



Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Winter Edition ♣ 2015-2016

The newsletter is always available online at www.pfb.com/berks

Thanks to those of you who have opted to receive your newsletter electronically. So far, 2% of our members have agreed to stop their paper/snail-mail newsletters. We encourage you to help us move into the 21st century by letting us know that you want electronic only, or that you'd still prefer the paper version.

Please e-mail BerksCoFBnews@aol.com to let us know your preference: paper vs. email/online.

BCFB Spring Banquet Friday, March 18, 2016 6:45 Registration, 7:00 Dinner Adults \$10 - Children 10 and under FREE

Berks County Ag Center
1238 County Welfare Road • Leesport
Dinner will be catered by Kathryn's Katering.

Make reservations by March 10th:
Robin Lincoln • 315 S. Baumstown Road
Birdsboro, PA 19505 • Phone: 484-925-4132

Program will include Service Update,
Committee Reports and
Entertainment by The Zepp Family Band
These local youngsters perform a mix of songs that include bluegrass, country, gospel and yodeling!



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County Information

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State Director District 3

Howard Robinson _____ 717-529-2508

Save the Dates

BCFB Night at the Fightin' Phils
Monday, June 27, 2016

BCFB Summer Picnic at the Shartlesville Community Park
Saturday, July 16, 2016

Watch for more information in the upcoming newsletter!

2016 Safety Contests

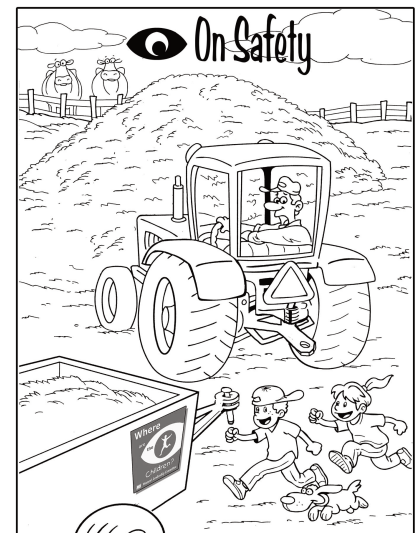
It is time again for the PFB Safety Contests. This year's theme is "Eye on Safety."

Ages 4 – 6 can find a Coloring Page on the website. It will be judged on neatness, appropriateness of coloring, appearance and coloring within the lines.

Ages 7 – 9 and 10 – 12 should create a drawing. Paper size 8 ½" x 11", in color, including a slogan of 10 words or less which addresses the theme.

Ages 13 – 15 and 16 – 18 can submit a photograph. Color or Black & White.

Full rules can and the coloring page can be found at www.pfb.com/safetycontests. Prizes will be awarded on the county level before entries are submitted to the state. County Deadline is April 1, 2016. Please deliver to: Elizabeth Peifer, 149 Blacksmith Road, Oley, PA 19547 Phone: 610-689-4934



Sponsored by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee

POLICIES Approved by BCFB 9/25/15

1. We recommend that this PFB State Policy (p.10 #7 -17) be submitted as a **National Policy**: We recommend that school students have access to a variety of fresh milk products and that school lunch programs be required to use whole milk versus powdered milk. Also, to improve the quality and consumption of school milk, we support the use of bulk containers when feasible.
2. **National**: We recommend that Farm Bureau hold no opinion on Bitcoin currency as long as it isn't the exclusive means of exchange.
3. **State**: We recommend that legislation be enacted to regulate UAS/drone use over private property for any purpose.
4. **State**: We support proposed legislation that allows Clean and Green land to be used for operating a rural enterprise with limited roll back tax consequences even if the rural enterprise operator is not the landowner or landowner's immediate family.
5. **State**: We oppose legislation that would require DEP to hold at least one public hearing prior to issuance of permits for land application of biosolids.
6. **State**: The Rodenator is considered illegal at this time. We support legislation that would make the Rodenator legal to farmers after taking a certified course and passing said course.
7. **State**: We recommend that all conservation plans mandate contour strips on highly erodible land. (HEL) – Conservation Program.

8. **State**: We recommend that we adopt a five cent deposit container bill known as "The Bottle Bill." This would be the same as the New England states have.
9. **State**: We recommend all state legislators and retired state legislators pay 100 percent of their health insurance.

Action Request

From almost any screen of the PFB website, you can find a link to the ACTNOW webpage. From this area, you can find out who your legislators are and how they have been voting. You can sign up to be alerted when Legislative Action is needed from our members. You can even use the webpage's system to directly contact legislators by e-mail, using a PFB prepared letter or your own letter. This is what we are all about, so don't miss out on the action.

Volunteer Impact Program

George Moyer was chosen to receive BCFB's VIP award for 2015. This award is given to members who go above and beyond in serving Farm Bureau and its mission. George is a tireless worker for agriculture in Berks County, Pennsylvania and the U.S.A. George will be the first to tell you that the most important selling point for BCFB membership is the political work that we do on all levels. Using that sales pitch, George exceeds our expectations year after year – signing new members and getting current members to renew. George's home is probably full of coats, shirts, hats, pins and more; all bearing the Farm Bureau logo in some form or another. He deserves every one! Thank you George!

