



April 9, 2026

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Thomas E. Dernoga, Esq., Chair  
 Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committee (TIEE)

THRU: Sylvia King *CK*  
 Senior Legislative Budget Officer

FROM: Alex Hirtle *AH*  
 Legislative Budget & Policy Analyst

RE: Soil Conservation District  
 Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Review

**Budget Overview**

The FY 2027 Proposed Budget for the Soil Conservation District (the “District” or “SCD”) before recoveries is \$2,509,300. This is an increase of \$171,800, or 7.3%, over the FY 2026 Approved Budget. The budget change is attributed to increases in operating costs related to technology charges based on anticipated County-wide costs, and compensation increases due to the annualization of FY 2026 and FY 2027 planned salary adjustments. The Soil Conservation District General Fund costs are 100% recovered from non-General Fund sources.

**Budget Comparison – General Fund**

Approved Fiscal Year 2026 to Proposed Fiscal Year 2027

**Expenditures by Category - General Fund**

Category	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Proposed	Change FY26-FY27	
					Amount (\$)	Percent (%)
Compensation	\$1,558,507	\$1,646,400	\$1,646,600	\$1,758,700	\$112,300	6.8%
Fringe Benefits	497,873	549,000	549,000	604,200	55,200	10.1%
Operating	121,823	142,100	142,100	146,400	4,300	3.0%
Capital Outlay	—	—	—	—	—	—
<b>SubTotal</b>	<b>\$2,178,203</b>	<b>\$2,337,500</b>	<b>\$2,337,700</b>	<b>\$2,509,300</b>	<b>\$171,800</b>	<b>7.3%</b>
Recoveries	(2,178,203)	(2,337,500)	(2,337,700)	(2,509,300)	(171,800)	7.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$—</b>	<b>\$—</b>	<b>\$—</b>	<b>\$—</b>	<b>\$—</b>	

**Authorized Staffing Count - General Fund**

	<b>FY 2026 Approved</b>	<b>FY 2027 Proposed</b>	<b>Change Amount</b>	<b>Percentage Change</b>
Full-Time	16	16	0	0.0%
Part-Time	0	0	0	0.0%
Limited Term	0	0	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0.0%</b>

**Staffing Changes and Compensation**

- The FY 2027 Proposed Budget includes funding for 16 full-time positions and remains unchanged from the FY 2026 approved staffing level.
- FY 2027 proposed compensation is \$1,758,700, an increase of \$112,300, or 6.8%, over the FY 2026 approved level. The increase is due to the annualization of planned salary adjustments for FY 2026 and FY 2027.

**Fringe Benefits**

- In FY 2027, Fringe Benefit expenditures are proposed at \$604,200, an increase of \$55,200, or 10.1%, above the FY 2026 Approved Budget, to reflect an increase in the fringe benefit rate from 33.3% to 34.4%.
- A five-year trend analysis of fringe benefits is included in the following table.

<b>Category</b>	<b>FY 2023 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2024 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2025 Actual</b>	<b>FY 2026 Approved</b>	<b>FY 2027 Proposed</b>
Compensation	\$1,006,198	\$1,485,788	\$1,558,507	\$1,646,400	\$1,758,700
Fringe Benefits Expenditures	\$437,700	\$452,604	\$497,873	\$549,000	\$604,200
As a % of Compensation	32.60%	30.50%	31.90%	33.30%	34.40%
Annual % Change		3.40%	7.70%	10.30%	10.10%

**Operating Expenses**

- In FY 2027, operating expenses are proposed at \$146,400, which represents an increase of \$4,300, or 3%, over the FY 2026 Approved Budget, due to an increase in the technology allocation cost, and includes funding for printing and general office supplies costs. Other Operating Equipment is proposed to decrease by \$1,300 in FY 2027.

