

# The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

*Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community*



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**Government Relations Bulletin #10 – October 30, 2009**

**Daylight Savings Time begins this weekend.** On Sunday, November 1st at 2:00am clocks are to be set back one hour to become 1:00am local standard time. Under the terms of the Energy Policy Act of 2005, we turn our clocks back one hour on the first Sunday in November. We will move them ahead again by 1 hour on the second Sunday in March. Most of the U.S. observes Daylight Savings Time; however, Hawaii and most of Arizona do not use it. Indiana, one of the long hold-outs, adopted DST in 2006.

## State Update

### **Deadline for Planting Cover Crops Extended to November 16**

ANNAPOLIS, MD (October 27, 2009) – Due to poor weather and saturated soil conditions, the Maryland Department of Agriculture has extended the planting deadline for farmers who have signed up to plant cover crops this fall with the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program. Farmers now have until **Nov. 16, 2009** to plant rye, barley, wheat and triticale on their crop fields. They must certify the acreage planted with their local soil conservation districts by Nov. 23, 2009 in order to be reimbursed by the program for associated seed, labor and equipment costs.

“Many of our farmers planted their summer crops late due to an unusually wet spring. Recent rains have delayed harvests and as a result, farmers have not been able to plant their cover crops as early as planned,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “Extending the planting deadline provides farmers enrolled in our Cover Crop Program with the opportunity to plant more acres so that we can achieve maximum water quality benefits for the streams and rivers that feed the Chesapeake Bay.”

The Cover Crop Program is a centerpiece in the suite of 27 smart, green and growing actions that Governor Martin O’Malley has established to ramp up Bay restoration and achieve an additional reduction of 3.75 million pounds of nitrogen and 201,000 pounds of phosphorus from reaching the Bay by the end of 2011. The Cover Crop Program will account for more than one-third of this goal.

Planted in the fall following the summer harvest, cover crops are cereal grains such as wheat, rye and barley that grow in cool weather. They help slow down rainwater runoff during the winter when soil would otherwise be exposed, while recycling any nutrients remaining in the soil from the previous summer crop. Last year Maryland farmers planted 238,800 acres of cover crops on their fields which prevented an estimated 1.1 million pounds of nitrogen and 43,600 pounds of phosphorus from impacting local waterways. The majority of Cover Crop Program funding comes from the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Fund with additional support from the 2010 Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund.

For additional informational on the Cover Crop Program, farmers should visit their local soil conservation district or contact the MACS office at 410-841-5864 or your local soil conservation district office.

### **MFB Opposes “Meatless Mondays” in Baltimore City Public Schools**

MFB President, Mike Phipps, recently sent a letter to Baltimore City Public Schools CEO, Dr. Andres Alonso, opposing a decision whereby their cafeterias would take part in an anti animal-agriculture campaign descriptively titled, “Meatless Mondays” and refuse to serve meat on Mondays. In the letter, President Phipps first thanked the school system for its avid embrace of MDA’s Farm to School program wherein schools are encouraged to source fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as meat and dairy products, from right here within Maryland. In addition to providing students with locally produced agricultural products, the program also encourages lesson plans and activities to teach students about where, how, and who produces the food they consume. Phipps went on to express the agricultural community’s concern that the groups behind the self-described meatless “movement” are promoting misinformation regarding the production methods, health risks, and environmental impact of our nations animal agriculture sector. Furthermore, in their attempt to politicize the school lunch tray, school officials are removing healthy, essential proteins from the diets of those subscribing to the school’s free and reduced meals program, for whom school lunch is the most important, if not the only, substantial meal of the day. Maryland farmers oppose such manipulation of our school systems and the nutrition programs they oversee.

### **Wildlife Q&A Session during MFB Convention**

During this year’s annual convention, MFB’s Wildlife Management Committee will once again be sponsoring a breakout session and in addition to the presentation of the DNR’s Farmer of the Year Award, this year’s session will play host to a Q and A session with several DNR staff members. It seems each year the traditional wildlife presentations yield more and more questions for the DNR folks, so this year we thought it would be useful to focus solely on addressing members’ questions. With that in mind, the Committee hopes you’ll join us for the session and be sure to bring your wildlife questions with you.

