



WELCOME!

The Virginia Soil Health Coalition

Quarterly Meeting

May 7, 2026



 **Virginia Cooperative Extension**
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

Virginia Soil Health Coalition

Quarterly Meeting

7 MAY 2026



AGENDA

- 1:00 pm **Welcome from the Honorable Katie Frazier, Virginia Secretary of Agriculture & Forestry**
- 1:15 pm **Virginia General Assembly Recap: Legislation Update and Budget Status**
- Dr. Kendall, Tyree, Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
 - Trey Davis, Virginia Agribusiness Council
- 1:30 pm **Federal Policy Update: The Farm Bill & Congressional Appropriations**
- Samantha Levy, American Farmland Trust
- 2:30 pm **Clarifying the Relationship: 4 The Soil and the VSHC**
- Emily Scott, Social Impact Studios
- 2:45pm **Update from the Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Advisory Committee**
- Jen Nelson, Resource Smart LLC
 - Robert Waring, Brandon Farms

Thank you to our funders!



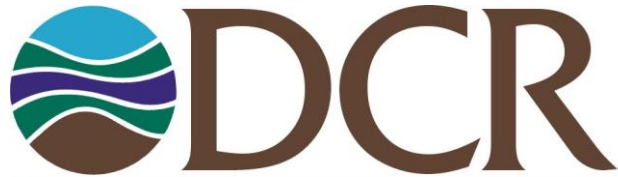
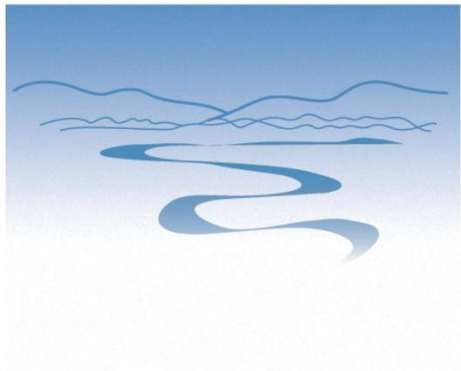
NFWF



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund

AGUA FUND, INC.



Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation



Sustainable Agriculture
Research & Education



Virginia Government

The Virginia General Assembly: Convenes annually on the second Wednesday in January

Even Years: 60 days

Odd Years: 45 days

The Virginia House of Delegates: Two Year Term
100 Members (Currently Democratic majority)

