



CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN: BACKSTOPS

The Council continues to be a willing partner in each of Virginia's phases of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). The Council is glad to see Virginia hit our mid-point, 2017 nutrient reduction targets. We continue to support the voluntary agricultural best management practice cost-share program and are grateful for the Administration's continued support in the WIP. We are also grateful to the General Assembly for the \$73 million deposit into the Water Quality Improvement Fund in last year's session to be used in putting agricultural BMPs in place and the Council supports renewed efforts in the Governor's introduced 2020 budget to increase that funding.

While we agree with most aspects of the third phase of the WIP, we are concerned the WIP calls for certain "backstops" be imposed on producers should targets not be met in nutrient management planning and livestock stream exclusion by 2025. We believe locking Virginia's producers into a mandatory system five years in advance is premature and infeasible. This type of requirement would overly burden small operators and not take into account current or future economic conditions of the agriculture economy. Certain sectors of the agriculture community are struggling. These economic conditions provide a significant barrier to nutrient management implementation and may not be a sustainable option for these operations.

Similarly, stream fencing systems continue to be among the most expensive BMPs to implement. Virginia continues to lose 1 dairy farm every 3.5 days. At this rate, it is unrealistic to require a struggling dairy farm implement costly BMPs over a 10-year lifespan on their property without providing funding support from the Commonwealth.

Our Position

The Council supports the established partnership of encouraging voluntary efforts to implement best management practices on agriculture operations. We remain very concerned with efforts to impose practices on producers who cannot afford to sustainably maintain those efforts.

For more information, please contact us at vac@va-agribusiness.org