

**Chesapeake Executive Council: Directive in Support of Agricultural Technical Assistance
(5/30/18)**

As of August 7, 2018, whereas farmers have been and will continue to be critical to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and the thousands of miles of local streams and rivers within its watershed; and

Whereas, agricultural lands compose nearly 30 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with more than 83,000 farms creating more than \$10 billion of agricultural production annually; and

Whereas, productive, economically robust agriculture is central to sustaining the economies and food-production of all six watershed states; and

Whereas, population growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed will challenge the region's farmers to become even more productive, while staying competitive in the global commodity markets; and

Whereas, since the beginning of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, farmers working with agricultural conservation professionals have planted cover crops, practiced no-till crop management, established and maintained streamside buffers and performed a litany of other conservation measures at an unprecedented scale; and

Whereas, these agricultural technical assistance providers – both public and private – connect the dots between policy, financial assistance, program compliance, practice verification and much more, to assure both positive environmental and economic outcomes; and

Whereas, every watershed state will rely on the agricultural community to continue to make significant further reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to restore local water quality and reach TMDL goal; and

Whereas, to restore the watershed to clean water, there is a need for expanded, dedicated agricultural funding, as well as readily available, effective and professional agricultural technical assistance to support farmers as full partners in the successful restoration of the Chesapeake Bay; and

Whereas, some states have developed agricultural conservation technical or financial assistance programs to help meet their own Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL) goals; and

Whereas, the federal Farm Bill is the single most important piece of federal legislation promoting conservation on private lands, while also promoting farm viability.

Whereas, programs within its conservation title, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and Regional Conservation Partnership Program, provide valuable financial and technical support to our farmers as they do their part to meet the Bay TMDL; and

Whereas, additionally, states in the watershed operate their own robust programs designed to supplement and compliment the Farm Bill in assisting farmers to implement conservation practices; and

By this directive, the Chesapeake Executive Council will:

Endeavor to provide stable, adequate and predictable levels of funding for technical assistance and practice implementation at both state and federal levels, including technical assistance funds independent of cost share and financial assistance programs.

Include an assessment in each state's Phase III Watershed Implementation plan of the capacity of agricultural technical and financial assistance to deliver the nutrient and sediment load reductions assigned to the agricultural sector along with strategies to address any identified needs.

Diversify and expands the network of public, private and non-profit providers of technical assistance to ensure that on-farm help is available to meet the agricultural sector load reductions.

Expand technical assistance capacity, request options from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the use of cooperative agreements and other tools that combine federal, state, local and private resources to target priority agricultural concerns.

Enhance the job climate for government technical assistance providers by exploring how to make training and certification more streamlined and accessible, along with the development of two-year certification programs, innovative technology training forums and education loan assistance programs.

Signed:

Governor of Maryland
Governor of Delaware
Governor of New York
Governor of Pennsylvania
Governor of Virginia
Governor of West Virginia
Mayor of the District of Columbia
Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission
Environmental Protection Agency Administrator