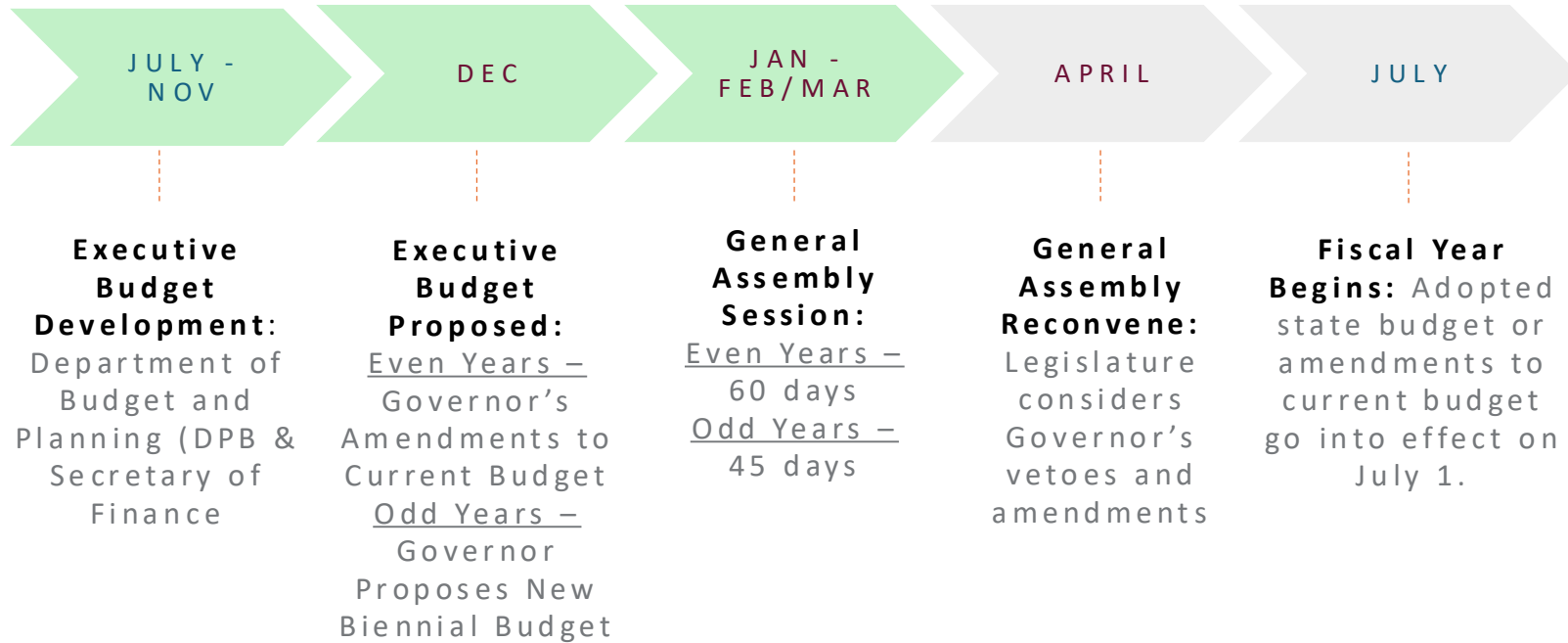
The Senate of Virginia: Four Year Term
40 Members (Currently Democratic majority)



VASWCD has introduced 26 budget amendments, provided support to many bills and will have visited all legislator offices during 2026 session.

State Budget Process

“The Governor proposes, the Legislature disposes” - Unknown





Championing Environmental Stewardship

The House version of the budget removes \$36,200,000 from the Water Quality Improvement Fund of Governor Youngkin's. This amount was taken from the general fund supplemental deposit.

