



# Bucks County Farm Bureau

Volume 9, Issue 2

[www.pfb.com](http://www.pfb.com)

Spring 2024

## President's Message

Hello to Bucks County Farm Bureau Members:

Well spring has sprung! The grasses have greened up and the leaves have pushed out of the trees, and lambs are running with their mothers and so are calves and the foals. So life has begun again. So has the farming season. That means that you'll soon see equipment moving across our roads in our county. I ask you to please be patient and ask other people to also be patient when encountering farm equipment on the road.

For all the new members that have joined this past year, welcome to Bucks County Farm Bureau! We are always looking for help legislatively to visit our legislators and to tell them our story how farming is done on our farms. If you're interested to become involved, please contact one of our Farm Bureau Board members.

We will be having an Ice Cream Social at Traugers Farm Market. I would like to see as many members and their families as possible. This is a great time to meet and get to know other members from your county and also your board members. I hope to see you all there and to enjoy the Ice Cream Social and Traugers Farm Market.

Thank you for being a Bucks County Farm Bureau member and have a safe and prosperous summer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark A. Scheetz". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mark A. Scheetz  
President

## BUCKS COUNTY FARM BUREAU BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Dolly Rutherford, Newsletter Editor	267-566-2123	orruth91@yahoo.com

**The Bucks County Farm Bureau meets the 4th Wednesday of the month @ 7:30 p.m.  
Plumsteadville Grange, #1738, Route 611, Plumsteadville**

### **FARM-tastic Book Program—2024 Book: “Polly and the Birth Day”** **\$11.00**

Past books are still available. Contact Glenda Wismer 215-766-0675 or pamperedchefglenda@gmail.com

### **HarrisJerry /Paul Hockman Young Ag Professionals Grant-2024**

Applicants must be between ages 20-30, a Bucks County resident, and be actively involved in production agriculture. Applicant and/or family must be members in good standing of the Bucks County Farm Bureau and be committed to a career in production agriculture.

Applicants may receive up to two grants of \$2500.00, but not in succeeding years. Preference will be given to first time applicants. Applicants must be present to receive their grant at the Bucks County Annual Meeting in September. This grant is non-renewable. Please contact Mark Scheetz at 215-723-4904 or fivemfarm@verizon.net or Don Buckman at 267-718-0313 or donbuckman81@yahoo.com to request an application.

### **Young Ag Professionals Contests-2024**

Achievement Award, Excellence in Agriculture Award, Social Media Award,  
Discussion Meet Contest-Deadline 9/30/24

Upcoming Events: AFBF Fusion Conference, Denver Co, March 7-10, 2025  
AFBF Annual Convention, San Antonio, TX, January 24-28, 2025

Go to: pfb.com for further information.

# Ice Cream Social & Farm Tour

June 2nd

Traugers Market

370 Island Rd, Kintnersville

(Rt. 611 & Island Rd.)

Rain or Shine 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Bring the family & your lawn chairs. Farm Bureau Event will be held in Tractor Shed.



**Bucks County Annual Meeting**

**September 21, 2024**

**Penridge Community Center**

**More details to follow.**

# Weikel Open House-May 5, 2024



Hannah & Sarah Wismer, Cassidy Carwithen



Hannah Wismer, Cassidy Carwithen, Sarah Wismer



Hannah Wismer

## E Chester Heim Scholarship

Farm Bureau members with a son/daughter studying for an ag degree at DVU or Penn State can apply for this scholarship. Check box on the application confirming your parents are in good standing with PA Farm Bureau. For information for all of our scholarships go to:

<https://pfbfriends.com/education/scholarships/>



# Farmers Care Day-February 19, 2024

The annual Farmers Care Day was held February 19th at Freddy Hill Farm. The total amount donated by Region 1 of Pennsylvania was \$13,882.16 in food, aluminum can tabs, and monetary donations, which were given to the Ronald McDonald House Charities in Philadelphia. Bucks County Farm Bureau donated \$2,000.00.

Since 1999, regional agricultural friends have helped the house provide a “home-away-from-home” by stocking the pantry and providing families with food and other essential items necessary to make the house a home. Thanks to these efforts, the Ronald McDonald House can continue to provide a safe and comforting home for families of children receiving medical care at area hospitals.

