

The Maryland Farm Bureau Hotline

Legislative proposals that impact Maryland's farm community



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National Update

EPA's Chuck Fox Holds Listening Session on Bay Clean Up in Frederick

EPA officials held a public listening session for the agricultural community on Thursday, August 13th at the Frederick County Extension office. The listening session was held in anticipation of the September 9th publication of EPA's draft report on how to improve water quality and reach the 2025 goals for Chesapeake Bay clean up. EPA's report and leadership in this effort is in response to the Executive Order issued by President Obama in May. The Executive Order requires the following report in September:

"Within 120 days from the date of this order, the agencies identified in this section (EPA, USDA & others) as the lead agencies shall prepare and submit draft reports making recommendations for accomplishing the following steps to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay:

- (a) define the next generation of tools and actions to restore water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and describe the changes to be made to regulations, programs, and policies to implement these actions;
- (b) target resources to better protect the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary waters, including resources under the Food Security Act of 1985 as amended, the Clean Water Act, and other laws;
- (c) strengthen storm water management practices at Federal facilities and on Federal lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed and develop storm water best practices guidance;
- (d) assess the impacts of a changing climate on the Chesapeake Bay and develop a strategy for adapting natural resource programs and public infrastructure to the impacts of a changing climate on water quality and living resources of the Chesapeake Bay watershed;
- (e) expand public access to waters and open spaces of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from Federal lands and conserve landscapes and ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay watershed;
- (f) strengthen scientific support for decision making to restore the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed, including expanded environmental research and monitoring and observing systems; and
- (g) develop focused and coordinated habitat and research activities that protect and restore living resources and water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed."

At the August 13th listening session, Chuck Fox, Special Advisor to the EPA Administrator, said that ag is not the only focus of this effort. He acknowledged that ag has "documented improvements" in reducing nitrogen and phosphorous inputs into the bay and that urban and suburban areas are increasing rather than decreasing their loads. He said that last week's listening session in Annapolis concentrated almost

exclusively on new standards needed for development, redevelopment and stormwater management in urban and suburban areas. They are also looking at curtailing fertilizer use on private lawns. The Frederick meeting was intended to concentrate on the ag side of the equation. He said data shows that ag is still a major contributor of nutrients to the Bay and will have to take additional steps towards reduction. The plan is aimed at all states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, not just Maryland. Of the 50 people at the Frederick meeting, at least half were from Pennsylvania and Virginia.

Fox outlined some of what EPA and the federal coordinating committee were discussing with regard to agricultural impacts. The primary recommendation will be for a Next Generation Nutrient Management Plan with new scientific standards for all farmers in the watershed. The Next Generation plan might include the following:

- A. Cover crops – Should they be emphasized after corn and whenever animal manures are applied? Fox said research data shows that we need to achieve cover crops on 80% of the farmland in the watershed to reach the 2025 reduction goals. How do we get there?
- B. Buffers – around the edge of fields and through retirement of land. To reach the goals we have to expand the number of acres in buffer programs.
- C. Application rates, timing and method of nutrient application. Manures may need to be incorporated to prevent run off.
- D. Phosphorus saturation in soils – Additional restrictions may be needed on animal manure application on high P soils. P based soil tests must be more widely used.

Fox also said EPA was discussing potential changes to CAFO regulations to further expand the jurisdiction to pick up smaller operations. They may also expand the minimum permit requirements to include attention to land application areas in addition to production areas. Accountability is a major focus for EPA – how do they know that a farmer is implementing certain practices?

Of the states in the watershed, only Maryland has mandatory nutrient management plans for all farmers. EPA will be making a push to get similar requirements for all farmers in VA, PA and other watershed states. But it looks like Maryland's plan may be beefed up in this process. Fox reminded the group that EPA is under federal court mandate to establish a TMDL for the Bay by December 2010. This process will include 90 separate TMDLs with load allocations for nitrogen and phosphorus in different regions of the watershed. The initial load allocations will be published for comment in October 2009. Comments will be taken through the spring of 2010. Reduction strategies will be part of that process as well.

During the question/answer portion of the Frederick meeting concerns were expressed over wildlife overpopulation and their contribution to N&P in the Bay; the accuracy of data on non-point source pollution; the Bay Model and concern that the data is not accurate; lack of credit given for BMPs installed on farms that were not paid for by state or federal government; the need for a system to allow farmers to log their conservation efforts into a system without the need for a government inspection; the budget challenge and the need to fund programs to help farmers get and implement nutrient management plans; self certification/self-writing of nutrient management plans; the need to develop a more flexible program to allow farmers to pick a combination of BMPs and management strategies that will get them to a target number of N&P loss; on farm economics and the need for farm viability.

Attached is a copy of the full Executive Order. You can also access the document on line at <http://executiveorder.chesapeakebay.net>. If you missed the listening session and want to make a comment

you can do it at this site. You will not get a response, but EPA officials said they would read all the comments before publishing the September 9th draft report.

Farmers Express Concerns During meetings with Congressman Kratovil

Congressman Frank Kratovil held 10 town hall style meetings with farmers throughout the 1st District last week. During the meetings farmers expressed opposition to the climate change legislation passed by the House last month. Farmers also raised concerns over the clean water restoration act, estate tax reform, dairy economics and health care legislation. Most of the meetings were attended by 30 to 50 local farmers. In a few cases, the meetings were taken over by anti-health care reform citizens who were not part of the farm community. As a result of the meetings, the Congressman has agreed to have at least two more meetings this fall, one to talk about encouraging and supporting young farmers and another to discuss assistance to the dairy community. Farmers should continue to contact Congressman Kratovil and the other members of the Maryland Congressional delegation during the August recess. Your input will help guide critical policy discussions on Capitol Hill in September.

