

Chesapeake Bay Pact Seen As National Model

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — A precedent-setting pact between the USDA and the Chesapeake Bay Program is aimed at ensuring a broader and more coordinated approach to managing resources, controlling agricultural runoff, and reducing nutrients in the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort.

The agreement targets the USDA to provide an integrated approach to environmentally sound and economically viable farm management practices in the Chesapeake Bay watershed states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

The USDA's approach to agricultural management in the Chesapeake region ultimately will be incorporated in watershed-based agricultural efforts throughout the country.

The pact was signed Tuesday, Jan. 25, by James Lyons, USDA assistant secretary for natural resources and environment, and Governor William Donald Schaefer, of Maryland, for the Chesapeake Bay Program, at the winter meeting of the Maryland Association of Conservation Districts in Annapolis.

"The Bay Agreement serves as a model for what we can do in other places," said James Lyons. Through the agreement, members of the USDA will work closely

with agricultural agencies in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the other federal agencies involved in the Chesapeake Bay restoration to better deliver services to farmers.

Schaefer, who serves as the chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Program's policymaking body the Chesapeake Executive Council, said reducing the amount of nitrogen and phosphorus entering the Bay from farmland was a key to the USDA-Chesapeake Bay Program pact. "We have to do it faster, and we have to do more," Schaefer said. The Chesapeake Bay Program is committed to reducing nutrients entering the Bay by 40 percent by the year 2000.

Nutrients enter the Chesapeake from many sources, but studies have shown that agricultural activities, such as crop production and livestock operations are a chief source of the Chesapeake Bay's nutrient pollution. In 1992, the Bay Program's Chesapeake Executive Council launched the Agricultural Nonpoint Source Initiative to address the challenges that farmers face in reducing agricultural runoff and nutrient pollution. The findings from the initiative were presented to the Chesapeake Executive Council a year later, in September 1993. The USDA role in the Chesapeake Bay restoration

is the direct result of recommendations made by the Nonpoint Source Initiative.

"The Bay Agreement strengthens the team approach," Lyons said. "The USDA works very

closely with landowners and landusers and we are committed to sharing ideas and sharing resources."

This approach, Lyons said, will include a coordinated effort in-

volving the USDA's Soil Conservation Service, its extensive service, and its Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service. Under the new agreement, the

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Maryland Governor William Donald Schaefer, seated, left, and James Lyons, USDA assistant secretary for natural resources and environment, seated, right, sign the precedent-setting pact between the USDA and the Chesapeake Bay Program to control agricultural runoff, reduce nutrients, and coordinate the management of resources for farmers. On hand for the signing are, left to right, Robert M. Sussman, deputy administrator of the U.S. EPA; U.S. Senator Paul S. Sarbanes of Maryland; and Maryland Secretary of Agriculture Robert L. Walker.

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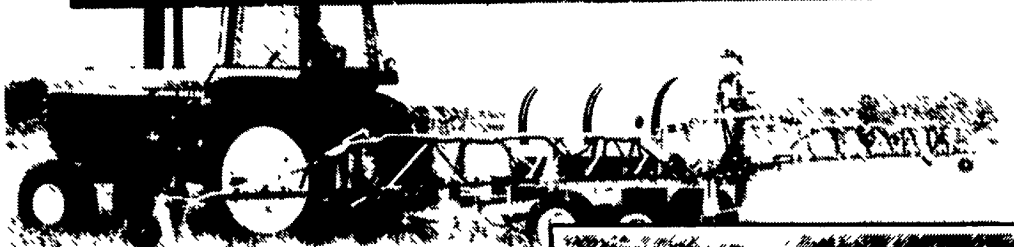
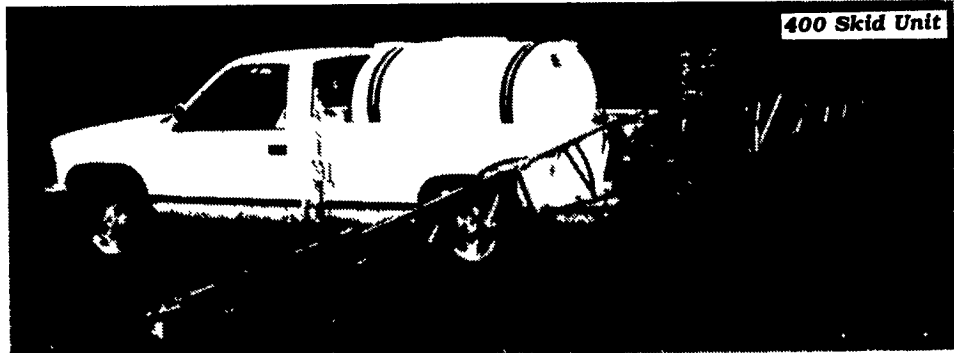
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