MSC Business Services Account Supervisors

Carl Ganster - 610-678-1816
Vance Getz - 717-945-6645

David Mory - 610-419-0250
Jason Seibert - 717-274-0217



Nationwide
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Daniel Williams
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Rosetree Consulting offers a 5% discount on regulatory services (manure management plans, nutrient management plans, conservation plans, odor management plans) to Berks County Farm Bureau members.

Eric Rosenbaum: 484-788-7263

Topics in Online Edition

The online edition of the newsletter offers much more than just what is in the paper edition! Below is a list of articles that are also in the online edition. Check it out today at www.pfb.com/berks and consider canceling your paper edition.

- Members of Congress, Along with State and Local Governments, Support Bay Lawsuit
- PA Supreme Court Decision Ensures Uniformity of Right to Farm Law Protections
- Congress Approves Tax and Funding Provisions That Benefit Agriculture
- Farmers Encouraged to Understand Their Rights for Pipeline Easements
- Congress Approves Transportation Bill
- EPA Broke The Law With Social Media Engagement on WOTUS
- CHEMSWEEP Available in 17 Counties This Year
- Somerset Farmer Finds Value with M&T
- Budget Stalemate Could Force Extension to Close
- Farm Bureau Encourages Participation in BMP Survey
- Ebert to Serve on AFBF Board of Directors
- New Leadership Elected at AFBF
- Farmers Reminded of DMAP Enrollment Deadline
- Congressman to Speak at FARMER Dinner
- Several Veteran Pennsylvania Lawmakers Retiring
- PFB Asks State for Help With Ag Plastics Recycling
- Former Anti-GMO Activist Urges Farmers to Be Part of the Conversation
- Farm Succession Requires Smart Planning
- Farms Have Until April 15 to Apply For Dairy of Distinction
- USDA Offers Farm Ownership Microloans
- Center for Dairy Excellence Plans Producer Roundtables
- Farm Bureau Member Enjoys GM Discount

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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
March 2 – 3	National Legislative Conference	Washington, DC	
March 6 – 12	Local Government Week		
March 10	Legislative Breakfast	Wegman's Restaurant, Rte 61 Reading	8:00 am
March 11	BCFB Board Training	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:00 pm
March 11	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30 pm
March 18	BCFB Spring Banquet	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	6:45pm Registration; 7pm Dinner
April 4	FARMER Dinner		
April 5	State Legislative Conference	Harrisburg, PA	
April 8	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30 pm
April 17 – 23	Rural Road Safety Week		
April 26	Pennsylvania Primary Election		
May 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30pm
June 10	BCFB Board Meeting	Ag Center, Leesport, PA	7:30 pm
June 27	Night at the Fightin' Phils		
July 16	Summer Picnic	Shartlesville Community Park	

Members of Congress, Along with State and Local Governments, Support Bay Lawsuit

Members of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation, along with more than 20 states and 15 Pennsylvania counties, are supporting Farm Bureau's appeal of a lawsuit to the Supreme Court. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and the American Farm Bureau Federation are asking the Supreme Court to overturn a lower court ruling that could allow the Environmental Protection Agency to micromanage land use decisions as part of their Chesapeake Bay cleanup plan.

Nearly 100 members of Congress, including eight members of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation filed a "friend of the court" brief in support of Farm Bureau's lawsuit. While Pennsylvania did not file a similar brief, Berks, Blair, Bradford, Cambria, Clearfield, Columbia, Fulton, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry, Snyder, Somerset, Susquehanna, Tioga, and Wayne counties also voiced support.

The filing by Farm Bureau is asking the Supreme Court to hear the appeal. The Supreme Court has the jurisdiction to decide if they will hear the appeal, or let a lower court ruling stand. Farm Bureau believes the EPA is exceeding its authority in prescribing specific nutrient reduction goals and deadlines, and is preventing states and local communities from devising their own solutions to helping the Chesapeake Bay. Farm Bureau believes the EPA is overstepping its Congressional authority and is not accurately accounting the number of best management practices used by farmers when calculating agriculture's contribution to water quality.

"The fact that so many voices are being raised in support of Supreme Court review shows the broad and severe threat that EPA's action here poses nationwide," AFBF President Bob Stallman said. "EPA has asserted powers that do not appear in any law written by Congress, and it has done so in the context of an iconic national treasure, hoping that will inoculate its power grab in the courts. We have faith that the nation's highest court will see this for what it is and hold EPA accountable to stay within its statutory authority."

Farm Bureau believes the EPA's plan gives "super-zoning" authority over state and local governments, dictating where development can occur. By the EPA's own estimate, 20 percent of the agriculture land in the Bay watershed would need to be converted to forest or grassland in order to reach nutrient reduction

goals. One significant issue for the Supreme Court to consider in this case is to what degree the courts should defer to broad agency interpretations of their statutory power. Farm Bureau has contended the Clean Water Act puts state and local governments in the driver's seat when setting timelines for nutrient reduction goals.

