

Report Confirms Flaws in Government Chesapeake Bay Analyses

WASHINGTON, D.C., July 27, 2011 – An updated report on the science surrounding Chesapeake Bay water quality confirms that serious and significant differences exist between the Environmental Protection Agency’s “Bay Model” and the model authored by the Agriculture Department. Left unchanged these differences could lead to farmers in the watershed paying a steep price for nutrients and sediments that have been mistakenly attributed to them, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The analysis, conducted by LimnoTech and commissioned by the Agricultural Nutrient Policy Council, shows there are vast differences between the EPA and USDA Chesapeake Bay models in the areas of land use, total acreage of the Bay watershed and data and assumptions about farmer adoption of conservation and farming practices.

“It is clear to us that the EPA’s TMDL water regulations are based on flawed information,” said AFBF President Bob Stallman. “Due to the fact that farmers and others in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed are being directed to incur extreme costs and even take land out of production to comply with EPA’s harsh new regulations, those regulations must be based on reliable information. Currently that is not the case.”

As a result of the federal agencies’ disagreement in key areas such as conservation and farming practices used by farmers in the watershed, and the number of acres that fall within watershed borders, there is a wide discrepancy in the nutrients and sediments being attributed to agriculture. Given USDA’s superior knowledge of agriculture and farming practices, Stallman said EPA’s disregard for USDA information is not acceptable.

“We all want a clean Chesapeake Bay,” Stallman said. “Farmers in the watershed have made tremendous investment to put conservation practices in place to protect the bay, and they are doing more every day.

“While we need EPA and USDA to work together to resolve these key differences, ultimately we believe that the types of regulations put in place for the bay by EPA are unlawful. This is a job for our state governments, not the federal government. But, since federal regulators are pursuing restrictive regulations on our farms, they should at least base their actions on credible facts.”

A copy of the LimnoTech report is available at http://nutrientpolicy.org/ANPC_News.html.