



## Who Are We?

### **The Conservation District Role**

When meeting new people, a common question that almost always comes up is, “so, where do you work?” To this we answer, “The Chester County Conservation District.” Then the conversation always turns into an in-depth explanation of the many, many roles of Conservation Districts.

### **Understanding the Conservation District Roles**

The first part is recognizing the two different halves of the office: the **Urban Team** and the **Agricultural Team**. The titles are somewhat self explanatory. The **Urban Team** works with development and the storm water, erosion, and runoff concerns from the disturbed areas as a result of development. The **Agricultural Team** works with agricultural operations and addressing the erosion and nutrient runoff concerns that happen due to normal farming practices.

### **Conservation and The Agricultural Team**

When we incorporate best management practices into an operation’s everyday activities, we can give producers the tools to manage resources in the best possible way while being conscious of environmental impacts. Much of our time is spent on procuring funding, designing, and overseeing the installation of these best management practices. Examples of best management practices we promote are: manure management systems, heavy use areas, roof runoff structures, stormwater controls, manure stacking areas, waterways, diversions, cropland terraces, animal walkways, access roads, stream crossings, forested buffers and many more. Our office deals with many different funding sources for positions and projects, and each Conservationist’s job is molded to fit the existing needs year to year. Equine, mushroom, dairy, hog, duck, field crop, and produce operations can call our office for further information and personalized assistance.

### **Complaints**

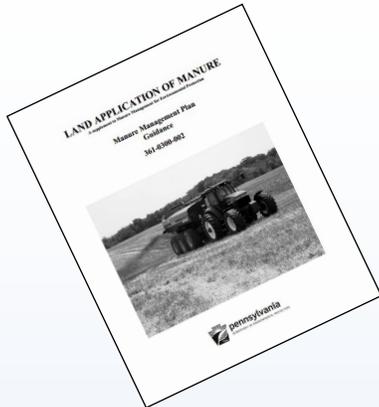
The Chester County Conservation District is not a regulatory agency for agricultural operations. This means we do not administer penalties for non-compliance with regulations. However, we do handle complaints from the public on behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. We are the first responders in these situations and we strive to educate and seek voluntary compliance first and foremost.

### **Education**

Ultimately, our initial visits with agricultural producers are informational and educational, and where the assistance goes from there is really up to the individual and their specific needs. Looking for ideas to address an environmental concern on your farm? Would you like to know what financial assistance is available? Give the Conservation District a call at 610-925-4920 and we can tailor information and assistance to your specific needs and priorities.

# Funding Available for the Development of Manure Management Plans (MMPs)

As has been well documented lately, according to Chapter 91 of Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law, all farms that generate and/or land apply manure are required to have a written Manure Management Plan (MMP).



## “Are you in compliance?”

If not, any farm in the Red or White Clay Watersheds of Chester County could now be eligible to receive a grant to cover the cost of having a MMP written. With funding made available through United Water Delaware’s Watershed Control Plan, farmers may receive up to \$250 to put toward the development of a plan.

The money will be awarded on a first come-first serve basis, so contact Adam Mowery (610-925-4920 x 116 / amowery@chesco.org) if you are interested. Also, if you are not sure if your farm lies within the Red or White Clay Watershed, the CCCD can be of assistance in determining this for you.

United Water Delaware has also offered to help cover the cost of hosting Manure Management Workshops in the Red and White Clay Watersheds. The CCCD anticipates organizing two workshops in the Fall/Winter 2014. If you’re interested in attending and want to be contacted when the details have been finalized, please contact us to confirm you are on our mailing list.

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Thousand cankers disease has been detected in Chester County trees and the Agriculture Department has enacted wood quarantines. This restricts the movement of wood and wood products from Chester and other surrounding counties. The disease was found in fields with black walnut trees in Franklin, London Britain, and Lower Oxford townships. For more information, go to “Resource,” the Newsletter of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, at <http://www.apps.dcnr.state.pa.us/news/resource/res2014/14-0806-tcd.aspx>

# Nutrient Management

VS

# Manure Management

Please refer to Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences publication “Agronomy Facts 54: Pennsylvania’s Nutrient Management Act (Act 38) Who is Affected?” for more information on determining your type of operation at: <http://extension.psu.edu/plants/nutrient-management/act-38/pennsylvania-s-nutrient-management-act-act-38-who-is-affected>