Farm Bureau continues to voice concern that the EPA failed to properly account for best management practices, such as cover crops and no-till planting, utilized by farmers to prevent soil and nutrients from reaching waterways. That means models used by the EPA to calculate nutrient loads in the Bay paint agriculture in an unfair light.

CHEMSWEEP Available in 17 Counties This Year

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's pesticide disposal program is available in 17 counties this year.

CHEMSWEEP will be available in Armstrong, Blair, Cambria, Chester, Clarion, Delaware, Forest, Indiana, Lackawanna, Lancaster, Lebanon, Luzerne, Snyder, Somerset, Union, Venango, and Wyoming counties. The program is made available in different counties each year.

Agriculture businesses and pesticide applicators can use the program to safely dispose of unwanted pesticides. Every year, pesticide products are discontinued or phased out leaving agriculture producers with leftover material that cannot be placed in landfills.

"Pesticides can be a problem when they outlive their usefulness, sitting in barns and sheds and becoming hazardous to the environment," said Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "Thanks to CHEMSWEEP, it's easier for our agriculture industry to safeguard our environment and properly dispose of pesticides."

More than 2.3 million pounds of unwanted or unusable pesticides have been properly destroyed through the program since it was established in 1993. Licensed pesticide applicators, dealers and commercial businesses in those counties will be able to participate by completing a CHEMSWEEP registration that will be sent in the mail. The registration period ends February 28. CHEMSWEEP will cover the disposal cost for the first 2,000 pounds of material per participant. Disposal over that amount will be billed at a contracted price. For more information visit: www.chemsweep.pa.gov.

Congress Approves Tax and Funding Provisions That Benefit Agriculture

Congress approved a bill containing tax provisions that will help farmers better manage their expenses and cash flow. And in a separate move, federal lawmakers approved a new budget that contains key spending provisions beneficial to agriculture.

The tax bill approved by Congress makes permanent Section 179 small business expensing and sets the deduction limit at \$500,000. That provision allows small businesses to deduct equipment expenses, and many farmers have utilized the provision to help even out their year-to-year income and expenses. The bill also extends bonus depreciation for another five years. Bonus depreciation allows businesses to depreciate 50 percent of equipment purchased and used in 2015, 2016 and 2017. The amount of depreciation will be reduced in 2018 and 2019.

“These tax provisions will help farmers free up needed cash flow, so they can reinvest in their business and make improvements that reduce costs and increase efficiency,” said Pennsylvania Farm Bureau President Rick Ebert.

The spending bill approved by Congress funds a number of areas critical to American agriculture. At the same time, it also makes the Country of Origin Labeling law voluntary for beef, chicken and pork. Canada and Mexico were threatening to place retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports if the COOL requirements would have continued.

Farmers Encouraged to Understand Their Rights for Pipeline Easements

With the amount of natural gas available in the Marcellus Shale formation, and the growing opportunity for American companies to export the fuel, Pennsylvania is poised for a growth in pipeline development. That means landowners, regardless of their location in the state, will need to understand their rights when it comes to granting pipeline easements on their property.

That was the message of Ross Pifer, director of the Penn State Center for Agriculture and Shale Law. Pifer spoke during a seminar held at Pennsylvania Farm Bureau’s 65th Annual Meeting in Hershey. While areas like Western Pennsylvania and the Northern Tier are experiencing gas drilling, every area of the state could be potentially impacted by pipeline development, Pifer said. The advent of drilling in the Marcellus Shale formation has catapulted Pennsylvania to second place in the nation, behind only Texas, in the amount of natural gas produced each year. Places like Philadelphia could become an energy hub with the right pipeline infrastructure in place, and development of other export terminals on the East Coast means there will need to be miles of more pipeline development, Pifer said.

There are three ways that pipelines can be put in place. One is through the negotiation of drilling rights, a move Pifer discourages. All negotiations over pipelines should be separate from drilling leases. Pipelines can also cross private property through a negotiated right-of-way or through an eminent domain process, Pifer said. But in both cases the landowner has certain rights. For a company to use eminent domain, they have to prove that their project is in the public interest—a determination that rests with the federal government. Even if eminent domain is used, landowners are entitled to fair compensation for use of their property, Pifer said.

Landowners also have the ability to negotiate a right-of-way that allows a company to place a pipeline in that corridor. Through the negotiation process, landowners can establish the number of pipes allowed in the right-of-way, pipeline diameter and how long the infrastructure is in place, Pifer said.

Farmers also need to consider factors like soil compaction, and how much yield loss will occur after construction—all of which can and should be negotiated, Pifer said. In addition, landowners will need to consider the tax implications on a right-of-way. In most cases, money received from a right-of-way falls under capital gains taxes. Regardless of the situation that landowners are facing with pipelines, Pifer recommends securing the services of an experienced attorney before signing any documents.

