



## ASSISTING FARMERS

### Accelerating Agricultural Implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategies

## *Agreement*

The Chesapeake Bay jurisdictions and the Chesapeake Bay Commission, respectfully convey this policy agreement to our colleagues in the states and the U.S. Congress to stress the critical importance of enhancing support for agricultural conservation:

Each Chesapeake Bay watershed state, in its strategy for achieving the *Chesapeake 2000* goal of removing the Bay from the Federal impaired waters list, considers a suite of restoration practices across all land uses in the watershed. However, all of these strategies rely heavily on increased implementation of agricultural conservation practices due to their cost-effectiveness and the prevalence of agriculture in the watershed.

Along with private funds and state programs, the Federal Farm Bill authorizes programs that are the primary source of funding for implementation of conservation practices. Current Farm Bill funding to the Chesapeake Bay region addresses about one fourth of the estimated Federal contribution of \$262.5 million needed annually for agricultural conservation measures to meet state water quality goals. Farmers are willing to implement the available solutions to protect water quality but lack the funding to do so while remaining economically viable.

In 2005, the Chesapeake Executive Council focused extensively on agriculture. We adopted a strategy for implementing new and innovative uses for manure and poultry litter, which are sig-

nificant contributors to excess nitrogen and phosphorus in the Bay. We also, in anticipation of the expected reauthorization of the Federal Farm Bill in 2007, adopted five priority recommendations, which *remain our top priorities* to maximize the benefits of Federal agricultural conservation programs to the region's farmers and to achieve water quality goals. These five priorities are:

1. Establish a nationwide Regional Stewardship Program to increase flexibility in the delivery of Federal funds.
2. Fully implement the Conservation Security Program, nationwide.
3. Target funds to maximize environmental benefits and ecological services.
4. Provide increased support for the economic viability of agriculture.
5. Increase funding and technical assistance for conservation-related programs.

Implementation of these top priorities cannot occur without the knowledgeable and hard-working professionals who provide technical assistance to individual farmers, especially when it comes to sharing new and innovative practices.

HEREFORE, as states we resolve to:

1. Pursue funding mechanisms to leverage Federal funds with enhanced state funds for conservation practices on working lands throughout the Chesapeake watershed.
2. Provide, in concert with Federal programs, adequate levels of technical assistance to meet our Tributary Strategy goals and report annually on efforts to increase participation in conservation programs between now and 2010.
3. Work with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to coordinate the efforts of our technical assistance professionals employed by the state or by conservation districts to align reporting systems and maximize efficient delivery of services.

**F**URTHERMORE, to ensure the effectiveness of our five top priority Farm Bill recommendations we direct our staffs to work with Congress, via reauthorization and/or appropriation, to:

1. Increase Federal spending for conservation and conservation-related programs in the Chesapeake Bay Region to levels sufficient to meet Tributary Strategy goals.
2. Reform conservation ranking systems to reward farmers who implement practices with the greatest environmental benefits.
3. Create Regional Technical Committees for the rapid deployment of innovative technologies, especially regarding manure and poultry litter.
4. Increase appropriations for the Conservation Technical Assistance Program and other sources of United States Department of Agriculture technical assistance funding to meet regional needs, and to sustain these levels over multiple years to ensure successful implementation and maintenance of practices.
5. Exempt technical assistance for Farm Bill conservation programs from the Commodity Credit Corporation Section 11 spending cap.

**F**INALLY, let it be known that we, the signatories of this Agreement, will make the 2007 reauthorization of the Farm Bill and related appropriations a top priority in our Federal legislative agendas to ensure adequate conservation assistance to our farmers.

September 22, 2006

FOR THE STATE OF MARYLAND



*Robert J. S. [Signature]*

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



*J. R. [Signature]*

FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA



*Edward G. Rendell*

FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



*Anthony G. Williams*

FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION



*Smith [Signature]*

Note: One Chesapeake Executive Council Member, the EPA Administrator on behalf of the United States, has not signed this Agreement. Federal law and practice prohibit federal officials from adopting the kind of specific advocacy statements contained in this Agreement. This omission does not indicate opposition to, or support for, any of the specific actions outlined in this Agreement.