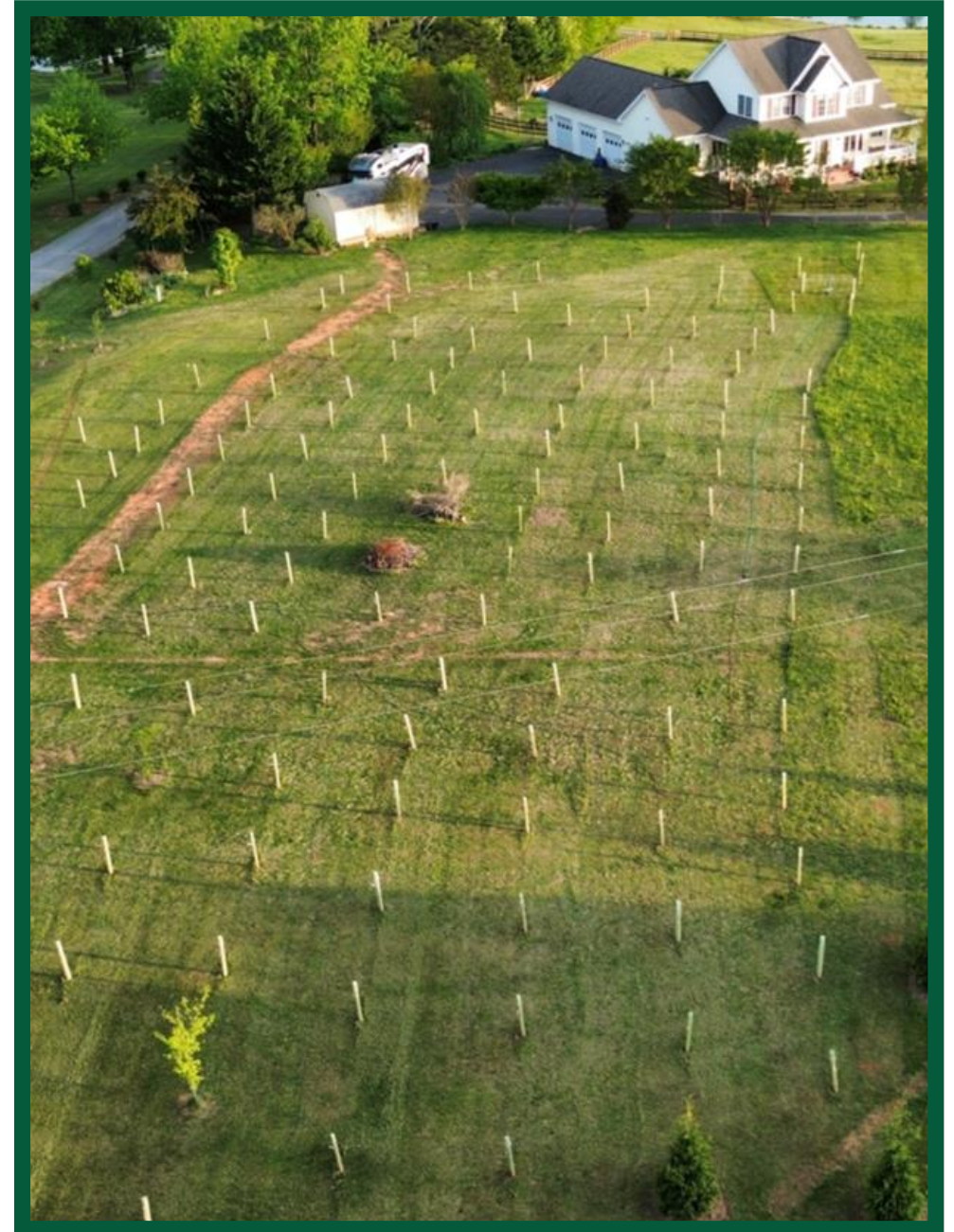
That reduction leaves the Ag BMP Cost Share Program program \$44.7 million short of full funding in meeting our water quality goals. The total first year deposit to WQIF after the House amendment is \$249.9 million.

No movement on budget, due by end of June



WHAT IS VCAP?

The Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP) is a non-agricultural cost-share program that provides financial incentives and technical and educational assistance to property owners installing eligible Best Management Practices (BMPs) in Virginia's participating Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs).



Total VCAP Advocacy Impact



105 total localities represented

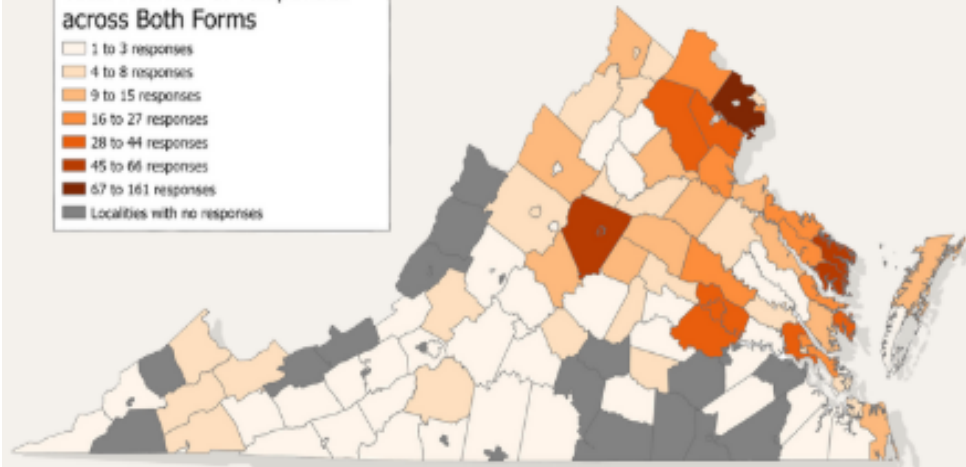
1,176 total responses across both forms

78.95% of localities represented

~17,606 emails sent*
to local legislators and Money Committee members

Total Number of Responses across Both Forms

- 1 to 3 responses
- 4 to 8 responses
- 9 to 15 responses
- 16 to 27 responses
- 28 to 44 responses
- 45 to 66 responses
- 67 to 161 responses
- Localities with no responses