Congress Approves Transportation Bill

Congress approved a long-term transportation bill that will provide state and local governments certainty for infrastructure improvements. The bill also gives states flexibility to provide exemptions to farm vehicles and drivers traveling intrastate without jeopardizing federal funding. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau worked closely with members of Congress to ensure that states had the ability to provide exemptions to farm vehicles. The bill provides specific clarification for the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration that federal highway funds cannot be withheld if states adopt different standards, or provide exemptions, when dealing with farm vehicles.

Last year, Farm Bureau tried working with members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly to provide common sense exemptions for farm vehicles, such as the requirement that all loads must be secured—essentially requiring tarps. That provision would require farmers to place a cover over every load of harvested crops, even when simply moving material between the field and farm. State officials were concerned they would risk losing federal highway money if they provided exemptions to requiring covered loads. Along with providing states flexibility in providing agriculture exemptions, the highway bill will also call for a significant investment in the nation’s highway infrastructure. The five-year bill does not call for any tax increases.

Bill highlights include:

- Expanded funding for bridges off the National Highway System.
- Streamlines review and permitting process for project approval.
- Consolidates offices within the federal Department of Transportation.
- Promotes new technology for congestion management.

Farms Have Until April 15 to Apply For Dairy of Distinction

Pennsylvania dairy farmers are facing an April 15 deadline to apply for the Dairy of Distinction award. The award recognizes farmers who maintain clean farmsteads and buildings and present an attractive operation. Dairy of Distinction awards are based on the premise that attractive farms enhance consumer confidence in dairy and builds public support for the industry. Dairies that receive the highest score in 10 Pennsylvania districts will receive a sign to display at the front of their farm. Roadside judging will take place in May. Farms will be evaluated on areas that fall under a farmer’s control, such as clean buildings, attractive landscape and well-maintained facilities. They will also factor additional aspects such as animal cleanliness and manure management. To apply, call O’Connor at 814.863.3913.

PA Supreme Court Decision Ensures Uniformity of Right to Farm' Law Protections

A decision issued this week by Pennsylvania Supreme Court will foster uniform application of the Right to Farm Law's protections from nuisance suits. The Supreme Court reversed the decision of a lower appeals court, which previously held that juries must be involved in determining what are "normal agricultural practices" when determining the scope of protection from lawsuits provided under the law.

"The Supreme Court appreciated the need for consistent and uniform application of the Right to Farm Law's protection from nuisance actions, and the jeopardy that the lower court's ruling placed on that uniformity," said John Bell, PFB's Government Affairs Counsel. "Decisions on whether a farm activity is protected in the law as 'normal' or not protected could have been different from county to county." The Supreme Court ruled that in applying the law's protection from nuisance suits, courts, not juries, are solely responsible for determining whether a farm activity is part of "normal agricultural operation."

Questions over the state's Right to Farm Law came to light in a lawsuit filed by neighbors against York County Farm over the use of biosolids. The lawsuit was filed more than a year after the farm first began to use biosolids. The trial court dismissed the lawsuit, applying the Law's provision to protect farms from nuisance actions after a "substantial change" on the farm has been put in place for at least a year. However, on appeal, Superior Court ruled that the trial court should not have decided on its own the farm was engaged in "normal agricultural operation" when using biosolids and the issue of whether such use was "normal" was one of "fact" for a jury to determine. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau filed a "friend of the court" brief to the Supreme Court in support of reversing the Superior Court's ruling.

EPA Broke The Law With Social Media Engagement on WOTUS

The Environmental Protection Agency broke the law when it used social media to campaign for new water rules, the U.S. Government Accountability Office has ruled. The recent ruling found the EPA's social media engagement and grassroots lobbying campaign conducted during the comment period of the controversial "waters of the U.S." rule ran afoul of federal laws. The EPA's WOTUS rule significantly expands their authority under the Clean Water Act to include the regulation of dry land.

"It's clear from this report that EPA orchestrated this matter in a biased fashion," said American Farm Bureau President Bob Stallman. "Now it's up to Congress to clean up this mess."

Specifically, the independent review by the Government Accountability Office found the EPA violated propaganda and anti-lobbying provisions when it used social media to advocate for the WOTUS rule. EPA employees used a social media platform called Thunderclap that allowed the agency to spread messages across various accounts, such as on Facebook and Twitter.

"EPA engaged in covert propaganda when the agency did not identify EPA's role as the creator of the Thunderclap message to the target audience," GAO wrote in its legal opinion.

The EPA also violated anti-lobbying provisions by including hyperlinks to external web pages that called on the public to contact Congress in support of the WOTUS rule. Sen. Jim Inhofe, who chairs the Senate Environmental and Public Works Committee, asked the GAO to review the EPA's use of social media during the WOTUS campaign.

Member Benefit Spotlight

M&T Bank

Somerset Farmer Finds Value with M&T

When Shawn Saylor was looking for a new bank to handle his dairy business, M&T Bank made a lasting impression. Saylor was unhappy with his previous bank, so as he began to shop around for a new financial lender. M&T Bank was more than willing to work with Saylor. M&T Bank is one of three lending institutions Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has developed a business relationship with. Farmers who show their Farm Bureau membership at M&T locations can have the \$225 loan application fee waived for agriculture loans.

