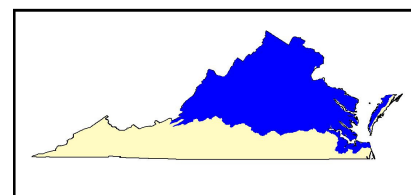


Farming for Clean Water

New report highlights opportunities to get farther faster and more cost-effectively in cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay

FOCUS ON VIRGINIA

A healthy Chesapeake Bay is good for Virginia's economy (including our fisheries) and our quality of life. In order to save the Bay, we need to clean up the streams and rivers that drain to it, as shown on the map. These streams and rivers are being choked by nutrients and soil from wastewater plants, industry, housing subdivisions and farms. From a farmer's perspective losing nutrients and soil is a problem; keeping them on the farm is good for business as well as for the Bay. Farmers are already doing a lot to help the Bay, but we need to find ways to help them deliver even greater benefits. Virginia has developed a set of cleanup plans, called Tributary Strategies, that spell out what needs to be done to keep nutrients and soil on the farm where it belongs.

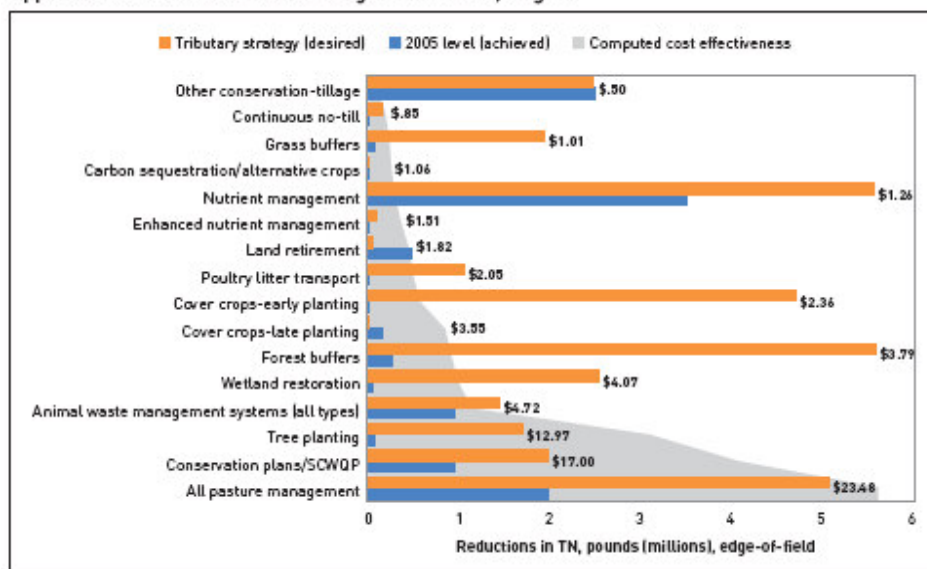


Virginia's Chesapeake Bay drainage

How is Virginia doing? The chart below shows the Tributary Strategy goals for various farm conservation practices (in orange) and levels of goal accomplishment in 2005 (in blue). Practices are arranged from most cost-effective at the top to least cost-effective at the bottom. Looking at the chart we see that:

- Virginia is looking to a wide range of practices to meet its overall water quality goals.
- As of 2005, Virginia had not prioritized its efforts to the most cost-effective practices (though it has now made significant efforts to do so).
- Virginia has met its goals for only one practice—conservation tillage.
- We are very far from our goals for most practices.
- There are significant opportunities to achieve large nutrient reductions at relatively low cost.

Opportunities for cost-effective nitrogen reductions, Virginia



Where do we go from here?

Our new report, *Farming for Clean Water*, offers recommendations for restoring the Bay by substantially changing the ways we fund, deliver, credit and verify agricultural conservation.

A good place to start is by *targeting funds and attention* to conservation practices that have proven most cost-effective in reducing farm runoff. The chart shows us that Virginia has real opportunities to advance its cleanup goals by focusing its money and effort on:

- Planting early cover crops. These are good for the Bay and also benefit farm productivity— a win-win situation.
- Installing grass and forest buffers. These soak up nutrients and soil and also provide wildlife benefits.
- Restoring wetlands. Like buffers, these help clean the water and provide additional environmental benefits.
- Transporting poultry litter to sites where it can be used as a soil amendment or energy source.



Photo: NRCS

In addition, we can:

- Make traditional conservation practices – such as nutrient management, conservation tillage, and cover crops -- more effective by shifting emphasis to performance and outcomes.
- *Embrace innovation* in farm management systems and practices, such as dairy feed management and alternative cropping systems, that will help both the Bay and farmers' bottom lines.
- *Increase research and education* to promote widespread adoption of today's innovations and develop the innovations of tomorrow.
- *Increase resources for technical assistance* for farmers, and *create financial rewards* for farmers who produce clean water and other environmental benefits.
- Improve our ability to track conservation funding, verify what practices are actually implemented, and determine the nutrient and sediment load reductions they generate.

Learn more visit: www.environmentaldefense.org/chesapeakebay