



# BACKGROUND

## Directive in Support of Agricultural Technical Assistance and Conservation Practice Implementation

### Background

Agriculture is essential to all people—farms provide us with food and fiber, natural areas, and aesthetic and environmental benefits. But agriculture is also one of the single largest sources of nutrient and sediment pollution entering the Chesapeake Bay. In its midpoint assessment of progress toward meeting the goals of the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (Bay TMDL), the Environmental Protection Agency identified agriculture as one of the most critical sectors in which to target for increased pollutant reductions.

To achieve these agricultural pollutant reductions, a need exists for collaborative, innovative partnerships, programs and funding sources. A combination of strong, well-implemented regulatory programs, voluntary incentive programs that address farming operations, and/or targeted annual state agricultural cost-share and other financing programs have great potential to be successful. *Boots on the Ground: Technical Assistance for Farmers* (<http://www.chesbay.us/recent.htm>), a comprehensive report from the Chesapeake Bay Commission on agricultural technical assistance within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, lays out:

- How to define what technical assistance is, who provides it and how it works;
- How it is funded; and
- What do we need to do to ensure its availability and effective delivery.

The report was developed through extensive stakeholder engagement at the federal, state and local levels, along with regional non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and most importantly, farmers living and working in the watershed.

### The Directive

The *Chesapeake Executive Council: Directive in Support of Agricultural Technical Assistance and Conservation Practice Implementation* recognizes that crucial role that farmers play in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, while acknowledging the need for technical assistance to help the agricultural sector in meeting their pollutant reduction goals. The whereas clauses identify the importance of the agricultural sector to both the economic and environmental health of each member jurisdiction, and the role that technical assistance providers play in helping farmers achieve environmental benefits while enhancing their economic viability.

The therefore clauses identify specific actions the Chesapeake Executive Council tasks the Chesapeake Bay Program Principals' Staff Committee to address to ensure technical assistance is adequate to achieve the agriculture sector load reductions required to meet the Bay TMDL. The approach in each jurisdiction is to maximize voluntary and incentive-based programs to achieve agricultural sector load reductions, while providing adequate technical assistance as a key part of achieving that outcome.

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