"Our old bank wasn't doing us any favors and didn't seem to care if we quit working with them," Saylor said. "We came across M&T about the same time Farm Bureau started working with them. They have been very active and more than willing to talk with us."

Saylor and his brother Richard operate a dairy farm in Somerset County, where they milk 640 cows and grow corn and hay silage. Saylor said he continues to be impressed with the level of interest the bank has taken in his operation, and its success. The farm uses M&T for business checking and lines of credit. Saylor, who sits on the Board of Directors of Somerset County Farm Bureau, said having a good working relationship with a lender is critical for farm businesses.

"It's really important for them to know what we have in mind for the future of the business and for us to know where we stand," he said. "We are looking at expansion and some future construction so we have to work close with them on how we can move forward."

Saylor said he's recommended M&T Bank to other farmers in his area.

"They were one of the only ones willing to work with us and restructure some loans," he said. "Without it, we would have been stagnate."

M&T, which is headquartered in Buffalo, N.Y., has 178 branches in Pennsylvania.

Budget Stalemate Could Force Extension to Close

Penn State Cooperative Extension may soon be forced to take drastic steps—including ceasing operations—unless lawmakers agree to restore funding eliminated in a budget veto. Gov. Tom Wolf used his line-item veto power late last year to eliminate funding to portions of a budget lawmakers presented just before Christmas. Agriculture was hard hit by the line-item veto, including the elimination of \$50 million in funding approved by the General Assembly for Penn State for Extension and Research. Gov. Wolf's budget move was designed to get some money flowing to schools, but also compel the General Assembly to reach a greater compromise on a budget battle that is extending into its seventh month.

Eliminating state appropriations for Extension and Research, place these programs in imminent danger of closure, unless state appropriations are committed almost immediately. Because Penn State Extension's budget is made up primarily of state funding—which is used as a leverage for \$90 million in federal and local funding—the service could cease to exist at a time critical to agriculture.

“Pennsylvania farmers, and the general public, cannot afford to see Penn State Extension close its doors. Extension is our lifeline to the ongoing research at Penn State,” said PFB President Rick Ebert. “The loss of Extension services would send a message to the nation that Pennsylvania government is not investing in the future of agriculture.”

Farm Bureau worked with Senate Agriculture & Rural Affairs Chairman Elder Vogel on targeted appropriation bills to restore funding to agriculture programs including Cooperative Extension. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is encouraging all farmers to contact their state lawmakers and the governor's office and urge them to support both measures. Penn State University's Agricultural Extension and research programs have provided farmers with the most advanced variety of scientific and technological knowledge and farming techniques, and continues to be a major contributor in improvement of both production efficiency and environmental quality on farms.

Penn State is leading the efforts to quantify the use of Best Management Practices on farms in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Extension is also playing a leading role in helping farmers across the state meet new federal food safety mandates that will bring about significant changes to how farms handle produce. Extension is not the only victim of the ongoing budget battle. The governor also cut funding for veterinary services including the Animal Health & Diagnostic Commission and the Pennsylvania Veterinary Lab.

Farm Bureau Encourages Participation in BMP Survey

Penn State is conducting a survey aimed at counting the best management practices that Pennsylvania farmers have put in place on farms in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has partnered with Penn State and other state agencies in developing the survey and the process for handling of the data collected through the survey. Farmers will be asked to provide information on the types of BMPs used on their farm, such as cover crops or no-till planting.

“We need all farmers in the Bay watershed to take part in this survey and provide information on what they are doing to manage the soil and nutrients on their farm,” said PFB President Rick Ebert. “The data collected will be used to quantify for federal agencies a more accurate accounting of BMPs used by Pennsylvania farmers.”

Penn State is sending out letters encouraging farmers to participate in the survey and directing them to the website <http://src.survey.psu.edu/farmbmp>. Each letter has a five-digit code that farmers must use to complete the survey. The survey is intended for farmers operating within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Farmers who have not completed the electronic survey by mid-February will receive a copy in the mail. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau believes the federal Environmental Protection Agency has significantly underreported the number of BMPs that farmers are using to reduce the amount of nutrients reaching the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Penn State will share the aggregated data with state and federal officials to give a more accurate accounting of BMPs within the watershed.

The project may require that someone from Penn State meet with a small number of randomly selected group of survey participants to verify that survey data reflects what is happening on the farm. PFB members are strongly encouraged to participate in this survey. For more information, and to view a video of the survey, visit www.pfb.com/pfb-media/news-releases.

New Leadership Elected at AFBF

Vincent “Zippy” Duval, a cattle, poultry and hay farmer from Georgia, was elected president of the American Farm Bureau Federation while Scott VanderWal, a grain and beef farmer from South Dakota, will serve as the organization's vice president. Duval is the 12th president in the nearly 100-year history of AFBF.

Last year Bob Stallman, who served as the AFBF President for 16 years, announced he was not seeking reelection. Barry Bashue, who served as the AFBF Vice President, ran for the presidential post along with Duval and two other Farm Bureau leaders.