Bucks County Farm Bureau is collecting soda & soup can tabs for charities (Farmers Care Day). Please be a part of this wonderful charity. You can give them to a Board member or bring them to a Board Meeting or to any Farm Bureau event.



Glen & Sarah Wismer



## Registration Due May 27

**Educator's Ag Institute 1.0 June 23-27, 2024**

**Educator's Ag Institute 2.0 June 26-28, 2024**

(must have completed 1.0 to attend 2.0)

**Main Campus Penn State University**

**Register at [pfbfriends.com](http://pfbfriends.com)**

**[Middletown Grange Fair August 14-18, 2024](#)**

**[Ag Progress Days August 13-15, 2024](#)**

## Bucks County Farmers Markets

- [Yardley Farmers Market](#): Saturdays 9 am – 1 pm, Buttonwood Park, Yardley. Runs May 4 through October 12.
  - [Lower Makefield Farmers Market](#): Thursdays 3:30 – 6:30 pm, at Edgewood & Heacock Roads in Yardley. Starting May 30 through October 3
  - [Wrightstown Farmers Market](#): Saturdays 9 am – 1 pm, at 2203 2nd Street Pike (next to the Wrightstown Township Municipal Building), Wrightstown. Runs May 4 through Thanksgiving.
  - [Doylestown Farmers Market](#): Saturdays 8 am – 1 pm, on Hamilton St. near West State St. in Doylestown. April 20 through November 23, rain or shine.
  - [Chalfont Farmers Market](#): Saturdays 8 am – Noon. Located at 40 N. Main Street, Chalfont Borough, next to the Police Department and Krup Park. [Check Facebook for up-to-date information.]
  - [Plumsteadville Grange Farm Market](#): Saturdays 9 am – 12:30 pm, at the Plumsteadville Grange near the intersection of Route 611 and Keller’s Church Rd. in Plumsteadville. Usually end of May through the end of October.
  - [Perkasie Farmers Market](#): Saturdays 9 am – 1 pm, on 7th between Market and Chestnut Streets in Perkasie. Starts June 1.
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## **PFB Participates in Blessing of the Balers May is Beef Month**



Pennsylvania Representative, Bud Cook, held his second annual Blessing of the Balers event outside the Pennsylvania Capitol building. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau was honored to have the opportunity to once again be a part of this special ceremony.

Agriculture organizations, state officials, beef farmers, and others gathered to bless the balers with the hope of a productive hay season.

The event also celebrated May as Beef Month, with representatives from the PA Beef Council, the Center for Beef Excellence, Pennsylvania Cattlemen’s Association, and the Pennsylvania Livestock Association.

## *Pennsylvania Farm Bureau State Legislative Update*

### **PFB Testifies to Pennsylvania House Game & Fisheries Committee on Crop Damage Legislation**

Andy Bater, Chairman of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's Wildlife & Fisheries Committee, testified to the Pennsylvania House Game & Fisheries Committee on HB 2106-2108 on Tuesday, April 9. The package of bills is intended to begin to mitigate the issue of crop damage and other wildlife issues affecting farmers across Pennsylvania.

The package of bills includes stricter trespass penalties, streamlined deer carcass removal, ensures at least one game commissioner meets the definition of a farmer, adds a database of good-standing hunters for farmers to contact, and removes the restrictions on Sunday hunting.

PFB fully supports this package of bills as they currently are written. As long as these key PFB priority issues are addressed in these bills, PFB will support Sunday hunting within this package. This is according to our policy: "We recommend supporting Sunday hunting if multiple PFB policy priorities are included in legislation."

Crop damage is a major issue for Pennsylvania farmers. USDA estimates from federal crop insurance data shows that Pennsylvania suffered north of \$20 million in losses on corn in 2017 – the highest reported number in the nation. That same study showed that Pennsylvania farmers suffered north of \$15 million in losses to soybean crops in 2017.

Additionally, PennDOT data between July 1, 2022, and June 30, 2023, shows that there were 5,848 accidents in the state that were directly or indirectly caused by deer. At least 1,264 people were injured and nine people were killed in those crashes.

