



Berks County Farm Bureau Berks Newsletter

Elizabeth Peifer, Editor

Winter Edition 2017-2018

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.

Berks County Farm Bureau Board of Directors

President

Larry Gelsing _____ 610-678-0912

Vice President

Paul Hartman _____ 610-689-0870

Secretary/Treasurer

Robin Lincoln _____ 484-925-4132

Directors

Steve Burkholder _____ 610-682-2871

Dorothy Wagner _____ 610-689-5496

Joe Rosenbaum _____ 610-323-4448

Kyle Mackes _____ 610-914-5605

Bobby Tercha _____ 610-682-4526

Charles Seidel _____ 610-562-4137

Brennan Johns _____ 484-955-1997

Harry Shaak _____ 610-562-7298

George Moyer _____ 717-933-8748

Governmental Relations Director

Craig Lutz _____ 610-678-0609

Women's Leadership Committee Director

Elizabeth Peifer _____ 610-689-4934

Young Farmer & Rancher

Rachael Kirkhoff _____ 610-750-1531

CID/Newsletter Editor

Elizabeth Peifer _____ 610-689-4934

Regional Organization Director

Ethan Howard..... 610 533 2558

State Director District 3

Howard Robinson _____ 717-529-2508

Membership Volunteer Incentive

Anyone who hasn't ever signed up a new member to BCFB can earn a \$25 gift card by signing up a new member in 2018! Have a neighbor or family member who is interested in agriculture? Non-farmers can be members too, and enjoy the various service benefits that our farmer members enjoy.

Speak to a board member if you have questions.



PFB's 2018 Safety Contest theme is Think Safe, Be Safe. Children ages 4 to 6 can enter by coloring the 2018 coloring page. Children ages 7 to 12 can make their own drawing. Children ages 13 to 18 can enter a photo. For rules and entry requirements, check out the webpage www.pfb.com/safetycontests.



Please submit all entries to Elizabeth Peifer by May 1, 2018.
149 Blacksmith Road, Oley, PA 19547

2018 Upcoming Activities

YF&R Conference

February 24 – 25
State College

Spring Banquet and Services Update

March 23
Berks Co Ag Center, Leesport, PA

BCFB at the Fightin Phils

Date to be determined.

EPA Requires Reporting of Air Emissions from Animal Waste

The federal Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) requires livestock facilities to report hydrogen sulfide and ammonia air emissions that are equal to or greater than 100 pounds per 24-hour period by January 22, 2018. Air emissions are reported as a continuous release notification and emailed to the National Response Center. Within 30 days, a written notification of the air emissions from the farm will need to be submitted to the EPA Regional Office where the livestock facility is located. One year later, a one-time follow-up report which verifies and updates the information will need to be submitted to the EPA Regional Office. Further information is available on the EPA website at: <http://bit.ly/2kGvU5U>

Avoiding Tractor Tragedy

Carpenters have their hammers. Foresters have their chain saws; Coal miners have their picks; Infantry soldiers have their weapons. And farmers have their tractors. All the above are very dangerous careers and can lead to tragedy.

Here are 10 tips to avoid injury when driving that big green or red machine.

1. Match the operator to equipment. Match the operator's size and experience to the tractor.
2. One tractor seat equal one person. There is no safe childcare location on a tractor.
3. Have a rollover protection system. Most newer tractors are equipped with some kind of rollover protection.
4. Stay in the protective zone. Please use the seat belt and stay in the seat.
5. Keep up good maintenance practice. This includes lights, guards, signals and other safety devices.
6. Take preventive measures to avoid slips, trips and falls. Don't be in a hurry, use handhold and steps.
7. Avoid side rollovers. Clearly understand the principles of center of gravity and centrifugal force on slopes and hillsides.
8. Avoid rear overturns. Understand the principles of rear axle torque and how quickly it can happen.
9. Keep PTO guard in place. Never use an implement missing a guard.

