

Agriculture Champion Program



**Senate Committee on
Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources and
House Committee on
Agriculture, Chesapeake and Natural Resources Meeting
October 1-2, 2008, Bear Creek Lake State Park**

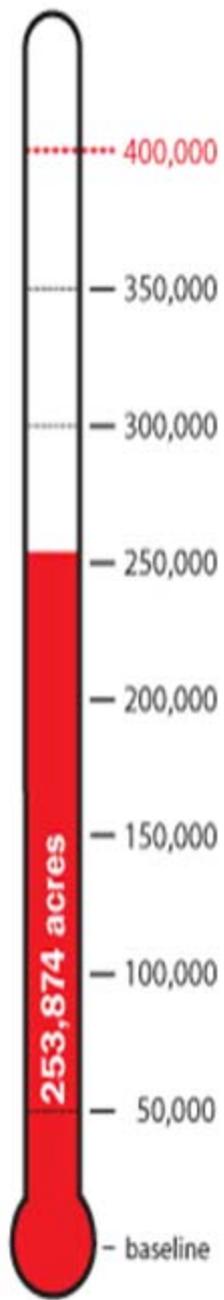
Current VA Ag Initiatives

9 Main Initiatives

Provide support for
agricultural priorities and
conservation initiatives



Land Conservation Progress



Land Conservation

- 2006: Governor Kaine announced his goal of conserving 400,000 acres
- Current land conservation program includes:
 - Virginia Land Preservation Tax Credit (\$100 M/yr; transferrable)
 - Virginia Land Conservation Foundation
 - VDACS Farmland Preservation Program
 - The acceptance of conservation easements by the Virginia Outdoors Foundation and other state, local and nonprofit agencies

Five Priority Practices

Committed 80% of funds to:

1. Nutrient management
2. Cover Crops
3. Conservation Tillage
4. Stream Fencing (“Livestock Exclusion”)
5. Stream-side Buffer Planting



Why Focus on These Five?

- Highly effective at reducing nutrient run-off
- Highly Cost-Effective
- Good for the environment and also beneficial to long-term profitability of agriculture
- Full implementation achieves 60% of the Bay NPS goal from all land uses



BMPs – Selling Conservation Through Effective Use of Media

YOU HAVE TO PRODUCE. YOU WANT TO CONSERVE. SEE YOUR SWCD.

Through the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost Share Program (VACS), your local SWCD can help you balance your desire for a good harvest with your need to remain profitable. Since 1986, SWCDs have distributed nearly \$60 million in cost-share funds to farmers and landowners like you. Cost-share funding usually becomes available on July 1 for the following growing season. Contact your state assistance for the grant, or timely applications are encouraged. SWCD staff welcome your questions and often can assist you with the paperwork.

QUALITY FOR VACS FUNDING

You may qualify for cost-share money if you:

- are an individual, partnership, corporation, trust, or other business operating a farm in Virginia;
- have a water quality issue on your farm that needs to be addressed; and you
- submit a complete and timely application to your SWCD.

In addition, your project must:

- be approved by your local SWCD board;
- meet VACS technical specifications; and
- pass a field inspection, if one is required.

There is a cap on the amount a farmer can receive annually from VACS. Check with your SWCD for details. The state cost-share program cannot exceed 75 percent of the total eligible costs on the funded practice area.

LOOK INTO TAX CREDIT

In addition, state income tax credits are available for the purchase and use of certain conservation equipment and for specified best management practices. Ask your SWCD for more information.

VACS offers more than 50 conservation practices that cover the full spectrum of agricultural operations. Here are a few of the practices with the greatest impact on water quality.

INSTALL A STREAMSIDE BUFFER

Planting trees, shrubs and herbaceous vegetation between fields and streams creates habitat for species of crop pests and can filter your losses from flooding. Riparian buffers also filter nutrients runoff and prevent erosion.



FENCE STREAMS AND PROVIDE ALTERNATIVE WATER SOURCES.

When you fence livestock out of streams and provide another source of drinking water, your herd will enjoy better health. You'll lower nutrient and bacteria levels in local waters, too.



To learn more, contact your local SWCD. See back panel for contact information.