*See the table on the following page.*

Operating Objects	FY 2025 Actual	FY 2026 Budget	FY 2027 Proposed	FY 2026 - FY 2027	
				\$ Change	% Change
Office Automation	\$ 121,100	\$ 137,300	\$ 142,900	\$ 5,600	4.1%
Printing	\$ 400	\$ 400	\$ 400	-	-
Other Operating Equipment	\$ 4,400	\$ 4,400	\$ 3,100	\$ (1,300)	-29.5%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 125,900</b>	<b>\$ 182,100</b>	<b>\$ 142,100</b>	<b>\$ (40,000)</b>	<b>3.0%</b>

**Recoveries**

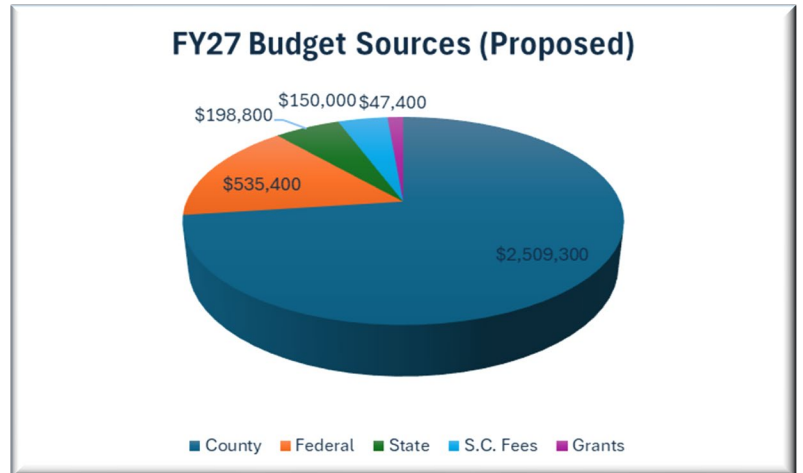
- In FY 2027, Proposed Recoveries total \$2,509,300, an increase of \$171,800, or 7.3%, over the FY 2026 Approved Budget to reflect increases in compensation and operating expenditures. General Fund costs in FY 2027 of \$2,479,300 will be recovered from the Stormwater Management Enterprise Fund.
  
- In FY 2027, the County will also recover \$30,000 from the Maryland Agricultural Land Transfer Tax for expenses associated with the Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

Recoveries, FY 2026 and FY 2027						
	Specific Project	FY 2026 Approved	FY 2026 Estimate	FY 2027 Proposed	Change (FY26 VS FY27)	Change %
1	Salaries - MD Ag Tax	\$ 22,300	\$ 22,500	\$ 22,300	\$ -	0%
2	Fringe - MD Ag Tax	\$ 7,700	\$ 7,500	\$ 7,700	\$ -	0%
	<b>Sub-Total MD Ag Tax</b>	<b>\$ 30,000</b>	<b>\$ 30,000</b>	<b>\$ 30,000</b>	<b>\$ -</b>	
3	Salaries - Storm Water Mgmt.	\$1,624,300	\$1,624,100	\$1,736,400	\$ 112,100	6.90%
4	Fringe - Storm Water Mgmt.	\$ 541,100	\$ 541,500	\$ 596,500	\$ 55,400	10.23%
5	Operating - Storm Water Mgmt.	\$ 142,100	\$ 142,100	\$ 146,400	\$ 4,300	3.03%
	<b>Sub-Total Storm Water Mgmt.</b>	<b>\$2,307,500</b>	<b>\$2,307,700</b>	<b>\$2,479,300</b>	<b>\$ 171,800</b>	<b>7.44%</b>
	<b>TOTAL RECOVERIES</b>	<b>\$2,337,500</b>	<b>\$2,337,700</b>	<b>\$2,509,300</b>	<b>\$ 171,800</b>	<b>7.35%</b>

