



For immediate release:

Survey of Farm Conservation Practices in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

If you're a farm operator in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed region, you soon will have a chance to highlight your contributions to conserve soil and improve water quality. "This is incredibly important information that can help Virginia achieve its water quality goals for the Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay," observed Dr. Ed Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension.

The survey was crafted over many months by members of Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Task Force. Task force members worked closely together and include representatives from the: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, Virginia Agribusiness Council, Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Virginia Department of Forestry, Virginia Farm Bureau, and Virginia Tech Office of Analytics and Institutional Effectiveness, among other partners. Virginia Cooperative Extension/Virginia Tech serves as the survey administrator.

During development of Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP), farmers noted that many of the conservation practices that they have voluntarily implemented over the years are not accounted for in tracking the progress made toward meeting priority water quality goals, including improvements in Chesapeake Bay water quality. Responding to those concerns, the final WIP called for development of this survey.

"Virginia agriculture has done much to improve water quality in our local rivers and streams and the Chesapeake Bay," said Martha Moore, Vice President of Governmental Relations at Virginia Farm Bureau Federation. "We have always said that farmers are utilizing more conservation practices than what is reported into the Chesapeake Bay model. This survey will help prove this fact and why it is so important for farmers to fill out this survey."

"While farmers often receive cost-share support to implement certain conservation practices, they also invest their own time and money to establish conservation practices voluntarily," said Clyde Cristman, Director of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation. "This survey will enable farmers in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed to share conservation practices that they have voluntarily established or continued to maintain after the cost-share has expired."

Kendall Tyree, Executive Director of the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, observed that the survey data will also help inform technical assistance and educational programs. "This is a great opportunity to learn about ways to enhance producer programs," Tyree said, "particularly those that assist producers with expanding best management practices implementation."

"I am proud of the work Virginia farmers have performed to conserve soil and improve water quality," said Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Jewel Bronaugh. "In addition to acknowledging their work, this survey will help identify areas of improvement and best practices."

The survey will respect participant confidentiality. For more information about the survey, frequently asked questions, or to access the survey link online, please visit <https://vaswcd.org/virginia-farm-voluntary-agricultural-bmp-inventory> . Participants are asked to submit their responses by March 12, 2021.

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