10. Limit mixing tractors and vehicular roadway traffic. Travel at off peak times, use flashing lights, and reflective slow moving emblems.

The above information was posted on "AmericanAgriculturist.com" in August 2017. Also, the Penn State Ag Days usually has a daily tractor tipping and rollover demonstration. So remember your family is always looking for you to come home every night.

Carl D. Ganster E.A.
MSC Business Service
Account Supervisor

Delegates Set Policy Direction at PFB Annual Meeting

Farm Bureaus approved policy resolutions that will guide the organization's advocacy in the coming year. Farm Bureau's unique, farmer-led policy development process is what gives our organization relevance as it advocates for the future of agriculture.

Delegates at PFB's Annual Meeting considered policy resolutions that were approved by county Farm Bureaus. Those approved by the delegates that deal with state issues will be formalized in PFB's 2018 Policy Book, which will guide what PFB staff and volunteer leaders advocate for and against in Harrisburg. Those dealing with national issues will be considered by delegates from each state at the American Farm Bureau Federation convention in January.

A few examples of policies adopted in November include: We recommend that farm vehicles and trailers currently farm-exempt under the PA Vehicle Code be permitted to serve non-profit and charity usages within the current guidelines for farm vehicles; we recommend the creation of a special registration plate benefiting agricultural education programs; and we recommend DEP commit permanent and recurring funding for stream restoration and stabilization.



Nationwide®
On Your Side

Berks County Nationwide Agents

Kathy Barry *
Robesonia, PA
610-693-5000

Richard McFeely
Reading, PA
610-777-2224

Jeffrey Spotts *
Wyomissing, PA
610-374-2911

Michael Davidheiser
Boyertown, PA
610-367-6095

Hugh McGinley
Birdsboro, PA
610-582-2862

Daniel Williams
Kutztown, PA
610-683-6823

Brian Hunsinger
Douglassville, PA
610-582-5204

James McIntyre
Morgantown, PA
610-286-6170

David Wilson
Birdsboro, PA
610-582-9233

David Koeffler
Reading, PA
610-929-9951

Christine Ramsey
Shillington, PA
610-777-3258

William Young
Reading, PA
610-779-8064

* Farm Certified



Protecting Everyone

- Individual & Family
- Group Business
- Senior, Medicare
- Dental & Vision

Call PFB Health Services

1-800-522-2375

www.pfb.com/healthinsurance

Farmers Care Program History

American Farm Bureau Federation began the Food Check-Out Day program in 1998. Held each year on the day or week Americans would have earned enough money to purchase a year's worth of groceries – typically, in the first week of February. The significance of farmers marking this date is to illustrate the low food prices enjoyed in the United States. Consumers in the U.S. spend an average of 6 to 7 percent of their annual income on food. Compare that to many Western European countries which spend two times that much on groceries.



The program was picked up by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau in 1998 as a way to raise monetary and food donations for those in need. In doing so, we've partnered with the Commonwealth's Ronald McDonald Houses to raise money and awareness of this cause. Ronald McDonald Houses are a home-away-from-home, keeping families together as children endure medical treatments.

In 2014, American Farm Bureau Federation decided to discontinue the program, leaving Pennsylvania with questions at how to proceed. We made a quick decision to rebrand the program and let our Women's Leadership Committee take an even larger role in planning the program. The program was renamed "Farmers Care" to illustrate the obvious, farmers care about the quality of food they produce and helping their communities.

Since the program's start in 1998, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee has raised over \$1,078,000 in monetary donations to the Ronald McDonald Houses. This is a HUGE accomplishment, and has helped to expand the program and its impact across the state.

Help Support Farming by Completing 2017 Census of Agriculture

The U.S. Department of Agriculture is starting to send out the 2017 Census of Agriculture this week. Conducted every five years, the questionnaire collects comprehensive data about agriculture in every county in the nation.

Those figures help highlight agriculture's importance to the local and national economies. The data is used by farmers and agribusinesses for planning and by legislators and policy makers for developing agriculture policy, such as the farm bill, and designing programs that help farmers and other residents of rural areas.