- **Act 38 (Nutrient and Odor Management Act)**
- Based off Animal numbers and densities
  - **Concentrated Animal Operations (CAO)**
    - Operations with 2 AEU/Ac. or greater (density)
    - 1 AEU (animal equivalency unit) = 1,000 lbs. animal weight
    - Produces more manure than can be safely applied.
  - **Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO)**
    - NMP required as part of DEP NPDES permit for CAFOs
    - See **FYI** for more info. about CAFOs
- Written by a certified Act 38 Planner
- Must be reviewed by a certified Act 38 reviewer
- Subject to Conservation District Board approval
- Changes/revisions to an approved plan subject to review and approval of amendments
- Requires soil and manure tests/analysis
- Requires documented manure spreader capacity and calibration
- Written for 1 – 3 years
- Subject to status reviews to determine implementation of the plan
- Includes setbacks from sensitive resources (i.e. – streams, wells, sinkholes, drainage systems, etc.)
- Addresses Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs)
- Details existing inadequate Manure management practices and stormwater involving **CRPAs**.
  - Includes a schedule of Best Management Practice (BMP) implementation to address inadequate practices
- Includes export/broker agreements
- Record Keeping
  - Crop Yields
  - Quantity, timing, and location of manure applied
  - Soil Tests
  - Manure Tests
  - Manure transfer/export

- **Chapter 91 (Clean Streams Law)**
- Required for all operations that generate or utilize manure or agricultural process wastewater
  - For all operations which a NMP does not apply
    - Not a CAFO and less than 2 AEU/ac. animal density
- Can be written by anyone
- Does not need to be reviewed/approved
- Flexible to changes
- Does not require soil and manure tests/analysis (although helpful)
- Includes setbacks from sensitive resources (i.e. – streams, wells, sinkholes, drainage systems, etc.)
- Addresses Animal Concentration Areas (ACAs)
- Record Keeping
  - Crop Yields
  - Quantity, timing, and location of manure applied
  - Manure transfer/export

## FYI

An operation is considered a **CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation)** if:

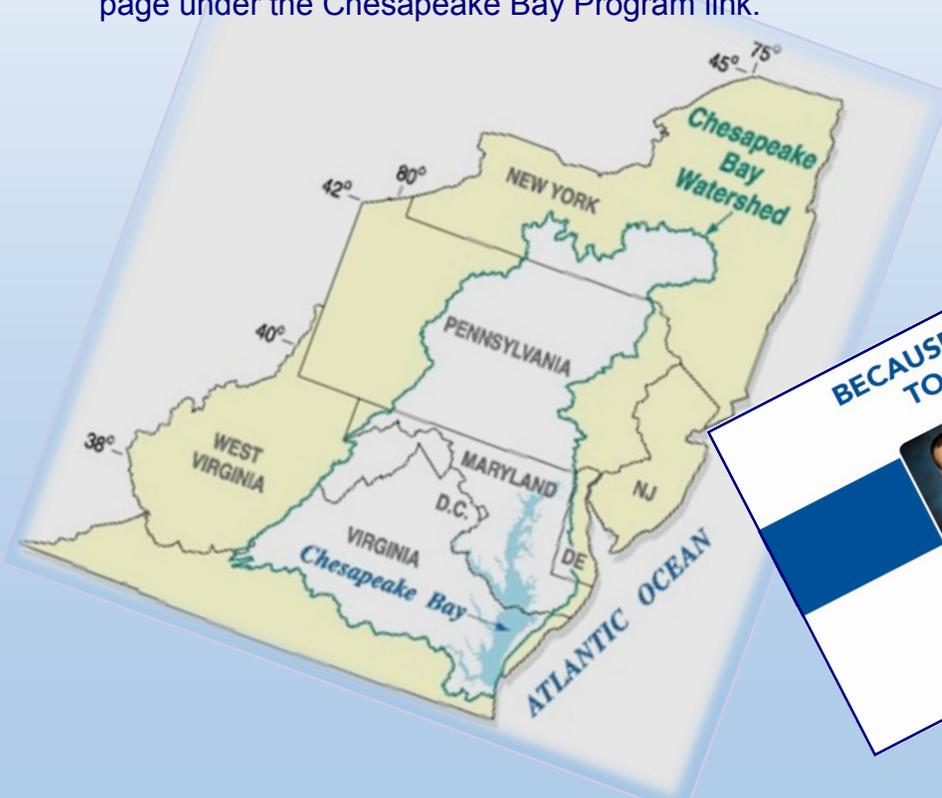
- Operation Exceeds any of the following thresholds for Animal quantities:
  - 700 mature dairy cows; 1,000 veal calves; 1,000 cattle; 2,500 swine (55lbs or more); 10,000 swine (less than 55 lbs); 500 horses; 10,000 sheep or lamb; 55,000 turkeys; 30,000 layers or broilers (wet); 125,000 broilers (dry); 82,000 layers (dry); 30,000 ducks (dry); 5,000 ducks (wet)
    - “wet” and “dry” describe type of manure handling system whether liquid (wet) or other (dry)
- Operation has a total of more than 1,000 AEU for all animal types combined
- Operation is a CAO (> 2 AEU/ac) that has more than 300 AEU for all animal types combined

