



BOOTS ON THE GROUND

Improving Technical Assistance for Farmers

A REPORT OF THE CHESAPEAKE BAY COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 2017

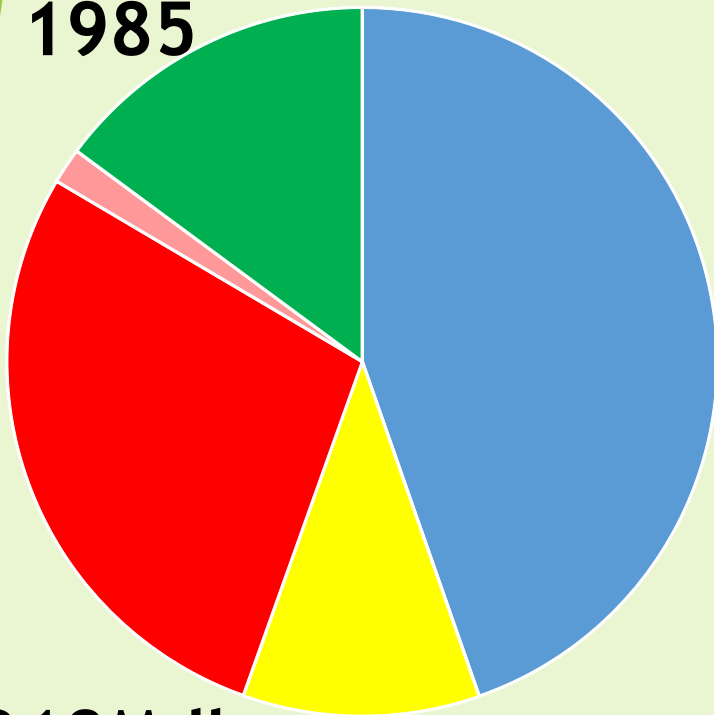
Ann P. Swanson
CBC Executive Director
WQ GIT Ag Workgroup
February 15, 2018



Chesapeake Bay Watershed Nitrogen Reductions 2015-2025

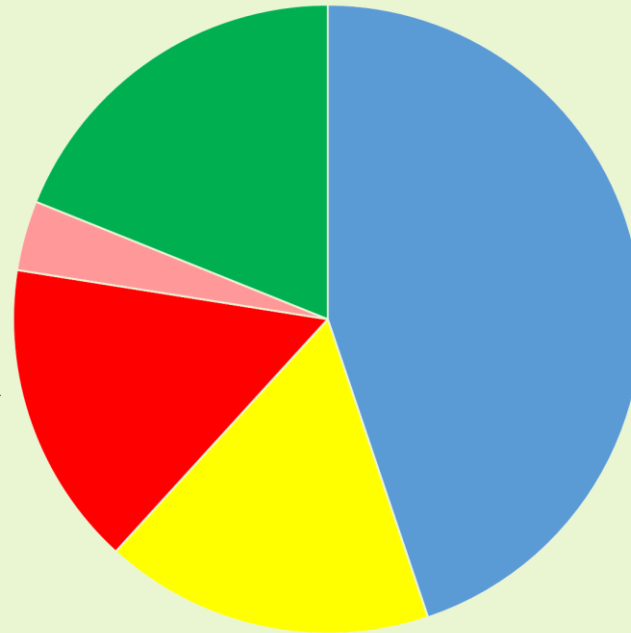
■ Agriculture ■ Urban Runoff ■ Wastewater+CSO ■ Septic ■ Forest

1985



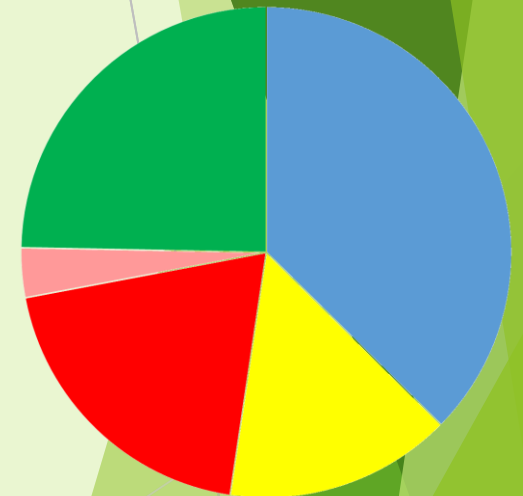
318M lb.
319(144 M kg.)