"Collected in service to American agriculture since 1840, the census gives every producer the opportunity to be represented so that informed decisions can support their efforts to provide the world with food, fuel, feed, and fiber," USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue said. "Every response matters."

USDA mails the surveys directly to farms and responses are due back — either via mail or online — by Feb. 5. Responding to the Census is required by law. For more information, visit: www.agcensus.usda.gov.

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

Rosetree Consulting provides soil sampling, crop consulting, and government regulatory documents for agricultural operations of all sizes. Our goal is to provide clients with the information and understanding needed to make better decisions and have a more profitable operation.

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.

SAFEMARK DEALERS

Kantner Tire 230 S. Franklin Street Shoemakersville, PA 610-562-2567	Pikeville Equipment 521 Oysterdale Road Oley, PA 610-987-6277	Zimmerman Farm Service 180 School House Rd Bethel, PA 717-933-4114
--	---	--

PUT
Firestone
Farm Tires
to Work for You!

SAFEMARK

Call for your nearest Safemark Dealer
717.944.1466 or 800.732.8473

Visit us on the web at www.pafbsafemark.net/

MSC BUSINESS SERVICES
PFB Members' Service Corporation

*Continuing to Add New Services & Partnerships
Creating the Best Total Program of Its Kind*

Services

- Farm Management Service
- PFA FACCTS®
- Write-up Services
- Benchmarking
- Payroll Services
- RFD Tax
- Consulting Services
- REAP Credit Resale
- Certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor

Call 717.731.3517
Email: FMS@pfb.com www.msCBS.net

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	TIME
January 6-13	PA Farm Show	Harrisburg, PA	
January 9-11	Keystone Farm Show	York, PA	
January 12	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
February 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
February 14	Farm Bureau Day	Harleysville, PA	9:00 am – 2:30 pm
February 19	Farmers Care Day	Freddie Hill Farms	
February 24-25	YF&R Conference	State College, PA	
March 9	BCFB Board Training	Berks Co Ag Center	7:00 pm
March 9	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
March 19 – 23	Ag Literacy Week		
March 23	BCFB Spring Banquet	Berks Co Ag Center	6:45 pm
April 13	BCFB Board Meeting	Berks Co Ag Center	7:30 pm
April 17	PFB State Legislative Conference	Harrisburg, PA	

USDA Proposes Allowing Low-Fat, Flavored Milk in School Lunch Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed adding more flexibility to the varieties of milk that can be served through the National School Lunch and School Breakfast programs. The proposed rule would allow schools that participate in the programs to offer students low-fat (1 percent milk fat) flavored milk beginning with the 2018-2019 school year.

Now, schools may serve low-fat unflavored milk but are limited to non-fat for flavored milk. USDA will seek public comments on the proposal before drafting a final rule.

“Schools want to offer food that students actually want to eat,” USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue said. “It doesn’t do any good to serve nutritious meals if they wind up in the trash can. These flexibilities give schools the local control they need to provide nutritious meals that school children find appetizing.”

The move is similar to one called for in a bill proposed by U.S. Rep. Glenn “G.T.” Thompson of Centre County. Thompson’s bill, the School Milk Nutrition Act, would allow schools to serve low-fat flavored milk in addition to other options. Farm Bureau supports the bill.

“To boost children’s consumption of nutritious fluid milk, a variety of milk offerings should be part of the school lunch program,” American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall said.

Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine Zone Expanded

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture has expanded the quarantine zone, created to halt the spread of the invasive spotted lantern fly.



With the latest expansion, the state has shifted to imposing quarantines at the county, rather than municipal, level and including areas where the insect’s presence has not yet been confirmed but there’s a high risk of spread. The quarantine area now covers 13 entire counties: Berks, Bucks, Chester, Carbon, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Monroe, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill.