Duval has served in numerous leadership positions with Georgia Farm Bureau, including as president for the past nine years. He also served as chair of the AFBF Young Farmer & Rancher Committee in the 1980s. Duval, who owned a dairy farm before transitioning to beef cattle and poultry production, said he relished the chance to travel the country during his presidential campaign and to talk with hundreds of farmers.

“Farmers and ranchers across this country have the same values. We are all family people,” he said. “Family farms across this country have the moral responsibility to feed this nation—and they take it so seriously.”

VanderWal has served as president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau since 2004. He and his wife Michelle served on the American Farm Bureau Federation YF&R Committee for two years in the early 1990s. He has also represented Farm Bureau on several trade trips, most recently to China and Switzerland. Both Duval and VanderWal credit Farm Bureau's YF&R program for helping them craft their leadership skills.

“Zippy and I are both products of the YF&R leadership training,” VanderWal said. “It is a great testament to the programs we have through Farm Bureau to speak out on behalf of agriculture.”

Congressman to Speak at FARMER Dinner

Congressman Mike Kelly has been invited to speak at the FARMER Dinner. The event, a major fundraiser for the FARMER Committee, will be held April 4, the day before our State Legislative Conference.

Kelly, a Republican from Butler County, serves Pennsylvania's 3rd Congressional District in Congress. He has served since 2010. Prior to running for Congress, Kelly led his family-owned automotive dealership. The dealership employs more than 100 people.

Since its inception 35 years ago, FARMER, which stands for Farmers Allied for Responsive More Effective Representation, has recognized lawmakers who are friendly to agriculture. Each election cycle, the bi-partisan FARMER Committee reviews the records of involvement of members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly on important agriculture and rural issues, including input from county Farm Bureaus. Those lawmakers identified by FARMER as "Friends of Agriculture" are publicly recognized and receive a campaign contribution.

The FARMER Banquet will take place Monday, April 4 at the Hilton Harrisburg, beginning with a reception at 5:30 p.m. and dinner at 6:30 p.m. Tickets are \$150 per person or \$250 with spouse.

The FARMER dinner is being held the day before PFB's State Legislative Conference. Deadline for reservations is March 28, Reservations can be made by contacting Ginny Keever at 717.761.2740 or vkkeever@pfb.com

Several Veteran Pennsylvania Lawmakers Retiring

A dozen veteran members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly announced they are not seeking reelection to another term. As is the case in most election years, some current members of the General Assembly take this as an opportunity to retire, or pursue other career opportunities. All members of the House of Representatives and half of the Senate are up for reelection this year. Among the notable names not seeking reelection are Rep. Bill Adolph, a Delaware County Republican who chairs the Appropriations Committee and Rep. Sandra Major, a Susquehanna County Republican who was friendly to agriculture and served as House Caucus Chair.

Other announced retirements are:

- Rep. Peter Daley, a Washington County Democrat
- Rep. Dwight Evans, a Philadelphia County Democrat
- Rep. Mauree Gingrich, a Lebanon County Republican
- Rep. Julie Harhart, a Northampton County Republican
- Sen. Shirley Kitchen, a Philadelphia County Democrat
- Rep. Nick Kotik, a Allegheny County Democrat
- Rep. John Payne a Dauphin County Republican
- Rep. Ted Harhai, a Westmoreland County Democrat
- Sen. Patricia Vance, a Cumberland County Republican
- Rep. Mike Vereb, a Montgomery County Republican

In the coming weeks, candidates in these and other districts will emerge in preparation for the April 26 primary. Pennsylvania Farm Bureau encourages farmers to get to know the candidates who are seeking elected office and to show their support by voting. Supporting elected officials who are familiar with agriculture—and the role it plays in the state's economy—is crucial to farm families.

PFB Asks State for Help With Ag Plastics Recycling

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is asking the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to implement an agriculture plastic recycling program. Farm Bureau is concerned that burning of agriculture plastics, a common disposal method used by farmers, may no longer fall under exemptions generally given to the burning of agriculture waste.

There is no formal statewide program for recycling plastics like silage bags, mulch, or drip irrigation. PFB is asking the Department of Agriculture to implement a recycling program similar to one run in New York. There, Cornell University and other state agencies coordinate the pickup of used agriculture plastics.

In the past, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has tolerated the burning of agriculture waste. However, those exemptions cover only agricultural commodities in their "unmanufactured state." Some DEP officials have told farmers that agriculture plastics do not fall under the exemptions for agriculture open burning.

However, farmers who have attempted to recycle agriculture products have had them turned away over concerns that they are too dirty to recycle.

PFB encouraged the department to look into the Recycling Agricultural Plastics Program (RAPP) implemented in New York. The program uses a mobile baler which collects spent plastics. When the program launched, Cornell University held educational programs for farmers to learn about requirements for product cleanliness. PFB believes the Department of Agriculture is the best option to lead a multi-agency initiative to start a statewide agriculture plastic recycling program.