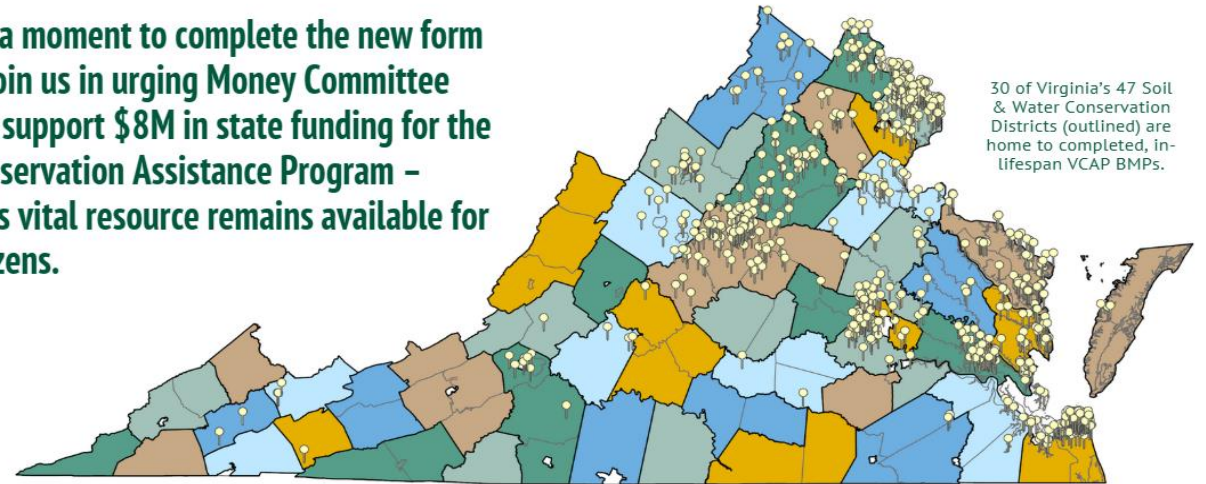
*Please note that these numbers are estimates and are not completely accurate



WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

VCAP starts in our local landscapes, but its impact flows across our Commonwealth

Please take a moment to complete the new form below and join us in urging Money Committee members to support \$8M in state funding for the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program – ensuring this vital resource remains available for Virginia citizens.



30 of Virginia's 47 Soil & Water Conservation Districts (outlined) are home to completed, in-lifespan VCAP BMPs.

Name *

First Name

Last Name

Email *

Locality *

Subject *

Message *

VCAP is a program facilitated through local Soil and Water Conservation Districts to support voluntary, community-based water quality and stormwater runoff management practices. Demand continues to exceed available resources, and without funding appropriation in the next biennium, SWCDs will be unable to meet the growing needs of landowners and communities. This investment will help address the current

Soil Health Coalition Resolution



2026 SESSION

INTRODUCED

26106920D

HOUSE RESOLUTION NO. 228

Offered March 3, 2026

Commending the Virginia Soil Health Coalition.

