

**Farmers in Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin,
Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland,
Perry, Snyder, and Tioga Counties PA Invited to Participate in Survey to
Inventory Farm Conservation Practices**

Fill the survey out starting **January 14** at <https://farm-bmp.psu.edu>

What is the purpose of this survey?

We know that Pennsylvania farmers have done much to improve water quality and soil health. Yet many of the conservation practices that farmers have implemented are not accounted for in tracking progress toward priority water quality goals, including cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. This is especially true where farmers have implemented practices on their own initiative, using their own means to do so. In 2016, Penn State led a successful effort to inventory these practices by inviting Pennsylvania farmers across the Chesapeake Bay watershed to complete a survey. This resulted in many previously unreported practices being documented, reported and accepted toward agriculture's water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay. In 2020, the survey was repeated in Lancaster, York, Adams, and Franklin Counties and many more previously unreported practices documented and reported. Now, in 2022, we are again following this successful format and inviting farmers in Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Tioga Counties to fill out the survey and provide a more complete picture in these 14 counties of the many conservation practices that have been implemented. This survey will inventory these practices, ensuring that the agricultural community receives the credit it deserves for improving water quality.

What was the impact of previous surveys?

Nearly 7,000 responded to the 2016 survey, and many previously unreported practices were documented, reported and accepted toward agriculture's water quality goals in the Chesapeake Bay. Among the impressive numbers from that survey included 475,800 acres of core nutrient management, 343,300 acres of ag E&S and conservation plans, 2,165 manure storages, 2,106 barnyard runoff control systems, and 7,500 acres of riparian buffers. 2020 marked Pennsylvania's best annual progress report toward Chesapeake Bay goals in the last decade. Farmers played a key role in that success, when the survey was repeated in Lancaster, York, Franklin and Adams, with nearly 1,800 returns. Again, many additional conservation practices were reported and credited. Numbers from the four counties included 305,900 acres of supplemental nutrient management, 277 manure storages, 118 barnyard runoff control systems, and 7,330 acres of riparian buffers. Some of these numbers even exceeded Countywide Action Plan (CAP) goals for the participating counties.

What conservation practices are being asked about?

The survey will first ask farmers some basic information about their farming operation (total acres, crops grown, animals raised), and then ask about the following conservation practices: nutrient and manure management; manure injection and incorporation; supplemental nutrient management (often called the “4Rs”); manure storages; barnyard runoff controls; grazing management; agricultural erosion and sediment controls plans and conservation plans; no till and minimum till; cover crops; and riparian buffers.

Who developed the survey?

The survey was developed by Penn State University in collaboration with Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, PennAg Industries Association, Professional Dairy Managers of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and county conservation districts. Questions were pre-tested by Pennsylvania farmers and agriculture conservation professionals, and the survey was refined based on their input.

Who is administering the survey?

The survey is being administered by the Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center on behalf of the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences.

How will the survey be launched?

The survey will open **January 14, 2022**, when Penn State will mail a joint letter from Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau to all agricultural property owners in Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Tioga Counties, inviting them to participate in the survey. The letter will provide a link to the survey online, allowing farmers to respond to the survey at a secure web location, <https://farm-bmp.psu.edu>. Farmers receiving the letter are encouraged to fill out the survey online beginning January 14.

Do farmers have to fill out the survey online?

No, but we are encouraging farmers to do so. It is fast, secure, and easy. If a farmer has to stop filling out the online survey, all of their data will be saved and they can return to where they left off to finish the survey. However, if farmers do not want to fill out the survey online, a hard copy of the survey with a self-address stamped envelope will be mailed to them in February 2022, giving farmers the option of completing and returning the survey by mail. Farmers will have the option of either completing the survey online at <https://farm-bmp.psu.edu> or by mail throughout the duration of the survey period, which ends **April 1, 2022**.

Should a farmer who filled out the survey in 2016 do so again this year?

Yes. Filling out the survey in 2022 is important so you can provide an update on your conservation practices. This is important for several reasons. First, it provides an opportunity to report that practices previously reported are still in place and providing water quality benefits. Second, the 2022 survey will provide you with an opportunity to report new practices that you have installed since you last filled out the survey. Finally, the survey will give you a chance to report annual practices (such as nutrient management, no till and cover crops) for the previous calendar year.