2015



242 M lb.
(110 M kg.)

2025



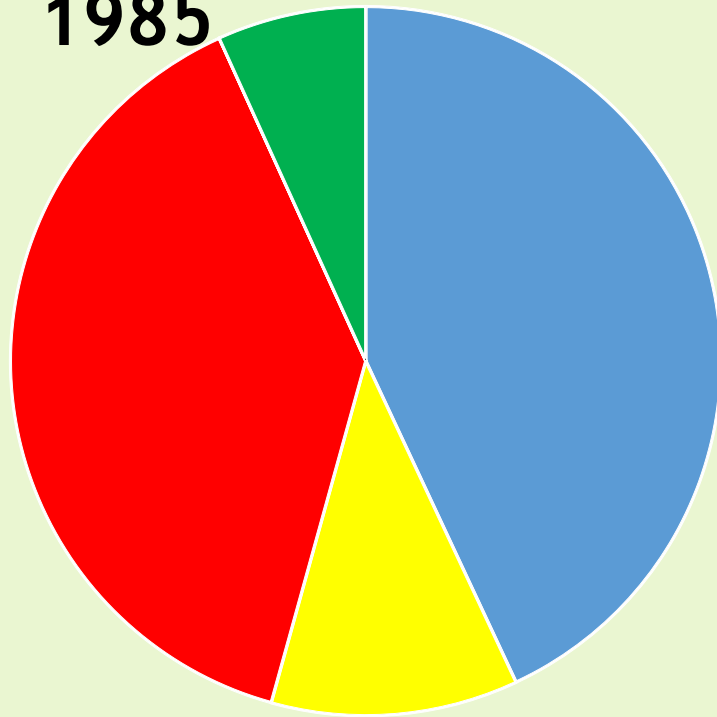
192 M lb.
(87 M kg.)

*Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership, Based on the jurisdictions' Phase II WIPs.

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Phosphorus Reductions 2015-2025

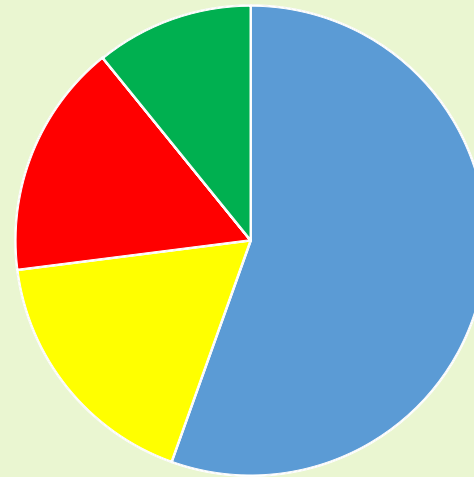
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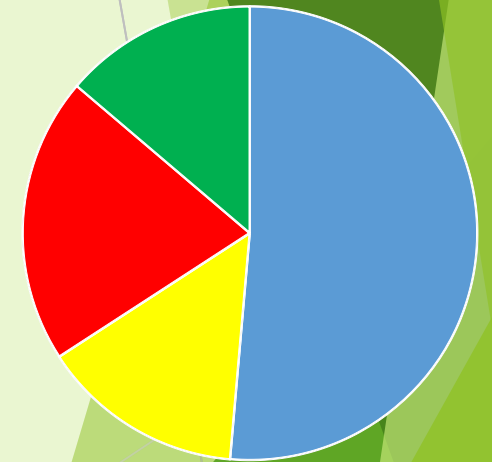
25.6 M lb.
(11.7 M kg.)