PFB is glad to help lead the combined effort of working to solve this issue by working with multiple hunting and conservation groups to mitigate the problem together. Movement on this legislation is expected this spring.

### **Important state legislation Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is tracking:**

#### **Headed to the Governor's desk to be signed into law:**

**SB979** – Senator Lynda Schlegel Culver – SB979 would provide the Department of Agriculture the authority to specifically require the posting of dangerous transmittable disease information at domestic animal and feed locations where animals and feed are offered for public sale. While the department currently has broad authority to issue quarantines and regulate the keeping of domestic animals to exclude or contain a dangerous transmissible disease, there are no provisions in law to provide information to the public on how to manage domestic animals to prevent or mitigate disease. Currently, it is a retailer's choice to provide such information, even if it is encouraged and provided by a regulatory authority. While this legislation would address the current outbreak of HPAI, the language would apply to any transmittable disease outbreak posing a danger to domestic animals.

#### **Passed out of Committee:**

**HB997** – Representatives Lawrence and Owlett – Whole Milk in Pennsylvania Schools Act – This legislation would ensure Pennsylvania school children have access to Pennsylvania-produced whole milk. This bill passed the House last session 196-2 but was not considered in the Senate. The bill passed out of committee with no opposition on April 30th. The bill was then tabled on the House floor.

**SB800** – Senator Chris Dush – This legislation would recognize that the loss to a farmer whose land is seized through eminent domain is beyond the assessed value of the land. The land may possess various characteristics that make it particularly special, such as fertile soil, existence in an area where the farmer can sell produce to passersby, proven dependability, and many others. This legislation would seek to acknowledge the goodwill that a particular plot of land may have and compensate the farmer. The bill passed out of committee on a 10-1 vote on April 30th. The bill will now be up for consideration by the full Senate.

***Federal Legislative Update From Federal Affairs Specialist Bailey Fisher***

## FARM BILL

- *Farm Bill Action Alert and Timeline:* Last year, President Biden signed H.R.6363, a stacked continuing resolution (CR) for FY24 appropriations, which included a one-year extension of the farm bill. Now that FY24 appropriations are done, we are hopeful that the House Agriculture Committee sticks to Chairman GT Thompson's proposed timeline to have a farm bill markup by Memorial Day. **Please complete [AFBF's Action Alert](#) asking Congress to pass farm bill and include a legislative fix to Prop 12 ASAP!** If you completed the petition, we appreciate it but now AFBF has a new and improved Action Alert to complete.
- *Proposition 12 Legislative Fix Needed in Farm Bill:* Farm Bureau is working with Congress Members to find a bipartisan legislative fix to Prop 12 to be included in farm bill. Prop 12 requires veal, pork, and egg raised in confined areas to have a certain space minimum. We simply cannot have a patchwork of regulations for producers to try and follow across the nation.

## AG LABOR

- *Senate Version of Supporting Farm Operations Act Introduced:* On February 29, Senator Thomas Tillis (R-NC) introduced S.3848, the Supporting Farm Operations Act. This bill would freeze the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR) at the level that was established in 2023 until end of 2025. PFB is in support and asking for Senate and House Members to co-sponsor the bill. The House companion is H.R.7046, and Representative Meuser is a co-sponsor. **Please complete PFB's Action Alert for S.3848/H.R.7046.**
- *H-2A Problem Explanations Wanted:* **If you use the H-2A program or know Farm Bureau members who do, please reach out to Bailey.** She is compiling explanations from Farm Bureau members on their problems with the H-2A program, whether it be wage rate costs, housing inspections, etc. Bailey is sending these explanations to PA's Congressional Members and asking for them to co-sponsor the *Supporting Farm Operations Act*. It is always more helpful for a Congress Member to hear from their constituents.

## RESTORE NASS SURVEYS

- *USDA's Decision to Cancel Certain NASS Surveys:* On April 16, **AFBF urged USDA in [a letter](#) to reverse its decision to cancel crucial livestock and crop surveys.** Specifically, NASS announced it would no longer provide a July cattle inventory survey in addition to county-level estimates for crops and livestock and the objective yield survey for cotton.

