

April 2008

Statewide Water Conference to Focus on Vision for “Agriculture in Balance”

On June 2 and 3 a statewide working conference, *Agriculture and Environment: Achieving Balance*, will be convened to identify new solutions to the old, yet challenging issue of nutrients in the environment. Sponsors of the conference include the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Education Office, the Penn State Institutes of Energy and Environment, the Environment and Natural Resources Institute, and the Penn State Center for Agriculture and Environment. The conference will be held at the Sheraton Harrisburg-Hershey, Lindle Road.

The conference is designed to tap the collective wisdom of those who are engaged in farm and natural resource management in identifying the opportunities for improving the state’s water quality. This two-day conference will bring together the state’s foremost experts to identify opportunities and solutions for better stewardship of the land and waters for which we have responsibility. This is a new and innovative approach which engages participants directly in the problem solving process.

The event is coined a working conference as participants will be charged to identify specific strategies for moving Pennsylvania towards a vision for “agriculture in balance”. In preparation for the working conference, the Conference Planning Committee convened a one-day retreat that brought together agriculture and environmental leaders to create a “vision” defining a future for Pennsylvania’s agriculture. This vision will be “unpacked” at the conference with the goal of seeking ways to remove barriers and identify new solutions for addressing nutrient-related pollution.

To establish a baseline for understanding the range of perspectives and interests regarding nutrients, conference participants will screen a documentary developed by Penn State Public Broadcasting that portrays the diverse sources of and issues surrounding nutrients – including management and impacts to the environment. Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Penn State agricultural and environmental scientists, municipal wastewater treatment plant operators, farmers, regulators, agriculture and environmental non-governmental organizations and others will describe the challenges of managing, monitoring, and capturing nutrients in the environment. The documentary, in sequence with the vision, will set the stage for engaging conference participants in identifying new strategies including partnerships and opportunities for reducing nutrients released into the environment.

Background

Nutrient-related pollution has plagued the states that drain to the Chesapeake Bay for years. And the problem isn’t confined to the Bay watershed. Nutrient-related pollution from municipal- and agricultural sources has been linked to stream, river and lake impairments in the Ohio River-, Delaware River-, and Great Lakes watersheds as well.

The Summer/Fall 2007 issue of Penn State Agriculture highlighted this topic in the article “Out of Balance”, describing Penn State’s research and Extension efforts to proactively address the excess nutrient issue in the Susquehanna River basin (<http://www.aginfo.psu.edu/psa/07SumFall/outofbalance.html>, http://enri.cas.psu.edu/media_files/Nutrient_Management.wmv).



Summer/Fall 2007 issue of *PennState Agriculture Magazine* featured story **Out of Balance**, Scientists Grapple With Excess-Nutrient Problem in the Susquehanna River Watershed

Penn State researchers in the field and lab have experienced tremendous success in the development and application of technologies for effectively reducing nutrients in feed and field, yet nutrients originating from agriculture and other sources continue to find their way to the Bay.

More Information

For more information about the conference, please visit the conference website: www.conferences.cas.psu.edu or contact Kristen Saacke Blunk, director of Penn State’s Agriculture and Environment Center, ksaackeblunk@psu.edu, 814.863-8756.

Conference Sponsors

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State Institutes of the Energy and the Environment

Conference Planning Committee

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Participants in the Visioning Retreat (in addition to Conference Planning Team)

Bill Angstadt, MD/DE Agribusiness Association
Rob Meinen, Penn State
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