Patrons—Laufer and Lopez

WHEREAS, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition was first established by the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service when the agency launched its soil health initiative in 2013; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition brought together a number of organizations and stakeholders that regard healthy soils as essential for improving long-term agricultural resilience and productivity in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition facilitates soil health-building systems that address the four principles of soil health, including to keep soil covered, minimize disturbance, maximize living roots, and energize with diversity, providing environmental and economic benefits that support Virginia farmers, communities, and natural resources; and

WHEREAS, by improving soil health on all landscapes, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition advances the Commonwealth's water quality improvement commitments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed; and

WHEREAS, as a result of the Virginia Soil Health Coalition's efforts to bring partners across the Commonwealth together to promote effective collaboration and agricultural innovation, the Commonwealth is recognized nationally for its leadership in the adoption of soil health principles and practices; and

WHEREAS, by supporting collaboration across agriculture, conservation, and research institutions in advancing the implementation of soil health-building systems and practices, the Virginia Soil Health Coalition has helped to ensure a resilient future for all Virginia landscapes and communities; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, That the Virginia Soil Health Coalition hereby be commended for enhancing soil health in the Commonwealth and for bolstering Virginia's agricultural productivity, water quality, climate resilience, and economies; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, That the Clerk of the House of Delegates prepare a copy of this resolution for presentation to the Virginia Soil Health Coalition as an expression of the General Assembly's admiration for the organization's contributions to soil health in the Commonwealth.

INTRODUCED

HR228



Continued Use of Crop Protection Products

Paraquat Ban Bill HB1375 (Clark) defeated In full House Agriculture Committee

Prohibits any person from manufacturing, distributing, using, or selling any pesticide containing paraquat. No person shall (i) sell or distribute at retail or offer for retail sale or distribution any such pesticide on or after July 1, 2026, or (ii) apply or use any such pesticide on or after July 1, 2027. Nothing in this subdivision shall restrict the continued sale of such pesticide by a retailer of any existing inventory in stock on July 1, 2026.



Land Application of Biosolids

HB 1443 (Lopez) / SB 386 (Stuart) PASSED These companion bills establish Virginia's first comprehensive regulatory framework for PFAS in biosolids.

-Mandatory PFAS testing: Beginning July 1, 2027, land application is governed by a three-tier system based on rolling 12-month averages of PFOS or PFOA concentrations:

≥ 50 µg/kg (greater than or equal to 50 micrograms per kilogram): Land application prohibited; alternative disposal required

25–49 µg/kg (25 to 49 micrograms per kilogram): Application limited (3 dry tons/acre) with mandatory landowner notification

< 25 µg/kg (less than 25 micrograms per kilogram): Land application permitted under existing permits, with notification requirements

A single high reading above a defined threshold triggers immediate retesting, and repeated exceedances halt land application entirely.

Advocacy & Outreach Tips

1. Build the relationships: How are you connecting with your local leaders? Build the relationship outside of session. Coordinated outreach during session.
2. Know the legislative process: Are you informed and involved in the process?
3. Know your issues: Familiarize yourself with priorities. How have you prepared, shared local info to put ask in context?
4. Follow through/Follow Up: Do you regularly circle back with info, updates and even a thank you?



2026 House Farm Bill And Other Federal Conservation Updates



Samantha Levy, Senior Policy Manager for
Conservation and Energy
American Farmland Trust





Farm Bill Process Update

- Last week, the House Farm Bill passed on the Floor 224-200
(+14 Dems, -3 Republicans)
- It is being called a “skinny Farm Bill”
- It is unclear its next steps in the Senate or path to becoming law

House Farm Bill Title II: Highlights

- The majority decided that each title needed to remain budget neutral
 - The majority made prior changes to SNAP, Safety Net, and Conservation funding in their 2025 budget reconciliation bill (OBBBA)
 - CBO Scored some FB Title II changes as costing money (\$\$)
- Created two new programs
 - Forest Conservation Easement Program (replaces HFRP)-(\$\$)
 - Federal Match for State and Tribal Soil Health Programs (subprogram of CSP)
- ACEP changes (\$\$)
- Reauthorized CRP
- Reauthorized other “orphan programs” like CRP-TIP (\$\$)