## PFAS DRINKING WATER REGULATION FINALIZED

- *MCLs Set for Six PFAs:* On April 10, **EPA announced the [final National Primary Drinking Water Regulation \(NPDWR\)](#) for six PFAs.** We share the concerns over PFAS. The health and safety of America's families are important to us. However, we are disappointed that EPA ignored the best available science by creating arbitrary standards to remove PFAS. The maximum contaminant level (MCL) threshold is so low it will make it almost impossible for anyone to reach. EPA's maximum contaminant level is 25 times lower than what the World Health Organization has proposed. There are only 66 laboratories in the United States that can test for PFAS in water. They will be overwhelmed by samples submitted by each of the country's 65,000 water systems. Small rural communities will be hit hardest by these new standards because they lack the resources of large cities. In communities with a population of less than 100 people, the cost of treating water for PFAS will be between \$10,000 and \$11,000 per household.



## PFAS FINAL CERCLA RULE PUBLISHED

- *PFAs Superfund Rule Finalized*: On April 19, EPA finalized the [Designation of Perfluorooctanoic Acid \(PFOA\) and Perfluorooctanesulfonic Acid \(PFOS\) as CERCLA Hazardous Substances](#) rule. The final rule will designate two widely used PFAS chemicals, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS), as hazardous substances under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA), also known as Superfund. Farm Bureau has concerns about how this will impact agriculture and land values. There will be more information regarding the impact to farmers and ranchers in the next update.

## TAXES

- *Ag Industry Letter of Support for H.R. 7024*: On April 8, AFBF joined over 30 agricultural organizations in sending [a letter](#) to Senate leadership urging them to **bring up H.R. 7024, the Tax Relief for American Families and Workers Act for a vote**. This bill would extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. Specifically, it would extend 100% bonus depreciation, retroactive to 2023, through the end of 2025 and raises the cap on Section 179 expensing. It passed out of the House on January 31 with a bipartisan vote of 357-70.

## SUMMER E15 SALES

- *AFBF Supportive of E15 Blend for Summer*: On April 19, [EPA issued an emergency fuel waiver to allow gasoline blends containing 15 percent ethanol \(E15\), which will go into effect on May 1](#). Families rely on this waiver during summer travel months for affordability as gasoline prices are at all time highs. EPA said current estimate indicate that on average, E15 is 25 cents cheaper than E10.

## DAIRY

- *Denial of Emergency Implementation of Higher-of Class I Mover*: AFBF received a response from USDA at the end of March (email Bailey at [bmfisher@pfb.com](mailto:bmfisher@pfb.com) for the letter). **USDA claims they do not have the power to make an emergency decision giving the ongoing FMMO amendment process**. Farm Bureau strongly disagrees with this due to 7 CFR 900.12 (d) Omission of recommended decision says, "The procedure provided in this section may be omitted only if the Secretary finds on the basis of the record that due and timely execution of his functions imperatively and unavoidably requires such omission." Farm Bureau believe this gives the Secretary the power to make a final decision on a switch back to the higher-of (since the hearing record proves how necessary this change is). AFBF is working on figuring out next steps though it seems like an uphill battle if USDA does not acknowledge the above regulation. Waiting to see what USDA comes up with in a proposed recommended decision will probably be our best bet. Pool losses have increased to over \$1.14 billion as of February due to the Class I mover change.
- *U.S. House Passed H.R. 1147*: On December 13, **the U.S. House passed H.R. 1147, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act with a bipartisan vote of 330-99**. A majority of the PA House delegation voted yea on the bill. On December 14th, Senator Roger Marshall (R-KS) requested to do an unanimous consent (UC) vote to move the bill to the floor. The UC failed due to Senate Ag Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow's (D-MI) objection. We have been told the Senate has the votes for the bill to pass. Farm Bureau is urging the Senate to bring H.R. 1147 to a vote.

