



**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

July 28, 2023

Adam Ortiz, Regional Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency, Region 3
Four Penn Center
1600 JFK Blvd.
Philadelphia, PA 19103-2029

Dear Regional Administrator Ortiz:

As the leaders of the state agricultural agencies in the Chesapeake Bay region, we are writing to you to request that the Chesapeake Bay Partnership create an Agriculture Advisory Committee. We are collectively faced with a pivotal moment in addressing the ongoing conservation challenges in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, including how to best track the ongoing progress of the work occurring on farms and in communities, and how to best work towards goals established as part of Pennsylvania's final amended Phase 3 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (Phase 3 WIP).

While the issues facing the Chesapeake Bay are multi-faceted, there is no question that agriculture has an influence on those existing challenges. Equally, it is clear that agriculture can and will be part of the solution that results in overall water quality improvements. Farmers across the Bay watershed are committed partners in conservation and are willing to adopt best management practices that have a proven track record of reducing the level of nutrients from reaching local waterways.

Thankfully, farmers who want to make conservation improvements have more access to state and federal programs than ever before. We also have a strong commitment from the public and private sector to work with farmers on conservation strategies and a desire to make sure that these improvements are tracked and verified for incorporation into the Chesapeake Bay Program's modeling inputs.

Currently, the Chesapeake Bay Partnership's Executive Council receives input from three advisory committees: the Science and Technical Advisory Committee, the Local Government Advisory Committee, and the Citizens Advisory Committee. However, none of those committees fully represents agriculture. While there is adequate scientific and citizen representation on these committees, we see a need to create a committee comprised of farmers and other agricultural industry stakeholders and leaders. Conservation stewardship that improves the health of the Bay will be happening on agricultural lands in significant measures. So, it's critical that programmatic decisions are vetted by the men and women of agriculture who have an in-depth understanding of farming operations and best management practices for agricultural conservation.



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We respectfully request that the Chesapeake Bay Partnership create an Agriculture Advisory Committee. Having input of agricultural industry leaders was critical for setting ambitious but achievable goals when Pennsylvania developed its Phase 3 WIP. As part of the Agriculture Workgroup for Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP, we had 11 members representing various agriculture sectors. Those individuals provided valuable input into the development of Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP.

Our recommendation is to have the creation of an Agriculture Advisory Committee be incorporated into the Principals Staff Committee's "Charting a Course to 2025" recommendations to the Chesapeake Executive Council, which could easily be immediately implemented by the Executive Council. An engaged agriculture sector is critical to the future success of the Bay restoration, and we hope that the Bay Partnership's creation of an Agriculture Advisory Committee will serve as an important sounding board and idea generator for future success throughout the watershed. We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you on this endeavor.

Sincerely,

Russell C. Redding, Secretary
Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Kevin M. Atticks, Secretary
Maryland Department of Agriculture

Richard Ball, Commissioner
New York Department of Agriculture & Markets

Matthew Lohr, Secretary
Agriculture & Forestry, Virginia

Kent A. Leonhardt, Commissioner
West Virginia Department of Agriculture

Michael T. Scuse, Secretary
Delaware Department of Agriculture

CC: Marel King, Pennsylvania Director, Chesapeake Bay Commission