

## Lancaster, Chester County Farms Eligible for Special Funding

HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Natural Resources Conservation Service has awarded special funding for a Chesapeake Bay Foundation partnership project to reduce pollution and greenhouse gases on farms in Lancaster and Chester counties.

This funding will support a joint CBF-Environmental Defense Fund Conservation Innovation Grant initiative to more efficiently apply nutrients, resulting in pollution reduction benefits to water and air.

The grant is among nine projects nationally eligible for the \$10 million of additional funding.

The funding is available via the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to farmers in Chester and Lancaster counties who are interested in using enhanced nutrient management approaches (such as soil and plant testing) to help them apply nutrients only where they are needed most.

Resulting reductions of fertilizer will not only decrease potential nitrogen runoff into streams and rivers, but will also cut air emissions of nitrous oxide, a potent greenhouse gas.

EQIP funding can be used to help offset farmers' costs to implement various enhanced nutrient management methods.

The purpose of the CIG project is

to quantify these reductions and determine whether the greenhouse gas benefits could be sold as carbon offset credits.

Applications to participate in EQIP are accepted on a continual basis, but NRCS encourages eligible farmers to apply on or before Feb. 15 to be considered for priority funding in this project in fiscal year 2013.

"Enabling farmers to make better decisions about fertilizer use promises to take conservation to the next level with benefits for farmers and the environment," said Denise Coleman, state conservationist for NRCS in Pennsylvania.

"Applying the right amount of nitrogen in the right place at the right time will help producers increase their yields and reduce fertilizer costs while leading to water quality improvements," she said.

Beth McGee, senior water quality scientist for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, said, "In addition to water quality benefits, we also expect reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

"With possible shrinking federal support for conservation programs, we hope the project will ultimately facilitate Chesapeake region farmers' participation in and financial gain from the sale of carbon offset credits," McGee said.

This project builds on a partnership between the foundation, Washington Gas Energy Services and Sterling Planet in which the companies contribute to a carbon reduction fund that the foundation manages.

Carbon reduction funding is triggered by the sale of Washington Gas Energy Services' green product, WGES CleanSteps Carbon offsets.

To date, WGES and Sterling Planet have contributed more than \$400,000 to this carbon reduction fund to implement projects, primarily with agricultural producers, which generate carbon offset credits while also reducing pollution to the Chesapeake Bay.

Chester and Lancaster County farmers who want more information about the overall project may contact Chris Sigmund of Team Ag at 717-721-6795 or [chriss@teamaginc.com](mailto:chriss@teamaginc.com).

Chester county farmers who want more information about EQIP funding and application process may contact NRCS District Conservationist Beth Sassaman at the Chester County NRCS office at 610-696-0398 or [beth.sassaman@pa.usda.gov](mailto:beth.sassaman@pa.usda.gov).

Lancaster county farmers can call District Conservationist Heather Grove at the Lancaster NRCS office at 717-299-5361 or [heather.grove@pa.usda.gov](mailto:heather.grove@pa.usda.gov).