## AFBF'S APRIL MARKET INTELS:

[2022 EPA Emissions Inventory Highlights Agriculture's Sustainability Strides](#)

[Declining Livestock Inventories Contribute to Drop in Meat in Cold Storage](#)

**Regulatory Affairs Update From Regulatory Affairs Specialist Grant Gulibon**

Farm Bureau Monitoring HPAI in Dairy Cattle in Midwestern, Western United States;

PDA and USDA Issue Orders Restricting Movement, Requiring Testing

Farm Bureau is monitoring developments regarding the detection of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) in dairy cattle. As of this writing, HPAI has been detected in dairy herds on thirty-three premises located in eight (primarily) western and midwestern states, beginning in late March. In response, both the Pennsylvania and United States Departments of Agriculture have issued orders restricting the movement of dairy cattle between states, as well as imposing testing requirements that must be fulfilled prior to any such movement.

On April 5, PDA issued an “Interstate and International Quarantine Order” under the Pennsylvania Domestic Animal Law due to the threat posed by the HPAI Eurasian lineage goose/Guangdong H5 clade 2.3.4.4 virus, for the purpose of preventing the spread of the virus to dairy cattle, given its potential to cause severe disease in various species, including cattle. Key provisions of the order include importation standards, movement restrictions, and testing requirements for dairy cattle entering Pennsylvania. These requirements involve testing samples from dairy cattle for Influenza A Virus prior to movement, with exemptions for certain categories of animals. Violations of the quarantine order may result in penalties, including quarantine, testing, treatment, or disposal of animals, and disinfection or destruction of related goods or materials. PDA retains the authority to establish additional quarantine or testing measures as necessary.

USDA’s order, issued April 24 under the authority of the federal Animal Health Protection Act, with an effective date of April 29, mandates testing of HPAI for interstate movement of dairy cattle. Before interstate movement, dairy cattle must receive a negative test for influenza A virus at an approved National Animal Health Laboratory Network (NAHLN) laboratory. Owners of herds in which dairy cattle test positive for interstate movement will be required to provide epidemiological information, including animal movement tracing. The steps immediately become required for lactating dairy cattle. The requirements for other classes of dairy cattle will be based on scientific factors concerning the virus and its evolving risk profile. APHIS will reimburse the cost of testing at NAHLN laboratories, and laboratories and state veterinarians must report influenza A nucleic acid detection diagnostic results in livestock to the USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS). Laboratories and state veterinarians also must report influenza A serology diagnostic results in livestock to APHIS. USDA officials also stated that they will be issuing guidance on implementation of the order in the near future. In addition, both the federal Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) are working with USDA to protect food safety and human health, respectively, as the response focused on livestock health continues.

PDA continues to urge all dairy producers to update their biosecurity plans and be wary of wild birds (primarily waterfowl) that continue to be the main spreaders of HPAI in both birds and dairy cattle, and there is evidence that suggests that the virus can be transmitted from cow to cow, as well as from bird to cow. Three quarantines of poultry and non-poultry premises previously imposed by PDA remain in effect, but are expected to be lifted within the next month.

The PDA Center for Dairy Excellence is holding weekly calls with producers to provide updates on the situation. Visit this link for information on how to join those calls: [Weekly Dairy Industry Conference Calls: Updates on HPAI Health Situation and PA’s Response | Center for Dairy Excellence](#). Farm Bureau has also created a resource page for members: [HPAI in Dairy Cattle Resource Guide: What to Know - Pennsylvania Farm Bureau \(pfb.com\)](#).

### **PDA-DEP Food Processing Residuals Work Group to Complete Work, Issue Report**

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA)/Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) work group examining potential changes to the state’s laws/regulations/policy governing the use of food processing residuals (FPRs) held its most recent meeting on April 11.

The formation of this work group, which also includes state Reps. Barb Gleim (R-Cumberland County), Paul Schemel (R-Franklin County) and Paul Friel (D-Chester County), was driven by complaints in several municipalities in southeastern and southcentral Pennsylvania about farmers’ use of FPRs as fertilizer, specifically related to odor and other environmental concerns that local residents claim are the result of farmers using FPRs in this manner. These complaints have translated into political pressure for the state to “do something” in response. Farm Bureau has communicated its priorities to the group, most important among those the need to keep spreading of FPRs in normal farming operations a viable option for our members and avoid any attempt to open up the Right to Farm Act to changes while evaluating any other proposed legislative, regulatory or policy changes.

