

To All Snyder County Farmers:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has determined that the state of Pennsylvania is behind in its pollution reduction goals for restoring the Chesapeake Bay and PA agencies must set a course to reach those goals.

One of several ideas in reaching those goals was to increase the number farms being inspected (from 2% to 10% of all farms/year) to determine if they are following state and federal water quality regulations. The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) urged conservation districts to help with these compliance inspections. While conservation districts have traditionally conducted inspections among certain animal operations, they also offered technical and financial assistance to farmers as well.

If a conservation district agreed to do this, they would not see a reduction of state funding for technical staff. It would also likely mean a shift in time and resources away from offering technical assistance to farmers to conduct these inspections. Many conservation districts agreed to participate. However, several conservation districts felt uncomfortable doing this and decided not to participate.

The focus of the inspections is to determine whether farmers:

- Properly handle, store and land apply animal manure and agricultural process wastewater on the farm consistent with the nutrient needs of growing crops [i.e., a manure management plan (MMP) or a nutrient management plan (NMP)]; and
- Properly manage risks of erosion and runoff from agricultural plowing or tilling operations and animal heavy use areas [i.e., an “agricultural erosion and sediment control plan” (Ag E&S Plan) or a conservation plan].

The Snyder County Conservation District (SCCD) Board of Directors (made up of one county commissioner, four farmers and two public members who are appointed by the county commissioners) voted that its staff conduct these inspections for one year (July 2016 – June 2017) on a trial basis. It was reasoned that it would be better for our farmers to be visited by SCCD staff instead of DEP or EPA. If a farmer was found deficient or lacking in their plans, that farmer could seek SCCD assistance with those plans upon request. In May 2017, the SCCD Board voted to have its staff continue with these inspections for another year (July 2017 – June 2018).

In the meantime, SCCD staff asks that farmers work on seeking our guidance in getting their plans in compliance. There may be a time in the future when an SCCD staff member visits a farm and the plans are not in compliance. It’s possible that the SCCD may not be able to help and would be forced to report the problem to DEP.



As farmers you plan what crop varieties to plant, measure the amount of herbicide to use in your sprayer, inventory what forages and livestock you own, record what medicines you give your animals, and repair equipment when it is broken. Does it not make sense to plan how to handle and spread your manure and take measures on keeping your land productive? Also, does it not seem proper to show others that you, as a farmer, are doing your part in improving our local waters and the Chesapeake Bay?

If you have any questions or want to meet with us, please feel free to contact me or any of my colleagues at 570-837-3000.

Respectfully yours,

Barry Spangler, SCCD Ag. Conservation Technician