

AAC | Agricultural Advisory Committee

CHAIR
Bill Fink
Pennsylvania

Che Axum
Washington, DC

Amanda Barber
New York

Will Carlisle
Delaware

Amanda Cather
Maryland

Kevin Craun
Virginia

Barb Glenn
Maryland

Kristof Grina
Washington, DC

Greg Mitchell
West Virginia

Jerry Ours
West Virginia

Bill Powers
Delaware

Mark Rohrbach
Pennsylvania

Bob Waring
Virginia

Marty Young
New York

November 10, 2025

Governor Wes Moore
Chair, Chesapeake Executive Council
Office of the Governor
100 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Governor Moore,

On behalf of the Chesapeake Bay Program's Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC), thank you for ensuring agriculture has a seat at the table. The success of the Chesapeake Bay Restoration depends on the collective action of many different individuals, and our input is fundamental to inform effective strategies, policies and programs. The Chesapeake Bay Program's four advisory committees act as a two-way street to bring expert advice and boots on the ground insight in, while serving as ambassadors out into their networks of farmers, local governments, citizens, and scientists.

Farmers are not opponents in Chesapeake Bay restoration—they are partners and problem-solvers. Every day, they balance producing food for our communities with protecting the water, soil, and ecosystems that sustain us all. Our farmers are not just food producers—they are frontline environmental stewards. Supporting them means supporting clean water and strong rural economies.

Farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed continue to demonstrate that when investments and verification systems are in place, we deliver measurable results well above national baselines, including:

- Ag Best Management Practice (BMP) Implementation reduced nitrogen loads by 58.8 million pounds and phosphorus loads by 2.6 million pounds
- Cover crops on nearly 2 million acres- 5x the national adoption rate!
- No-Till and Conservation Tillage on nearly 3 million acres
- Conservation Plans on more than 5 million acres

Our progress to date and continued annual growth demonstrates that voluntary, locally-led conservation through the partnership model of federal, state and local funding, technical assistance, and accountability is working.

The AAC respectfully offers the following recommendations and requests for action to further empower agriculture to keep this progress in place and help meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals:

1. Strengthen Farm Viability as the Foundation for Conservation

Economic viability is inseparable from environmental sustainability. When farms thrive, conservation thrives. Programs should explicitly link profitability, cash flow, and risk management with conservation outcomes.

- Support state-level cost-share and tax-credit programs that align conservation with financial health
- Encourage business-planning and transition services alongside conservation funding to help the next generation enter and remain in farming.
- Recognize that voluntary adoption of BMPs depends on farms having the resources to act.

2. Accelerate Innovation and Target Investments

Investments in agricultural conservation are working. To build on this success, the Partnership should continue to support innovative practices, strategies, and technologies that enhance productivity, profitability and water quality.

- Prioritize soil health, precision agriculture, efficient nutrient management, and manure treatment technologies.
- Strengthen public-private partnerships for data collection and innovation, with appropriate liability and privacy protections.
- Support innovative incentive approaches.
- Ensure that state and federal programs are responsive and flexible to keep pace with new technologies and advancements.

3. Celebrate Agricultural Progress and Build Public Trust

What we call the “agricultural sector” is made up of 83,000 farms, including many small private landowners who have achieved measurable reductions in nutrient and sediment losses through their collective voluntary actions, innovation, and stewardship. Those successes deserve to be recognized.

- Establish a proactive communications campaign across the Partnership to highlight on-farm conservation results.
- Use transparent, credible data to tell the story of progress—highlighting wins while identifying opportunities for continued improvement.

The Chesapeake Bay states are national leaders in BMP adoption; it’s time to communicate that progress more effectively to policymakers and the public.

4. Support Land Preservation and Diverse Agricultural Systems

Preserving farmland is integral to protecting the Bay. Development is the true alternative to agriculture, and maintaining working lands should remain a central strategy.

- Support farmland as a preferred land use through ag land preservation programs and other options for working lands.
- Ensure that conservation programs are adaptable for diverse operations—including urban, small-scale, and food-access-focused farms.
- Maintain flexibility in program design to avoid constraining agriculture’s ability to remain diverse and nimble in food production.

5. Cultivate Agricultural Literacy and Workforce Development

To sustain momentum, the next generation must be engaged and equipped.

- Promote agricultural literacy in schools and community programs.
- Invest in workforce and leadership pipelines for farmers, agronomists, animal scientists and conservation professionals.
- Encourage mentorship programs and recognition of young farmer leadership in conservation.

Economic viability and workforce development are directly linked—young producers and conservationists must see a viable future in agriculture if we expect continued progress.

Direct Requests to the Governors of the Executive Council

To sustain and amplify the progress made by the agricultural community, the AAC respectfully asks each Governor to:

- 1. Maintain and Expand State Agricultural Conservation Funding**
Continue or increase dedicated state funding streams such as the PA Farm Bill, MD Agricultural Cost-Share Program, VA Whole-Farm Approach, and NY Agricultural Nonpoint Source Program and Climate Resilient Farming Grant Program. Reliable, state-specific investment remains the foundation for measurable BMP adoption.
- 2. Test New Incentive Structures to Increase BMP Implementation**
Endorse and fund pilot programs that directly tie payments to verifiable environmental outcomes- rewarding measurable nutrient reductions, carbon mitigation, and water-quality improvements.
- 3. Champion Agricultural Literacy and Career Pipelines**
Promote agricultural education and training at the state level to ensure a strong conservation workforce and support for the next generation of producers.
- 4. Advance Data-Driven Accountability and Transparency**
Strengthen the use of transparent, credible data to track and communicate agricultural progress. Encourage responsible public-private partnerships that protect farmer data while improving the accuracy and credibility of Bay reporting.

In closing, farmers are a “silent majority” among environmentalists—people who live on the land, rely on its productivity, and care deeply about its future. Investing in farm conservation is a win-win: it protects the Chesapeake Bay and keeps our agricultural sector competitive and resilient.

We are seeing real results—record reductions in pollution, healthier soils, and stronger rural economies. Let’s continue to build on that momentum together.

Respectfully submitted,



William C. Fink

Chair, Agricultural Advisory Committee

Chesapeake Bay Program