The April 11 meeting focused on review of proposed recommendations for inclusion in the group's final report, which is scheduled to be finalized at the group's May 2 concluding meeting. Issues discussed included the following:

- Potential changes to the land application system (LAS) plan that is required for spreading FPRs under the state's Solid Waste Management Act. These would likely include requiring additional BMPs to manage odor, especially for materials with larger potential to cause odor (such as those which are animal-based or have higher fat content).
- Updates to the 30-year-old FPR manual that would be beneficial in improving it as a technical guidance document that can clearly spell out what is required of farmers. It may be necessary to break out that portion of the manual as a separate document.
- Changes may that be proposed to the state's hauler-broker law, potentially covering making documentation requirements and liability clearer to providers of FPRs. There was also discussion of clarifying liability and responsibility for compliance, with responsibility for compliance on the applicator of FPRs if the landowner is not the applicator, as well as increasing training and accountability for FPR haulers by requiring them to be certified in FPR hauling within the hauler-broker program.
- Categorizing some FPRs as "higher-risk," with specific requirements for FPRs with higher odor risk that would require use of certain BMPs. This would include "outcome-based" language to ensure that odor is mitigated.
- Codifying notification/verification of all FPR application and keeping records only for the purpose of providing a "level of assurance" for compliance.
- Codifying the required minimums for an LAS plan, including BMPs and storage information; an odor site index (OSI) for sites with "higher-risk" FPRs; and other BMPs to be determined. Much of this reporting is already required in some form, as haulers are required to verify what they are hauling.
- Clarifying how odor complaints are handled. This is particularly important because while FPRs can be the source of odor complaints in a given area, those spreading those materials are not always the source of the odor, and it becomes very easy for farmers spreading FPRs to become targets of unwarranted harassment.
- Assigning oversight responsibility and authority (given the state's leadership role in nutrient management and with Act 38) to the State Conservation Commission, given its existing role in regulating land application of nutrients and activities of manure haulers/brokers very similar to those proposed for haulers of FPRs.
- The need to differentiate the treatment of FPRs from the treatment of biosolids, which are never stored as FPRs can be. Most BMPs are designed for chronic odor or for storage onsite, and farmers are always trying new BMPs, which are continuously added and updated. It is important to recognize that FPRs are not always the source of odor problems, and farmers can only do so much to mitigate odor regardless of its source.

The Farm Bureau Natural & Environmental Resources (NER) Committee will be holding a virtual meeting on April 30 to review the above and provide for any additional communication to the work group, the General Assembly, and the Shapiro Administration of the organization's position.

#### **PDA Animal Health & Diagnostic Commission Meets, Discusses HPAI in Dairy Cattle, Other Emerging Animal Health Topics**

The Pennsylvania Animal Health & Diagnostic Commission (AHDC) met on April 4 in Harrisburg. Much of the discussion focused on the then-new threat of HPAI in dairy cattle, and while much of the information covered has been superseded by events described earlier in this update, there were a few points of interest related to efforts by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to address wild birds and their role in spreading HPAI. USFWS is working on non-lethal controls for wild birds near dairies and is finishing surveillance on wild birds while doing CDE management. USFWS mentioned the use of bait to attract starlings (which may not be as effective in warmer weather due to the availability of other food sources), as well as the use of traps. PDA will be sending out biosecurity documents on wild bird mitigation in the near future.

PDA Bureau of Animal Health personnel also provided updates on new swine traceability standards, focusing on two main differences. The first is that sows leaving premises will need an RFID tag as well as premises tag, while the other aligns the standards with the SHIP program (with full synchronization by 2027). Staff also reported that there are currently 52 CWD premises in Pennsylvania, with 29 animal detections and several court cases against cervid producers. The AHDC will next meet on June 6.

### **DEP Agricultural Advisory Board Receives Chesapeake Bay, Manure Management Manual Updates**

The DEP Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) met on April 17 and heard updates from the Department on Pennsylvania's 2023 Chesapeake Bay progress, the release of the new Manure Management Manual, and EPA's progress in implementing the terms of the 2023 lawsuit settlement agreement between the agency and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

DEP reported expanding its capacity to complete water quality projects identified in county action plans, as well as for support of personnel and water quality monitoring. The SCC has also contracted for engineering services to prioritize Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) funds that commingle with EQIP funding. Local entities in seven Pennsylvania counties are also working together on "precision conservation initiatives" that could lead to delisting impaired waterways from the state's impaired waters list.

