

A Great Blue Heron stands in a wetland, its long legs partially submerged in dark water. It is holding a crab with its long, hooked beak. The heron's feathers are a mix of grey, white, and blue. The background is filled with tall, green, blade-like grasses.

THE REFRESHED CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED AGREEMENT

SAME AS IT EVER WAS

Improving living resources and water quality.

Concern about dead zones and toxins.

Restoring and protecting underwater grasses and wetlands.

Coordination and commitment at the highest political level.





CH-CH-CHANGES

- Numeric pollution reduction targets
- Specific, measurable and time bound targets
- Shifting from “all about the Bay” to a watershed-wide view
- The TMDL
- Adaptive Management
- Increased State Participation
- Increased Federal Involvement
- Improved public involvement

BEYOND 2025

The effort to chart a course for the Program beyond 2025 began with acknowledging we had met some but not all targets by the deadline we set, and we remained committed to our goals and partnership.



- Phase 1 – Determine our Next Steps
 - Affirm our continuing commitment.
 - Revise the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement
 - Streamline the structure and processes
 - People centered approach
- Phase 2 – Refresh and Streamline
 - Review and update all Outcomes
 - Refresh the Vision, Principles, Goals, etc. as needed
 - Prepare structure and process recommendations.



VISION

We envision a Chesapeake Bay region where clean water flows, wildlife thrives, and farms, forests and fisheries are healthy and productive. It is a place where people from all walks of life feel connected to the land, to the Bay and local waterways, to their communities and to the rich cultural heritage that makes this watershed unique. Together, we are building a future that is environmentally and economically sustainable, resilient and full of possibility — where everyone can enjoy and help conserve the natural beauty of the Bay and the lands and waters that surround it, today and for generations to come.

FOUR CORE WATERSHED GOALS



21 OUTCOMES WITH SPECIFIC TARGETS

Thriving Habitat, Fisheries and Wildlife	Clean Water	Healthy Landscapes	Engaged Communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blue Crabs• Brook Trout• Fish Habitat• Fish Passage• Oysters• Stream Health• Submerged Aquatic Vegetation (SAV)• Wetlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reducing Excess Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment• Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring• Toxic and Emerging Contaminants	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adapting to Changing Environmental Conditions• Healthy Forests and Trees• Land Use Planning and Decision Support• Protected Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local Leadership• Public Access• Stewardship• Environmental Literacy Experiences• School District Environmental Literacy Planning• Workforce



THINGS TO KNOW

TIMELINE: 2040

RESTORATION & CONSERVATION:

Targets that reflect the challenges we're facing and the value we need to conserve.

ex. *Healthy Forests and Trees*
Brook Trout

DEEPER, NOT WIDER:

Targets that think deeper about who benefits and how.

ex. *Fish Passage*
Oysters
Public Access



THINGS TO KNOW

ADAPTING TO CHANGE:

All management strategies will address and account for changing environmental conditions.

OTHER PARTNERS AT WORK:

There are many more topics of importance to the watershed than can be included in one Agreement. Thankfully, we're not the only ones at work!

SET UP TO SUCCEED



Accountability means:

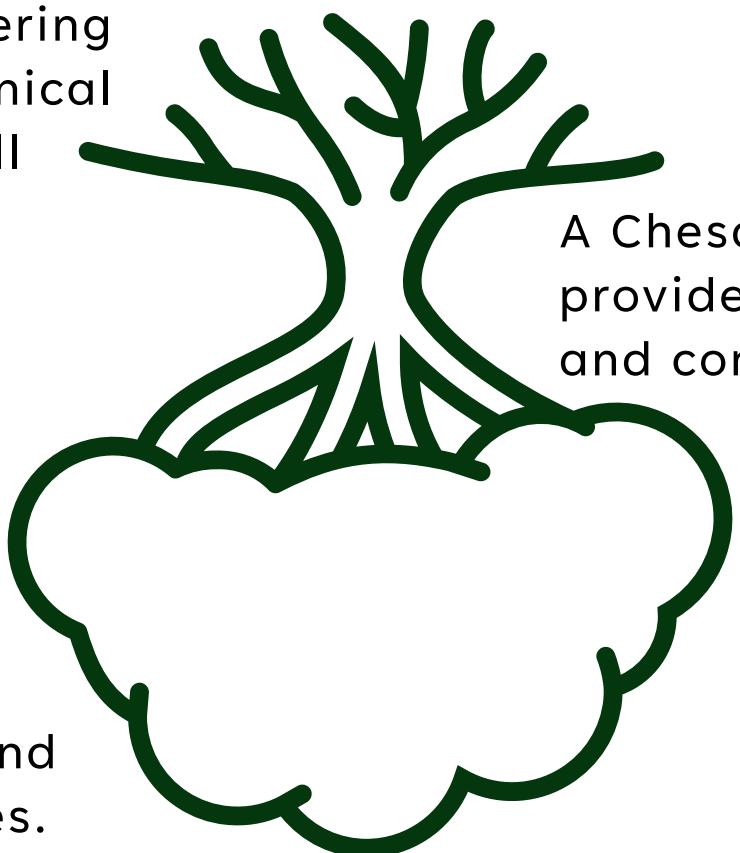
- 1) Identifying long-term *and short-term* targets,
- 2) Tracking our progress, and
- 3) Sharing the status and trends regularly, reliably, and publicly.



