



United States Department of Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service

 **2018 Farm Bill: Maximizing
Opportunities in the Chesapeake Bay**
Matthew Lohr
Chief, NRCS

**Chesapeake Bay Commission
Quarterly Meeting**
September 13, 2019



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Where my story begins....

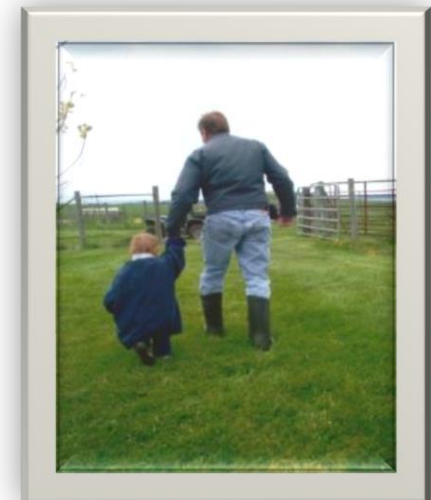


1880's



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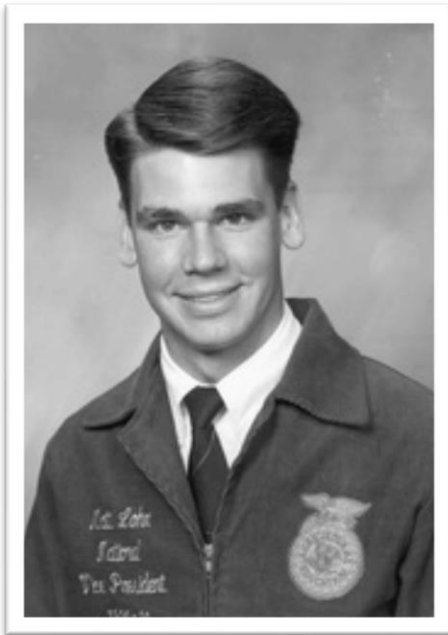
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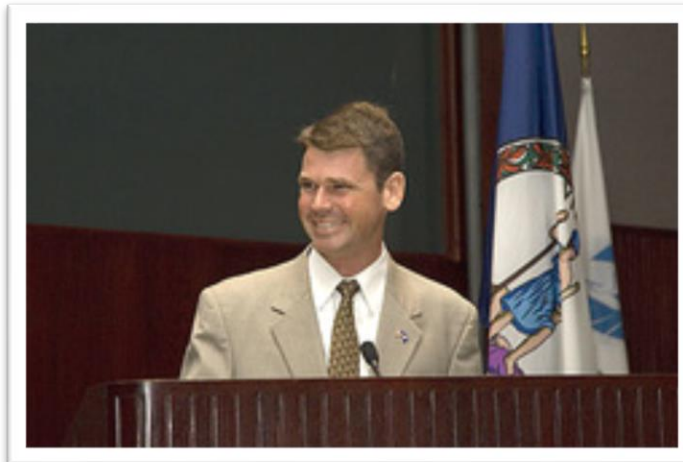
Legacy

Those enduring qualities and achievements that are celebrated and handed down to future generations