This expanded capacity is showing up in water quality reporting data. The number of nonpoint source best management practice (BMP) records reported to EPA in 2023, increased by 2,808 records for a total of 14,534 BMPs recorded, or nearly 24 percent over the 2022 figure. At the same time, USGS monitoring data shows improving trends and conditions at the Susquehanna River Input Monitoring (RIM) station, as well as several of Pennsylvania's Non-tidal Network (NTN) water quality monitoring stations. Even more encouraging is the change in modeled nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment pollution attributable to agriculture over the past 15 years, which shows the success of the Commonwealth's strategy of focusing on local water quality first and foremost:

- Comparing 2009 modeled nitrogen loads with 2019 nitrogen loads, there was an increase in the agriculture sector of more than 1 million pounds. However, between 2019 and 2023, modeled nitrogen load reductions from agriculture were more than 5.06 million pounds.
- Comparing 2009 modeled phosphorus loads with 2019 phosphorus loads, there was a reduction in the agriculture sector of 52,825 pounds. However, between 2019 and 2023, modeled phosphorus load reductions from agriculture were more than 135,300 pounds.
- Comparing 2009 modeled sediment loads with 2019 sediment loads, there was a reduction in the agriculture sector of more than 196 million pounds. However, between 2019 and 2023, modeled sediment load reductions from agriculture were more than 140 million pounds.

DEP staff also reported on the work of the joint EPA-USDA task force formed in early 2023 to increase collection of uncredited BMPs. Much of the task force's work has focused on methods already in use by agencies for such collection, as the state's Right to Know law would need to be amended to allow for more intensive reporting.

DEP also noted that one way that BMP reporting could be improved currently without legislative changes would be to encourage farmers to report manure management plans, which dovetails with the expected April 27 release of the updated Pennsylvania Manure Management Manual. This is the culmination of over five years of collaboration between DEP and numerous industry stakeholders, with critical leadership and input from past and present Farm Bureau members and staff. The new manual provides for a new planning option—the Manure Management Plan (MMP) Short Form—as well as new and revised worksheets in the MMP workbook, revised application rate tables, and new appendices related to animal equivalent unit (AEU) calculation and manure spreader calibration. Training and resources will be available through the Penn State Manure Management website and the DEP Clean Water Academy, and Farm Bureau will create a resource page on the manual for farmers as well.

Finally, the AAB heard comments from EPA on the implementation of the CBF et al. vs. EPA lawsuit settlement agreed upon last April. Four Lancaster County farms were selected initially according to environmental sensitivity criteria, with assessments conducted between April and June of 2023. These assessments included a site visit, water quality sampling of the nearest receiving stream, review of relevant plans, monitoring of points upstream, within and below the operation, field measurements, sampling and taking actual water quality samples to be tested according to EPA methodology. In broad terms, at least one operation had an issue with improper disposal of an animal mortality, as well as improper manure management. Another met the criteria to be a CAFO and as a result needed to obtain a permit, while most of the premises had free animal access to streams. Once summaries of the inspections are taken, the results will be shared with DEP and follow-up actions will be planned. The AAB will receive additional information at its upcoming June 18 meeting.

# ADVERTISING CORNER



**Are You Turning 65 This Year and Going on Medicare?**

Choosing your Medicare plan can be overwhelming. It can be hard to figure out what you want, or more important, what you need.

**Farm Bureau's experienced and trained staff are ready to help. At no cost to you, we can:**

- Answer your questions
- Explain and compare options
- Work within your budget
- Help with informed Medicare coverage decisions

*Knowledgeable. Helpful. Dedicated.*  
To check availability in your county call **800.522.237**.

**Bucks County Farm Bureau is collecting soda & soup can tabs for charities (Farmer Care Day). Please help us out. You can give them to a Board member, drop off at a Board Meeting, or bring them to any Farm Bureau event.**

**On-Site FARM TIRE SERVICE**



**215-257-4307**  
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## GROWMARK FS, LLC

**ESMOND B. CROOKE, CCA**

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