

FARM BUREAU OF DORCHESTER COUNTY

"To promote and protect agriculture and rural life in Dorchester County."

April 2026

A Message from the President



Serving as your President this past year has been a valuable learning experience. I've had the opportunity to meet with individuals in Annapolis, as well as Farm Bureau members and leaders from across the state.

This year, our board members were tasked with making the 2026 Annual Banquet our most successful event to date. Based on feedback from attendees and guest interactions, we achieved that goal by selecting an excellent venue. It was truly an exceptional evening.

This is a great example of what we can accomplish by working together. I encourage all members to help recruit new or returning members so Dorchester County Farm Bureau can continue doing what we do best.

Let's keep achieving together. Please feel free to share your ideas or suggestions at any time.

Happy Spring, Dorchester!



Mike Knauer
Dorchester County Farm Bureau President

Board of Directors Officers

Mike Knauer President
Chip Fleming, Vice President
Lisa Dwyer, Secretary/Treasurer

Board Members

Valarie Brinsfield
Mary Lou Brown
Dale Collins
Steve Edgar
Chris Griffith
Beth Hill
William Layton
Emily Zobel

Women's Leadership Committee

Valarie Brinsfield



OUR VISION

Maryland Farm Bureau takes pride in being a true grassroots organization, starting at the local level. As the unified voice for Maryland agriculture, our members find value in our lobbying efforts, Farm Bureau programs, and workshops. We work every day to promote and protect the rural landscape and natural resources of Dorchester County.

Contact Us At:

P.O. Box 1293
Cambridge, MD 21613
DorchesterFB@gmail.com

Dorchester Farm Bureau Annual Banquet Recap

Dorchester County Farm Bureau hosted another successful Annual Banquet, bringing together 174 members, guests, and supporters for an evening dedicated to celebrating agriculture and the strength of our local farming community.

A Strong Show of Support

Through generous participation in raffles, auctions, and ticket sales, a total of **\$19,169 was raised, including \$3,800 designated for the Farm Bureau Scholarship Fund.** These funds will directly support future programs, events, and educational opportunities.

Recognizing Outstanding Service

A highlight of the evening was the presentation of several well-deserved awards. William Layton received the Presidential Service Award for his dedication and leadership. Dale Collins was honored with the Legacy of Service Award, recognizing his long-standing commitment to the organization and the agricultural community. The Friend of Farm Bureau Award was presented in memory of Richard Colburn, honoring his lasting impact and support of agriculture.

Welcoming Distinguished Guests

The Farm Bureau was honored to welcome several distinguished guests, including Delegate Tom Hutchinson, Senator Johnny Mautz, Mike Detmer representing Congressman Andy Harris, Chris Catterton of the Maryland Farm Bureau, and Katie Walker, Operations Coordinator for the Maryland Farm Bureau.

The evening was a reminder that the success of Dorchester County Farm Bureau is built on the dedication of its members and the strength of the agricultural community. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success.



Members and guests gathered for the 2026 Annual Banquet



A full house celebrating Dorchester County agriculture

ANNUAL BANQUET SPOTLIGHT



President Mike Knauer and Vice President Chip Fleming present awards.



William Layton
Presidential Service Award



Friend of Farm Bureau Award
(in memory of Richard Colburn)



Dale Collins
Legacy of Service Award

DORCHESTER LEADERSHIP FEATURED

Maryland Farmers Focus on Local Challenges

As Congress debates national agricultural policy, farmers on Maryland's Eastern Shore are focused on more immediate concerns—rising input costs, land use, and the future of local agriculture.

Dorchester County Farm Bureau President Mike Knauer was featured in a recent article, sharing concerns about the growing use of farmland for solar energy projects. While these projects provide income, Knauer noted they often take valuable land out of production without directly benefiting local communities.

Despite these challenges, farmers remain committed to preserving their land and passing it on to the next generation—continuing a long tradition of stewardship and dedication to agriculture.

From The Board

The Dorchester County Farm Bureau Board continues to focus on supporting our local agricultural community through advocacy, education, and outreach. As we move into the spring season, we look forward to upcoming events, scholarship opportunities, and continued engagement with our members. Thank you to everyone who contributes their time and effort to keep our organization strong. We look forward to seeing many of you at upcoming events this season.



Early spring growth on the Eastern Shore

SCHOLARSHIPS & OPPORTUNITIES

Laura Layton Educational Scholarship

- For students pursuing agriculture or related fields
- Up to **\$1,000** for full-time students
- May reapply in future years
- Paid directly to the school

Application Deadline: April 15th

Youth Ambassador Program

- One-year leadership opportunity representing agriculture
- Participate in Farm Bureau and community events
- Promote agricultural education and outreach
- Receive up to **\$1,000 scholarship**

Application Deadline: August 15th

2025-2026 Scholarship Recipients



Madison Tobat



Kyle Jackson



Emily Todd

District 6 Updates

Maryland Farm Bureau has launched a new website at www.marylandfb.org. In addition to providing information, the new site is more interactive—allowing members to track legislation, take action on bills, and renew memberships online, all in one place.