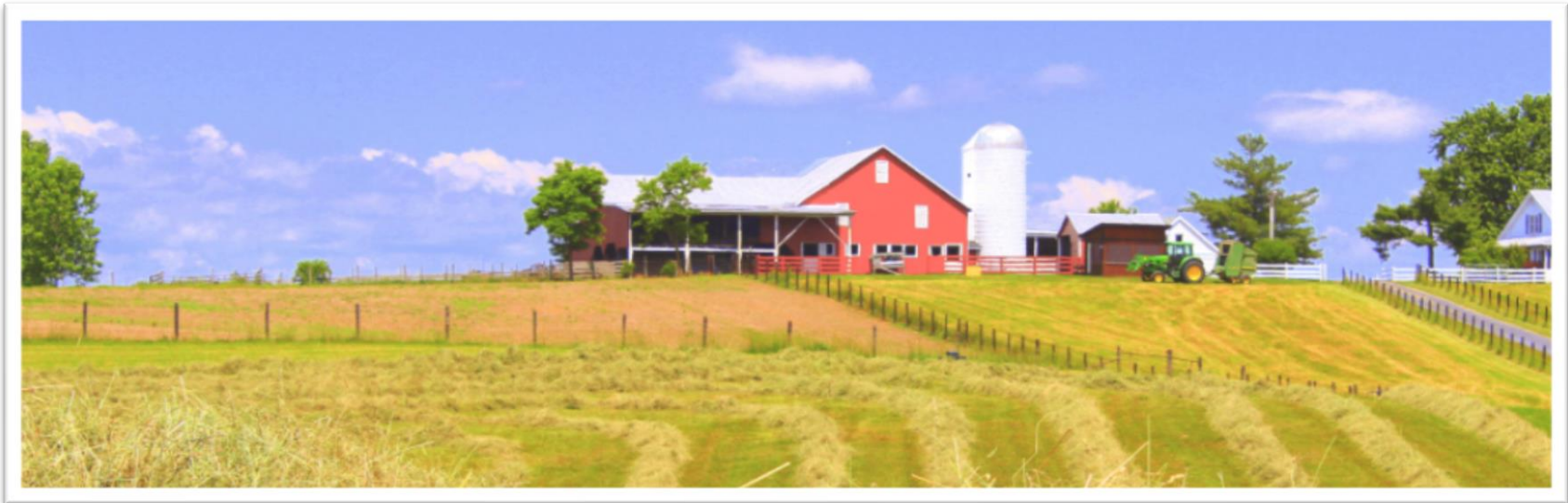




***National FFA**
***State Legislator**
***VA Ag Commissioner**



Valley Pike Farm, Inc.



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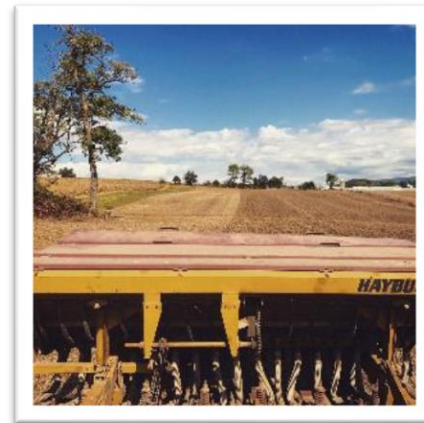
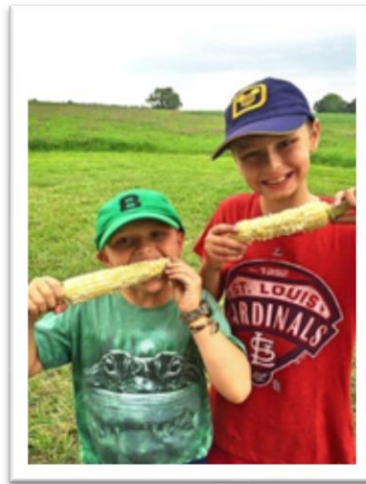
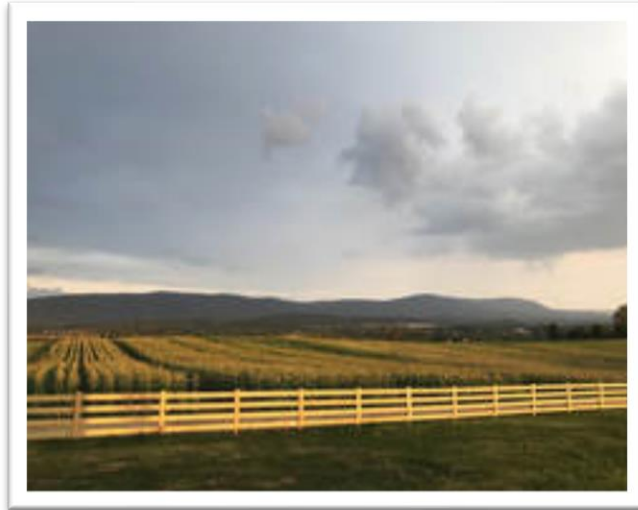
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A Family Affair...



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This is why I believe in conservation



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Lenny



Frank





Our Smallest Actions can have
the Biggest Impact!

**INSPIRING
IMPACT**





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Chief's Priorities

1. Implement and deliver the 2018 Farm Bill to our nation's farmers, ranchers, and private forest owners.
2. Streamline NRCS processes and program delivery to best serve our customers.
3. Better understand our customer needs and improve overall customer service.