2015



15.4 M
lb.
(7 M kg.)

2025



14.5 M lb.
(6.6 M kg.)

Reductions are achieved through PRACTICES . . .



EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- Cover crops
- Conservation tillage
- Nutrient management techniques
- Stream fencing
- Rotational grazing
- Buffers
- In-field livestock watering stations
- Manure storage facilities
- Precision feeding



. . . but farmers' participation and success in conservation practices is dependent upon close partnerships between the farmer and trained personnel who supply: **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**



Boots On The Ground

- ▶ **What is technical assistance, who provides it, and how does it work?**
- ▶ **How is it funded?**
- ▶ **What do we need to do to ensure availability and effectively delivery?**

CBC's Technical Assistance Expert Team

- Kristen Saacke Blunk, *National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*
- Russ Brinsfield, *Private Consultant*
- Matt Ehrhart, *Stroud Water Research Center*
- Fred Fiscus, *Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources*
- Katie Frazier, *Virginia Agribusiness Council*
- Tim Garcia, *Natural Resources Conservation Service*
- Darryl Glover, *Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation*
- Terron Hillsman, *Natural Resources Conservation Service*
- Roy A. Hoagland, *HOPE Impacts, LLC*
- Peter Hughes, *Red Barn Consulting*
- Matthew Johnston, *University of Maryland*
- John Lipman, *Lipman Development Strategies*
- Lara Lutz, *Writing/Editorial Consultant*
- Louise Lawrence, *Maryland Department of Agriculture*
- Beth McGee, *Chesapeake Bay Foundation*
- Connie Musgrove, *Private Consultant*
- Royden Powell, *Private Consultant*
- Jake Reilly, *National Fish and Wildlife Foundation*
- Kelly Shenk, *Environmental Protection Agency*
- Jeff Swinehart, *Lancaster Farmland Trust*
- Christopher Thompson, *Lancaster County Conservation District*
- Lindsay Thompson, *Delaware-Maryland Agribusiness Association*
- Kendall Tyree, *Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts*
- Bobby Whitescarver, *Whitescarver Natural Resources Management, LLC*
- Tim Woodward, *Tellus Agronomics*
- Dana York, *Green Earth Connection*

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Steps to On-Farm Conservation

1

EDUCATION



Initial education can come from NRCS, a District, or the private or non-profit sector, in the form of meetings, field days, workshops or site visits.

2

PLANNING



There are many types of plans and planners to assist farmers. Certified conservation and nutrient management plans can be written by the NRCS, a District, or private or non-profit sector experts.

3

DESIGN



Conservation projects can be designed by the NRCS, a District or the private or non-profit sector. Engineering designs for structures generally require NRCS review and approval.