SET UP TO SUCCEED



A network of partners delivering the science, resources, technical assistance, and political will needed for success.



A Chesapeake Bay Program Office that provides the information, coordination, and communication partners rely on.

Outcomes that benefit the Bay, the Bay watershed, and our watershed communities.

THANK YOU

Adrienne Kotula
Deputy Secretary
Natural and Historic Resources
Commonwealth of Virginia
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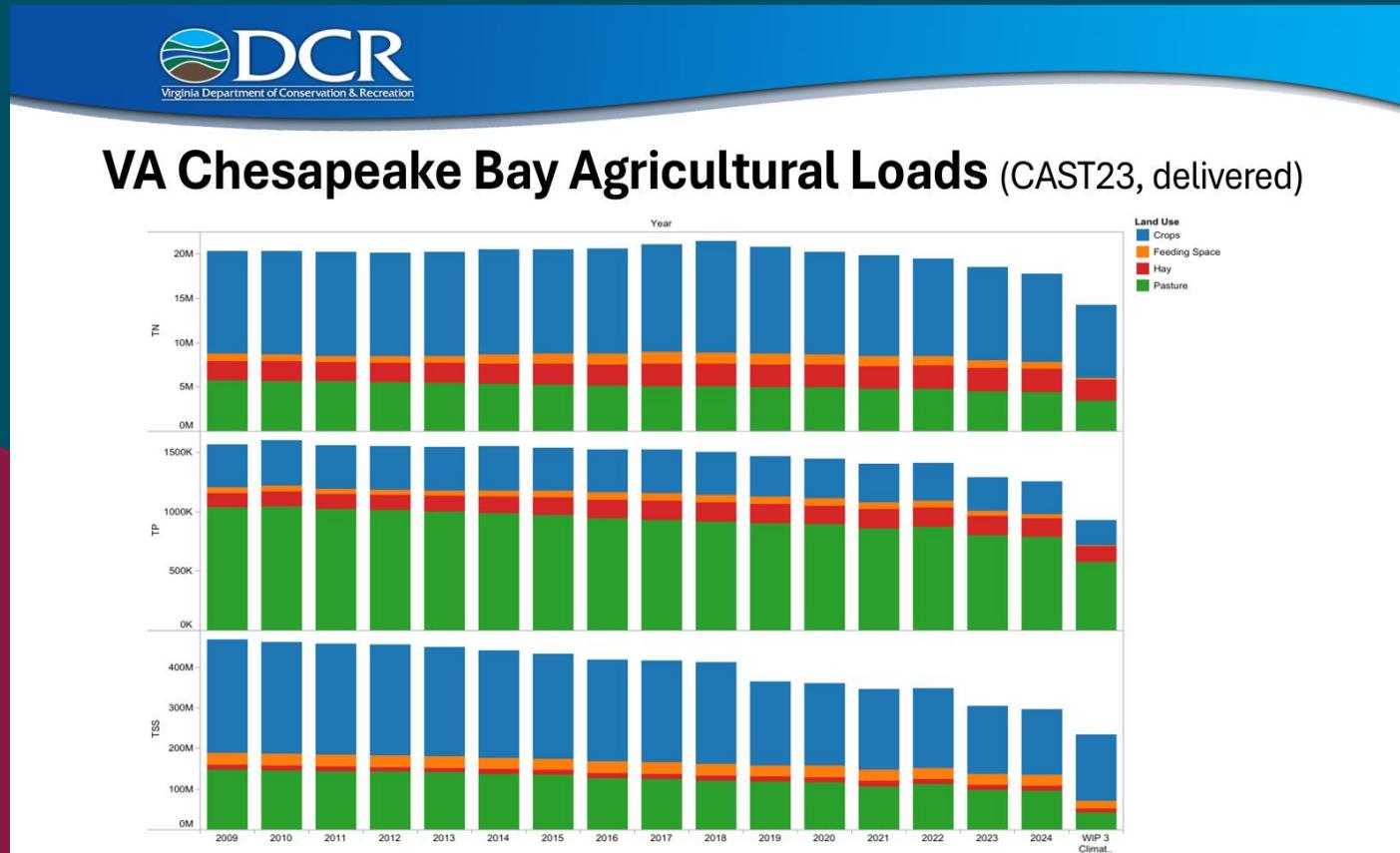
All photos courtesy of the Chesapeake Bay Program



Virginia Farmer Survey of Voluntary Best Management Practices in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed 2.0