“This invasive insect threatens to destroy \$18 billion worth of agricultural commodities here like apples, grapes and hardwoods, inflicting a devastating impact on the livelihoods of our producers and businesses,” Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said.

Businesses in the quarantine area must obtain a Phytosanitary Certificate or compliance agreement from the department to move items outside the area and need a permit to move items within the quarantine zone. People who live within or are traveling through quarantine zones should check vehicles for egg masses before leaving an infested area, buy firewood locally instead of moving it between areas, check outdoor items and trees for egg masses, not transport brush, yard waste or construction waste outside the quarantine area. For more information, visit <http://bit.ly/PDASpottedLanternfly>.

New PFB Company to Support Agriculture by Providing Information Technology Solutions

A new initiative recently launched by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau seeks to help businesses meet their technology needs while also supporting advocacy for agriculture. pfbSOLUTIONS is a new, for-profit company owned by PFB that aims to bridge the gap between the corporate world and rural Pennsylvania.

By partnering with well-known technology companies, pfbSOLUTIONS will offer its customers services such as computer and communications networking, information technology management, data storage and security. The company has products and services available to serve large and small businesses both within and outside of the agriculture world. Proceeds from pfbSOLUTIONS will support PFB and its mission of advocating and building a better future for Pennsylvania’s farms and rural communities.

“Just like our farmer members, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau needs to diversify in order to remain a strong organization,” said PFB President Rick Ebert. “We believe pfbSOLUTIONS will help us do that.”

In addition to offering technology services to businesses, pfbSOLUTIONS will also partner with DTN to provide localized agricultural weather-forecasting services to farmers. PFB members will receive an exclusive discount on those services. For more information, visit www.pfbsolutions.com.

Sallie Honored with Prestigious Barnraiser Award

Louis R. Sallie, retired Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Administrative Secretary, has been honored with the Barnraiser Award, becoming only the 14th recipient of PFB's most prestigious recognition in the organization's 67-year history.

Sallie, who retired this year, was recognized during the PFB's 67th Annual Meeting. The award recognizes individuals who have spent a lifetime in dedicated leadership to the agricultural community. As administrative secretary, Sallie ran the day-to-day operations of PFB and was directly responsible for providing timely and critical information to the State Board of Directors. He worked with grassroots members to grow the organization into what it is today and greatly expanded efforts to educate the non-farming public about agriculture.

"During his career with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Lou was a great leader and provided outstanding advice over the years to farmers," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "He helped me and many other farmers navigate through a variety of complex issues and difficult situations associated with agriculture. Although he was not a farmer, Lou always focused his efforts on working toward outcomes that benefitted farm families."

Butler County Farmer Honored as Local Affairs Leader

Butler County farmer Nikole Stuchal was recognized with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's 2017 Local Affairs Leader Award during the organization's 67th Annual Meeting in Hershey. The award recognizes an outstanding individual, whose local affairs efforts and activities have helped solve problems and improve rural living for county Farm Bureau members.

Stuchal—who farms about 2,000 acres of corn, soybeans and other grains in Butler, Mercer and Venango counties with her husband Cory—was a key player in getting Butler County Farm Bureau involved in efforts to train first responders for grain bin rescues and help farmers think about emergency preparedness. Working with local emergency officials, Stuchal hosted a grain bin rescue training on the farm. That experience led her to get involved in other efforts to promote farm safety.

"Nikole was the lead spokesperson for the rescue program, reaching out to multiple organizations in Butler County. Her participation in the grain bin events were informative and placed a high priority on promoting farm safety," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "Nikole's actions also helped put a spotlight on the important role Butler County Farm Bureau plays throughout the county."

Washington County Farmer Named Outstanding Woman in Agriculture

Nancy Midla, a Washington County beef farmer, was honored with the Outstanding Woman in Agriculture Award during Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's 67th Annual Meeting in Hershey.

