Earlier this month, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), in partnership with the Chester County Conservation District held its annual Local Workgroup meeting. Local working groups are subcommittees of the State Technical Committee and provide recommendations to USDA on local and state natural resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities and programs. The workgroup meeting this year was held at NRCS’ new office located at The Highland Corporate Center, Coatesville, with the theme “Coffee and Conservation.” The event included conversation about local priorities, equipment demonstrations, refreshments, and door prizes. There was a great turn out by representatives from local watershed groups, agricultural producers, private stakeholders, and government organizations. It was great to see members of the community come together to collaborate and share their insights into what natural resources and agricultural interests they feel should made a priority for Chester County in the coming year.
Pennsylvania’s Clean Streams Law requires farm/land owners to have written plans applicable to what they are doing on their farm/land. Conservation/Ag E&S Plans (for tillable acres) and Manure Management/Nutrient Management Plans (for manure generation/application) can either be a useful tool for managing land and nutrients sustainably or an awfully expensive piece of paper. Whether or not a plan is a good, a quality plan is often dependent on several factors:

**Communication** – the level of communication with your planner goes a long way in developing a quality plan. Knowing what is going into your plan and an understanding of what the information put in the plan means is important. A consultant should go over the plan with you and explain in detail the information in it, as it is a documentation of your decisions, so that you fully understand what you are agreeing and committing to.

**Implementation** – a plan is only good if it is implementable. Implementation relies on understanding your own capabilities and goals on the operation, and understanding the purpose and intentions of your plan coinciding with these goals. If a plan is written and cannot be implemented for whatever reason, it is not a good plan. A plan that is not or cannot be implemented is not a plan, but an idea, and ideas are not required by law. Plans are.

**Reason for getting a plan** – often the reason for getting a plan can play a large role on the quality of a plan. Getting a plan “because it is required” can often leave gaps in necessary communication and resulting ability to implement the plan. Inspectors from the DEP and the Conservation District, whether as the result of a complaint or through routine inspections, may request plans and can determine fairly quickly whether plans were written for use as a tool for sustainable agriculture, or just a piece of paper to provide lip service to a regulatory requirement. A good plan should be developed to address specific resource concerns regarding your operation, for the good of the environment, and for your bottom line. You should fully understand what goes into your plan, what it means, and your own ability do the things documented in the plan. Implementation comes from understanding. Understanding comes from communication. Communication can be dependent upon the reasons for getting a plan.
The Agricultural Planning Reimbursement Program, which helps reimburse agricultural landowners/operators within the Chesapeake Bay watershed for costs they’ve incurred for planning, has been extended for a second year. The program is on a first-come, first-served basis, and will cover up to $6,000 ($1,500 max per plan) towards the cost to develop one or more of the following plans:

- **Chapter 91 Manure Management Plan** (min. requirement for all animal operations)
- **Chapter 102 Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control Plan** (min. requirement for all tillable acreage/animal heavy use areas over 5,000)
- **Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans** (required planning for all CAO/CAFO operations)
- **Conservation Plans** (in place of Ag E&S plans that must meet Chapter 102 – high level plan required for preservation and/or NRCS funding/assistance)

Please note, however, that plans developed by the NRCS, or plans developed using NRCS funding or for REAP tax credits will not be eligible for reimbursement under the program.

The registration deadline for the program is April 1st, 2019, so act now!

If you have questions about to program or wish to register and get started, please contact the Agricultural Planning Reimbursement Program coordinator for Chester County:

**Jedd Moncavage**
TeamAg Inc.
120 Lake Street
Ephrata, PA 17522
717-721-6795
jeddsm@teamaginc.com

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**Future Funding Opportunity in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in Chester County**

Farmers located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed:
Keep your eyes open for increased availability of funding to address environmental challenges on your farm in late 2018. A partnership project coordinated by CCCD has been approved through NRCS’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

For more information call:

Dan Miloser
CCCD Agricultural Team Leader
610-925-4920 ex. 115
Chesapeake Bay reboot inspections are being planned for the third year in the Chesapeake Bay watershed of Chester County. These visits will be focused on all types of agricultural operations, everything from large livestock and cropping operations to small scale equine operations to hobby farms.