## National Update

### **Senator Cardin and Rep. Cummings Introduce Chesapeake Bay Bills that Could Threaten Farming in the Watershed**

On October 20, 2009, Senator Ben Cardin introduced S.1816, the Chesapeake Clean Water and Ecosystem Restoration Act. Cosponsors include Senator Mikulski, Senator Carper (D-DE), Senator Kaufman (D-DE). Senator Elijah Cummings introduced a companion bill, H.R. 3852. Cosponsors in the House include Van Hollen (D-MD), Rep. Sarbanes (D-MD), Rep. Hoyer (D-MD), Rep. Edwards (D-MD), Rep. Connolly (D-VA), Rep. Rep. Moran (D-VA), Rep. Scott (D-VA), Rep. Oberstar (D-MN), Rep. E.B. Johnson (D-TX) and Delegate Norton (D-DC).

The bills give EPA sweeping new authority for ensuring Chesapeake Bay clean up by 2025. The bills allow EPA to regulate and limit any pollution into the Bay. Under the current Clean Water Act, EPA has authority to regulate man-made or man-induced alterations. Under this bill, EPA will have authority to regulate all water flow and any activity that disturbs the soil, including all development and farming activities and any source of air deposition.

The bill gives EPA authority to regulate non-point sources, which is the type of discharge that would occur on farms. But the bills do not specify whether EPA can set numeric limits on nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment or use best management practices.

The bills also require regulation of impervious surfaces. All new or re-development must restore pre-development hydrology. This means every road, school, hospital and firehouse built by a state or local government must meet these requirements. Where hydrology cannot be restored on site, offsets must be purchased and mitigation must occur at another location in the watershed. The bills limit those who may be eligible to sell offset credits or participate in a trading program to those who are regulated by EPA under Clean Water Act. That means only farmers who have discharge permits can sell credits. Since all credits must occur in the watershed and all farms will be required to do every BMP available just to meet the TMDL goal, the only cost-effective source of credits for developers and local governments is likely to be the purchase and retirement of agricultural land, driving farms out of the watershed.

The bills require EPA to establish a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Bay Watershed by December of 2010. TMDLs are the overall limit of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment that may be released into the Bay on a daily basis by all sources – point and nonpoint. States are required to submit implementation plans for approval to EPA to reach the TMDL. The bill requires 2 year goals to be established and met until the final Bay restoration occurs in 2025.

If a state fails to reach a 2 year increment goal, EPA will withhold all Clean Water Act funds. EPA then has blanket authority to take any action necessary to meet the goals. This includes shutting down farms and banning all new development.

### **AFBF Opposes \$894 Billion House Health Care Bill**

The American Farm Bureau Federation is opposed to the Affordable Health Care for America Act (H.R. 3962) that was rolled out in a rally on the west front of the Capitol on Thursday because it requires compulsory national health insurance and a government-run health insurance program. Farm Bureau backs market-based health insurance reform, and the \$894 billion House bill fails to meet that goal. Farm Bureau is also concerned that the bill will add to the federal deficit. The bill is paid for primarily by imposing a surcharge on taxpayers with adjusted gross income in excess of \$1 million (married filing a joint return) and \$500,000 (single) at a rate of 5.4 percent.

### **Merrigan Sets ‘Know Your Farmer’ Facebook Chat**

Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan will host her second Facebook chat about the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” initiative on Thursday, Nov. 5, at 3 p.m. EST. The topic of this chat will be farm to school, which involves getting and using fresh produce and other farm products from local and regional farmers for use in local schools.

Merrigan hosted her first Facebook chat on the initiative on Oct. 1. Questions were submitted from people across the nation about beginning farmer and rancher programs, interest in school nutrition, food safety and supporting local and regional food systems. During the 30-minute session, more than 115 questions and comments were submitted. Details are available at [www.usda.gov/live](http://www.usda.gov/live) and people can submit a question in advance of the chat or watch the conversation on the USDA Web site. The Web site, at [www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer](http://www.usda.gov/knowyourfarmer), features social media tools to help focus the public conversation about farming and food, while engaging American agriculture and linking producers to customers. The public will be able to send their stories, ideas or videos to the “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” team at [knowyourfarmer@usda.gov](mailto:knowyourfarmer@usda.gov). The public can become a fan of USDA on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/USDA](http://www.facebook.com/USDA).