

EPA Chesapeake Bay Model Undermining Public Confidence

WASHINGTON, D.C., November 3, 2011—The Environmental Protection Agency’s refusal to take the time to improve its Chesapeake Bay Watershed nutrient management model is undermining the public’s confidence. This refusal also could cause farmers and other stakeholders in the watershed to spend scarce resources on conservation measures directed to the wrong sources or the wrong areas, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

Testifying today on behalf of AFBF before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on Conservation, Energy and Forestry, Carl Shaffer, president of the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, said EPA’s questionable modeling in the Chesapeake Bay fails to provide any comfort that the restrictions demanded by EPA will allow states to come even close to EPA’s pollution reduction goals.

“As taxpayers, Farm Bureau members across the nation are concerned that millions of dollars can be potentially spent to chase paper compliance with a model that uses faulty assumptions rather than valid and readily available data,” Shaffer testified.

Shaffer owns and operates a wheat, corn and green bean farm in Columbia County, Pa., located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. In his testimony, Shaffer said at least two state agencies in Pennsylvania—Agriculture and Environmental Protection—are working to develop the Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) demanded by EPA for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has been actively involved in the WIP process since it began more than two years ago, according to Shaffer.

“Unfortunately, in our view, recent regulatory actions by EPA to micromanage and dictate environmental performance in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed have needlessly and unlawfully usurped the responsibilities that the Clean Water Act intended to be reserved and addressed by the states,” Shaffer said.

Shaffer emphasized that in the implementation of the Phase II WIP, “EPA is driving a hurried process on the part of the states while offering little guidance of value. What’s most disturbing is that EPA is still asking state, and now local governments, to develop plans based on poor and inadequate data.”

Shaffer said EPA’s demands for the Phase II WIP further cripple the states’ abilities to devise a program that will encourage meaningful and effective long-term benefits in the Chesapeake Bay. He said EPA’s excessive Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) regulations already are creating problems for farmers and other stakeholders in the bay.

“Under EPA’s Chesapeake Bay TMDL, all the pollutant loadings to the bay and the reductions in those loadings take place in a ‘model world,’” Shaffer said. “The ‘model world’ appears to have no basis in reality and very little to do with the real conservation efforts of farmers.”