During these visits, staff from either the Chester County Conservation District (CCCD) or the Southeast Regional Office of the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) will be requesting administratively complete copies of all plans required of the operation, based on the operation’s activities. A complete, up-to-date Chapter 102 Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control Plan or Conservation Plan is required for all operations that have over 5,000 square feet of cropland and/or animal heavy use areas, while a complete and up-to-date Chapter 91 Manure Management Plan is required for all operations the generate or land apply manure, regardless of scale.

This year, the CCCD will be responsible for at least 100 visits, and will be focused on the southeastern boundary of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Visits will occur primarily in Franklin and New London Townships, with some inspections in Penn, and the east ends of Upper/Lower Oxford, and Elk Townships, along with catching up with operations missed during previous years.

PA DEP SERO staff will be visiting at least 30 operations focused in the southwest portion of the county, in East and West Nottingham Townships.

If your operation is within these areas and your required plans have been secured and are up to date, feel free to contact the District to schedule a visit. Operations that are on the list of operations to be visited should have already, or will soon receive correspondence indicating the operation’s selection as a farm to be visited during the upcoming year (July 2018 to June 2019). If you have questions pertaining to these visits, what is required of you or where to get information, or if you are in the Bay watershed and have plans and want to schedule a meeting to review those plans, please call Benjamin Drover, at the Chester County Conservation District at 610-925-4920, extension 120, or email bdrover@chesco.org.
On August 15th, CCCD staff and local farmers had the opportunity to attend an educational tour given by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. We departed from the Baltimore Aquarium and discussed the effects that rivers and tributaries have on the Bay before continuing our journey to test water turbidity (clearness), dredge the bottom of the harbor for sediment, and view the city’s aquatic trash wheels & skimmers. After traveling to Fort Carroll, we dredged the oyster bed and trawled for fish in order to assess the diversity of the habitat.

While aquatic species are slowly returning to the Bay, oysters remain at 2% of their original population. They are a primary filter of sediment and other suspended toxins, but excess sediment and nutrients from as far as Pennsylvania and New York can cause a loss of habitat for Bay oysters and the species that benefit from them. Overall, we had an enlightening day learning how what we do upstream affects downstream waters.
Almost every piece of property that pastures animals has animal concentration areas (i.e. – an area constantly disturbed with an accumulation of nutrients from regular animal traffic/confined). Animal concentration areas can be sources of pollution to surface water, which is why Chapter 91 requires them to be evaluated. Whether or not they are a problem that needs to be addressed depends on whether or not there is a “connection” between the source (A.C.A) and the resource (stream, lakes, ponds, etc.).

A “connection” could come in many forms. It could be a roadside ditch or swale, it could be an inlet and culvert, or it could just be a proximity issue as well, where a source is just too close to a resource. And while it is understood that connections that exist during some parts of the year may not exist during other parts of the year, sources and resources must be disconnected regardless of time of year.

A good time to evaluate an ACA to determine if a problem exists that must be addressed is during an intense rainfall in the spring/summer/fall or during a winter snowmelt. Being able to see where water is coming from, how much, and where it is going can help someone decide if an issue exists, and what solutions may best address the issue. If water that falls on or enters an ACA flows directly into surface water or a connection (pipe, swale, ditch, etc.) then it must be addressed by following the guidance in your Chapter 91 Manure Management Plan by:

1. Diverting upslope drainage – minimize creation of contaminated runoff by keeping clean water clean.
2. Collecting/Treating runoff from ACA – collect (in a storage) or allow runoff to sheet-flow through a well vegetated area at least 3 times the length of the ACA.
3. Prohibiting animals access to surface waters directly from an ACA – animals should be excluded from free access and access needed should be limited to stabilized areas.***
4. Limiting the size of the ACA – the smaller the area, the less of a potential impact.
5. Locating areas where animals are known to congregate (feed/watering, shade areas) away from streams.

