



## **Agencies Helping Mid-Atlantic Farmers and Landowners**

### **U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA, federal agency)**

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management. Read about the USDA and the agencies within the USDA at <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/about-usda>.

### **Natural Resources Conservation Service (within the USDA, federal with local offices)**

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) was established to improve the health of our Nation's natural resources while sustaining and enhancing the productivity of American agriculture. NRCS achieves this by providing voluntary assistance through strong partnerships with private landowners, managers, and communities to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters upon which people and the environment depend. Read about the NRCS and their services at <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov>

### **Farm Service Agency (within USDA, federal with local offices)**

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) originally established in 1933 to help rural Americans through the Great Depression, is today the service arm of the USDA. FSA administers farm programs, farm loans, commodity operations, management and state operations for USDA. FSA provides credit to farmers unable to receive private, commercial credit, with emphasis on providing loans to beginning, minority and women farmers and ranchers. FSA administers ad hoc disaster programs and delivers commodities for use in humanitarian programs at home and abroad. FSA's long-standing tradition of conserving the nation's natural resources continues through the Conservation Reserve Program. Read about FSA and their services at <https://www.fsa.usda.gov/>.

### **State Department of Forestry (state agency with capital city and local offices)**

#### **Virginia**

The Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) was established in 1914 to prevent and suppress forest fires and reforest bare lands. VDOF's mission today is to protect and develop healthy, sustainable forest resources for Virginians. The Department provides technical assistance to private landowners to assist them in managing their forest land for forest products, water quality, protection of threatened and endangered species, historic resources and wildlife habitat; provides marketing and utilization assistance to forest industry and provides technical assistance in managing state owned lands of other agencies. VDOF protects 15.8 million acres of forest land from fire, insects and disease and manages 22 State Forest lands totaling 67,920 acres for timber, recreation, water, research, wildlife and biodiversity; their strategic plan is currently unavailable on the agency's website. Read about VDOF and their services at <http://www.dof.virginia.gov/>

#### **Maryland Forest Service**

The mission of the Maryland Forest Service is to restore, manage, and protect Maryland's trees, forests, and forested ecosystems to sustain Maryland's natural resources and connect people to the land. Maryland Forest Service (FS) is part of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Headquartered in Annapolis

the FS has 4 regional offices, 2 fire centers, 18 county field offices, 1 forest tree nursery and 4 State Forest offices. Read more about their services at: <http://dnr.maryland.gov/forests/Pages/mission.aspx>

## **Pennsylvania**

The mission of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry (DCNR) is to ensure the long-term health, viability, and productivity of the commonwealth's forests and to conserve native wild plants by managing state forests, protecting forestlands, public and private, promote forestry and the knowledge of forestry by advising and assisting other government agencies, communities, landowners, forest industry and the general public and promoting forestry and the knowledge of forestry by advising on wise stewardship and forest resource use. Read more at: <https://www.dcnr.pa.gov>

## **Cooperative Extension Service for Virginia, Pennsylvania, and Maryland (state agency with university and local offices)**

The Cooperative Extension Service (CES) is a nationwide, non-credit educational network that addresses public needs by providing non-formal higher education and learning activities to farmers, ranchers, communities, youth, and families throughout the nation. As part of the US land grant university system, CES works in partnership with USDA'S National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) to translate research into practice.

Maryland = University of Maryland Extension

Virginia = Virginia Cooperative Extension, also known as Virginia Tech

Pennsylvania = Penn State Extension

## **Conservation Districts (typically a county agency with local offices)**

Across the United States, nearly 3,000 conservation districts—almost one in every county—work directly with landowners to conserve and promote healthy soils, water, forests and wildlife. Conservation districts may go by different names —“soil and water conservation districts,” “resource conservation districts,” “natural resource districts” and “land conservation committees”— but they all share a single mission: to coordinate assistance from all available sources—public and private, local, state and federal—to develop locally-driven solutions to natural resources concerns. In addition, conservation districts: implement farm, ranch and forestland conservation practices; conserve and restore wetlands; protect groundwater resources; assist communities and homeowners to plant trees and other land cover; help developers control soil ; and reach out to communities and schools to teach the value of natural resources and encourage conservation efforts. Conservation districts are established under state law ([A Standard State Soil Conservation Districts Law.](#)) They have different names in different states.

- Land Conservation Departments – *Wisconsin*
- Natural Resource Conservation Districts – *Arizona*
- Natural Resources Districts - *Nebraska*
- Resource Conservation Districts - *California*
- Soil Conservation Districts - *Idaho, North Dakota, Utah, Maryland, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Tennessee*
- Soil & Water Conservation Districts - *Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, New*

*Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia and the Pacific Basin*

- Conservation Districts - *Pennsylvania*

**Non-Profit Foundation or Organization (often known as NGO, typically local or regional)** that helps preserve farmland and rural heritage, promotes land and water stewardship. Find land or agriculturally-based organizations that service your area by searching: (your county/region) land stewardship non-profit

**Land Trust (typically local or regional, although national land trusts do exist)** is a **charitable** organization that acquires land or conservation easements, or that stewards land or easements, to achieve one or more conservation purposes. Find land trust information for your area by searching (your county/region) land trust. Search for Land Trusts in your area at <https://www.farmlandinfo.org/directory>.