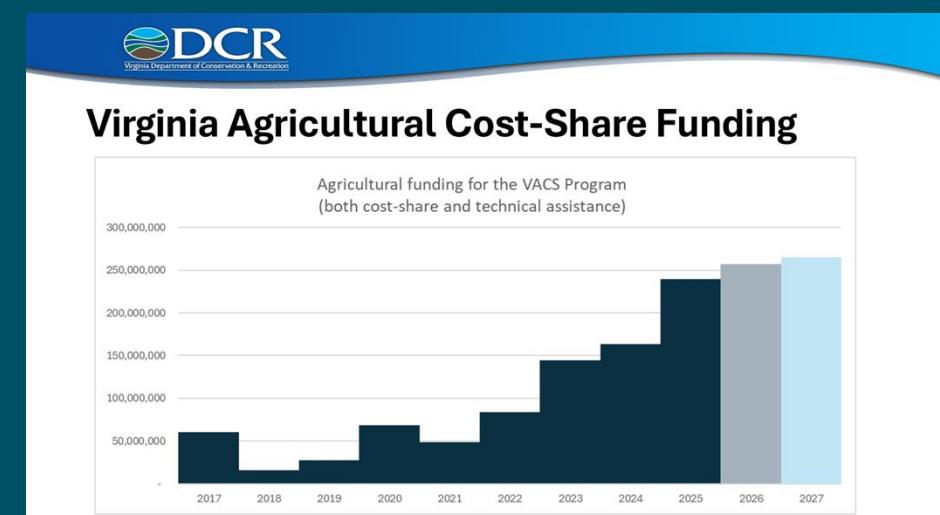
Relevance

- Virginia agriculture has made significant progress toward meeting nutrient reduction goals for the Chesapeake Bay yet remains behind schedule to achieve required reductions in some areas.



Relevance

- Virginia agriculture must meet its nutrient reduction goals by 2027 or legislation that passed the 2020 General Assembly mandates practices for implementation by farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Specifically:
 - § 62.1-44.121 Any operator of 50 or more acres of Chesapeake Bay cropland shall maintain and implement an approved nutrient management plan.
 - § 62.1-44.123 Any person who owns property in the Chesapeake Bay watershed on which 20 or more bovines are pastured shall install and maintain stream exclusion practices sufficient to exclude all such bovines from any perennial stream in the watershed.
- Virginia has provided historic levels of cost-share funding in recent years to support and expand producer implementation of BMP's. And, leaders have worked diligently to identify strategies for achieving nutrient reduction goals. The voluntary ag BMP inventory is one of those strategies.



What the survey is...

- The survey is... Designed to learn more about voluntary conservation practices on Virginia farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. (For purposes of this survey, “voluntary” implies practices carried out at the producer’s own expense and includes practices that may have been cost-shared at one time and continue to be maintained past the cost-share contract period.) Practices that were funded by federal cost-share dollars are also important to know.
- The survey is... A way to ensure the agricultural community receives credit it deserves for improving water quality and conserving soil health.
- The survey is... Intended to help Virginia agriculture achieve its goals for nutrient reduction in the Chesapeake Bay watershed region.
- The survey is... One of multiple strategies being implemented by the Commonwealth of Virginia and partner organizations to help achieve Bay nutrient reduction goals.

What the survey is not...

- The survey is not.... Going to lead to regulatory agencies showing up on a participating farmer's property.
- The survey is not... Going to get the farmer in trouble if they complete it.
- The survey is not... Going to get the farmer in trouble if they don't complete it.

Why participate...

- Virginia agriculture must meet its nutrient reduction goals by 2027 or legislation that passed the 2020 General Assembly mandates practices for implementation by farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Voluntary conservation practices are vital for tracking progress toward water quality goals. By sharing these efforts, farmers will help Virginia tell a complete story of agricultural stewardship.
- Confidentiality is assured. Responses will be protected, and the final survey results will never be associated with the farmer's name or location in final reports. If a producer does not wish to use their own name on the survey they can complete it with the assistance of their Extension agent and use the agent's name on the survey instead.
- The survey is easy to complete. It can be completed online or in hard copy form. Assistance is available from your local Extension office or participating Soil and Water Conservation District office.

Project Website...

- <https://vaswcd.org/virginia-farm-voluntary-agricultural-bmp-inventory/>

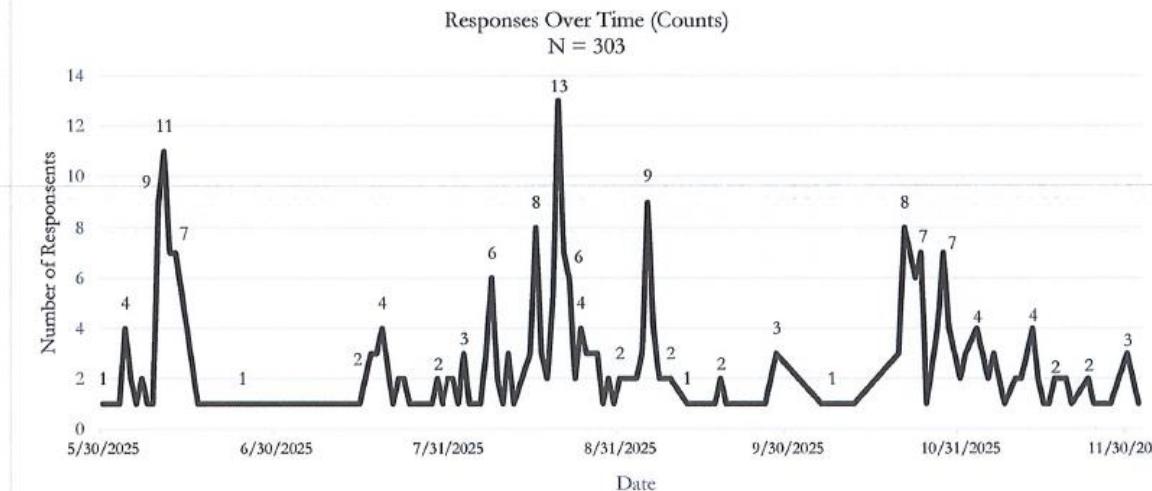
Survey Progress to Date...