***stabilized means not subject to erosion or soil loss (concrete, compacted stone); permits may be needed for installation.
Delaware Bay RCPP a Success in the Mushroom Farm Community!

The Regional Conservation Partnership (RCPP), in cooperation with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stroud Water Research Center, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, was very successful within the mushroom farming community in the Red and White Clay Creek Watersheds.

The great majority of both of these watersheds are listed as impaired on the 2014 PADEP Integrated Water Quality Report, mostly by agriculture. Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) for nutrients and pathogens have been developed for Red Clay Creek, and TMDLs for nutrients, pathogens, and oxygen depletion have been developed for White Clay Creek (EPA, 2006). Since the partnership’s arrival, over $1 million dollars has been provided to 11 mushroom farms in the White Clay Creek and Red Clay Creek watersheds for the installation of best management practices intended to protect surface and groundwater resources.

All of the projects included the installation of systems to manage wastewater associated with growing houses and two of the farms also installed concrete pads for temporary storage of mushroom compost. Below are pictures of some BMPs that were installed through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
An updated policy has been issued for timber harvesting projects. What follows are key facts about the update as well as what services the Conservation District can provide to assist you with your project.

The “Erosion and Sediment Control Plan for a Timber Harvesting Operation” packet (available on our website or at the office) is only to be used for a select cut timber harvest. It addresses haul roads, skid roads, log landings, and subsequent restoration. Please note that a Timber Harvest Erosion and Sediment Control plan is NOT a permit.

The Timber Harvest Packet contains the following:
3. Timber harvesting BMP Inspection Template.

Clear cutting will be handled in the following manner:
1. If it is a clear cut for the purposes of construction activities it will be subject to Ch. 102.4(b) and Ch. 102.5 E&S plan and NPDES permit requirements.
2. If it is proposed for conversion to agricultural use, then this project will be referred to the Conservation District Agricultural Team to be incorporated into a Farm Conservation Plan or equal.

Timber Harvest Fees and Services:
1. $250.00 - Regular timber harvest E&S Control Plan review with no assistance.
2. $350.00 - Assistance with maps and paperwork as presented below:
   a) CCCD will produce and mail back to the applicant 2 maps: an Aerial Map with topographic contours and streams and a Soil Map and report for the timber harvest area.
   b) Assistance with completing the District Application and E & S Control Plan for Timber Harvesting Operation packet.
3. $400.00 - Assistance with maps, paperwork, and a site visit.

In addition, evidence of 105 permitting (needed for activities that involve stream work or stream crossing), if needed, will be provided to CCCD at the time of submission. CCCD will not assist with acquiring 105 permits. This is to be completed with the Department of Environmental Protection, Southeast Regional Office.
I’VE GOT TIMBER: A Timber Harvest Conversation (Part 2 - continued from the Spring/Summer issue)

**Tim Timber:** So, I now have a stand of trees on my farm that I would like to clear and build a barn. I’ve gone to the township and they don’t need anything for a barn. What do I need from the Conservation District?

**Conservation District (CD):** How many acres of disturbance do you have?

**Tim Timber:** Do I have to count in the utility lines to the barn? The water and electricity?

**CD:** Yes – count that as disturbance along with the area to build the barn.

**Tim Timber:** Well, that would be about 1.2 acres.

**CD:** So, this is a two-part process. You will need a National Pollution Discharge Elimination (NPDES) Permit. Stage one would be the timber harvest of the stand of trees and have E & S controls just for that. You would have to stabilize the area where the trees were until you are ready to build the barn. Stage two would be building the barn. This stage would have its own sequence but both stages would be under one permit.

**Tim Timber:** Does that mean that I cannot take the stand of trees down until I get that permit?

**CD:** Yes. You would need to get with your engineer to draw up the plans to show where you are taking down the trees and where you are building the barn with grading. We would be glad to meet with you and your engineer to walk you through the NPDES process and the tree harvesting.

