



August 2013

## FARM BILL: FUNDING CONSERVATION THAT COUNTS!



Pennsylvania farmers rely on the federal Farm Bill conservation programs to help conserve soil and nutrients, and to meet state requirements. The 2008 Farm Bill provided significant financial and technical assistance for voluntary conservation projects that improve the health of our rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

**The Farm Bill contributes more than any other legislation to water quality improvement in the nation.** Oddly enough, the water quality pieces are also among the smallest components. Both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate just passed Farm Bills that we hope will soon be reconciled and signed into law.

The continued funding for conservation programs must be a priority, but unfortunately is not receiving the same media and public attention as nutrition programs and crop insurance.

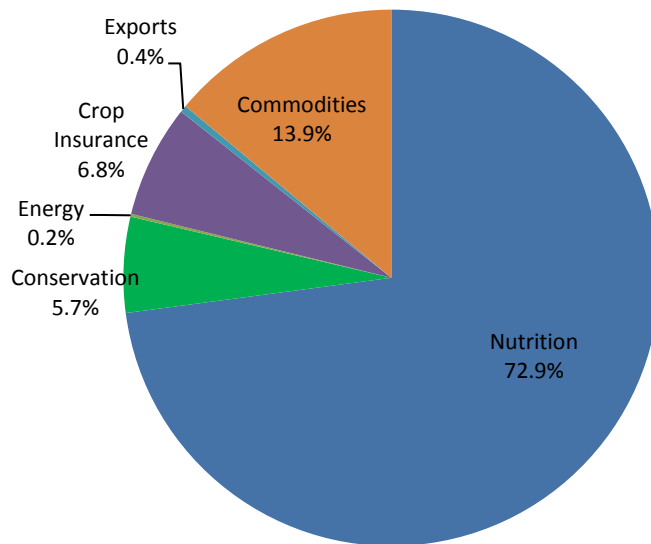
Because conservation programs comprise only 5.7% of the total Farm Bill cost, cutting them will not make a significant dent in the overall budget. **It would, however, cause great harm to farmers working to protect soil and water.**

From 2010 to 2012, Farm Bill programs have helped farmers throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Pennsylvania **reduce nutrient and sediment pollution** through conservation successes like these:

- 52,718 acres of nutrient management
- 25,830 acres of cover crops
- 18,324 acres of conservation tillage
- 6,606 acres of prescribed grazing
- 2,327 acres of riparian forest buffer
- 10,744 acres of permanent grasses and legumes.

### Nutrition, Farm and Conservation Spending

Gross Outlays over 2002-2012



Data from Congressional Research Service, presented by Food Fight 2012.

These types of voluntary conservation efforts improve the health of our local rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay. Many farmers have adopted conservation tillage, cover crops, soil erosion controls, barnyard improvements, streamside buffers and fencing, nutrient management, and other conservation practices that have reduced both nutrient and sediment runoff to our waterways. Practices, such as these, are important in ensuring Pennsylvania can show continued improvement in local water quality and meet our milestone goals for restoring the Chesapeake Bay. In many cases farmers make these investments of time and money without federal Farm Bill assistance because the need is far greater than the Farm Bill's Conservation Program budget.

Unfortunately, for every three farmers applying to the US Department of Agriculture for assistance, only one has been able to sign a contract due to funding limitations. **These conservation programs, like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) are worth the investment.**

### **Conservation that Counts toward PA Milestones**

More than 11,300 miles of Pennsylvania's streams, as well as the Chesapeake Bay, are impaired by excess nutrient and/or sediment loads. The federal Clean Water Act requires all states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution for clean and healthy streams, and a restored Chesapeake Bay. States in the Bay watershed, including Pennsylvania, are accountable for reporting pollution reduction practices every two years. These are known as Milestones.

Under the Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint ([www.cbf.org/blueprint](http://www.cbf.org/blueprint)), we're seeing much greater emphasis on the need for Erosion and Sediment Control Plans to stabilize the soil, and Manure Management Plans to prevent manure runoff, which have been required on Pennsylvania farms since the 1970s. Even greater nutrient and sediment reductions will continue to occur when all farms have implemented these plans, but many will rely on the Environmental Quality Incentives Program and other Farm Bill programs to do so.

Strong conservation programs with proven track records require adequate funding to reach the goals outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Blueprint and to meet our two-year Milestone commitments. For Pennsylvania farmers it is crucial to have federal support for practices that count towards meeting those goals.

### **Conservation Programs are Proven to Work – a Success Story**

#### **Farmers and Community Unite to Save Stephen Foster Lake:**

There are many examples of success, such as breeding trout populations in streams that previously were too polluted. Stephen Foster Lake in Bradford County once again is a prime fishing spot, as a result of farmers throughout the watershed working together to reduce nutrient flows that were causing algae blooms, and sediment runoff that was clouding the water and reducing the lake's volume.

Dean Jackson, a dairy farmer in the Stephen Foster Lake watershed, explained that farmers adopted a variety of conservation practices that were appropriate for each farm's circumstances, with technical and financial support from Farm Bill programs and other sources. Dean moved heifers away from a stream to a new barn that makes manure management and feeding much easier, while improving heifer performance. Dean also has been planting cover crops to build soil health and organic matter, suppress weeds, and shorten the transition time to no-till. No-till cultivation reduced his fuel usage by more than 50%, decreased his work load, and led to consistently better corn and hay yields. He reported, "The best part is the stewardship aspect of no-till and cover crops. Having cover on the ground throughout the year means less erosion, more organic matter and better soil health."

**This is just one example where farmers, communities, and officials worked together to improve local water quality. It reinforces the need for a continued and even greater commitment to conservation programs, and is a reminder that these Farm Bill conservation programs are worth the investment.**

- Every dollar invested in clean water programs on farms generates \$1.56 in new economic activity;
- the Chesapeake Bay is worth \$1 trillion due to fishing, tourism, property values, and shipping activities;
- Pennsylvania's fishing and boating industry is worth over \$3 billion annually;
- clean water can increase the value of homes near the water by up to 25 percent.

Pennsylvanians deserve clean water, healthy communities, and strong and vibrant economies for today and for generations to come. The conservation programs in the Farm Bill can help Pennsylvania realize these goals.



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION  
*Saving a National Treasure*