What if a farmer did not receive the survey in the mail but wants to participate?

All farmers in Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Tioga Counties are urged to complete the survey, whether they received the survey in the mail or not. If a farmer in these four counties has not received a mailing from Penn State but would like to fill out the survey, there are two options:

- First, fill out the survey online at <https://farm-bmp.psu.edu>. This is the fastest and easiest option.
- Second, pick up a copy of the survey at the local county conservation district or county Extension office, or download and print out a .pdf copy of the survey at <http://tinyurl.com/farmbmp>. Fill out the survey and follow the instructions at the end of the survey to mail it back.

I am a Pennsylvania farmer in another county of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Will I have an opportunity to report my conservation practices?

Yes. In order to focus limited resources and encourage all Pennsylvania farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to fill out the survey, we are now conducting the survey in phases. In 2020, we inventoried Lancaster, York, Adams and Franklin Counties. This year's phase is focused on 14 priority "Tier 2 and 3" counties identified in Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan (Phase 3 WIP). Future phases will seek to inventory other Pennsylvania counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Does a farmer need any documents or information to answer the survey?

Farmers may need to reference some of their farm operation documents to answer some of the questions in the survey. This may include their conservation plans, nutrient management plans, manure management plans, or documentation on conservation practice installation. Farmers are encouraged to look at the .pdf copy of the survey, available at <http://tinyurl.com/farmbmp>, to review the questions ahead of time and determine what documents they might need to answer the survey.

May a farmer seek help from a consultant in filling out the survey?

Yes. Farmers may work regularly with an agricultural consultant to develop plans and implement conservation practices on their farms. These consultants may have more intimate knowledge of conservation practices on the farm. Farmers may engage their consultant to help fill out the survey.

What if a farmer is retired and rents his ground out to another farm operator?

The current farm operator should fill out the survey. If a retired farmer received a copy of the survey, he should have the farm operator who rents his ground fill out the survey. If both the current farm operator and the retired farmer received a survey, the operator should complete only his survey. Operators may fill out one survey for all ground that they operate (owned and rented) in their home county. If they operate ground in other counties, they should fill out a separate survey for each county in which they operate.

What if a farm landowner who is not a farmer receives the survey?

The current farm operator should fill out the survey. If a landowner who is not a farmer received a copy of the survey but has farmer who operates the farm, the landowner should have the farm operator who rents the ground fill out the survey. If both the current farm operator and the landowner received a survey, the operator should complete only his survey. Operators may fill out one survey for all ground that they operate (owned and rented) in their home county. If they operate ground in other counties, they should fill out a separate survey for each county in which they operate.

Will I receive anything for filling out the survey?

Yes. To thank you for filling out the survey, Penn State Extension will mail you a complimentary Penn State soil test kit.

What happens after I fill out the survey?

Once your survey is completed, ten percent of survey respondents will be randomly selected for farm visits by trained Penn State Extension personnel to assess inventory results and to come to a mutual understanding of each practice. If selected, you will be contacted by Extension to ensure your willingness to participate in a follow-up farm visit. Farmers participating in follow-up farm visits will receive a complimentary copy of the Penn State Agronomy Guide as a thank you. Data from the farm visit will be kept completely confidential.

When does the survey close?

The survey will close on **April 1, 2022**.

What happens after the survey closes?

Once the survey closes, researchers from Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences will analyze the survey responses and provide cumulative results to the Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Office to document conservation practices implemented by Pennsylvania farmers in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Is my name and location kept confidential?

Yes. All names and locational information about individual farmers and farms will be kept completely confidential. The results reported by Penn State will be cumulative by county and will not include individual names or locations. Names and addresses will be removed from all inventory and farm visit results to prevent identification of participants. Penn State researchers have extensive experience in implementing these types of data confidentiality protocols and will ensure these protocols are strictly followed as this survey is administered.

Is participation in this survey voluntary?

Yes. Participation in the survey is completely voluntary. Nonetheless we hope that all farmers in Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Tioga Counties will choose to fill out the survey at <https://farm-bmp.psu.edu> between January 14 and April 1, 2022 and help tell a very positive story about Pennsylvania agriculture's role in protecting and improving water quality of our streams, rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.

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