

# He's 'King' of Md. conservationists

OWINGS, Md. — "William (Buddy) King received the U.S. Department of Agriculture's second highest honor, the superior service award on Tuesday, at a ceremony in Washington, D.C. King, an engineering technician for the USDA's Soil Conservation

Service and a resident of Owings in Calvert County, was among the 45 individuals and 14 groups honored by the Agriculture Department at its 38th annual honor awards program.

King's dedication to soil and water conservation and his non-nonsense approach to problem solving has won him the respect of farmers and developers throughout the region. Known as "Mr. Conservationist" in the four counties he serves including Prince George's, Anne Arundel, Montgomery and Howard, it is his job to help landowners control soil erosion and keep sediment out of streams.

According to Gerald R. Calhoun, SCS state conservationist, King was singled out for his superior leadership in promoting low-cost

conservation practices and for his salesmanship and training abilities.

"Buddy started the back-to-basics philosophy in Maryland showing farmers how to use their own equipment to install conservation practices. For many farmers, this was the only way they could afford to do it. For example, it costs about \$2.00 a foot to hire a bulldozer to install a diversion whereas they could build one with their own tractor for about 25 cents a foot."

King started the movement about three years ago when his territory was expanded from Prince George's County to include the other three. Farmers were hardpressed by high costs and low crop prices. The cost of hiring equipment in these urban counties



William (Buddy) King, Calvert County, Md. SCS engineering technician.

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was twice as much as in rural counties.

He began by convincing a Howard County farmer to plow in a diversion as a demonstration project. Diversions are small ridges constructed across a hillside to intercept runoff water and channel it to a safe outlet. He then arranged for other conservationists to attend so they could learn, too.

Next, he encouraged the conservationists to hold field days in their own counties where these and other conservation practices could be demonstrated to farmers. As a result, said Calhoun, the number of diversions installed during the past few years has increased dramatically.

King's ability to teach others is one of his strongest attributes,

says Dave Bourdon, Prince George's Soil Conservation District. "He doesn't just give you the answer to a problem," says Bourdon. "He shows you how to get the answer."

King is also recognized as an expert in designing practices to control erosion and storm water runoff in urban areas. He does designs for sophisticated control ponds and even shows private engineers with more academic credentials how to correct design problems.

"Buddy is a hard worker with an outstanding ability to make other people understand the importance of conserving soil not only for maintaining the productivity of our farmland, but for improving the whole environment," Calhoun added.

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