Midla, who manages a 500-acre purebred Hereford beef operation near Marianna with her husband Leslie, was a driving force in bringing the "Ag in the Classroom" movement to Western

Pennsylvania. During the 1980s, she visited elementary schools to teach some 400 students per year about agriculture through educational materials and slide presentations featuring her farm. A member of the Washington County Farm Bureau for more than 40 years, she also played a major role in a local Farm Bureau initiative called "Ag Days at the Mall," where she brought livestock from her farm into the center concourse of the shopping mall so the public could see, smell and touch animals and learn about where their food comes from.

"Nancy's passion for agriculture is contagious, while her commitment to educating children and adults about the many aspects of farming and food production is renowned in her area of the state," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "Nancy is also a role model for young women and I'm proud to recognize her as Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's third recipient of the Outstanding Woman in Agriculture Award."

Retired Researcher from Columbia County Wins Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award

John Yocum, a retired scientist who led Penn State University's Southeast Agricultural Research & Extension Center for 41 years, is being recognized for his contributions to Pennsylvania agriculture with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's 2017 Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award. The award, presented at 67th Annual Meeting in Hershey, honors an individual whose dedicated work and service has significantly contributed to the advancement of Pennsylvania agriculture.

"John provides a perfect example of why agriculture research and cooperative extension programs are so critical to the advancement of agriculture in the state," said PFB President Rick Ebert. "His individual efforts and work with other colleagues have directly benefitted Pennsylvania farmers by making their crops more productive and more environmental friendly."

Yocum, who returned to his native Columbia County after retiring, had multiple roles associated with the farm, including conducting agriculture research projects, performing the duties of an agronomy extension specialist and teaching a variety of classes. He grew the research farm from 88 acres to the current 155 acres. He is probably best known for his research and Extension work that showed Pennsylvania farmers how soybeans could be a viable crop for them to consider growing and how soybeans could be a strong option as a double-crop in the state.

EPA Imposes Changes to Dicamba Herbicide Labels

The EPA has prompted label changes for 2018 for the herbicide dicamba. More than 3 million acres of soybeans were damaged in 2017, which was attributed to off-target damage. Next season, only certified applicators with dicamba-specific training can apply dicamba and records must be maintained.

Wind speed, a limited application window, tank clean-out to prevent cross contamination and awareness of nearby sensitive crops will need to be practiced reducing the risk of herbicide drift. The label changes will help to keep dicamba available to growers for over-the-top application to soybeans in the future.

County Farm Bureaus Recognized for Achievements

Members of Susquehanna County Farm Bureau were recognized with the prestigious Farm Bureau Premier County Award, during Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's 67th Annual Meeting in Hershey.

The award is the highest honor bestowed upon a county Farm Bureau among Pennsylvania's 54 county Farm Bureaus. Susquehanna County Farm Bureau was also recognized for earning two President's Awards as well as the Overall Achievement Award for county Farm Bureaus with up to 400 farmer members, which salutes a county Farm Bureau for its outstanding performance in six program areas.

Wayne/Pike County Farm Bureau won the Overall Achievement Award for counties with more than 400 farmer members as well as two President's Awards. Bedford County Farm Bureau was recognized with the second-place Overall Achievement Award for counties with more than 400 members and received one President's Award. Juniata County Farm Bureau won the second-place Overall Achievement Award for counties with 400 members or fewer and received a President's Award.

Other counties receiving President's Awards were: Chester/Delaware County Farm Bureau, Butler County Farm Bureau, Cambria County Farm Bureau, Crawford County Farm Bureau, Mercer County Farm Bureau and Snyder County Farm Bureau.

Young Farmers to Compete in National Contests

Winners of two Pennsylvania Farm Bureau Young Farmer & Rancher contests will go on to compete against winners from other states at the national level.

The Pennsylvania contest winners were recognized during PFB's 67th Annual Meeting. Corey and Heather Grove won the YF&R Excellence in Agriculture Award. The award recognizes their involvement in agriculture, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and other organizations.