Options to Pay for \$\$

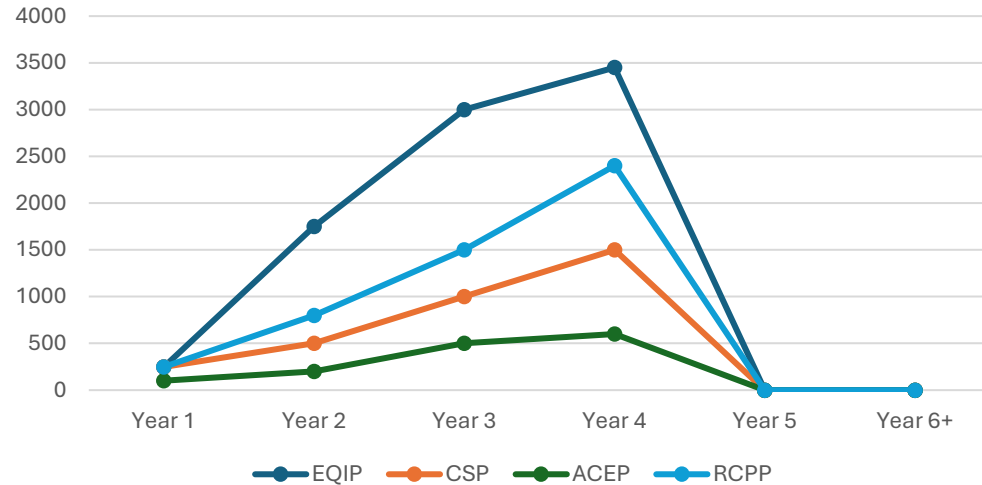
1. Cut each program to pay for \$\$
2. Make no changes that cost \$\$ to Title II
3. Shift \$\$ from EQIP-OBBBA allocation (the majority's plan)

Conservation Program Budget Authority Comparison

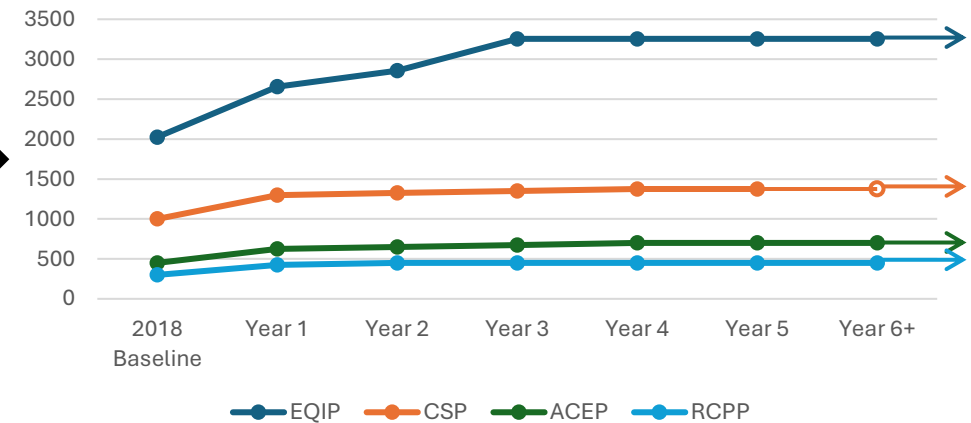
Program	'22 IRA-D (climate)	'25 OBBBA-R	'26 House FB	Senate?
EQIP	\$8,450,000,000	\$11,310,000,000	\$10,845,000,000	
CSP	\$3,250,000,000	\$3,600,000,000	\$3,675,000,000	
ACEP	\$1,400,000,000	\$2,350,000,000	\$2,425,000,000	
RCPP	\$4,950,000,000	\$1,475,000,000	\$1,500,000,000	
FCEP			\$240,000,000	

The Importance of Baseline

IRA Conservation Investments: a one time infusion (in millions)



OBBBA and House FB Conservation Programs increase baseline (in Millions)



Program	2018 Farm Bill Baseline	OBBBA and Proposed 2026 FB Baseline	Baseline Increase
EQIP	\$2,025,000,000	\$3,255,000,000	\$1.23 billion
CSP	\$1,000,000,000	\$1,375,000,000	\$375 million
ACEP	\$450,000,000	\$700,000,000	\$250 million
RCPP	\$300,000,000	\$450,000,000	\$150 million

New Match for State Soil Health Programs

- Exciting opportunity to increase funding for innovative state soil health programs and incentivize new ones to be created
- Broad, bipartisan support with political momentum (marker bills, FACA support)
- House: Subprogram of CSP at \$100 million per year. Consistent with 2024 version, program that got the second largest increase
- Senate: Senator Boozman included in his framework. Location and program allocations?