With this being an election year, the Maryland Farm Bureau PAC is active in supporting candidates who advocate for agriculture. Since its creation, the PAC has contributed over \$350,000. Contributions are voluntary, and members are encouraged to consider supporting the PAC during membership renewal.

If you haven't yet, be sure to check out Maryland Farm Bureau's podcast. Featuring interviews with farmers, business leaders, and policymakers, it's an easy way to stay informed on agricultural issues across the state.

If you have questions or suggestions on what Maryland Farm Bureau should be focusing on, please feel free to reach out. As your representative on the state board, I welcome your input.

William Layton
District 6 Representative
william@laytonschance.com (410) 804-6525

Maryland Farm Bureau Promotion & Engagement Committee

The Promotion & Engagement program helps Farm Bureau members grow as effective communicators, collaborators, and advocates for Maryland agriculture.

Members have opportunities to share their experiences on and off the farm, within their communities, and with consumers. If you're passionate about telling agriculture's story, this program is for you.

The program focuses on:

- Promoting awareness and understanding of agriculture
- Equipping members with tools for engagement
- Providing training to help build consumer trust and confidence

For more information, contact Operations Coordinator Katie Walker at: kwalker@marylandfb.org.

Stay Connected – Renew Your Membership

Dorchester County Farm Bureau relies on the strength and support of our members. Your membership helps us advocate for agriculture, support local programs, and ensure a strong voice for farmers and rural communities.

If your membership has lapsed, or is coming due, we encourage you to **renew today**. Staying active keeps you connected to the latest updates, events, and opportunities to get involved.

Renewing is quick and easy online at www.marylandfb.org, or you can contact us if you need assistance. *Many memberships expire this time of year—please take a moment to check your status.*

Senate Bill 0931 (Renewable Energy Certainty Act)

The Dorchester County Council has taken action regarding Senate Bill 0931, which places a 5% cap on solar development within a county's Priority Preservation Area (PPA).

The Council has:

- Requested an official calculation from the Maryland Department of Planning to determine Dorchester County's 5% solar cap
- Noted that Dorchester County does not have a state-recognized PPA
- Asked the Maryland Public Service Commission (PSC) to pause approval of new utility-scale solar projects until the cap is clarified, citing concerns the county may already exceed the limit

Additional Context:

Local officials, including Councilman Mike Detmer, have expressed concern that SB 0931 overrides local zoning authority and threatens agricultural land. Because Dorchester and Somerset counties do not have recognized PPAs, officials argue they lack the mechanism outlined in the law to regain control once the 5% threshold is reached.

In response, the Council passed local legislation in late 2024 addressing setbacks, buffers, and decommissioning requirements for solar projects. The Council has also voted to intervene in PSC cases, including the Maryland Blue Crab Solar and Storage project, citing concerns over state preemption of local authority.



Maryland Noxious Weed Reporting

If you see any of the following Noxious Weeds you can now report them to the MDA.

Palmer Amaranth, Waterhemp, Johnsongrass, Shattercane, Canada Thistle, Bull Thistle, Plum Thistle, and Musk Thistle.

A location/address and landowner/farmer information would be needed for contact.

You can contact Victoria Spice at victoria.spice@maryland.gov



Dorchester County Farm Bureau

PO Box 1293
Cambridge, MD 21613

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2026 Dorchester Farm Bureau Calendar of Events

JANUARY

13th Board of Directors Meeting at 6pm
9th-14th AFBF Convention in San Antonio, Texas

FEBRUARY

10th Board of Directors Meeting at 6pm
11th Women in Ag Conference
21st-28th National FFA Week
28th Annual Banquet

MARCH

10th Board of Directors Meeting at 6pm
15th-21st National Ag Week
17th National Ag Day

APRIL

14th Board of Directors Meeting at 7pm

MAY

12th Board of Directors Meeting at 7pm

JUNE

9th Board of Directors Meeting at 7pm

AUGUST

4th-8th Caroline/Dorchester County Fair
11th BOD Meeting & Policy Review Mtg at 6pm
15th Ambassador Applications Due
25th Executive Committee Budget/Calendar Meeting at 5:30

SEPTEMBER

8th Annual Meeting at 6:00 pm
13th Annual Picnic at Layton's Chance Winery & Vineyard at 2:00 pm

OCTOBER

12th National Farmers Day
13th Board of Directors Meeting at 7pm
26th National Pumpkin Day

NOVEMBER

10th Board of Directors Meeting at 7pm

DECEMBER

No Meeting in December