4

IMPLEMENTATION

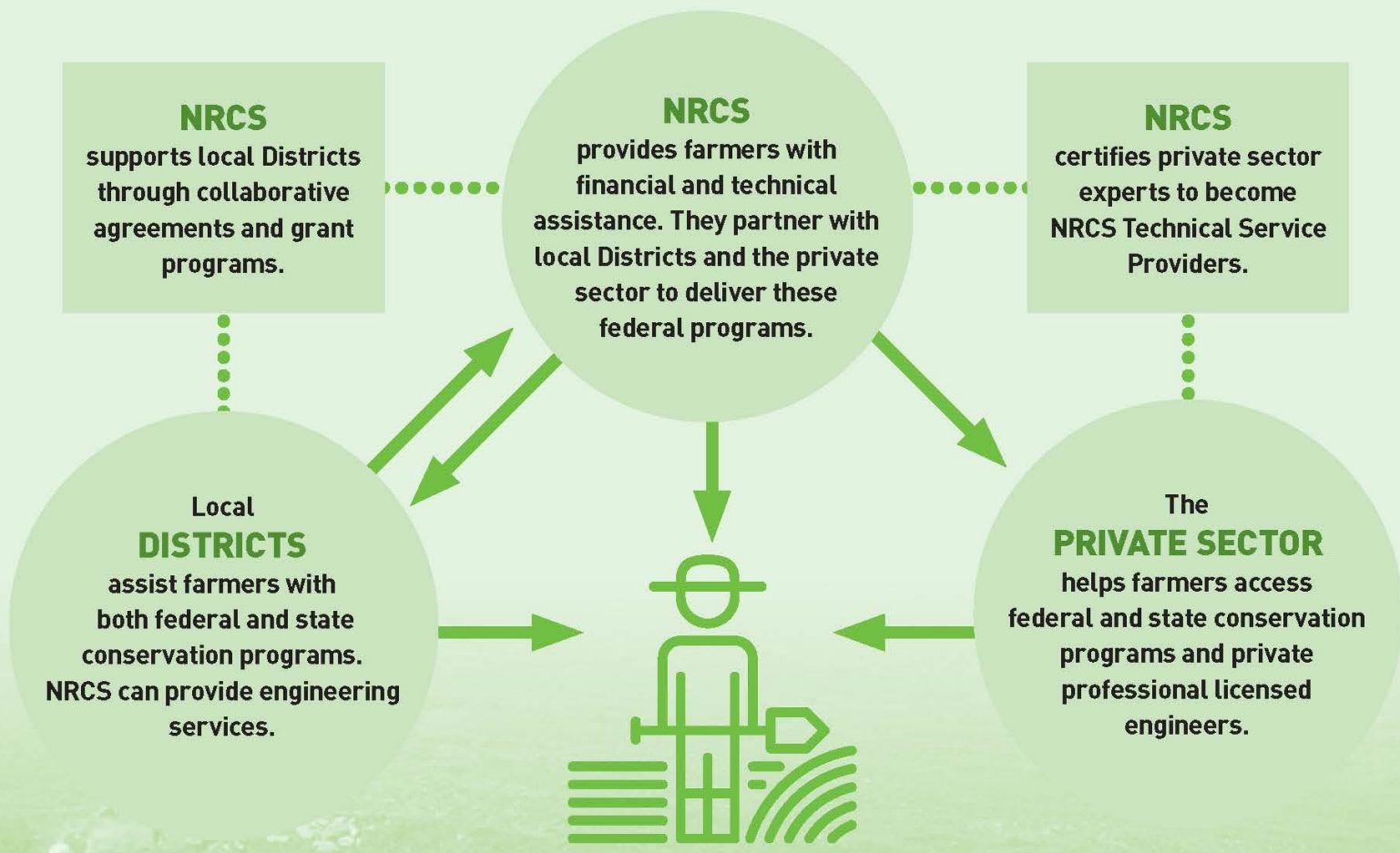


The farmer takes the lead with BMP implementation and maintenance, with guidance and assistance from a technical assistance provider. Financial assistance can offset the cost.



USDA NRCS (PA)

A Network of Public and Private “Boots on the Ground” Assists Farmers



ALL PARTNERS — private, state, and federal — provide education about conservation practices through farm site visits, workshops and meetings.

“ Seeing that same face come in, you become like friends and family. They come in and yes, there’s paperwork, but I didn’t run into one person that was pushy or arrogant and I would like to see that keep going. It’s a valuable service, and I wouldn’t want to do it without them. ”

— Raymond King, Lancaster County, PA

60% more

Technical Assistance is needed to meet the our 2025 Bay TMDL goals



...It’s about Trust

“ Planting cover crops is a big project for us every year. Without the Conservation District there to verify what’s going on, get us signed up and understand the programs, we wouldn’t be doing near as much as we do. And, I like the fact that I know the guy, I have his cell number, and I can say hey, it’s this farm, and he immediately knows what I’m talking about. ”

— Jason Scott, Dorchester County, MD



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- ▶ **How is it funded?**
- ▶ What do we need to do to ensure availability and effectively delivery?

