**Chesapeake Executive Council: Directive in Support of Agricultural Technical Assistance and Implementation**

As of August 7, 2018, whereas farmers have been and will continue to be critical to the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and the thousands of miles of local streams and rivers within its watershed; and

Whereas, agricultural lands compose nearly 30 percent of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with more than 83,000 farms creating more than $10 billion of agricultural production annually; and

Whereas since 1987, the Clean Water State Loan Revolving Fund program funded 1,944 agricultural projects in EPA Region III to the level of $99,777,693.

Whereas, productive, economically robust agriculture is central to sustaining the economies and food-production of all six watershed states; and

Whereas, population growth in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and globally will challenge the region’s farmers to become even more productive to meet food demands and staycompetitive in the global commodity markets while protecting local water quality; and

Whereas, since the beginning of the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, farmers working with agricultural conservation professionals have planted cover crops, practiced no-till crop management, established and maintained streamside buffers and performed a litany of other conservation measures at an unprecedented scale; and

Whereas, these agricultural conservation professionals– both public and private – connect the dots between policy, financial assistance, technical assistance, program compliance, practice verification and much more, to assure both positive environmental and economic outcomes; and

Whereas, every watershed state will rely on the agricultural community to continue to make significant further reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment to restore local water quality and reach the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL); and

Whereas, to restore the watershed to clean, safe water, there is a need for expanded, dedicated agricultural funding , as well as readily available, professional agricultural technical assistance providers to support farmers in the successful restoration of the Chesapeake Bay; and

Whereas, programs within the Farm Bill’s conservation title, such as the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program and Regional Conservation Partnership Program, provide valuable financial and technical support to our farmers as they do their part to meet the Bay TMDL; and

Whereas, states have developed agricultural conservation technical or financial assistance programs to help meet their own Bay TMDL goals; and

Whereas, additionally, some states in the watershed operate their own robust programs designed to supplement and complement the Farm Bill in assisting farmers to implement conservation practices to meet their own Bay TMDL goals.

By this directive, the Chesapeake Executive Council will:

Endeavor to provide stable, adequate and predictable levels of funding for technical assistance including funds independent of cost share and financial assistance programs and practice implementation at both state and federal levels,

Include an assessment in each state’s Phase III Watershed Implementation plan of the capacity of agricultural technical and financial assistance to deliver the nutrient and sediment load reductions assigned to the agricultural sector along with strategies to address any identified needs.

Diversify and expand the network of public, private and non-profit providers of technical and financial assistance to ensure that on-farm assistance is available to meet the agricultural sector load reductions.

Expand technical assistance capacity, request options from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for the use of cooperative agreements and other tools that combine federal, state, local and private resources to target state priority agricultural resource concerns.

Enhance the job climate for government technical assistance providers by exploring how to make training and certification more streamlined and accessible, along with the development of two-year certification programs, innovative technology training forums and education loan assistance programs.

Signed:

Governor of Maryland

Governor of Delaware

Governor of New York

Governor of Pennsylvania

Governor of Virginia

Governor of West Virginia

Mayor of the District of Columbia

Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Commission

Environmental Protection Agency Administrator