# County Implementation Plan

Although less than 20% of the County is located in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, the Bay area has significant natural resource concerns. As directed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Chester County Conservation District has updated its County Implementation Plan (CIP) which addresses water quality initiatives in the Chesapeake Bay portion of the County. The CIP guides the Conservation District towards reaching goals laid out by the PA Watershed Implementation Plan. These goals include reducing the impact on the Bay from agriculture, municipal and industrial wastewater, development, and septic systems.

The three major pollutants targeted in the County Implementation Plan are nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. More than half of the nitrogen and phosphorus loads to the Bay watershed originate from nonpoint sources. Most nonpoint source pollutants are created by runoff from agricultural lands, residential development, and other urban areas. The remaining nitrogen and phosphorus loads come from point source discharges such as municipal and industrial wastewater plants and failed residential septic systems.

The Chester County portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is situated in the Lower Susquehanna East watershed, and is comprised of the following local watersheds: the Octoraro Creek, Pequea Creek, Northeast Creek, Little and Big Elk Creeks, and Conestoga Creek. According to the Chester County Planning Commission's 2010 Community Profiles, the County as a whole is made up of approximately 35% agricultural land and 35% developed land. However, within the 20 municipalities that contain the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, approximately 53% of the land is used for agricultural purposes and only 20% is developed land—making runoff from farms a major target of the CIP. The County Implementation Plan also summarizes trends in development, population, farmland preservation, and County land use. Furthermore, the CIP details agricultural and urban best management practices to prevent and reduce erosion. If you wish to learn more about the CIP, it is available on the Chester County Conservation District's webpage under the Chesapeake Bay Program link.



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The Chester County Conservation District (CCCD) has a long history of working with the mushroom industry. Ag Team staff work with individual producers to help them understand current environmental standards and regulations and the impact they might have on their operations. CCCD Mushroom Farm Resource Conservationists, in conjunction with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), also provide technical assistance and help producers seek out funding opportunities to implement best management practices (BMPs) on mushroom farms and to bring them up to current environmental standards.

The agricultural activity of commercial mushroom production is regulated under the Solid Waste Management Act. The raw materials used and wastewater generated in mushroom substrate production as well as the mushroom compost and wastewater generated during the mushroom growing process have the potential, if managed inadequately, to negatively impact air quality, water quality, and human health. In 2012, the PA DEP updated the “Best Practices for Environmental Protection in the Mushroom Farm Community” manual that provides operational management strategies the industry can adopt to protect the environment and human health. Every mushroom operation is required to develop a Mushroom Farm Environmental Management Plan (MFEMP). An MFEMP describes the current management and existing conditions of the farm and the BMPs that need to be implemented to ensure adequate environmental protection. The development of a farm specific MFEMP and the implementation of the recommended BMPs outlined in the plan can be used in lieu of having to obtain a Solid Waste Permit from the PA DEP. It also helps operators avoid liability issues associated with the “normal farming practices” that are part of mushroom production. This manual not only serves as a BMP guidance document for the industry, but can also serve as a document to help educate the public and neighbors of mushroom farms on the “normal farming practices” associated with growing mushrooms.

The mushroom industry is integral to our local economy and the Chester County Conservation District will continue to work with individual producers to assist in the development of MFEMPs and implementation of BMPs that will help to protect natural resources for future generations. This will ensure the sustainability and viability of this important industry in Chester County.



# Help Us



# Help You

The Agricultural Team at the Conservation District likes to help everyone who contacts us with their conservation needs. This normally entails surveying, design work, lay out work, and construction checks as the work is being done. We can do all of this at no cost to the land owner. One might say that this is why we exist - to help landowners with their environmental problems.

