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CHESAPEAKE BAY RESTORATION PROJECT REACHES MILESTONE

Charleston, W.Va. – The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) announced a milestone reached within the Chesapeake Bay Restoration project. That milestone was meeting a significant agricultural goal developed as part of the state’s Watershed Implementation Plan. As of today, planners have written nutrient management plans for 90,000 acres in West Virginia’s eight county Chesapeake Bay drainage region.

“West Virginia is doing its part, and then some, to help restore the Chesapeake Bay watershed. To my knowledge, we are the furthest along and most likely the first state to reach its goals,” stated Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “Restoring land, for productive use, is a win for our economy and the environment.”

Nutrient management plans were written for many of the state’s poultry operations beginning in the mid-1990s. A decision was made in 2010 to remove most of the acreage and plans that had been reported up to that point and start fresh, with a new coordinated effort. From this time, the WVDA and West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) nutrient management planners set about the difficult task of writing and tracking new plans while updating existing ones.

“This has been a huge collaborative effort between the West Virginia Conservation Agency (WVCA) and the department of agriculture. Protecting this watershed is vital to West Virginia and our surrounding states,” stressed Conservation Agency Director Brian Farkas. “We are very proud of all the hard work that helped us reach this goal.”

On May 10, 2017, the official determination was made that West Virginia had reached the 90,000 acre goal. It is expected that West Virginia will continue to add to this acreage and go well beyond the goal that was initially set by the end of the calendar year.

“Significant recognition must go to the West Virginia farmers who were willing to buy into the program and voluntarily implement a nutrient management plan. While other states have resorted to regulatory programs with certain types of punishment for non-compliance, West Virginia decided to utilize a voluntary program,” stated WVDA Nutrient Management Coordinator Jerry Ours. “Outreach, education and real relationship building proved to be as successful, if not more, than regulatory programs.”

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