

Md. Rural Clean Water program approved

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Governor Harry Hughes signed an agreement with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service on May 4 that will put Maryland farmers in line for federal funds under the Rural Clean Water Program.

The first such agreement in the U.S., it will allow SCS to cost share with rural landowners on practices designed to keep agricultural nonpoint sources of pollution such as sediment and animal wastes out of streams.

RCWF is a provision of the 1977 Clean Water Act, which called for a massive effort to clean up the nation's rivers and streams. Under this law, agencies including the Maryland Water Resources Administration, the State Soil Conservation Committee of the Maryland Dept. of Agriculture, Extension Service, the state's 24 soil conservation districts, and SCS have pinpointed major pollution types and devised a plan to deal with them.

The President has recommended a \$75 million budget for RCWP in fiscal year 1980. Congress is scheduled to act on this proposal by Oct. 1. Once approved, the funds will be used to finance soil and water conservation efforts in 35 to 40 project areas nationwide.

Landowners in project areas approved for RCWP —

where the pollution problem is most critical — will be eligible to enter into five to 10-year contracts with the State Soil Conservation Committee or the local soil conservation district to

receive the federal cost share funds.

Gerald R. Calhoun, SCS state conservationist, says all soil conservation districts in the state are encouraged to develop applications for

RCWP funds. However, first consideration will be given to the five soil conservation districts having potential critical areas identified by the State Committee. He said he expects at least one

or two projects in the million-dollar range to be approved in Maryland.

"Farm operations can be a major source of nonpoint pollution if conservation is not practiced," said Calhoun. "Cropland contributes about 50 percent of the total sediment entering the nation's inland waterways. Attached to the

sediment particles are pesticides and nutrients."

"There has already been a national investment of about \$25 billion over the past five years to control point or direct discharge of pollutants. If something isn't done to control nonpoint source pollution, that investment will be jeopardized," Calhoun explained.



Governor Harry Hughes signs the Rural Clean Water Program agreement with the U.S. Soil Conservation Service which qualifies Maryland farmers for cost-sharing on practices to keep sediment and animal wastes from polluting streams. Clockwise from the Governor are James B. Coulter, Maryland Department of Natural Resources Secretary; Vernon R. Foster, State Soil Conservation Committee Chairman; Wayne A. Cawley, Jr., Maryland Secretary of Agriculture; Gerald R. Calhoun, Soil Conservation Service State Conservationist; and Constance Lieder, Maryland Secretary of State Planning.

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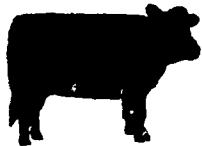
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