quality of our waterways.



Survey Technician examines crop field in York County

What's happening at Capital RC&D?

Webinars and Online Resources for High Tunnel Growers

High tunnels allow farmers to have additional control over in-field growing conditions by providing cover from weather and insects using construction similar to a greenhouse. High tunnels vary in size and complexity of construction, but at their most basic consist of a metal frame installed over a portion of cropland that is covered by translucent plastic. Temperature and ventilation are controlled by raising the plastic on the sides of the tunnel and the ends may be large enough to allow access for equipment, such as cultivators. These features are beneficial but the technology also requires farmers to be vigilant to quickly identify and manage issues.

Capital RC&D provides technical assistance to help Pennsylvania farmers using high tunnel technology

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through our partnership with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In spring 2019, Capital RC&D hosted and recorded a series of webinars focused on improving soil health, reducing pest



and disease issues, and improving crop yields, with specific topics focusing on cover crops, anaerobic soil disinfestation, and plastics research. The recordings can be found on www.capitalrcd.org, the new webinars are described below.

High Tunnel Cover Crops: Steve Groff, of Cedar Meadow Farm in Lancaster County, is well-known for his use of cover crops both in-field and in the Haygrove high tunnels covering his heirloom tomato production. The webinar focuses on Steve's use of timing, seed mix, and cover crop termination, to maintain soil structure and

microbial life, while reducing pest pressure and possible nutrient loss.

A Fresh Start: Anaerobic Soil Disinfestation in High Tunnel Systems (Part 1 and Part 2): Francesco Di Gioia, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of Vegetable Crop Science at Penn State University, provides an introduction to Anaerobic Soil Disinfestation (ASD) and how it can be used to control soilborne bacteria, fungi, plant-parasitic nematodes, and weeds, in the first session. The second session provides more advanced information about application and the quality of inputs.

Plastics, They Make a Difference in Your High Tunnel: Kathy Demchak, Senior Extension Associate with Penn State, presents her research on the impacts of various cover plastics on pest management and crop yields in raspberry production during this webinar. Kathy also focuses on light transmission issues and provides points for farmers to consider before their next plastic purchase.

The webinar recordings are featured on capitalrcd.org, as well as additional high tunnel resources including videos, articles, and webinars.

Capital RC&D Partner Spotlight

South Mountain Partnership Speaker Series

Each year, the South Mountain Partnership collaborates with its leadership committee, DCNR and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy to host a speaker series highlighting issues or areas of interest within the South Mountain region dealing specifically with conservation of resources, environment, recreation areas and more. The series aims to educate the public and ignite interest in South Mountain Partnership programs.

The 2019 series started in March with a presentation about Creating the Appalachian Trail in the South, by Tom Johnson, with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. This was followed by Historic Gettysburg -

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Adams County (HGAC), Barn Preservation Specialist, David Maclay, who shared details about barn preservation and provided training for Barn Survey volunteers. To learn more about the survey and historic barns in Adams County, visit: www.hgaonline.org/id35.html.

The 2019 series started in March with a presentation about Creating the Appalachian Trail in the South, by Tom Johnson, with the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club. This was followed by Historic Gettysburg - Adams County (HGAC), Barn Preservation Specialist, David Maclay, who shared details about barn preservation and provided training for Barn Survey volunteers. To learn more about the survey and historic barns in Adams County, visit: www.hgaonline.org/id35.html.



Photo courtesy of the South Mountain Partnership

In April, Andre Weltman, Chair of Friends of Pine Grove Furnace State Park, spoke about Charcoal Hearths, Collier Huts, and Haul Roads. Brandon Hoover, Director of Sustainability at Messiah College, discussed the important of pollinators in early May, including Messiah College programs that support pollinator

populations. These were followed by Dr. Allison Feeney of Shippensburg University with “Appreciating the PA Local Craft Brew Industry” in June.

The final session for 2019 will feature Michaux State Forest Ranger, Todd Ottinger, and Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Program Coordinator, Rob Dubas, for “Methods for Combatting Illegal Dumping and Vandalism in a Forest Setting”, on September 12th at Caledonia State Park.

All events held through the South Mountain Partnership Speaker Series are free and open to the public. To learn more about the series or the South Mountain Partnership, visit: www.southmountainpartnership.org/speakers-series/schedule#event2988

Northeast/ Mid Atlantic Agroforestry

The Northeast/Mid-Atlantic (NEMA) Agroforestry Working Group is comprised of a variety of partners throughout the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast states, including researchers, non-profits, governmental agency staff, farmers, foresters, and educators. The group works as a network to promote education, technical assistance,



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and idea sharing to support agroforestry efforts. Agroforestry systems expand upon traditional forest land management by incorporating complementary agricultural and forestry activities to generate income, complement agricultural activities, improve wildlife habitat and soil health.

Capital RC&D provided fiscal sponsorship for the initial development of the working group and their educational programs and resources, as well as administrative support for these programs in the form of grant management and event support. Capital RC&D's structure enables staff to provide administrative support or fiscal sponsorship for groups whose efforts further Capital RC&D's mission, like NEMA Agroforestry, but are without the staff or capacity to do so on their own.

To access agroforestry resources or to learn more about the work of NEMA Agroforestry, visit their website: www.nemaagroforestry.org.



Upcoming Dates

July 19, 2019 Capital RC&D Council Meeting: Lancaster County Farm and Home Center

Sept. 20, 2019 Capital RC&D Council Meeting: Dauphin County Ag and Natural Resource Center

*For additional details about these and other Capital RC&D and partner events,
visit the Events page at capitalrcd.org*

