



Maryland Farm Bureau, Inc.

8930 Liberty Road • Randallstown, MD 21133 • (410) 922-3426

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For Immediate Release
Contact: Susan G. Summers
301.865.1045
240.446.3601

Farmers making progress in cleaning up the Bay

Farmers are committed to doing their part to achieve the goal of clean water for the Chesapeake Bay. Despite recent rhetoric from environmental groups, farm family members who make up the Maryland Farm Bureau have been working diligently in cooperation with other states and stakeholders to find and implement practical solutions to achieve a healthy Chesapeake Bay.

“We find it reprehensible that groups who should be working with us want to malign the family farmers in Maryland who are working harder than anyone else to clean up the Bay,” said Maryland Farm Bureau President Patricia Langenfelder, a grain and livestock farmer in Kent County. “As a matter of fact, we are the only group making progress in cleaning up the waterways – while urban sources and others have slipped backwards.”

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Maryland farmers are only responsible for 7% of the nitrogen and 8% of the phosphorus in the Bay. While agricultural nutrients are often cited as the leading cause of trouble in the Bay, pollution is coming from many sources other than Maryland farms. “You could stop all of the farming in Maryland and still not make a significant reduction in Bay nutrients,” said Langenfelder. “And, if you replaced farms with housing developments you are likely to make the problem worse.”

Farm families continue to implement and expand their environmental efforts with Best Management Practices (BMPs) on their farms, including cover crops and no-till farming. In fact, farmers planted over 400,000 acres of cover crops this past fall that controlled soil erosion, reduced nutrient runoff and protected water quality in streams, rivers and the Bay. This was the largest cover crop planting in Maryland’s history and exceeded the state’s 2011 Bay cleanup goal by more than 20 percent.

Cover crops are widely known as one of the most environmentally sustainable ways to control soil erosion and reduce nutrient runoff over the winter. This year’s planting

prevented an estimated 2.4 million pounds of nitrogen and 80,000 pounds of phosphorus from potentially impacting the Bay.

Maryland farm families lead the nation and the watershed in efforts taken to reduce nutrient runoff. Besides the cover crop program, one of the most effective practices adopted in the state is no-till farming. The vast majority of Maryland crops are no-tilled, allowing the firm ground and the stubble of last year's crops to prevent soil and nutrient runoff.

Maryland Farm Bureau is made up of farm families who pay a minimal fee to be members at the county, state and national level. American Farm Bureau Federation is made up of farm families from every county in every state across the nation. All policies and actions are directed by farm family members, starting at the grassroots level.

It was because of that direction that AFBF recently filed suit against EPA, challenging the lawfulness of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load for Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Sediment. Farmers believe it includes federal overreaching into state authorities across seven jurisdictions, including Maryland, and includes invalid science and a lack of public participation in federal government action. "Farmers are and will continue to be good stewards of the land and will continue to shoulder their responsibilities in cleaning up the Bay," said Langenfelder. "But proper planning and sound science is a must."

Maryland Farm Bureau is a private, non-profit membership organization. It is controlled by its members through the democratic process and is financed by voluntary membership dues. Its strength comes from the active participation of over 34,000 member families that belong to the state's 23 county Farm Bureaus.

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