How is Technical Assistance Funded?

State Funding for Technical Assistance

Fiscal Year	Pennsylvania*	Maryland	Virginia
2009	5.7	8.0	1.0
2010	5.6	7.9	1.6
2011	6.0	8.0	1.2
2012	6.8	8.5	1.2
2013	7.1	9.6	2.8
2014	7.1	9.5	1.2
2015	7.1	8.1	2.8
2016	6.9	8.8	2.8
2017	Not avail.	9.7	7.4
2018	Not avail.	Not avail.	2.2

*In millions.

How is Technical Assistance Funded?

NRCS Funding for Technical Assistance

Fiscal Year	Pennsylvania*	Maryland	Virginia
2005	29	17.3	26.4
2006	27.5	17.1	26
2007	26.9	13.5	22.3
2008	28	15.5	24.9
2009	29.9	15.2	24.9
2010	35.7	18.9	29.6
2011	34.5	18.2	27.6
2012	31	14.5	25.8
2013	31	12.7	22
2014	32.7	14.5	24.8
2015	21.9	15.2	25

*In millions.

Boots On The Ground

- ▶ What is technical assistance, who provides it, and how does it work?
- ▶ How is it funded?
- ▶ **What do we need to do to ensure availability and effectively delivery?**

What do we need to do to ensure availability and effective delivery?

1. Create a robust network of **private sector** and non-profit providers of technical assistance.
2. Enhance the **job climate for governmental** conservation professionals providing technical assistance.
3. Provide more consistent, stable and predictable **levels of funding** for technical assistance, including funds independent of cost-share programs.

1. Create a robust network of **private sector** & **non-profit** providers of technical assistance.

- ▶ Make training and certification more streamlined and accessible
- ▶ Allow private providers full certification authority
- ▶ Remove NRCS' inherent internal competition, while increasing NRCS staffing levels
- ▶ Establish quantifiable numeric NRCS goals for out-sourcing TA to the private sector



2. Enhance the **job climate for governmental professionals** providing technical assistance.

- ▶ Develop a tuition loan assistance program
- ▶ Develop a two-year certification program for high school graduates, with post-graduate apprenticeship
- ▶ Provide access to training centered on innovative technologies



3. Provide stable and predictable levels of **funding** for technical assistance, including funds independent of cost-share programs.

- ▶ Provide larger and sustained base-level funding at both state and federal levels
 - Independent of and supplemental to cost-share programs
 - Geographic targeting
 - Consider Farm Bill state block grants (e.g. CWA section 319)



Federal Action

▶ 2018 Farm Bill

▶ Proposed RCPP amendment (Van Hollen)

- ▶ Authorizes the advance of TA funding to eligible partners
- ▶ Requires the available TA amount to be published at the time of project selection
- ▶ Limits agency costs for TA to those necessary to carry out the objectives of the partnership agreement.
- ▶ Requires NRCS feedback throughout the application process
- ▶ Allows grant funding to go directly to a partner organization

▶ Proposed CREP amendment (Casey)

- ▶ Allows partner TA to count as match
- ▶ Allows number and size of parcels to be considered when estimating TA need
- ▶ Encourages partnership with NGOs for TA

State Action *Pennsylvania*

▶ Ag Plan Reimbursement

- ▶ \$1M available for nutrient management and erosion & sedimentation plan-writing

▶ PSU Ag Stewardship & Conservation Certificate

- ▶ Will jumpstart planning skills and in-field experience

▶ Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology

- ▶ 12 wk. conservation planning course under development

State Action *Virginia*

▶ Three budget amendments introduced

- ▶ Would increase and stabilize TA funding using increased revenue from:
 - ▶ existing recordation fee
 - ▶ existing marine fuel sales tax
 - ▶ General Fund

▶ Virginia Environmental Endowment

- ▶ Considering using grant funds for TA

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Questions?
Ideas?
Opportunities?