

Adams County Back In Bay Program

GREENSBURG (Westmoreland Co.) — At the recent joint annual conference between the State Conservation Commission (SCC) and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, the proposed changes to the statement of policy of the Chesapeake Bay Program were officially adopted.

Among several changes in the statement of policy was the inclusion of the entire Chesapeake Bay Watershed into the Bay Program. A 1993 study by the Department of Environmental Resources resulted in recommending the exclusion of certain sub-watersheds, including all of Adams County, from the program. However, after several months of debate and questions about the study, the recommendation was dropped and a new strategy of allowing the entire Chesapeake Bay drainage area into the program was proposed.

The SCC accepted the new

strategy which makes all of Adams County eligible for enrollment in the Bay Program.

In an effort to improve water quality in the Chesapeake Bay, the Chesapeake Bay Program was started through federal and state funds to provide cost-share monies to agricultural operations to implement best management practices (BMP). These BMPs are designed to control and minimize soil erosion and nutrient runoff. They include such sound practices as contour strips, grass-lined waterways, terraces, and manure storages to name just a few.

The program is administered locally by the Adams County Conservation District with the assistance of the USDA Soil Conservation Service. Currently, here in Adams County more than 55 farmers have taken part in the program and have received nearly 1 million dollars toward installing

BMPs and doing their part in improving water quality in both our local creeks and streams as well as the Chesapeake Bay itself. Brian Sneeringer, nutrient management technician for Adams County, commented, "These Bay farms serve as an example of the fine work farmers both locally and statewide are doing to minimize pollution and improve our environment. We are extremely pleased that the State Conservation Commission has allowed us to continue to assist farmers both financially and technically to continue this trend."

The trend, however, might not last if the conservation district does not receive more applicants. Because Adams County was on the brink of being dropped from the program, the conservation district did not pursue any new applicants for the program. Now that Adams County is back in the pro-

gram the Conservation District is looking for new applicants.

Bay Technician Mildred Muselman said, "If we do not have farmers applying to the program, the state will not allocate money to Adams County. We must show interest and need in Adams County in order to receive further allocations."

Any farming operation in Adams County is eligible for the program. If accepted into the program, a contract between the conservation district and the landowner is signed in which the landowner agrees to implement the necessary BMPs to control soil and/or nutrient runoff. The district agrees to provide technical assistance as well as financial assistance at a rate of 80 percent of the costs to a maximum of \$30,000.

The Bay Program is often associated with manure storages and animals, but this is not always the

case. Deb Kammerer, conservation technician for SCS, said, "Any farmer who has erosion problems and is in need of soil conservation practices should also consider applying to the program for assistance."

The conservation district encourages any farmer with barnyard runoff problems, animal waste management concerns, or a large amount of soil conservation work, as required by their conservation plan, to consider applying to the Bay Program for assistance.

For more information, contact the Adams County Conservation District at (717) 334-0636.

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