ACEP Changes

- Changes to funding match
 - Increased match from 50 to 65% for states without local/state match
 - 25% option for easements without federal interest
 - 90% match for socially disadvantaged producers
- Streamlines implementation and easement modifications
- Imbues more trust to certified entities
- AGI related changes
 - Exempts ACEP payments from AGI calculations
 - Exempts easement payments from AGI limitations for other programs



Farmer to Farmer Education

Thanks to an amendment introduced by Congressman Vasquez (D-NM) and supported by the agriculture committee, Congressman Riley (D-NY), and Congressman Ryan (D-NY), this bill includes language adding Farmer to Farmer Education activities as eligible for CTA funding!



Other Title 2 Changes of Note

- More Support for Precision Agriculture
- Improves and Streamlines TSP Certification
- Streamlines Conservation Practice Standard Review Process
- Strengthens STAC Engagement in Implementation of NRCS programs
- Provides Direct Hire Authority to NRCS
- Establishes an Office of Conservation Innovation
- Streamlines RCPP implementation
- Increases CSP Minimum Payments from \$2500 to \$4000
- **Doesn't include:**
 - Fix for Buy, Protect, Sell

FY27 Appropriations and Conservation

- Conservation Operations and Conservation Technical Assistance are funded by annual appropriations
 - NRCS staff
 - Conservation planning
 - Cooperative agreements
 - Partnership agreements
- The President's FY27 budget proposed to zero out this line, and pay for NRCS FTEs with mandatory Farm Bill dollars (which would likely reduce financial assistance available to farmers)
- Regardless, the house passed their FY27 ag approps bill out of committee with \$800 million for Conservation Operations. This is \$50 million less than they proposed for FY26
- Farmer to Farmer Language in play in the Senate

USDA and the Trump Administration

- Lost or fired 22% of conservation staff across the country, many offices sit empty
- Last year, announced a Regenerative Agriculture Pilot program directing state offices to dedicate 25% of their allocation to regenerative practices
- Implementation of conservation has been uneven
- Culture change
- DEI Audits

Action Items

- Engage with Governor Spanberger
- Engage with VA Senators to advocate for Soil Health Match, in RCPP
- Tell stories about Farmer to Farmer Conservation Education and VA soil health program
 - Representative Cline is on House Ag Approps
- Partner on Farm Visits with VA Federal Delegation (long-term relationship building)

Next Steps: Tell Stories of Success

“

As a farmer, it's clear that many other farmers struggle to hear advice or information from folks that don't farm. Working farmer-to-farmer helps overcome that gap and, additionally, the experience of the educator can help with more pragmatic application of the conservation practices.

Photo: Anthony Aquino



Zack M. | Farmer
Laughing Earth LLC
New York



“

Academia can present great information, but often not in a way the lay person can understand and implement. There's a disconnect between theory and application. **When the message and training come from a peer, there's an automatic trust gained** because that peer understands your operation and challenges in a sense that academia may never.



Ed Dubrick,
DuChick Ranch, LLC
Illinois



“

There's **NOTHING** better than a peer sourced endorsement for something new on the farm!

Rich C., Farmer | The Collins Farm | California



**No Farms
No Food[®]**


American Farmland Trust



Q&A and More Info

Samantha Levy, Senior Policy Manager for Conservation and Energy
slevy@farmland.org



Agricultural Advisory Committee Updates

Robert Waring, Jen Nelson
VA Soil Health Coalition- May 7, 2026

Why an Agricultural Advisory Committee?

