

I would like to thank everyone for the opportunity to speak, it is an honor,

In trying to sum up what the bay cleanup has meant to farmers throughout the states it made me think of a phrase my family and I saw painted on the Berlin Wall a little while back by the artist Afrikanische Weischert. The photo with my children hangs in my office as a reminder every day,

“many small people, in many small places,
Doing many small things,
That can alter the face of the world.

With all of the complexity surrounding the cleanup of an ecosystem, it has to start with many people doing many small things to make a difference. On the whole, it appeared to be an extremely daunting task.

When I started farming with my father 25 years ago, cleaning up the bay seemed like an impossibility - so many people, so little science and many, many groups that could only agree to disagree. It was an unhealthy situation; not only did we have the wicked problem of a dirty environment, we had the wicked social problem of trying to get all of the folks that care about the bay together.

At the time I felt as though there were very few ways that farmers could improve the way that they grow food, that would be more environmentally sound. Frankly, I did not feel that I was even a part of the problem. I was young, educated and excited farmer, being an environmentalist was something that I never saw as a part of a future in farming.

Then the Chesapeake Bay Foundation reached out to the farm community to get together to try and come up with solutions, I was incredulous. Several farmers and the CBF then went to get the first round of funding for cover crops.

That was the start of a very large environmental experiment in getting an entire ecosystem cleaner.

Through the programs and the people that have been hired to administer them, I, like many farmers, have managed to stay financially sound while completely changing the way we farm over the last 20 years. Cover crops, no till, precision farming, to name a few. This area, the bay watershed, has, in my opinion, the best farmers in the world. At the same time, we have some of the best environmental groups as well. Coming up with solutions-based approaches through collaboration to fixing what ails the environment.

One example of this is on the northeastern shore of MD; including myself there are two farmers on the board of Shore Rivers. Considering that 25 years ago I was hesitant to attend a meeting with an environmental group, to now being on the board of a group, shows the great social progress and the confluence of folks coming together to solve problems through innovations and collaborative thoughts and actions. Because of the funding of government programs and NGO's I have been given the opportunity to see the way we farm through different lenses. Not only opening up my farm to build transparency, but also having original thoughts and technical assistance to keep my business flowing.

The technical and monetary assistance that education has brought through the bay funding has enabled the farm community to change the way we farm with confidence. By putting aside

differences we have been empowered to farm better. Whether it is working with government organizations or NGO's, farmers have been enabled to utilize that assistance in a way that is now showing in a cleaner bay.

I did say CLEANER, not clean. I think if we can continue down this path we can show the world that growing food and having a clean environment for our children are possible. When I go fishing, or water skiing with my kids, I often think, how awful it would be if they were no longer given the opportunity to do these things while at the same time I feel very fortunate they are.