USE A PLAN TO MANAGE WEEDS

Following a professionally developed nutrient management plan lets you maintain optimum conditions for crop growth while improving efficiency and more saving money. It also helps reduce the nutrients that leave your farm.



STABILIZE HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND

Control waterways, construct strip cropping and stream bank stabilization control erosion so you can hold on to your valuable land. In addition, these practices keep nutrients from churning streams.



PLANT YEAR-ROUND COVER

Implement a continuous system of non-cereal cover and you'll improve soil structure, suppress weeds and conserve moisture—all while reducing erosion. There's a cover crop for almost every rotation and production need.

At your local SWCD, we work with the people who work the land.

Beef producer.



Conservationist.



Your local SWCD is geared to the success of both.

Stop by your local Soil and Water Conservation District, and you'll learn how some conservation practices improve production and, with federal and state cost-sharing, can be affordable, too. Experienced staff at your district office can recommend practices that fit your situation. Answer any questions that come up. And help you qualify for funding. Because successful farmers know conservation makes good business sense.

Mountain Castles SWCD: (540)977-2698 ext. 3



We work with the people who work the land.

Sponsored by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.



Biosolids Application



- January 1, 2008: the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) assumed regulatory oversight of all land application of treated sewage sludge (biosolids)
- Nutrient management plans are required for all biosolids applications

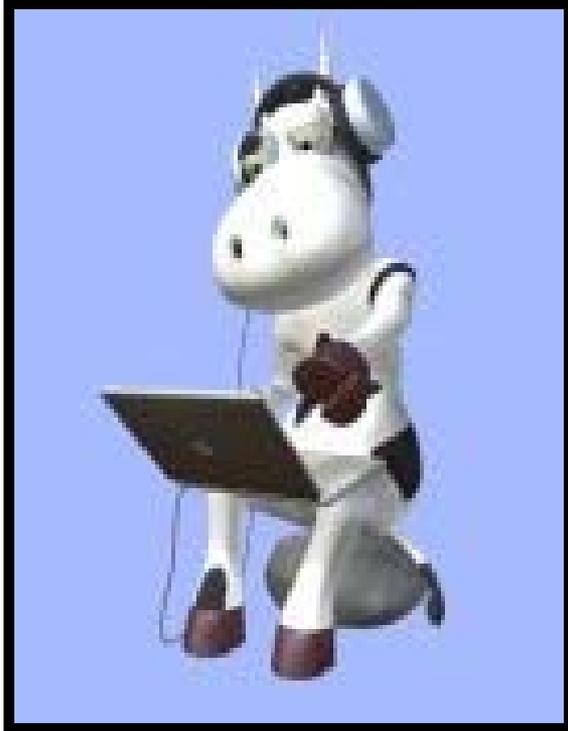


Poultry Waste Management



- **Regulatory changes to the Virginia Pollution Abatement (VPA) Permit Regulation for Poultry Waste Management have been proposed by the State Water Control Board**
- **If adopted, will require end-users of poultry waste to ensure that poultry waste is managed based on nutrient content and its potential to affect state waters**

Nutrient-Trading Program



- New or expanding facilities must offset new nutrient loads by acquiring nutrient credits from other dischargers or credits from offsetting landowners, including farmers
- Agricultural producers and other landowners can generate nutrient credits if they implement a set of “baseline” best management practices on their land



Phytase Use in Poultry Feed



Virginia's six largest poultry integrators will optimize the use of the enzyme phytase in poultry feed with a goal of 30 percent phosphorus reduction in poultry litter



Department of Conservation & Recreation
CONSERVING VIRGINIA'S NATURAL & RECREATIONAL RESOURCES



Virginia Poultry Growers
Cooperative, Inc.