Corey currently works full-time as an environmental consultant assisting farmers with their nutrient management plans, conservation planning, CAFO permitting and other duties, while Heather works as an administrative assistant for the York County Fire School, which trains emergency responders. Meanwhile, Corey and Heather both work part-time on their parents' farms and grow vegetables and raise chickens and steer on their two-acre farmette.

Kaleb Long, of Lancaster County, was the winner of the Young Farmer & Rancher Discussion Meet competition. The contest simulates a committee discussion, where participants lead a group discussion to come to a consensus on agriculture issues.

Both Long and the Groves will compete during the American Farm Bureau Federation convention, held in Nashville in January.

Hoffman Re-Elected Vice President

Juniata County farmer Chris Hoffman has been re-elected as Vice President of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau by delegates at the organization's 67th Annual Meeting.

It is truly an honor to represent this organization," said Hoffman, who raises hogs and chickens on his farm near McAlisterville. "I continue to be impressed with the involvement of our members and how their grassroots efforts directly lead to real changes that benefit farm families across the state."

Hoffman has been heavily involved with Farm Bureau for more than a decade, serving on PFB's State Board of Directors for eight years and as a member of the board's Executive Committee. As Vice President, Hoffman is responsible for chairing PFB's policy development process. He also chairs the state Agriculture Promotion Committee, which focuses on raising money for the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation and encouraging county-level events that promote consumer awareness of agriculture. Hoffman also chairs American Farm Bureau Federation's Promotion and Education Committee and is a member of the Penn State Board of Trustees.

New State Board Member Selected

Bob Craft, of Mercer County, was selected as the newest member of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's State Board of Directors. He will represent District 15, which includes Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties.

Craft was nominated by delegates from the district and elected to the post by delegates from all 54 county Farm Bureaus. He replaces Donald Koontz, who retired from the Board after reaching the tenure limit of four consecutive terms. Craft grew up on a dairy farm in Washington County and ran a small hog and beef farm there while also working off the farm in purchasing and commodity management. He was active in Washington County Farm Bureau and served as county President and Vice President before his off-the-farm career took him to western New York.

Now retired and living in Mercer County, Craft and his wife, Sandy, have been getting back involved with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau. Craft, who was recently elected Mercer County Farm Bureau President, said he is looking forward to getting more involved at the state level and hopes to encourage more grassroots participation within his district.

"My position will be as a liaison between the State Board and the county boards and I want to make sure that liaison position is strong and encourage more involvement and leadership from the county level," he said. "It's a position where I feel I can make a difference and help the counties."

Volunteer Readers Sought for Ag Literacy Week

The Second Annual Pennsylvania Ag Literacy Week is March 19 to 23 and the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture Foundation, a charitable organization supported by Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, is looking for volunteer readers to help teach students about agriculture and where their food comes from.

The effort needs individuals involved in Pennsylvania agriculture who will donate \$10 to provide a book – "Tyler Makes Pancakes!" – to a kindergarten through second-grade class, then spend 30 minutes in the classroom to read the book and lead a hands-on activity. To learn more and become a reader, visit www.pfb.com/agliteracy

Koontz Thanked for Service to Farm Bureau

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau thanks retiring State Board Member Donald Koontz for his service to the organization. Koontz stepped down after reaching the tenure limit of four consecutive terms. He represented District 15, which includes Beaver, Butler, Lawrence and Mercer counties.

Board directors play an important role in PFB and dedicate their time and effort to improving the organization and keeping county Farm Bureaus in their areas informed of important updates and initiatives.

Koontz, of Mercer County, has operated a dairy farm for more than three decades and has also worked off the farm as a facility manager for the Mercer County Extension and 4-H Park. He served previously as a county president as well as a legislative committee chair.

EPA Proposes Formally Delaying WOTUS



The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is proposing officially putting the brakes on implementing its Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) rule while the controversial regulation is reviewed and potentially rescinded and rewritten.