Agriculture is responsible for a majority of the remaining nutrient load reductions.

From the Directive establishing the AAC:

“To maximize the potential for accelerated adoption of agricultural conservation practices while fostering a vibrant and economically sustainable agricultural industry, **it is critical that the Chesapeake Bay Program be advised directly by farmers**, including urban farmers, and other agricultural industry stakeholders who have an in-depth understanding of the diverse farming operations across the watershed and best management practices for agricultural lands.”

Ag Advisory Committee Members

- **Geographic Representation-** Two representatives from each jurisdiction
- **Operational Diversity-** members represent a variety of operation types and farm sizes
- **Strong Networks-** members are connected to Farm Bureau, Conservation Districts, Ag NGOs, National Organizations and served as elected officials
- **Committee Leadership:**
 - Bill Fink, Chair (PA)
 - Bob Waring, Vice Chair (VA)



Central Themes

- The success of the ag sector to meet its goals is dependent on the economic viability of our farms.
- Innovation in agriculture is constantly advancing! How can the Bay Program support and credit the most current practices?
 - Soil Health
 - Manure Management Technologies
- How can we move the conversation in the ag community from a yield-driven approach to a profit-driven approach?



Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #2
Tillage	\$0.00	\$59.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$0.00
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$93.00
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$192.40
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$30.10
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$65.80
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$0.00
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$440.30
Plot Yield Average	211 bu	191 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$764.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$323.70
Difference		-\$190.90
Total N Applied	120lb	185 lb

Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #7
Tillage	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$0.00
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$80.00
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$90.00
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$0.00
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$102.00
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$23.00
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$295.00

Plot Yield Average	211 bu	94 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$376.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$81.00

Difference **-\$433.60**

Total N Applied 120lb 300 lb

- **AAC email:** AAC@chesapeakebay.net



Our page on the Chesapeake Bay
Program website

- **Bob Waring, AAC Vice- Chair**
 - (804) 443-7347
 - brandonfarms3012@gmail.com
- **Jen Nelson, AAC Coordinator**
 - (302) 353-9733
 - Jen.nelson@resourcesmartllc.com

Thank
You!!

A simple black and white smiley face icon with two dots for eyes and a curved line for a mouth.

Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #3
Tillage	\$0.00	\$59.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$0.00
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$105.26
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$363.36
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$0.00
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$0.00
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$22.39
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$550.01

Plot Yield Average	211 bu	183 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$732.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$181.99

Difference **-\$332.61**

Total N Applied 120lb 200 lb

Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #4
Tillage	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$0.00
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$100.00
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$136.31
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$42.47
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$62.50
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$25.59
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$366.87

Plot Yield Average	211 bu	187 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$748.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$381.13

Difference **-\$133.47**

Total N Applied 120lb 155 lb

Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #5
Tillage	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$23.65
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$98.25
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$85.34
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$27.00
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$90.00
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$26.29
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$350.53

Plot Yield Average	211 bu	211 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$844.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$493.47

Difference **-\$21.13**

Total N Applied 120lb 180 lb

Case Studies

	Brandon Farms	Farm #6
Tillage	\$0.00	\$0.00
Biostimulants, Fungicide, Insecticide	\$0.00	\$0.00
Seed corn	\$112.00	\$98.25
Preplant Fertilizer, Nitrogen, Starter	\$78.70	\$115.95
Preplant Crop Protection	\$15.90	\$30.43
Sidedress Nitrogen Applications	\$59.00	\$55.80
Post Crop Protection	\$23.80	\$16.70
Cover crop seed cost	\$40.00	\$0.00
Total Plot input cost per ac	\$329.40	\$317.13

Plot Yield Average	211 bu	208 bu
Plot Income (@ \$4/bu corn)	\$844.00	\$832.00
System Net Income (excluding fixed costs)	\$514.60	\$514.87

Difference **\$0.27**

Total N Applied 120lb 183 lb