



Press Release

from the
CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION

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CBF, "BLESSING" THE COW, AND REAP SUPPORTERS CALL FOR CLEAN WATER AND HEALTHY FARMS

(HARRISBURG, PA) – Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and representatives of 60 environmental, sportsmen and business groups today called on Governor Rendell and the PA Legislature to enact the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act of Pennsylvania (REAP) at an event at the Capitol. REAP will make significant improvements to the health of over 4,000 miles of Pennsylvania's streams and rivers currently being impaired by agriculture.

These 60 organizations that have endorsed REAP (HB100/SB690) represent Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth who want clean water in our homes, in our streams, and on our farms. CBF brought "Blessing," a local dairy cow, as a symbol of Pennsylvania agriculture and the vital role that dairy farming plays in our economy.

"Agriculture generates \$4.8 billion in farm production each year, with dairy farms leading the way," said PA Executive Director of CBF, Matthew Ehrhart. "By enacting REAP, the Governor and our legislators will be taking significant strides toward cleaning up our rivers and streams, providing cleaner drinking water, and creating healthier, more financially productive farms."

"Agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry, but unfortunately we have lost farms and farmers over the last 10 years, 23 percent of dairy farms alone," said Sen. Michael O'Pake. "The REAP proposal gives farmers, particularly dairy operations, much needed assistance to install farm conservation practices that not only reduce nutrients and sediment runoff, but increase farm productivity and reduce costs. That means more usable income for our farmers at this critical time."

REAP is a bipartisan measure sponsored by Representatives Jerry Stern and Peter Daley and Senators Mike Waugh and Michael O'Pake, along with 79 other co-sponsors.

"REAP will establish one of the most important programs to benefit agriculture and water quality in Pennsylvania's history," said Representative Jerry Stern. "This ground-breaking legislation will not only help our streams, but will also help the economic stability of our agricultural industry."

SAVE THE BAY

“REAP will clean up the water that serves us all, without burdening our farmers with unmanageable debt,” said Representative Peter Daley. “It uses proven market mechanisms to connect farmers with a need with taxpaying businesses who can help out. It is an efficient, innovative solution that uses less bureaucracy to get the same job done in less time.”

The Capitol event was hosted by Matthew Ehrhart, CBF’s Pennsylvania Executive Director with REAP co-sponsors, Representatives Jerry Stern (R-Blair) and Peter Daley (D-Washington), and with Senator Michael O’Pake (D-Berks). Speakers also included Brian Hill, President and CEO; Central PA Regional Office of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC); Joel Rotz, State Governmental Relations Director for the PA Farm Bureau; Chad Forcey, Director of Business Development; PA Landscape and Nursery Association (PLNA); and John W. Brosious, Deputy Director, PA Municipal Authorities Association (PMAA).

REAP would provide transferable state tax credits to Pennsylvania farmers who proactively plan and implement highly effective conservation practices to reduce runoff. Businesses that sponsor such conservation projects will also be eligible for corresponding tax credits. REAP will improve water quality and strengthen our agricultural communities and the economy statewide.

“The Pennsylvania Farm Bureau strongly supports REAP as a viable approach to increasing the return on the public’s investment in environmental stewardship by encouraging the private sector to help finance needed best management practices on farms,” said Joel Rotz, State Governmental Relations Director for the PA Farm Bureau. “The state budget is about public priorities and we believe this should be one of those included.”

The bill provides personal and business state tax credits ranging from 25 to 75 percent of the cost to install best management practices like barnyard improvements, riparian buffers, stream fencing and other practices. The development of manure management plans on farmlands, and forested buffers on non-farm lands, would also be eligible for credit. Each farmer enrolled in the program is eligible for up to \$150,000 in tax credits which can be extended over a period of 15 years.

To learn more about REAP, visit the CBF website at - www.cbf.org/reap

To learn more about polluted waters in your area, check out our “Impaired Waterways in Pennsylvania” at www.cbf.org/ImpairedWaters

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Editors Note: a complete list of REAP supporting organizations is attached.