

Farmers Observe Effects

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they were really clean."

Collected with the oysters were mud crabs, sponges, and other bay life. According to the bay guide, there are 303 different organisms associated with the oyster bar.

A guide from the Bay Foundation said that each oyster pumps 50 gallons of water daily. This helps to control sediment and pollution. Now the oyster supply is greatly depleted and not much is left to filter the water.

Leon Ressler, agriculture/environment extension agent, organized the trip to help farmers understand the agricultural impact on the Chesapeake Bay.

Farmers' heavy use of pesti-

cides and fertilizers affect ground water and wildlife around the Bay. Acid rain, septic systems, and sewage treatment plants are also considered heavy sources of Bay pollution.

While some environmentalists blame the farmer for the bay's decay, others are more subjective. The captain of the boat remarked, that many environmentalists have come to understand that farmers are concerned about land and water quality, that they face problems with nature and are doing their best to cope and still put food on the table and shoes on their children's feet.

An Amish farmer said that he was glad to hear that farmers aren't

getting the whole blame for the bay problem. He said, "They take oysters out year after year — and they blame the farmer for the oysters' decline. What can they expect? We'd have the same problem if we'd keep taking from the land and wouldn't put anything into it."

In recent years, there has been a strong effort to control pollution from the bay not only from the agricultural end but also from wastewater discharges, hazardous waste disposal, sewage treatment plants, and by wetlands protection and land use.

It is still too early to know if these combined efforts are making a difference. The captain of the skipjack said that from his perspective, "Weather controls water quality more than anything else. When there is a drought, no runoff or algae occurs, and you think the water is really looking good, but during heavy rains, the water looks worse than ever and you wonder what is happening."

The captain added, "We need 20 years of strong effort in cleaning up the bay to see results. Even if all pollution would stop, it would take 25 to 50 years to clean up what is already there. If we can hold pollution at this point, we are doing something. Toxins in San Francisco Bay and many others are worse than the Chesapeake waters."

Clagget Farm

The Lancaster farmers also toured Clagget Farm, a 285-acre research and education farm owned and operated by the Chesapeake



Michael Heller tells farmers who visited the Clagget Farm that captured amounts of runoff and sediments from contour strips, convention, and no-till corn plots enable students to compare various types of farming methods.

Bay Foundation.

The farm examines sustainable agriculture that reduces chemical use by using farming practices that take advantage of physical and biological processes that nature provides. They use crop rotation to break up pest cycles.

Michael Heller, farm manager, said, "Our focus is to try to deal with environmental problems not by telling farmers they can't do this or that, but by trying to help by technologies that are more sensitive to the environment."

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It took several farmers to pull the hand dredge from the Bay's oyster bars.

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Farmers used an oyster hand dredge to harvest oysters. Because it was off-season, the oysters had to be returned to the bay.

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