- 374 responses from June 2025 through January 28, 2026.
- 154 responses include usable data; 146 responses are 100% complete.

Table 1. Response Counts by Month (All Recorded Responses)

June	July	August	September	October	November
50	32	89	35	48	48

Figure 3. Responses Over Time (Counts) N = 303

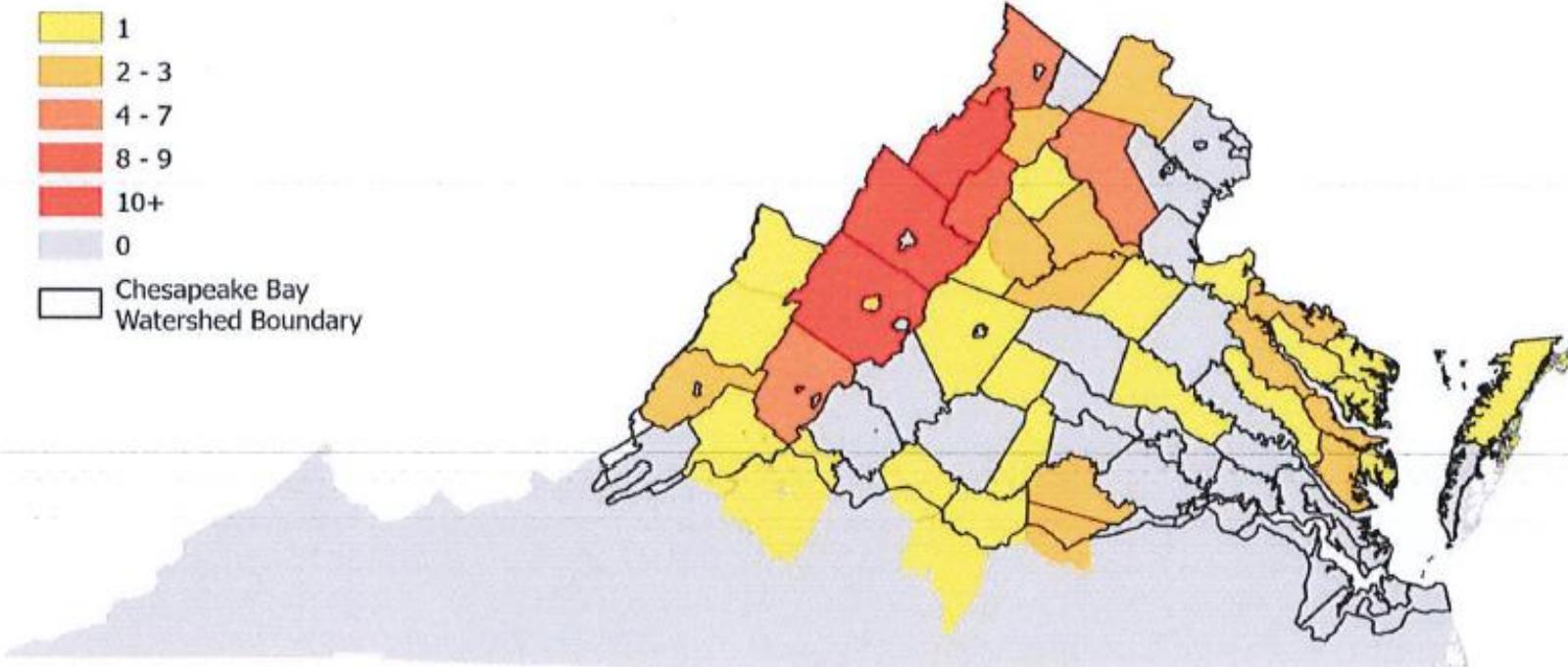


Geographics

All Recorded Responses

Figure 4 is a map of the location of all survey respondents who provided their contact information, with higher response rates in red and lower response rates in yellow. Those areas with no responses are in white.

