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## **CONSERVATION DISTRICTS TESTIFY ON PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES IN CLEANING UP CHESAPEAKE BAY**

**(Harrisburg)** –Pennsylvania’s conservation districts voiced their concerns about the Chesapeake Bay “reboot strategy” during the Chesapeake Bay Program’s Citizens’ Advisory Committee (CAC) to the Chesapeake Executive Council. The CAC held their quarterly meeting on September 8, 2016 in Lancaster, PA.

CAC is a group of partners chosen by the Governors of Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia and the Mayor of Washington DC. This group provides advice on the Chesapeake Bay Program and the Bay watershed clean-up goals.

Lancaster County Conservation District Manager Christopher Thompson addressed the Committee on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). Thompson briefed attendees on the issues conservation districts are now facing as a result of the reboot strategy. (The reboot refers to the Commonwealth’s efforts to recharge their approach to cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.)

In January 2016, conservation districts were asked to assist the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) with farm inspections. These inspections would check farms for manure management and erosion and sedimentation control plans. Local conservation district boards are faced with the decision whether or not to go into the program. However, funding for their Chesapeake Bay Technician staff depends upon



their willingness to inspect farms. Some conservation districts are hesitant to sign on because it would change the district's role from technical assistance to compliance.

Conservation districts have had meetings with the DEP in regards to the farm inspections conservation districts have been asked to conduct. This has been a step forward since many concerns the conservation districts have were addressed by DEP. However, there are still some issues of concern with consistency and privacy for the farms that are inspected.

“Although many of the conservation districts’ concerns have already been adequately addressed by DEP, there are still two outstanding issues – the discrepancies between the Statement of Policy, the inspection form, and the contract, and privacy concerns when a district employee obtains information generated by federal entities,” said Thompson.

How many of Pennsylvania’s conservation districts will take on farm inspections as part of their duties? Only time will tell.

Click here to read the full testimony: <http://goo.gl/eFjeNT>.

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*The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD) is a non-profit organization whose guiding values include: Sustainable Resource Conservation; Integrity, Local; Education and Outreach; and Partnerships. PACD primarily serves as the collective voice for Pennsylvania’s 66 county conservation districts. For more information about PACD, visit [www.pacd.org](http://www.pacd.org).*

