

Good Afternoon Everyone. It is an incredible honor to speak with you all this afternoon and I thank you for the opportunity.

I was lucky to be born in a very special place. That place is Lancaster County. Lancaster is widely known for its strong agricultural community. I have always felt lucky to find fresh, local produce around every corner and feel the strong sense of community that this bounty created.

Lancaster is an astonishing little county. There are 425,000 acres of ag land in the County, home to almost 6,000 farms of which, 99% are owned locally. We are ranked number 1 in the US for productivity on non-irrigated soil and the value of market products sold annually is \$1.5 billion. Farms in Lancaster provide 2.2 million people pork, 3.6 million people chicken, 9 million people eggs and 10.6 million people, milk each year. However, these great numbers do not come without a cost. Take a look at any pollutant loading map and Lancaster is easy to find. Clearly defined, without any political boundaries, we show up bright red for Nitrogen, Phosphorus and Sediment. Lancaster County alone, is responsible for 21% of the Nitrogen load in Pennsylvania's Phase III WIP.

Understanding this challenge and seeking to find a solution, led me to receive a degree in environmental resource management from Penn State. Upon graduation, I moved home to begin my career at the Lancaster County Conservation District where I first began to truly understand the dynamics of ag and the environment within the County. After a few transformative years, I began a new position with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. Aware of the great need in Lancaster County, I asked to move our Pennsylvania office to Lancaster to better support our farmers.

I have the privilege of working with farmers every day. From my experience, I can share with you that farmers have a deep care for their land. They have a strong stewardship ethic that has been passed down from generations before them and will continue to be passed down to the generations to come. I believe that the vast majority of farmers want to manage their lands responsibly. They have a strong sense of concern for their soil and the streams running through their lands. Every farmer can tell you exactly where his field gullies regularly and exactly what path through his pasture makes his cows the muddiest.

However, farmers can at times face economic challenges and conservation can be very costly. A conservation plan alone is commonly over a \$1,000. Stabilizing your barnyard with concrete averages around \$20,000. And a manure storage facility – is usually around \$80,000. Given these costs, you can understand why facilities and practices that farmers may know they need, are not implemented.

Fortunately, many programs exist that provide financial support to farmers in need. Help can be found with the federal and state government as well as private support from many different NGO's. These programs are imperative to achieving our goals of restoring the Chesapeake Bay.

New programs are developed continually and there are some exciting new things happening in Lancaster. We, at the Alliance, have recently begun working with Turkey Hill Dairy, a national ice cream distributor that was founded and is headquartered in Lancaster County. Turkey Hill has asked all of their farmers to obtain a conservation plan and implement the conservation practices written into said plan. The Alliance and Turkey Hill partnered together to receive a grant from the Natural Resource Conservation Service to support the farmers that could not afford to the cost of a plan and implementation. I do not know of any other ag distributor that has made this ask of their farmers. I

believe this new leadership developing within the private sector is going to catapult us forward in achieving our conservation goals.

As we continue to push toward our goals, we need to always remember the value of our farmers. They are an integral part of society, feeding our local communities and the world. We need we work with them, not against them, to solve our environmental challenges. When we ask farmers to improve, we need to simultaneously provide support. By working together and providing assistance, I believe we will support farmers in becoming the true stewards of their land that the vast majority of farmers aspire to be.