The 2015 rule, which Farm Bureau opposes, never went into effect because of injunctions issued by federal courts that questioned the rule's legality. But those cases are still working through the legal process so the possibility remains that new court rulings could put the rule into effect. EPA's proposal seeks to avoid that scenario by delaying the effective date of the regulation for two years.

EPA has proposed rescinding WOTUS and recently accepted public comments on that plan. The agency is now holding listening sessions to gather input on what a revised clean water rule should look like. The current version of WOTUS would give EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers broad authority to regulate nearly all land areas as "water," including an estimated 98 percent of Pennsylvania land. Farm Bureau believes the regulation attempts to regulate land areas well beyond what is allowed by federal law and has advocated for repealing the rule and replacing it with one that protects water quality without trampling on landowners' rights.



Voters Approve Expansion of Property Tax Program

Pennsylvania voters have approved amending the state Constitution to alter a program that offers property tax reductions for homes and farms.

The amendment removes a cap on the maximum level of property tax relief a school district or other taxing body (such as a county or municipality) may allow through the homestead/farmstead exemption. That program allows districts to exempt a portion of the assessed value of eligible properties from taxation as long as that revenue is made up through other means.

While—in theory—the change will allow local governments and school districts to offer greater relief to eligible taxpayers, it's not likely to have any meaningful effect on homeowners' or farmers' tax bills unless further action is taken by the General Assembly. Districts cannot offer greater property tax relief through the homestead/farmstead exemption without having the revenue to offset the cost. That means state lawmakers would likely need to approve another source of state funding—such as higher sales or income taxes—before eligible landowners would see their property tax bills eliminated or reduced.

But even under the best circumstances, farmers—even with the cap lifted—won't see meaningful property tax relief through the homestead/farmstead exemption because of limits on how the program is applied to farms. Farmland does not qualify at all for the exemption. And only farm buildings located on properties where the landowner lives are eligible.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau continues to advocate for solutions that provide relief from property taxes across the board, instead of benefiting only segments of the property. PFB supports eliminating school property taxes and replacing them with a mixture of other revenue options, such as higher and/or expanded sales and income taxes. It also supports partially reducing school property taxes as a possible step towards elimination.

Electronic Logging Mandate Delayed for Agricultural Haulers

The U.S. Department of Transportation is giving commercial haulers of livestock and agricultural commodity a 90-day waiver from new requirements that commercial drivers install electronic logging devices in their vehicles. The move comes as the department considers a request by Farm Bureau and other agricultural groups to exempt livestock haulers from the regulation.



The 90-day waiver from the rule begins once the regulation goes into effect Dec. 18. Most farmers would be exempt from the mandate anyway because federal law exempts drivers of "covered farm vehicles" from logging requirements. But drivers for commercial trucking businesses who transport livestock, live fish and insects are likely to fall under the requirements.

Farm Bureau and other groups argue that the hours of service requirements—which the electronic logs are intended to enforce—are problematic for haulers transporting live animals due to the requirement that drivers stop and take a minimum 10-hour break after reaching their service hour limit. The groups point out livestock haulers' specialized training and commitment to ensuring both the animals' well-being and the safety of other drivers.

EPA Livestock Emissions Reporting Requirements “Up in the Air”

The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) and Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) require facilities to report releases of hazardous substances that are equal to or greater than their reportable quantities (RQ) within any 24-hour period. Following a hazardous substance reportable release, a facility owner or operator must notify federal authorities under CERCLA and state and local authorities under EPCRA.

On Dec. 18, 2008, EPA published a final rule that exempted most farms from certain release reporting requirements in CERCLA and EPCRA. Specifically, the rule exempted farms releasing hazardous substances from animal waste to the air above threshold levels from reporting under CERCLA. For EPCRA reporting, the rule exempted reporting of such releases if the farm had fewer animals than a large concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO). Therefore, all farms were relieved from reporting hazardous substance air releases from animal waste under CERCLA, and only large CAFOs were subject to EPCRA reporting.

