



Maryland Conservation Update Fiscal Year 2015

January 2016

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Maryland Quick Facts

Number of NRCS Employees = 85
Number of NRCS Field Offices = 23
Acres of Cropland = 1.4 million
Acres of Forest Land = 2.5 million
Number of Farms = 12,256

FY 2015 Financial Assistance Obligations

Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA)

Financial Assistance: \$159,536
Contracts: 6
Acres: 363

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

Financial Assistance: \$797,515
Contracts: 27
Acres: 16,708

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Financial Assistance: \$7,261,542
Contracts: 231
Acres: 7,219

Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)

Financial Assistance: \$2,359,720
Contracts: 4
Acres: 696

Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)

Financial Assistance: \$743,186
Contracts: 8
Acres: 1,658

Sources: FMMI 9/30/2015; Contracts, Acres,
and RCPP FA, Protracts 11/5/2015, NEST.



Conservation planning on a Maryland dairy.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service—in partnership with Soil Conservation Districts and a host of local, state and federal agencies—works with Maryland farmers and forest landowners to help them boost agricultural productivity and protect our natural resources through conservation.

Roughly 70 percent of land in the lower 48 states is privately owned. The health of our environment and natural resources is not going to be decided on public lands, but by farmers, ranchers and forest landowners.

The United Nations projects a global population of 10.8 billion by 2100. Farmers and ranchers will have to produce as much food in the next 40 years as they have in the last 500. At the same time, we're facing impacts from climate change and extreme weather events. Severe droughts and flooding are becoming the norm. Our nation's agricultural land base is shrinking.

The conservation practices NRCS and our partners promote are helping producers prepare for what's ahead. Over the last few years, NRCS has adjusted its programs and practices to assist Maryland farmers in meeting new state regulations and achieving the water quality goals set for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

From systems that help improve the health of the soil and water to restoring wetlands and wildlife populations, we're helping to ensure the health of our natural resources and the long-term sustainability of agriculture in Maryland.

New Regional Conservation Partnership Program Takes Off

Authorized under the 2014 Farm Bill, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is USDA's new, innovative program that promotes coordination between NRCS and its partners to deliver conservation assistance to producers and landowners. Six projects are currently bringing additional resources to Maryland's farmers to protect our natural resources. These projects are restoring wetlands, advancing nutrient management, planting riparian buffers, enhancing forested wildlife habitat, and providing additional conservation solutions to increase the restoration and sustainable use of soil, water, wildlife and related natural resources on a regional scale.

Partnership Promotes Rotational Grazing in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed

Intensive grazing systems, a type of rotational grazing that uses higher per acre stocking rates in smaller grazing or pasture units, can provide multiple benefits for farmers and the environment. These systems can help maintain and enhance farm profitability while reducing labor and input costs. Compared to more traditional confinement operations, intensive grazing can result in improved soil health, an increase in sequestered carbon and decreased emissions of other greenhouse gases.

To promote greater adoption of intensive rotational grazing in the Bay Watershed, NRCS recently awarded a \$491,000 Conservation Innovation Grant to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Partner groups including the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council and the University of Maryland will match the amount, bringing the total project investment to nearly \$1 million.

The funding will be used to expand outreach and technical assistance for farmers who graze livestock in Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania and provide opportunities for current and new grazing farmers to share information on intensive grazing systems.

Maryland Dairy Farmers Work to Improve the Health of Estuaries

Producing high quality, nutritious milk may be a top priority for Coldsprings Farm, but it is not the farm's only accomplishment. Nestled between the rolling acres and lush green meadows of New Windsor, Maryland, lies a showcase of a dairy farm where owners Matt and Debbie Hoff are working with NRCS to reduce runoff of nutrients and sediment, leading to cleaner water downstream.

This is especially important, as Coldsprings Farm sits amid the Monocacy Watershed, which eventually flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

Coldsprings Farm is one of the largest family-owned dairy farms in Maryland, with a herd of 1,100 Holsteins, in addition to 2,200 acres of crops. Five generations of the Hoff family have farmed this land, using manure management practices, no-till, cover crops and riparian buffers to minimize runoff of nutrient and sediment while maintaining a productive farming operation.

To ensure the waste from their growing herd does not leave the farm and enter into local waterways, the Hoff's recently constructed a manure storage structure, with assistance from NRCS and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). The structure was built with a roof runoff system to ensure that clean water is kept clean and is directed to a

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Maryland NRCS Service Centers