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NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED ACTION PLAN

Chesapeake Bay Action Plan summarizes NRCS Priorities

- Natural Resources
- Outreach and Engagement
- S&T and Partnership

2018-2020 Chesapeake Bay Action Plan

Details NRCS commitments to priorities/goals for Natural Resources, Outreach, and Engagement. NRCS exceeded all its 2018 goals, achieving:

- **3,627 new conservation professionals trained**
- **12,106 public and private partners/citizens engaged in public meetings and committees**
- **28,020 new, underserved, and priority customers reached**
- **404,008 acres with practices implemented to improve water quality**
- **268,348 acres to improve soil health**
- **41,552 acres to restore/improve fish & wildlife habitat**



NRCS Natural Resource Priorities

- Improve water quality
- Improve soil health
- Restore and improve fish and wildlife habitat

NRCS Outreach and Engagement Priorities

- Training of conservation professionals
- Public engagement
- Client outreach

NRCS Science, Technology and Partnership Priorities

- Science, Technology and Data Guides Watershed and Farm Planning
- Use Partnerships to Increase Capacity and Effectiveness to Improve Natural resources
- Planning with Customers, Not for Customers



2018 Farm Bill - NRCS invests an average of \$8 million per day into conservation systems

NRCS has worked with producers to invest over \$1.1 billion into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.



2018 Farm Bill and NRCS Conservation Programs

- Demonstrates strong congressional support
- Helps streamline, target and simplify NRCS programs
- No new NRCS programs were added; none eliminated
- RCPP changed as a standalone program
- Developing rules that will be ready for FY20 signups
- NRCS will continue to offer the programs and assistance that producers and partners have come to expect



Changes to EQIP

- Adds resource concerns
- Raises cap for organic producers to \$140,000
- New enrollment option to address resource concerns
- Advance payments for historically underserved producers
- Expands CAPs to include soil health planning
- Increases authorization to >\$2 billion by 2023



Changes to CSP

- Increases payment rates for certain activities
- Authorizes contract extensions
- Provides specific support for organic
- Includes special grassland conservation initiative



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Changes to ACEP

- Assistance for 'Buy-Protect-Sell' transactions
- New requirements for highly erodible land
- Increases flexibility for partners
- Adds water quality as resource concern
- Expands wetland eligibility



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Changes to RCPP

- Announced Sept. 3, NRCS is accepting proposals with a Dec. 3 deadline.
- Now a stand alone program with its own funding - \$300 M/year nationwide.
- Enhanced Alternative Funding Arrangement provision – Farm Bill established 15 “alternate funding arrangements” or grants
- Three funding pools reduced to two — National pool eliminated
- Emphasis on project outcomes



CIG update




- NEW! On-Farm trial awards (\$25 M) planned announcement in November
- December - Regular CIG awards (\$12.5 M) planned to be announced
- FY19 CIG proposal period has closed
- Proposals are in peer review





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Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program-CREP



Targets high-priority conservation concerns identified by a State. Federal funds are supplemented with non-federal funds to address those concerns.

Resource Concern Priorities: Water Quality

NRCS will continue to address water quality concerns through EQIP, CSP and RCPP.

- This Conservation Title also requires collaboration with community water systems and state technical committees. A minimum level of 10 percent of conservation program funding, other than CRP, is to
- be used for source water protection.
- Water quality and water quantity practices that protect source water may have increased payment rates (not to exceed 90%).



Source Water Protection



- Should be considered in all programs; at least 10% of funding (except CREP) so approximately \$320 to \$377 million annually will be available nationwide.
- Certain entities (e.g., states, irrigation districts and groundwater mgmt. districts) are now eligible for water conservation and system efficiency practices.
- Increased payment rates (not to exceed 90%) for water quality and quantity practices that protect source water.



Information Gathering and Data Sharing

- The law has not changed!
- 2008 Farm Bill, Section 1619
- NRCS continues to share 100% of its practice data in aggregated form through partnership with USGS.
- Under 1619, we must aggregate the data to protect landowner privacy.



We must remain focused on our

Guiding values

- *Loving the land*
- *Serving our farmers*
- *Working hard*
- *Doing the right thing*
- *Partnering*
- *Caring*
- *Being an example for others*
- *Leaving a legacy*



**Thanks for
the chance
to be a
part of the
team!**



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