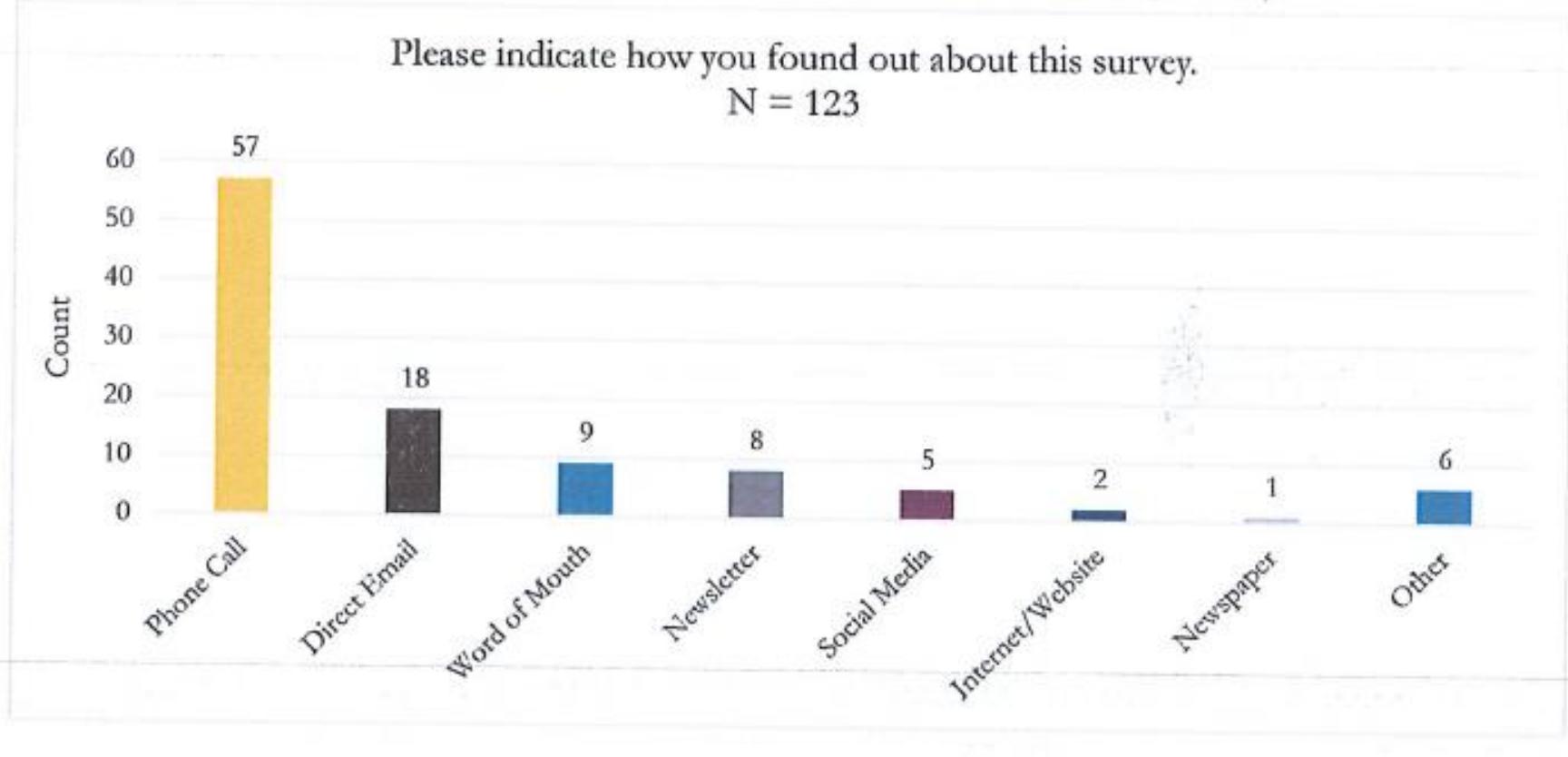
Figure 4. Location of All Respondents (N = 145)



Survey End

At the end of the survey respondents were asked questions on how they heard about the survey, including where and who they had heard about the survey from. The most frequent response of how respondents heard about the survey was from a phone call (57, or 46.3%). All the phone calls were directly from Extension Agents and had a 100% successful survey completion rate. The second highest response was hearing about the survey from a direct email (18, or 14.6%). Respondents heard from newspapers the least often (1, 0.8%) (see Figure 9).

Figure 9. Please indicate how you found out about this survey. (N = 123)



Agencies a part of Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Task Force were asked to share the survey to their members. Most farmers who heard about the survey from an agency heard about it from the Virginia Cooperative Extension (19). The second most frequent was the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Other agencies include Virginia Farm Bureau, Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Virginia Forestry Association. Two people responded with other agencies that they heard about the survey from - Virginia Biological Farming Association and Virginia State University (see Table 3).

Table 3. Please indicate how you found out about this survey

Agency	Count
Virginia Cooperative Extension	19
Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts	11
Virginia Farm Bureau	9
Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services	5
Virginia Forestry Association	1
Other	2

Food for Thought...

“Nearly every farmer was very willing to do the survey and excited about the cause. However, they nearly all said they would never go online and do it themselves.”

How You Can Help...

- If the land you farm drains to the Chesapeake Bay, please complete a survey and encourage others to do the same.
- If you need help completing the survey, contact your Extension agent, participating SWCD, (or Summer!). They can interview you about your practices and complete the survey on your behalf.
- I have encouraged the agents to reach out to their farmers and ask if they would be willing to meet and work on the survey together. If your agent, participating SWCD, (or Summer) contacts you with this request, please say “yes.”
- Help friends and neighbors in the agricultural community understand what the survey is...and what the survey is not.

Voluntary Ag BMP Producer Survey Workgroup Roster (2024-26)

Last Name	First Name	Title	Organization
Davis	Trey	President & CEO	Virginia Agribusiness Council
Goerlich	Dan	Associate Director	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Hughes	Eric	Agricultural Work Group Coordinator	Environmental Protection Agency
Kotula	Adrienne	Deputy Secretary	Office of Natural and Historic Resources
Lail	Matt	Extension Coordinator	Virginia Cooperative Extension
Marshall	Darrell	Agricultural Stewardship Program Manager	Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Martin	James	Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation	Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation
McLean	Kevin	Chesapeake Bay Program Manager	Virginia Department of Environmental Quality
Moore	Martha	Vice President Governmental Relations	Virginia Farm Bureau
Riddell	Jim	Legislative Specialist	Virginia Cattleman's Association
Scheps	Amanda	Working Lands Conservation Program Manager	Virginia Department of Forestry
Sketch-Bryant	Mary	Executive Director	Virginia Soil Health Coalition
Stanley	Tom	Extension Agent, Agriculture and Natural Resources	VCE-Rockbridge County Office
Tyree	Dr. Kendall	Executive Director	Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts
Walker	Amy	Operations Manager	Colonial SWCD
Womack	John	Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and Initiatives	Natural Resources Conservation Service