Source: FRR, pg. 5 Q. 12 and BB. Pg. 445

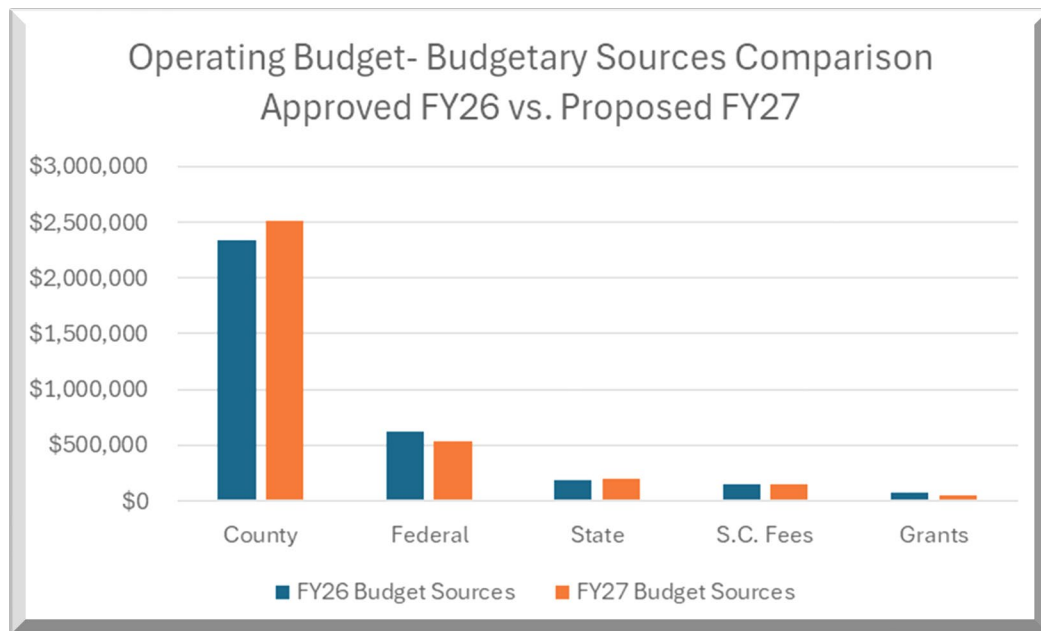
**Revenues**

- The pie-chart provides a detailed listing of the District’s proposed FY 2027 combined funding sources. The County provides the majority of the District’s operating funds (approximately \$2.5 million, or 73%), followed by Federal (\$535,400, or 16%), and the State (\$198,800, or 6%).



*Source: First Round Responses, Page 2, Q. 2*

- Please see the chart below for a detailed listing of the District’s approved FY 2026 and proposed FY 2027 combined funding sources, which will result in a net increase of \$171,800 in FY 2027 over the approved FY 2026 amount. Increases are seen in County funding (\$171,800), and State funding (\$6,100). Decreases are seen in Federal funding (\$89,200), and Grant funding (\$25,600). There are no changes in S.C. Fees (\$186,300).



*Source: First Round Responses, Page 2, Question2*

## **Grants**

- The total Grant Funding is proposed to be \$47,400 in FY 2027, a \$25,600 decrease from the FY 2026 budget.
- The District is currently utilizing the second National Association of Conservation Districts technical grant (NACD-TA) to continue to pay for their Urban Agriculture Planner. Efforts are underway to make this a permanent position.
- If approved for a third NACD-TA grant, the Planner would be funded until June 2027.
- The District expects a possible reduction in grant opportunities due to State budget challenges and unknown cuts from the federal government.

## **Highlights**

- The District's integral initiatives include the preservation of acres of agricultural land through various programs. Current programs total 7,356 preserved acres countywide. Two (2) properties settled for 64 acres and \$251,430. Five (5) other application rankings were approved for 289.66 acres. All five (5) properties have been appraised and one (1) property has been made an offer.
  - ***Rural Legacy Program*** – conservation of strategic natural resources and prevention of sprawl development:
    - ❖ Currently, there are no updates or pending applications.
  - ***The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF)*** – productive farmland and woodland preservation:
    - ❖ Maintained MALPF certification resulting in continued higher percentage of Agricultural Transfer Tax retention for preservation programs.
  - ***Historic Agricultural Resource Preservation Program (HARPP)*** funded by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) – Rural Tier preservation:
    - ❖ To date, the HARPP account balance is at \$2.41 million.
    - ❖ There are six (6) pending offers totaling 295 acres.
      - ✚ The dollar value of the pending applications is \$1.84 million.
      - ✚ If all the pending applications go through, there will be no anticipated shortfall in FY 2027.
- Continued involvement with Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) on the Environment, Agricultural & Natural Resources (EANR) Program Advisory Committee which serves three (3) high schools in the County.

❖ ***Envirothon*** competition - annual high school environmental competition.

- ✚ The FY 2025 Envirothon was held with 17 teams participating from 10 schools.
- ✚ It is expected that in FY 2026, the competition, which will be held on April 29, 2026, will have similar participation.
- ✚ The District continues to provide higher education scholarships to high school students; total scholarships awarded: 31; total scholarship funds paid out to date are \$48,500. Also, the District has provided over \$25,000 in funding each year for training, equipment, transportation, and food for this program.