P.O. Box 228
Hinton, VA 22831
Phone 540.867.4000

George's Foods,
LLC

Phosphorus Level Reductions in Feed



- Project: “Precision Phosphorus Feeding to Reduce Nutrient Losses From Virginia Dairy Farms”
- Payments are offered on a per cow basis for farms that reduce the phosphorus levels in feed



Livestock Exclusion



- The Virginia State Dairymen's Association recently committed to encouraging their membership to exclude animals from streams

Such action represents positive leadership from an agricultural organization and provides for similar commitments from other related commodity organizations



Accelerating VA Ag Initiatives

11 (potentially) new Ag
Conservation Initiatives



Governor Kaine as Agriculture “Champion”

2007 Chesapeake Bay Program Executive Council Meeting Recap:

- Critical that we keep VA farmers farming
- #1 Sector of VA Economy - \$79 Billion/yr
- Must farm in a way that is healthy for our waters
- Focus on programs/practices that produce the greatest results
- \$20 million in FY09 for Ag BMPs



Sustain Ag Funding

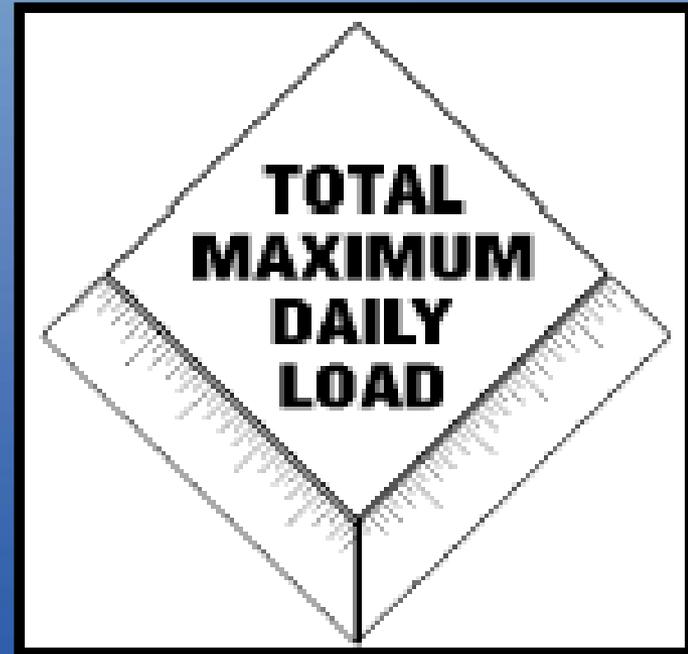


- Support adequate and sustainable funding for agricultural conservation practices
- Promote consistent, annual levels of funding that achieve and maintain significantly increased implementation levels of agricultural conservation practices statewide



Stream Clean-Up Plans

Increase the level of state cost-share assistance provided to farmers implementing agricultural conservation practices in watersheds where a stream clean-up plan has been finalized



Corporate Agri-Business Support

- Partner with corporate agribusiness leaders to implement a “Water Stewardship” Campaign
- Work closely with SYSCO, General Mills, and others to implement a supply chain-wide environmental stewardship initiative



Agricultural Advertising



- Governor to appear in Public Service Announcements promoting environmental stewardship and productive farms
- Deliver messages that address agricultural production, conservation, and water quality



Public-Private Partnerships



- Secretary of Natural Resources and Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to develop partnerships with selected commodity groups
- Initiate Secretary-level meetings with farm commodity organizations to strengthen conservation partnerships



Cow-Free Streams!



- Partnership initiative to keep livestock out of streams
- Provide increased levels of state cost-share assistance to farmers to install stream fencing and provide alternative watering sources
- Creatively adapt existing programs to accelerate implementation of agricultural conservation practices



“Boots on the Ground” Funding

- Support full funding of Virginia’s 47 Soil & Water Conservation Districts
- Ensure that technical assistance is in place to help more farmers implement conservation measures



Agricultural Conservation Tax Credit Program



- Establish a start-up program (\$ 5 Million cap) authorizing the transfer of agricultural best management practice tax credits
- Provide a new, alternative incentive program for farmers who historically do not participate in existing state agricultural cost-share programs



Agriculture Stewardship Act



- Strengthen the program by increasing staff levels
- Direct the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to report on any additional measures needed to strengthen the program



“Five Star Farms”

- High level recognition program for Virginia’s champion farmers



- Implement a new awards program for farmers who have achieved significant water quality protection



Federal Farm Bill Funding



Seek authorization to use funds recently secured through the 2008 Farm Bill to aggressively implement Virginia's agricultural priority practices as detailed in the annual Chesapeake Bay and Virginia Waters Clean-Up Plan





cfphoto.com