Advisory

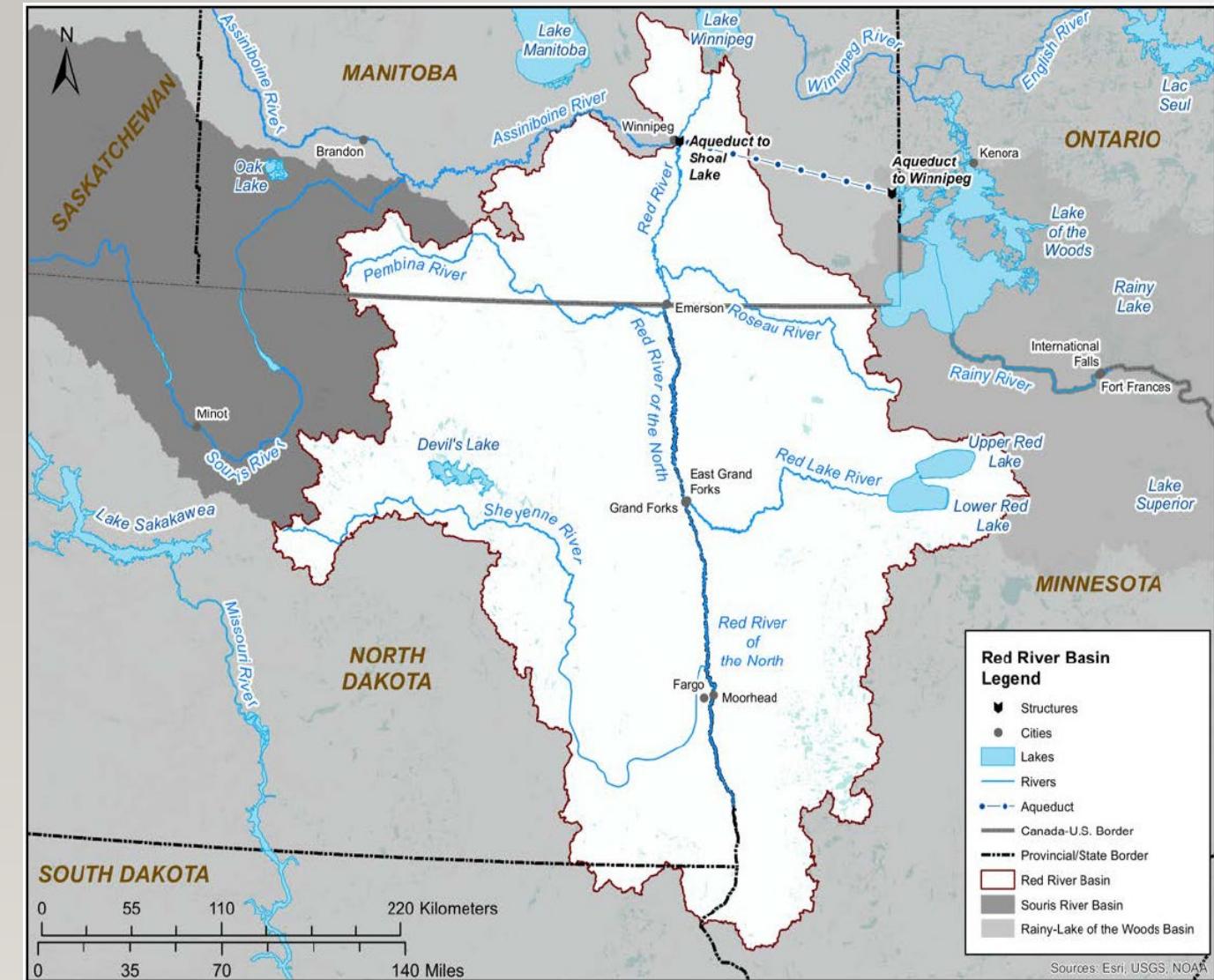
Dubin	Mark	Agricultural Technical Coordinator	University of Maryland College of Ag and Natural Resources / EPA Chesapeake Bay Program
Lowenstein	Cydney	Research Support Specialist	VCU Survey and Evaluation Research Lab
Lumsden	Molly	Research Support Specialist	VCU Survey and Evaluation Research Lab
Moore	Mary	Director of Field Research	VCU Survey and Evaluation Research Lab
Soladay	Tom	Director, Communications and Marketing	VT CALS

Thank you!