**Tim Timber:** What if I just want to take the whole stand of trees down and not propose anything for the 1.2 acres?

**CD:** If you just want to take down the stand of trees, you’ll need an E & S plan. You can use the timber harvest packet from our office to develop a plan; you will keep this plan on site. But there are a few things to consider. If you pull out the stumps, and it is over an acre of disturbance, you may still need an NPDES permit if you still want to build a barn or house. That is considered disturbance. If you pull out the stumps and want to convert it to a hay field, you will need Best Management Practices (BMPs) that now work for the conversion to the hay field. It is going from one Ag practice to another, and you will need to have an Ag E & S plan. We can get you in touch with the right people for whatever type of plan you need. Again, we would be happy to talk to you about any of the above.
Lofting’s Project at Inverbrook Farm

In 2015 we started the application process for a project at Lofting’s Inverbrook Farm. The conservation practices that were planned to be installed coincided with other farm and building improvements happening at the same time. Most of the practices involved directing stormwater around buildings and areas with any concentrations of mud or manure, stabilizing heavy traffic areas, and streamside plantings to protect streambanks from streambank erosion among other benefits. The work started in 2016, with a few finishing touches in 2017. The Loftings can be commended for not only implementing the conservation minded practices along with the farm renovations that greatly decreased impacts on a very nearby stream, but also adding 5 acres of trees throughout the entire property to an already very well established riparian buffer.
The Dirt and Gravel Low Volume Road Program’s purpose is to provide funding to municipalities for the improvement and maintenance of unpaved roads and now paved roads that have traffic volume of 500 cars or less with the goal of protecting water quality.

Below you will find a snapshot of four of our most recently contracted projects that will be improving water quality across the county, as well as an update on some exciting upcoming DGLVR changes to the GIS system. Please visit our website at http://www.chesco.org/1992/Dirt-GravelLow-Volume-Road for more detailed information on our ever-growing program.

- **Newlin Township - Beagle Club Road Part II:** A dirt and gravel road project with a nearby tributary to the Brandywine, this project will be the final stream crossing which includes a 10” x 24” box culvert. Grant allowance - $44,820.00
- **North Coventry Township – Catfish Lane:** A low volume road project that will feature a new 38” x 60” pipe and endwalls that will help improve water quality for a downstream fishery. Grant allowance - $21,345.00
- **Franklin Township – Franklin Road:** A dirt and gravel road project adjacent to an unnamed tributary of Big Elk Creek. This project features a new road base, new ditch outlets, existing ditches improved, and several stormwater improvements. Grant allowance - $18,572.50
- **Franklin Township – Creek Road:** A dirt and gravel road project taking place adjacent to the Middle Branch of White Clay Creek that includes the improvements to existing ditches and road base. Grant allowance - $5,460.00

**Major Changes to the DGLVR GIS system:**

- Must enter individual project checks: This allows more accurate and timely tracking when projects stay “active” for several months or years.
- More detailed financial reporting: The system will now provide complete accounting including allocations, spending, income, and interest for a complete picture of district Program finances both locally and in Harrisburg.
- More frequent financial reporting: The system will move the Program from annual to quarterly reporting.
- Automated quarterly replenishments: Replenishments will now be generated automatically each quarter based on spending for that quarter. CD managers will now be required to have a GIS access account in order to approve and submit replenishments. Paper replenishments will not be accepted after July

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**STAFF UPDATE**

**Please Welcome our New Agricultural Engineer!**

Hello, my name is Lisa Walsh, and I just graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a Bachelor’s in Biological Systems Engineering with an emphasis on natural resources. Growing up around the Wisconsin dairy industry, I have always had an interest in agriculture and wanted to pursue a future in it. In my free time, I enjoy outdoor activities, trying new food, music, and wood working. This is my first post-grad job, and I am thrilled to move to the area and begin my career as an agricultural engineer with Chester County Conservation District.