❖ **SYEP Program and Internships**

- ✚ The District has participated in the County's Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP) for the past several years. In FY 2026, SCD had one student set to participate, but they accepted other employment. Due to increased workload and an inability to give proper attention and supervision to youth participants, no youth are planned to participate in the FY 2027 SYEP.
- ✚ The District plans on hosting an intern in FY 2027, contingent on State and federal budgets. The District provides training and hands-on application of agricultural conservation and planning, erosion control, administrative work, and stormwater management.

▪ ***Urban Agriculture Conservation*** – Increased participation in the growing Urban Agriculture movement has provided increased opportunities to work with a broader range of customers on Urban Agriculture Conservation soil and water resource concerns:

- ❖ The Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins Regional Park currently has 10 farm businesses with working plots, and M-NCPPC is looking to open additional parcels.
- ❖ The District also provided technical assistance with a pilot project at Clagett Landing Road to specialty farmers providing flowers, vegetables, and grains on those parcels. Currently, there are two (2) farmers there.
- ❖ M-NCPPC has also leased a parcel on Swanson Road to a farmer who is planning on subleasing to other farmers as part of a cooperative.

▪ The District has created over 30 partnerships in FY25 to facilitate Public-private partnerships (P3) for urban farming, mitigate climate change while promoting soil health, carbon sequestration, and biodiversity. They have also partnered with associations and private firms to work on improved program delivery.

- Continued current technical training program to include participation with the Cities of Bowie, Laurel, Greenbelt, the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement (DPIE), the Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T), and other Maryland Soil Conservation Districts.
- The District is reporting the following related to Maryland's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP):
  - ❖ The District is currently at the end of WIP III. According to the revised Chesapeake Bay Agreement, Maryland Soil Conservation Districts will remain in the same planning and implementation mode of operation as they were in WIP III. Annual Goals will remain the same.
  - ❖ A completely new Bay Agreement will be released in 2030.
- The District has maintained an average urban plan review time for all technical submissions of five (5) business days with a stated maximum of ten (10) business days per cycle.
- ***Agriculture and Food Security Innovation Center (AFSIC)*** - Planning for this new County facility rests mainly on the Revenue Authority, which selected a vendor (New Ventures Advisors) to develop a feasibility study. The project has a 14-month timeframe, and there have been multiple project team meetings, advisory meetings, and stakeholder engagement meetings to date.
  - ❖ *Post AFSIC Feasibility Study* - After the study is complete, the Revenue Authority will announce an RFP to develop a business plan for the project.
  - ❖ The District will be a technical advisor on this as well.
- ***Solar Panels*** - The District is part of the mandatory referral process and the pre-acceptance meetings for solar facilities on farmland and wooded parcels. This is an added workload on staff, especially responding to questions from the public concerning the loss of farmland and the removal of forest for solar panel installation.
  - ❖ Proper vegetative stabilization of some sites has also been a problem.
  - ❖ Proposed agrivoltaics legislation, if approved, will be a major advancement in how solar facilities interact with ag land.
  - ❖ Passage will further increase workload for technical staff working with landowners on Best Management Practices.
- ***Practice Keeper digital planning tool*** – The District continues to use this web-based planning tool for developing Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plans (SCWQP) where it is applicable.

- ***Reduce Permitting Timeframes*** - The District continues to work on finding ways to make the plan review/program delivery protocols more efficient for erosion and sediment control, small pond dam safety, forest harvest, mining, and other types of land development.
  - ❖ Initiatives have included updating the PGSCD review manual, combining the three-step plan review process mandated by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE), and migrating to a paperless submission review and approval process.

**Questions For Committee Consideration:**

- Given the challenges of current and future State budgets, unknown cuts from the federal government, and reductions in grant opportunities, will the District be able to continue optimal program delivery to its customers?
- What will be the impact on the County's environment due to reductions in programs under the District that facilitate enhancement of our water quality and soil retention?
- What will be the Council's role in assisting the District with the expansion of agritourism within the County, so that public safety, development, noise, and traffic can be addressed through reasonable guidelines?
- Land preservation enrollment in the County has declined in recent years. Given competition for other uses (solar, development, mining, recreation, etc.), what programs can be developed or enhanced to increase the amount of acreage preserved annually?
- What resources can be utilized to ensure the District will have a full-time, permanent Urban Agriculture Planner that is solely dedicated to SCD's programs and under the District's supervision?