Dan Goerlich

dalego@vt.edu

540-231-7610



RED RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

THREE STATES, ONE PROVINCE, TWO COUNTRIES, ONE RED RIVER BASIN

KIM MELTON
SOIL HEALTH COORDINATOR

SOIL HEALTH IN THE RED RIVER BASIN

SOIL HEALTH TODAY - CLEAN WATER TOMORROW

- Water Quality / Water Quantity
- Resource for Farmers, Agencies and Political Divisions
- Encourage Best Management Practices(BMPs)
- Benefits
 - Water Retention
 - Prevent Soil Erosion
 - Decrease Pollution to Waterways



SOIL HEALTH OUTREACH

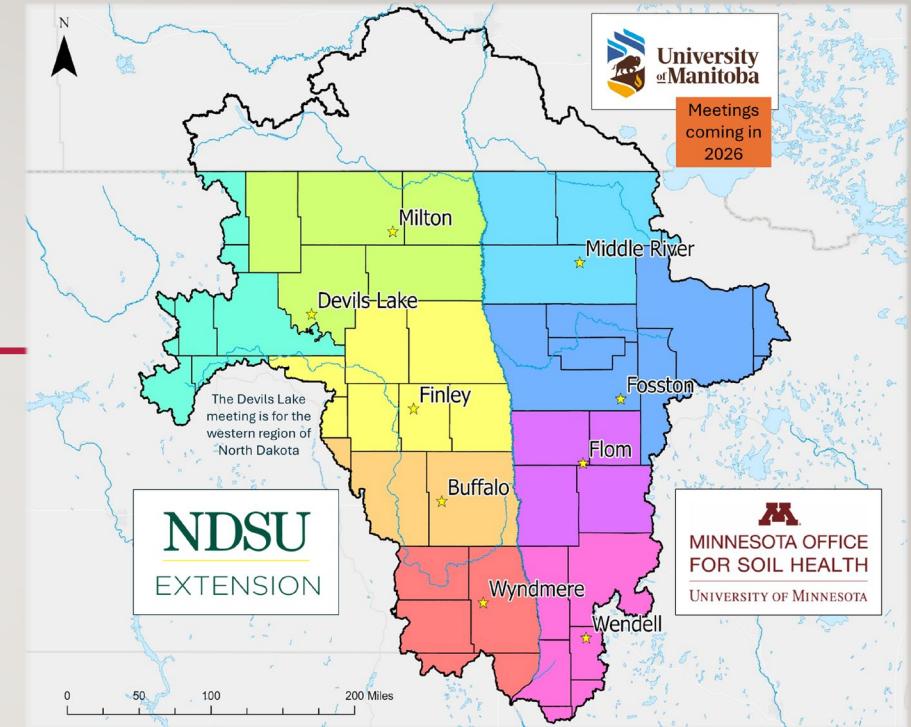
Regional Conservation Work Group Meeting

These gatherings provide an opportunity to:

- Build stronger professional relationships within your region
- Share challenges, successes, and innovative ideas
- Strengthen coordination to better serve landowners
- Collaborate to plan and implement **Best Management Practices (BMPs)** across the landscape

Together, we can foster a more connected conservation community, one that enhances local impact, supports sustainable practices, and improves outcomes for landowners and the environment.

Join the Conversation. Strengthen the Network. Make a Difference.



REGIONAL MEETING RESULTS

45 Attendees & 21 Organizations

North Dakota Meetings

- Staff Shortages
- Funding Challenges
- Soil Health Adoption Slow
- Agronomist are Strong Influencers
- NRCS Relationships Vary
- Successful Outreach
- Generational Barriers

Minnesota Meetings

- Rapidly Increase in Cover Crops
- Discussed Barriers to Implementation
- Reduced Tillage Option Growing
- Livestock Grazing Localized
- Outreach Best when Hyper Local & Small
- Programs Fragmented
- Generational Transition Barrier

MOVING FORWARD

CONTINUED SUPPORT

- Post Meeting Summaries
- Provide Resources
- Find Funding
- Support Outreach Events
- Share Training Opportunities
- Website for Soil Health Events
- Continue Biannual Meetings
- Group Recommendations





Contact Information

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Soil Health Coordinator

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VSHC Collaborative Strategic Plan

2026 - 2028

OUR VISION

Healthy soil supporting productive farms, thriving ecosystems, and resilient communities

OUR MISSION

To strengthen and support a broad collaborative network that improves and expands soil health across all of Virginia's landscapes

WE BELIEVE IN...

- Leveraging the power of a network that represents all of Virginia's diverse landscapes and communities
- Pursuing and sharing new and innovative science-based solutions
- Enhancing the resilience, productivity, and profitability of Virginia's farms
- Including and engaging all people who care for Virginia's lands, especially those who have been historically marginalized
- Protecting and nourishing Virginia's soil to benefit future generations of people, farms, communities, and natural resources

OUR COLLECTIVE RESULTS



People engaged in protecting and caring for soil



Resilient landscapes across all of Virginia



Sustainable food systems to support thriving communities



PRIORITIES

Strengthen the Coalition's organizational and leadership capacity

- Cultivate relationships with existing partners to leverage our network's skills and expertise.
- Engage new partners that represent all landscapes of Virginia.
- Secure sustainable funding sources to support Coalition functions.
- Connect with and learn from broader regional and national soil health, agriculture, and conservation networks.

Enhance partner collaboration and participation to drive research and implementation

- Facilitate resource and information sharing through meetings, online platforms, and continuous communication among partners.
- Support innovative, farmer-driven research in partnership with universities and communicate findings to organizations implementing soil health on the ground.
- Develop formal and ad-hoc work groups as needed to enhance coordination, communication, and collaboration on topics such as policy, communications, and science.
- Identify, seek funding for, and promote projects that advance partner capacity and implementation of soil health approaches.