USDA Offers Farm Ownership Microloans

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) will begin offering farm ownership microloans, creating a new financing avenue for farmers to buy and improve property. These microloans will be especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations. These microloans will be especially helpful to beginning or underserved farmers, U.S. veterans looking for a career in farming, and those who have small and mid-sized farming operations.

The microloan program has provided more than 16,800 low-interest loans, totaling over \$373 million to producers across the country. Microloans have helped farmers and ranchers with operating costs, such as feed, fertilizer, tools, fencing, equipment, and living expenses since 2013. Seventy percent of loans have gone to new farmers. Now, microloans will be available to also help with farm land and building purchases, and soil and water conservation improvements. FSA designed the expanded program to simplify the application process, expand eligibility requirements and expedite smaller real estate loans to help farmers strengthen their operations. Microloans provide up to \$50,000 to qualified producers, and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA).

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Former Anti-GMO Activist Urges Farmers to Be Part of the Conversation

By Darrin Youker, deyouker@pfb.com

Mark Lynas took a lot of heat on social media when he changed his stance on the use of genetically modified organisms in today's agriculture. Lynas, who was a vocal anti-GMO advocate, announced his change of heart in a public speech in 2013 when he admitted that his stance on biotechnology was not based on scientific scrutiny. He's now grown into a staunch supporter of GMOs as a way to protect the environment and improve the lives of those living in the developing world. But changing the public stance on the use of GMOs will take the voices of farmers and others sharing their stories, said Lynas, an environmental activist who spoke at 97th American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show. Lynas now works for the Cornell Alliance of Science.

"People need a believable source of information, and it is not going to be a corporate public relations office," he said of changing consumer opinions on GMOs. "I think farmers themselves are believable and credible. Farmers have a real important voice and you can use social media to shed light on this issue."

Lynas believes that one way to change public opinion on GMO technology is by food labeling. In addition, Lynas said he would draw a high bar for what is considered GMO technology to show the public that these products have been used for the better part of two decades with no negative impact on public health. Farm Bureau supports voluntary labeling based on national standards set by the federal Food and Drug Administration and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, similar to the national organic labeling standards. Farm Bureau wants to avoid a patchwork of state laws.

Lynas spent most of the late 1990s and early 2000s as a staunch anti-GMO activist. He led efforts to destroy crops standing in fields. But after studying the issue of climate change—where the science points to a climate shift—Lynas said he could not put the issue of GMOs to the same level of rigor. Lynas believes the environmental movement is fundamentally wrong on the issues of biotechnology in foods and is holding back the developing world. For instance, scientists have developed a strain of rice—called Golden Rice—that contains vitamin A, which is often deficient in the diets of Third World residents. However, environmentalists are trying to prevent the widespread adoption of Golden Rice because it was derived from GMO technology.

"Even when a crop could save thousands of children's lives it still gets attacked and destroyed because it contains GMO ingredients," he said.

Lynas believes there is an ongoing public shift to better understand the role that GMOs play in feeding a growing plant. And while science can explain the safety of GMOs, farmers need to embrace their role as advocates for the technology and the steps they are taking to protect the Earth. To view a video about Lynas speaking at AFBF visit: www.pfb.com/video

Farm Succession Requires Smart Planning

By Darrin Youker, deyouker@pfb.com

Farms surviving from one generation to the next do not happen by accident.

Instead, that success comes from a family having a clear goal for the future, and a

well-thought-out estate plan. That was the message of Doug Claussen, a certified public accountant at KCOE ISOM, who spoke on estate planning and growth strategies for farmers at The American Farm Bureau Federation's 2016 Annual Convention and IDEAg Trade Show.

Claussen encouraged farmers to start planning now for future growth and to develop a clear and concise strategy for having the next generation take over the operation. Of all family-owned businesses only 30 percent reach the next generation, and much of that failure can be traced to a lack of communication among family members and no concrete plan.

"A lot of farmers want to build a legacy for their family," Claussen said. "Farms that have been around for 100 years didn't just happen by accident. There were plans."

Estate and succession plans are personal to each farm family and their given circumstances, Claussen said. Are there children who want to take over the farm, and siblings who are not involved in the operation? Does a parent still want to be involved in the farm and have day-to-day responsibilities? All of these factors have to be worked out as part of an estate and succession plan to avoid conflict and complications down the road.

"Estate planning means deciding on what you want to do with your assets in life and death. You want to minimize taxes and avoid those family disputes," Claussen said. "If the first time the kids hear about mom and dad's estate plans is at the reading of the will, there will be conflict."

Claussen recommends that families consider legal structures like trusts in order to manage estates and help bring the next generation into the fold. One structure farmers have utilized is an Intentionally Defective Irrevocable Trust, which allows a parent to move assets from their estate, but still remain legally part of the operation. Under that structure, a farmer can still receive a cash flow from the business, Claussen said.

The future success of a farm is due in large part to smart planning and long-term strategy, Claussen said. And to make a smart transition from one generation to the next, farmers have to utilize the expertise of lenders, accountants and attorneys to make it successful.