Several citizen groups challenged the validity of the final rule in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. On April 11, 2017, the Court struck down the final rule, eliminating the reporting exemptions for farms. On Oct. 30, 2017, EPA and numerous agricultural intervenors had asked the Court for an additional delay, seeking to postpone the reporting requirements until January 2018 for livestock producers and allow EPA to develop guidance materials to help farmers understand their reporting obligations. On Nov. 22, 2017, the Court issued an order granting a stay of the mandate until Jan. 22, 2018, and according to EPA, no reporting is necessary until the mandate is issued.

Once the mandate is issued, EPA recommends that those required to report expedite their initial continuous release notification to the National Response Center by using the “temporary email option” at NRC-CERCLA-EPCRA-REPORT@uscg.mil. Those reporting are asked to identify their reportable release as an “initial continuous release notification.” This option avoids potential large call volumes and delays and also allows one email notification for owners/operators with multiple farms.

EPA will update its website once the mandate is issued and as new information becomes available, and Farm Bureau will monitor the situation and report any new developments to affected members.

PFB, Rotz Recognized for Support of Extension

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau’s all-hands-on-deck effort that resulted in the restoration of state funding for Penn State Cooperative Extension amid the 2015-2016 state budget impasse has received national recognition.

Joel Rotz, PFB’s Government Affairs and Communications Manager, received the Friend of Extension Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi, the national fraternal organization for Extension professionals, for his role coordinating the campaign. The award is the highest honor the organization bestows upon a person outside of Extension.

When funding for Penn State Extension was held up amid a nine-month standoff over the state budget, PFB became a leading advocate for restoring the funds by impressing upon lawmakers, the press and the public the importance of Extension. Rotz—who at the time served as PFB’s Senior Government Affairs Director—spearheaded the effort by helping to organize grassroots advocacy, testifying before legislative committees and working closely with Penn State to communicate the importance of Extension.

“If ever there was a need for strong leadership, this past budget cycle was it,” said Extension Director Dennis Calvin, who nominated Rotz for the recognition. “Joel Rotz stepped up and helped organize a loud and united voice for Pennsylvania agriculture on our behalf.”

Rotz said the honor is a reflection on the grassroots support PFB members demonstrated for Penn State Extension and research.

“Without that support, the future of those vital services for all Pennsylvanians would be in great jeopardy,” Rotz said. “I am privileged to be the one who was able to help direct our volunteer leaders and grassroots members in achieving this goal.”

Choice Hotels Benefit Helps Susquehanna County Farmer

Joe Loomis was glad to be a Pennsylvania Farm Bureau member several months ago when his family’s pre-cruise hotel plans went awry.

The person who organized the cruise for the group had also booked hotel rooms for the night before the cruise was scheduled to leave for Baltimore. When Loomis checked into his rooms, he found there were the incorrect number of beds. The hotel switched his family to other rooms but the rooms they were assigned were disgusting.

“I went outside, I pulled out my Farm Bureau card and called Choice Hotels,” said Loomis, a Susquehanna County farmer. “Five minutes later, they had us in a hotel across the street.”

As a PFB member, Loomis can save up to 20 percent off bookings through Choice Hotels. The chain operates 11 different hotel brands with more than 6,300 properties worldwide and in just about every area of the U.S. Well-known Choice brands include Comfort Inn, Quality Inn, Clarion, Econo Lodge and more.

With his PFB member savings, Loomis was able to book a suite at the Choice hotel for only a small bit more than the disappointing rooms at the other brand hotel. He said the room was clean, in great condition and a fantastic value.

“It will be my first call from now on,” Loomis said.

The Choice hotels discount is especially handy for members traveling this holiday season. You can also request free membership in the Choice Privileges® Frequent Traveler program, and earn points towards stays, shopping or other travel needs.

To get the discount, simply book online at www.choicehotels.com or call 800.331.1212 and enter or mention your PFB Significant Organization Savings code: 00209780. For more information, visit www.pfb.com/choicehotels.

