

Soil Stewardship Week

(Continued from Page A1)

about 50 farmers and honored guests to the Dan Dee Country Inn. In attendance were Frederick County commissioners David Gray, Ilona Hogan, Terre Rhoderick, Mark Hoke, and Bruce Reeder. Reeder is the liaison for the Catoctin and Frederick Soil Conservation districts. The Commissioners proclaimed Soil Stewardship Week.

Richard R. Holter, Sr., past supervisor of the Catoctin district, retired last year after 31 years of service. He was presented with the Distinguished Service Award and honored with a plaque for his service from 1963-1994. Holter, a dairy farmer from the Braddock Mountain area, said he was stepping aside "to allow somebody else to take over" and offer their input.

"Being in there 31 years, I had spent long enough. There are other qualified people that could take over my position," Holter said.

Assistant Secretary Powell talked about soil conservation districts in Maryland, and how the districts' roles are changing with the times. Initially, the districts served farmers. But with changing land use and growing populations, new resource management challenges related to urbanization and subdivision of land have evolved. Soil loss and natural resource management strategies have had to adapt.

In the early 1970s, Maryland enacted one of the first sediment erosion control programs in the country. The technical expertise in erosion control has shifted during the last several decades to the local government, according to Powell. This shift addressed the changing issues related to development. But Maryland conservation efforts work best when agencies and organizations function as a partnership, Powell indicated.

In a graphic presentation, Powell had members of the Catoctin and Frederick Soil Conservation Districts stand under an umbrella. The umbrella represented a common concern for the environment and soil conservation. Also belonging under the umbrella, according to Powell, was the federal government, which Powell referred to as the technical arm of the soil conservation districts, explaining, "The government provides engineering expertise in the areas of soils, wetlands, biology, and resource management."

Local government agencies, concerned with local priorities, also warranted a place under the umbrella; they are involved in sediment and erosion control issues, functioning through agencies such as Planning and Zoning and Environmental Health. Rounding out the picture were the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service and the Board of Education for their technical and educational expertise.

According to Powell, "The best example of the partnership at the state level over the last couple years has been the tributary strategies process." The unique situation in Maryland involving the Chesapeake Bay has led to a comprehensive commitment from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and the District of Columbia to reduce nutrient pollution in the Bay. Nitrogen and phosphorous levels are to be reduced by 40 percent by the year 2000, as mandated by the 1987 revision of the Chesapeake Bay Agreement. The Strategies are considered a local and national model of grassroots strategy, said Powell.

"The strategy Maryland is taking is that everyone has taken part in creating reduced water quality in the Bay, and everyone needs to take part in the solution," explained Beth Horsey, tributary strategy coordinator for the Maryland Department of Agriculture, reached at her office for comment. Excess nutrients from wastewater, agricultural land, and developed land; sediment runoff from farms, construction sites, and other lands; and elevated levels of toxic chemicals have been identified as the three major problems associated with the Bay's decline. The tributary strategies specifically address the first problem; reducing excess nutrients.

(Turn to Page A35)



Mark Hoke, center, representing Frederick County commissioners, honor Jesse Burali, left, and Daniel C. Poole, right for their service to soil conservation. In back are, from left, Ilona Hogan, Terre Rhoderick, and Bruce Reeder.



Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for the state of Maryland Royden Powell, III, in rear, demonstrates the partnership of the Frederick Soil Conservation District, represented by Jesse Burali on right, and the Catoctin District, represented by Daniel C. Poole, left.

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