Promote soil health by educating diverse audiences and connecting partners to align advocacy efforts and drive meaningful action.

- Link Coalition soil health impacts to state and regional water quality goals.
- Develop an impact monitoring plan to track Coalition outcomes and broader soil health progress across the state.
- Track and create a social network map including connections, growth of relationships, and capacity of partner organizations.
- Synthesize and share evaluation findings annually through accessible products to support learning and partner alignment.

Evaluate and share the impact of the Coalition's network capacity

- Sustain and enhance communications strategies through the 4 The Soil Initiative that resonate with a broader constituency such as youth, consumers, and urban constituents.
- Provide resources and educational materials to allies working on advocacy for sharing with decision makers.
- Organize and convene partner organizations to align advocacy messages, explore potential legislative approaches, and advance policy that promotes soil health best management practices.
- Convene partners, farmer mentors, and agency leaders to inform state programs and administration to effectively incorporate soil health.

Priority 1: Strengthen the Coalition's organizational and leadership capacity

We aim to build a more resilient and connected Coalition by building lasting partnerships, broadening who is at the table, ensuring stable resources, and learning from others across the region and nation.

- Cultivate relationships with existing partners to leverage our network's skills and expertise.
- Engage new partners that represent all landscapes of Virginia.
- Secure sustainable funding sources to support Coalition functions.
- Connect with and learn from broader regional and national soil health, agriculture, and conservation networks.

Priority 2: Enhance partner collaboration and participation to drive research and implementation

We aim to strengthen coordination, communication and ultimately collaboration among partners by sharing knowledge and resources, supporting farmer-driven research, and creating spaces for coordination and innovation that move soil health science and practice forward together.

- Facilitate resource and information sharing through meetings, online platforms, and continuous communication among partners.
- Support innovative, farmer-driven research in partnership with universities and communicate findings to organizations implementing soil health on the ground.
- Develop formal and ad-hoc work groups as needed to enhance coordination, communication, and collaboration on topics such as policy, communications, and science.
- Identify, seek funding for, and promote projects that advance partner capacity and implementation of soil health approaches.

Priority 3: Promote soil health by educating diverse audiences and connecting partners to align advocacy efforts and drive meaningful action

We aim to strengthen collective communication and outreach to broaden soil health understanding and engagement, while fostering a coordinated approach that translates shared knowledge and values into actionable policy outcomes through partner collaboration.

- Sustain and enhance communications strategies through the 4 The Soil Initiative that resonate with a broader constituency such as youth, consumers, and urban constituents.
- Provide resources and educational materials to allies working on advocacy for sharing with decision makers.
- Organize and convene partner organizations to align advocacy messages, explore potential legislative approaches, and advance policy that promotes soil health best management practices.
- Convene partners, farmer mentors, and agency leaders to inform state programs and administration to effectively incorporate soil health.

Priority 4: Evaluate and share the impact of the Coalition's network capacity

We aim to understand and share how the Coalition's network capacity, partnerships, and coordination support soil health progress and water quality priorities statewide.

- Link Coalition soil health impacts to state and regional water quality goals.
- Develop an impact monitoring plan to track Coalition outcomes and broader soil health progress across the state.
- Track and create a social network map including connections, growth of relationships, and capacity of partner organizations.
- Synthesize and share evaluation findings annually through accessible products to support learning and partner alignment.

At-A-Glance: Collective Action Plan

Strategic Priority	Focus Area	Key Actions	What Partners Will See
Strengthen Coalition Capacity and Leadership	Building a more resilient, connected Coalition through growing and sustaining a strong, diverse network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ongoing hard and soft funding• Quarterly meetings• Deepened communication with existing partners• Engagement with other state Coalitions and national conversations• Steering Committee leadership• New relationships (e.g. agribusiness, urban, youth)	Stable staffing, ongoing communication, clearer coordination, and expanded opportunities for engagement.
Collaborate on Research & Implementation	Translating farmer needs and questions into research and solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work with existing partners and programs (ICA, Innovation Roundtable, VT) to identify and fund farmer-focused research• Resource development and knowledge sharing (research → implementation)• Ongoing soil health train-the-trainer• Support for Farmer-to-Farmer mentoring	More trainings, shared resources, communicated science, supported funding for research and implementation, coordinated projects.
Educate & Align Advocacy	Expanding soil health awareness and influence through collective communication and coordinated policy efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 The Soil Initiative• Expanded on-the-ground educational programming with partners (youth, etc.)• Policy workgroup and administration engagement• Engagement with Chesapeake Bay Program	Consistent messaging, expanded outreach for broader public awareness, stronger policy engagement and coordination.
Evaluate & Share Impact	Understanding and showing how the Coalition is working to build capacity, shared learning, and support state goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Annual report• Survey of partners and expanded outcome tracking• Network mapping• Storytelling• Sharing impact with leadership	Shared evidence of progress and lessons learned.

Reminders

- Share your logo in support of the Coalition's mission, vision, and principles.
- Visit the website and sign up for the newsletter: virginiasoilhealth.org.
- Take the pledge and download the podcast: 4thesoil.org.
- Reach out to us about project ideas and grant proposals.
- Have a topic you want to hear more about or want us to bring a speaker in- let us know!



Thank you to our funders!



NFWF

Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund



AGUA FUND, INC.

