Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts

Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program (FSCAP)

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Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program

- A voluntary, proactive approach to recognize good conservation stewardship and encourage additional conservation practices.
- Establish an Agricultural Conservation Stewardship Certification Standard (ACSCS)
- Inform and help enroll farmers in new conservation programs
FSCAP Goals

- Formal recognition of good conservation stewardship work already done
- “Setting the bar” for others to achieve certification
- Informing farmers of new conservation programs
- Putting more conservation on the land to reduce pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries
Certification Standard

- Effective legal nutrient management plan
- Level of conservation practices that prevents any significant sources of pollution from leaving the farm
Certification Standard

- Public recognition for those who meet the Agricultural Conservation Stewardship Certification Standard (ACSCS)
- Satisfactory review of NM plan – notify MDA to remove the farm from inspection list
- If the farm does not meet the conservation standard, farmer will be referred to local soil conservation district
FSCAP Process

- Collaborative planning
- Core Partners – MASCD, MFB, CBF, MDA, NRCS
- FSCAP Work Group
- Stakeholder Meetings – provide input
- Pilot Program
- Training assessors
- Program implementation
New Conservation Programs

- Opportunity to inform and enroll farmers in new conservation programs
- Conservation Stewardship Program – ’08 Farm Bill
- Maryland Nutrient Trading Program
- Carbon Trading
- Confidential report
  - IPM
  - Improved feed management
  - Energy efficiency
New Conservation Programs

- Conservation Stewardship Program (CStP)
  - Many farmers have complained about old CSP paperwork
  - FSCAP assessor will help complete application during the visit
  - Referral to NRCS for program participation
New Conservation Programs

- **MD Nutrient Trading Program**
  - FSCAP assessor will offer to run the baseline assessment during the visit to determine the farmer’s eligibility
  - Referral to local soil conservation district for BMPs
    - To pass baseline assessment if necessary;
    - To plan BMPs for nutrient trading
  - Referral to aggregators
Nutrient Trading

- FSCAP will be active in the field when the Nutrient Trading program will be announced.
- FSCAP assessors will act as “advance agents” to help inform conservation-minded farmers
- Early participants will be first in line to sell credits.
Results

- Demonstrated success in a process that can be adopted by agency/organization as a permanent service in MD and other Bay states.
- Acknowledgement of good agricultural stewardship provides a source of pride and encourages others to do more.
- New sources of revenue for farmers
- Early entry in nutrient trading
- Certification process and participation in new conservation programs will reduce pollution to Bay.