Lincoln Urges Focus On Renewable Energy

Sen. Blanche Lincoln (D-Ark.) says her colleagues should abandon efforts to pass legislation curbing greenhouse gas emissions this year and concentrate on a narrower bill to require use of renewable energy.

“The problem of doing both of them together is that it becomes too big of a lift,” Lincoln said. “I see the cap-and-trade being a real problem.”

Senate leaders say they are sticking with plans to pass a bill that includes both climate change provisions and language mandating energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources such as solar and wind power. The Senate bill also provides for an extension of offshore oil and gas drilling in certain areas, broadening its support.

Climate legislation would require 60 votes to pass in the Senate. Most Republicans have said they oppose the cap-and-trade measure, and at least 15 of the Senate’s 60-member Democratic majority have said the House-passed version would hurt the economy and needs to be revamped to win their support.

Ronald McDonald House Charities Honors Farm Bureau

Farm Bureau was recently recognized by [Ronald McDonald House Charities](#) for its long-standing commitment to helping children and families in need. Terry Gilbert, chair of the AFB Women’s Leadership Committee, accepted a donor recognition award on behalf of Farm Bureau at the recent RMHC International Conference in Chicago.

Nearly 300 Ronald McDonald Houses around the U.S. provide a “home away from home” for families with seriously ill children. During [Food Check-Out Week](#), which was initiated in the late 1990s, AFBF and many county and state Farm Bureaus generously provide food and monetary donations to Ronald McDonald Houses as well as other charities. In 2010, Food Check-Out will be held Feb. 21-27.

Terry Bradshaw to Address Farm Bureau

The keynote address at the American Farm Bureau Federation’s 91st annual meeting will be given by Terry Bradshaw, four-time Super Bowl champion quarterback for the Pittsburgh Steelers and a Texas rancher.

Members from across the nation will gather in Seattle, Wash. Jan., 10-13, 2010, to not only hear a great speaker, but also learn more about the forces shaping agriculture today. Attendees also will have the opportunity to participate in a grassroots policy setting process that will guide AFBF through 2010.

“Terry Bradshaw is an All-American icon, recognized for his accomplishments both on and off the field,” said AFBF President Bob Stallman. In addition to his professional accomplishments in NFL football and sports broadcasting he also owns an 800-acre ranch in Texas where he raises cattle and breeds horses. In his presentations, Bradshaw takes a close look at what makes people successful and encourages audiences to think in new ways about sacrifice, pain, competition and hardship. Farm Bureau members can register for the 91st AFBF convention through their state Farm Bureaus.

Revised Version of Farm Animal Care Bill Passes

Michigan’s House Agriculture Committee passed new versions of House Bills 5127 and 5128, bills to make streamlined standards for farm animal care state law. Along with other revisions the Animal Care Advisory Council has been expanded from 10 members to 12 members, two of which now represent the general public.

Unlike the vocal opposition the Humane Society of the United States has expressed, the nation’s oldest humane organization, American Humane Association, supports the legislation and submitted written testimony. American Humane Certified Director Timothy Amlaw wrote, “We believe that agricultural interests in Michigan are on the right course by being proactive and addressing animal welfare standards with an effective and economically viable plan and within a reasonable time frame.”

Michigan Farm Bureau supports science-based animal care standards and believes this legislation provides a modifiable system for ensuring that livestock farmers are caring for their animals in a manner that supports animal health and food safety.

State Update

Cover Crop Program Allows for Low Germination in Seed Stock with Adequate Fall Growth - The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will allow farmers to use small grain seed stock with germination rates that are below the required 80 percent if they attain an adequate cover crop stand this fall. Since weather conditions this spring have negatively impacted seed quality, MDA is providing farmers the flexibility in the Cover Crop Program for farmers to use farm-grown seed that may not meet the normal germination rate.

“This adjustment to the program will allow farmers to use this year’s seed while still assuring that the cover crop achieves its proven nutrient benefits,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “By allowing seeds with lower germination rates, we hope to avert a decline in cover crop plantings that could result from problems with seed quality and availability of approved seed from other sources.”

The program typically requires adherence to specific seed germination rates, restrictions on noxious weed content and quantity of seed per acre. The newly announced option would relax only the germination standard. All other seed quality criteria must be met. Program participants are reminded that home-grown seed must be analyzed for germination and noxious weed content. MDA will require farmers to achieve specific stand coverage at the time of fall certification and recommends that seeding rates be adjusted to compensate for lower germination. MDA also advises that seed cleaning may improve germination. Soil Conservation District staff will check fields that are planted with substandard seed to assure that stand

establishment meets density requirements. Fields planted with substandard seed that do not achieve the required plant density will be ineligible for payment.

The Cover Crop Program is a centerpiece in the suite of 27 actions Governor Martin O'Malley has set 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 over one-third of this goal. By planting small grains such as wheat, rye and barley in the fall, farmers help capture nutrients keeping them out of local waterways during winter.

Last year farmers planted 237,500 acres in the program keeping an estimated 1.16 million pounds of nitrogen and 47,500 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, contact MDA's Conservation Grants Office in Annapolis on 410-841-5864 or your local soil conservation district office.

Maryland Farm Bureau Activities and Update

Policy Development Packets

Policy development packets were distributed 2 weeks ago to county Farm Bureau Presidents and Secretaries by email. Policy resolutions are due into the MFB office by Thursday, October 22nd. Issues of Concern were published in the August Spotlight. Copies of the MFB policy and AFBF policy were sent with the email. State policy is also posted on the MFB website at www.mdfarmbureau.com. Field staff will have hard copies of state and federal policy for use at county resolutions meetings. If you would like a copy of the policy development email, please send the request to valeriec.mdfb@verizon.net. I will be happy to forward a copy to you.