

A group of black and white cows are standing in a field of tall grass. The scene is bathed in the warm, golden light of a sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a soft glow and long shadows. The cows are looking towards the camera, and their white patches are highlighted by the warm light.

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey and Producer Survey Verification Framework

CBP Agriculture Workgroup Meeting
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A photograph of a farm scene. In the foreground, several cows are standing in a field of tall, green grass. One cow is white with a black face, and another is black with a white face. In the background, a white pickup truck is parked in a field. The sky is blue with some clouds.

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- Virginia implemented its first Chesapeake Bay watershed-wide Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey in 2021.
- Virginia implemented a new survey starting in June of 2025 to update the previous survey to assist in capturing additional voluntary conservation practices on Virginia farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- The information is intended to enable Virginia agriculture tell the story of what farmers are doing to conserve soil and improve water quality.
- This represents important information that can help agriculture achieve its water quality goals for Virginia's Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay.

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- The survey was developed collaboratively by Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Task Force.
- Task force members worked closely together and included the following representatives:
 - VA Farm Bureau (VFB)
 - VA Cattlemen's Association (VCA)
 - VA Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD)
 - VA Agribusiness Council (VAC)
 - VA Cooperative Extension (VCE)
 - VA Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)
 - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - VA Department of Conservation and Recreation (VADCR)
 - VA Department of Environmental Quality (VADEQ)
 - VA Department of Forestry (VDOF)
 - VA Commonwealth University Survey and Evaluation and Research Laboratory (SERL)
 - EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office (CBPO)

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- Survey questions were pre-tested by a group of Virginia farmers, Extension agents, and conservation professionals with VCE, VASWCD, and the VFB, and the survey was refined based on their input.
- The survey is being administered by the VCU Survey Evaluation & Research Laboratory in partnership with Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Task Force.
- Supporting training resources were provided to the SWCD and VCE staff to assist producers with completing the survey, including a training video: [2025-26 Voluntary Ag BMP Farmer Survey - Staff Training.mp4](#)

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Nonetheless, the supporting project partners have encouraged all Virginia farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to fill out the survey.
- All names and location information about individual farmers and farms will be protected and remain confidential.
- The results reported by the VCU Survey Evaluation & Research Laboratory will be cumulative by county and will not include individual names or locations.
- Names and addresses will be removed from all inventory and farm visit results to prevent identification of participants.

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- The survey asked producers if a best management practice was developed with cost share or not, as well as if that practice remains supported by a current cost share contract.
- The survey was intended to identify if farm operations maintained best management practices that were not supported by cost share (voluntary) as well as practices that were supported by cost share but are no longer under a BMP contract (expired crediting lifespan).
- Farmers were encouraged to contact their local Virginia Cooperative Extension office or local SWCD office for help with completing the survey.

Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural BMP Survey

- The online survey closed to the public on June 30, 2026.
- Researchers from Virginia Cooperative Extension and the VCU Survey Evaluation & Research Laboratory are analyzing the survey responses and have been providing cumulative results to Virginia's Voluntary Agricultural BMP Task Force members during the project.
- The final summarized data will be included in Virginia's annual reporting to the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office in 2026 to be counted toward Virginia's goals for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan.
- The summarized results will also be shared widely through media outlets to tell the story of how Virginia farmers are proactively working to improve water quality.

A photograph of a herd of cows in a lush green field. In the background, a white pickup truck is parked. The scene is set in a rural area with rolling hills and a line of trees in the distance under a cloudy sky.

Producer Survey Verification Framework

Producer Survey Verification Framework

- In addition to collecting information on agricultural BMP practices maintained on the farm operations, producers were also asked if they would voluntarily allow onsite follow-up verification visits.
- Onsite verification visits are currently being completed across Virginia's Bay watershed by Virginia Cooperative Extension staff and consultants as per the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership's approved verification framework.
- Verification process recommendations for voluntary producer surveys, including the Virginia Farm Voluntary Agricultural Survey, are identified in the CBP Verification Framework for Agriculture.

Producer Survey Verification Framework

- As part of the CBP partnership's Verification Framework for agriculture, Section 4a. "Farm Inventory" is pertinent to producer surveys:
 - Farm Inventory:

"A survey or listing of physical BMPs completed by certified, trained technical staff, or by the producer. The survey or listing is based on physical inspection. The reliability of the information and the level of verification depends upon the intensity and frequency of the survey, the training of the person completing the survey, and whether the person completing the survey must certify to its accuracy with penalties for false information. Producer completed inventories without third-party verification are not considered an adequate method for verification."
 - Source:

<https://d38c6ppuviqmfp.cloudfront.net/documents/Complete%20CBP%20BMP%20Verification%20Framework%20with%20appendices.pdf> Page 9

Producer Survey Verification Framework

- The researchers of the Virginia Cooperative Extension and Virginia Commonwealth University obtained voluntary approval for onsite verification visits by producers participating in the survey for nearly all Virginia counties in the Bay watershed to conduct a county-scale verification process. (56 counties)
- However, there were several participating counties in which no producers consented to the onsite visits. (4 counties)
- One potential approach potential approach for the select counties missing onsite verification would be to scaled up all of the VA Bay counties to a HUC level for analysis and reporting.
- Alternatively, another potential approach for the select counties missing onsite verification would be to remove the survey data from the project's BMP analysis and report.

Producer Survey Verification Framework

- A third potential approach identified by the Virginia Cooperative Extension could involve the use of adjoining representative county BMP survey verification results to be used as a proxy in lieu of the unavailable county-scale BMP verification analysis.
- The alternative approach includes the following parameters:
 - Representative counties for proxy BMP verification analysis would be geographically adjoining and share like or similar physical characteristics, including climate, geology, agricultural production systems (e.g.; crops, livestock, etc.), regulations, and access to incentive-based programs and technical assistance.
 - The proxy BMP verification process would be based on the BMP verification analysis results from two or more representative adjoining counties to reduce potential data bias.
 - If the above parameters could not be achieved, the survey data could either be scaled up to a HUC versus county level, or the survey data obtained from the non-verified counties could be removed from the survey data report.



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