pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Agricultural Inspections
July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018

This document summarizes the accomplishments of the expanded agricultural inspection program from the past state fiscal year. Many changes were made to the program, including enhancing statewide data management tools from a tabular system to a centralized geospatial database and the inclusion of a supplemental best management practice collection form.

Table 1. Total number of PA farms in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed as identified in the 2012 USDA Agriculture Census and total PA acres in agriculture land use as identified by the Bay Program.

2012 USDA Ag Census Farms in PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed	**33,610**
2013 Ag Land Use Acres in PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed	**3,093,000**

Table 2. Farms and agriculture acres inspected within Pennsylvania's portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

	2016-2017	2017-2018
Total Farms Inspected	2,823	2,924
Total Acres Inspected	393,426 (12.7%)	329,468 (10.6%)
PA Bay Farms Inspected under the Act 38 Program	743	814
PA Bay Ag Acres Inspected under the Act 38 Program	147,762	145,680
PA Farms Inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	2,080	2,110
Pa Acres inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	245,664	183,788

The total number of farms inspected increased by 101, while the acreage inspected decreased by 63,958 acres. Additional comparisons between the past two years' inspection summaries show that the average farm size inspected under the Chesapeake Bay Ag Inspection program went from 118 acres to 87 acres, meaning that smaller farms were inspected this year.

Not included in the above results are the verifications performed via the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program, which is administered by the State Conservation Commission. Since 2007, REAP has approved over 3,550 applications from almost 2,500 farmers (farmers can apply more than once to the program). A farmer must have their compliance status verified each time they apply. Since 2007, approximately 70% of REAP applicants had their compliance status verified by a public entity (conservation district or NRCS). The rest have been verified by qualified private service providers. In FY2017, 224 farms were verified in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership has instituted credit durations for all best management practices reported for the states' annual progress. The Nutrient Management best management practices for nitrogen and phosphorus are considered annual credits, therefore the states must report progress toward meeting those goals annually. While those farms and acres inspected via the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program typically remain constant over time, compliance is assessed annually. The rate of

compliance for Act 38 Nutrient Management plan implementation remained at approximately 80% at the time of the inspection. Further follow-up activities are required as part of the compliance assessment of Act 38 regulated farms, with the majority of those found to be out of compliance coming into compliance within 6 months after the annual inspection.

The farms and acres inspected under the Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program are unique operations. This means that the operations had not been re-visited, unless a follow-up inspection was needed. Out of the total 2,110 farms inspected, 1,571 were inspected by conservation districts and 539 were inspected by DEP regional offices.

Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program: Compliance and Enforcement

Compliance rates at the time of initial inspection for Manure Management and Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control (Ag E&S) Plans are comparable to the previous year. It should be noted that 96% of all farms inspected in 2017 – 2018 met the planning obligations by the end of the state fiscal year.

It is important to note the percentage found to have had planning and/or technical assistance provided by another party (agency or private consultant) to develop the plan.

Table 3. The percent of administratively complete plans found at the time of initial inspection for farms required to have and implement the plan(s).

Manure Management Plan	Percent of Total Required
Administratively Complete at the time of Initial Inspection	66%
Planning/Technical Assistance Provided	84%
Agricultural Erosion and Sediment Control (Ag E&S) Plan	**Percent of Total Required**
Administratively Complete at the time of Initial Inspection	68.5%
Planning/Technical Assistance Provided	98%

Table 4. The total referrals to the DEP Bureau of Clean Water for continued non-compliance for plan violations, along with further enforcement actions taken on those operations.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	Total
Referrals to DEP Bureau of Clean Water	21	87	108
Notices of Violation	21	87	108
Field Orders	0	22	22
Consent Order and Agreement	0	1	1
Closed Cases	7	42	49

Enhanced Data Collection and Tracking

The Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program enhanced the data collection methodologies that were used in the previous year. We transitioned from quarterly submission of tabular spreadsheets to the use of a web-based platform for geospatial data collection. A mobile inspection module was also introduced. Participating conservation districts and DEP regional offices have mobile devices to assist with collecting, tracking, and reporting inspection results.

Another enhancement to the program included the voluntary collection of implemented best management practices, which in turn will be reported to the Chesapeake Bay Program for annual progress. These best management practices include reporting the implementation of Manure Management Plans, manure storages, barnyard runoff controls, forested and grassed buffers, stream fencing, and rotational and prescribed grazing. Other practices may be collected by the inspector if the farmer has implemented those practices and is willing to provide the information.

Since November of 2017, we have included a voluntary records check for farms which indicate that they are following their Manure Management Plans. We are reporting over 22,700 acres of implemented Manure Management Plans, which meets the requirements of the Nutrient Management Core Nitrogen best management practice.

Manure Storage Facilities have a 15-year credit duration in the Chesapeake Bay Program modeling tools. As such, if the facilities are not re-verified to show that it is existing and functioning every 15 years, the practice is removed from the system. Through the Chesapeake Bay Ag Inspection Program, we can report for progress 106 existing liquid manure storage facilities that are equal to or greater than 15 years of age going back to 1985. The total capacity of these reported liquid manure storage facilities is over 28,739,000 gallons.

Conclusion

Another successful year of the expanded agricultural inspection program has shown that most farmers are getting the plans they need. A large part of the inspection program is education. Conservation district and DEP staff are using inspections as a catalyst to help farmers understand what is needed and to get them on track to implement their plans. Implementing best management practices on the land helps to ensure long-term farm sustainability.

Planning and technical assistance are of paramount importance. The development and implementation of plans hinges on the professionals who provide assistance. Funding resources continue to be needed as well. State programs like the Agricultural Plan Reimbursement Program, Small Business Advantage Grants, and Growing Greener as well as federal programs like NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) are critical for the continued improvements made to our local waters.

Acknowledgements

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