One of the problems that we have at times is that landowners call us about projects that they would like to have done in the next month-or sometimes the next two weeks. Helping landowners with these types of projects is a major challenge because of all that goes into doing a project well and completely. The specifics get very detailed but the bottom line is that environmental projects take time to do.

The Conservation District is working and coordinating with a vast array of other groups and agencies to do environmental work in a legal, ethical manner. Our goal is to help land owners get projects done by going through the appropriate steps to accomplish the goals. Every project is different and requires the conservationist to consider what is required in this specific instance to complete the project in a successful manner. Meeting with the conservationist well before a project needs to start allows the landowner to understand the details of their project so that there are no surprises along the way.

The Ag Resource Conservationist can help you understand how to complete your project in as little time as possible. We handle most of the paper work required to do environmental projects legally, which can free a landowner from doing it all on his or her own time. We also apply for permits when they are needed and do the surveying required to design a successful project. The design work is done by working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) engineering staff and the specific landowner.

Landowners can have the most success doing environmental projects by thinking ahead about what their needs are and contacting us in a timely manner to begin the process. You might ask-"How much time are we talking about?" If you would like the Conservation District to help design a project for you, a six month lead time may be required. If you are interested in us finding funding to help you cover the cost of a project that we design, frequently a year or more could be required.

The most successful projects are the ones where a land owner calls us well ahead of time about a project that he or she is considering. We can discuss the requirements, coordinate on the design work and have the project complete and sitting on the shelf waiting for the proper time to commence construction. Good communications is the major key to good outcomes.

Contact us for help with your project at 610-925-4920.





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## Your Equine Operation May be Eligible for Financial Incentives through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program!

The equine industry in Pennsylvania is a diverse and growing industry. Penn State studies report that the equine industry is the fastest growing segment of the livestock industry in Pennsylvania. Chester County has the second highest equine population in the state and continues to expand. Due to the recognition of environmental concerns caused by equine operations, the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is now accepting applications from equine operations. Proper management of equine operations requires the adoption of conservation practices to protect natural resources.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary federal conservation program, managed by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, which helps agricultural producers reduce erosion and pollution concerns, and improve natural resources. EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to help people plan, install, and implement structural, vegetative and management practices on agricultural and forest land.

Resource concerns may be addressed by the following practices: a nutrient management plan, a grazing plan, interior fencing to support prescribed grazing, an animal waste storage facility, a feed management plan, watering facilities, erosion control practices, animal trails and walkways, air & water quality projects, stream crossings, field borders, riparian/ vegetative buffers, creation of wildlife habitat, forest management and energy audits to name a few. Participation in the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) may aid equine operations in meeting new compliance regulations set by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The following types of equine operations may be eligible for financial incentives through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP): horse breeding operations; services offered for trail/carriage rides, etc.; training horses for use in riding/ driving/ racing, etc.; boarding of equine, renting stalls/ fields/sheds, etc.; services that teach others how to ride/handle horses, and activities related to raising/ training/ managing race horses. Equine owners who have horses as a hobby or do not generate income from them are not eligible.

The deadline to submit an application for the 1st round of Fiscal Year 2015 ranking is October 17, 2014. Please contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service West Chester Field Office at 610-696-0398 ext.3 for additional information or to submit an application.





CHESTER COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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# The Back 40 ...

often has articles about the difficulty of farming. Fortunately, the Chester County Conservation District has an agricultural staff that is dedicated to providing top-notch service to our cooperators.

A major part of our job is training. Besides the “trainings” we receive from our cooperating producers, we attend many other formalized trainings and meetings that usually cover at least one of the following topics:

- Engineering standards – how to determine which practices are needed and how to design and implement them
- Planning – how to determine which plans a producer needs and how to write them
- Programs – learning about new programs for farmers to help with the cost of completing a project and about changes to existing programs
- Regulations – staying up to date on regulations and how and to whom they apply

Being knowledgeable about each of these categories is essential for our staff in order to provide the best possible service to you, our cooperators. We place the highest priority on providing you with all of the information you need to make the best decisions possible for the management of your operation. When we wrap up a plan or a project, our goal is for you to know that your operation is better than it was before we stepped onto the farm. So, please – give us a call at 610-925-4920 and let us help.