"Don't do it alone. This is not mom and dad sitting at the kitchen table," Claussen said. "This is strategic and requires having stakeholders as part of the process."



Center for Dairy Excellence Plans Producer Roundtables

The Center for Dairy Excellence is planning several producer roundtables across the state to discuss the issues and trends facing the industry in 2016. Staff will also be available to discuss the services and resources available through the Center for Dairy Excellence. Most meetings will feature a meal.

Dates and locations are:

March 15

Grove City - McCullough's Kitchen Table, Sandy Lake at 8:30 a.m.
Somerset - Hoss's Steak & Sea House, Somerset at 1 p.m.
Duncansville - Hoss's Steak & Sea House, Duncansville at 6:30 p.m.

March 16

Huntingdon - Donna's Family Restaurant, Huntingdon at 8:30 a.m.
Chambersburg - Hoss's Steak & Sea House, Chambersburg at 1 p.m.

March 17

Lancaster - Bird-In-Hand Restaurant, Bird-In-Hand at 8:30 a.m.
*Lebanon/Berks - Dutch Way, Myerstown at 1 p.m.

March 21

Mifflinburg - Carriage Corner, Mifflinburg at 8:30 a.m.
Bradford - The Riverstone Inn, Towanda at 1 p.m.

**Tentative*

For more information visit: centerfordairyexcellence.org

Member Benefit Spotlight



Farm Bureau Member Enjoys GM Discount

When Brad Dressler needed a new vehicle for his family he went shopping—with his Farm Bureau membership card.

Dressler, who works on a grain farm in Northumberland County, purchased a 2015 GMC Acadia late last year. He used his Pennsylvania Farm Bureau membership to get a great deal. General Motors offers a \$500 discount on the purchase or lease of a new GM car or truck for Pennsylvania Farm Bureau members. GM also allows members to stack the discount with other discount offers.

“It was very easy. We had a pretty good salesman at the dealership,” Dressler said. “We got a \$500 discount, and every bit helps. I joked with my wife that our membership paid for itself for a few years.”

To take advantage of the GM discount and to learn more, visit Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's website at www.pfb.com and look under Member Benefits. Members need to print out a certificate, available through our website, to qualify for the offer. Members qualify for this GM program by having a valid Farm Bureau membership for at least 30 days prior to delivery of the vehicle.

Ebert to Serve on AFBF Board of Directors

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau President Rick Ebert was elected to serve on the Board of Directors of the American Farm Bureau Federation. Ebert's election took place during the AFBF 97th Annual Meeting in Orlando. Ebert will represent 12 states in the Northeast region— Pennsylvania, Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont and West Virginia – on the AFBF Board of Directors. Ebert, who operates a farm in partnership with his brother and sons in Westmoreland County, has served as PFB's President since 2014.

“I'm looking forward to the opportunity to represent Northeast states on the AFBF board. Pennsylvania is truly a diverse agricultural state, where farmers produce a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, meats and other food,” said PFB President Rick Ebert. “Farmers in the Northeast and New England have unique interests and experiences and can play an important role when interacting with our elected officials.”

AFBF's Board of Directors serves as the governing body of the American Farm Bureau Federation and plays a role in approving initiatives to carry out policy positions, interpreting policy as needed and overseeing the organization's budget.

In related news, Joan Myers was elected to represent the Northeast Region on the AFBF Women's Leadership Committee.

Farmers Reminded of DMAP Enrollment Deadline

Winter is a good time for farmers to look at their plans for coping with wildlife damage and to consider enrolling in a program that assists with deer damage. Farmers can use the Deer Management Assistance Program, known as DMAP, to help keep deer populations in check on their land. Unchecked deer populations can cause serious damage to crops. An average deer eats about 2,100 pounds of forage annually. If those deer are feeding on farm crops, it can take a large chunk out of farm income. Hunting is a great way to keep deer populations under control.

The DMAP program allows farmers to control who hunts on their property, or allows the Game Commission to distribute permits through their automated license system. The Pennsylvania Game Commission is again setting a late spring enrollment date for DMAP. To participate in DMAP, you must enroll by May 1, so now is an excellent time to consider your wildlife management plans.

In order for farmers to qualify, they must be the owner or lessee of private lands, and must be able to demonstrate that he or she is suffering crop or tree damage on the property. That property may be posted or un-posted. DMAP coupons are then given to the property owner or lessee at a rate of one per five acres of cultivated lands, or one per 50 acres of forest. Property owners are then allowed to distribute those coupons to licensed hunters, who can then redeem the coupon for a DMAP antlerless deer harvest permit. Hunters have to pay the Game Commission the set fee of \$10.70 for a resident DMAP permit. The non-resident permit is \$35.70. Each permit can be used to harvest one antlerless deer on the specific DMAP property enrolled in the program. Permits to hunt under DMAP are only valid for the property for which they are issued. To enroll in DMAP you must contact the PA Game Commission regional office that serves your area immediately after deer seasons end. The PA Game Commission can also give you more information on the rules and regulations for DMAP.