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KEEPING PMT ON SCHEDULE

The Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT) was enacted in 2015 as a landmark compromise between Maryland's agricultural and environmental communities. Protecting the Chesapeake Bay continues to be a top priority for the state and the PMT plays a critical role in keeping nutrient runoff out of the watershed.

Heading into the next phase of PMT implementation, we are anticipating an increased need for manure transport as more fields are incorporated into the tool. MDA will continue working with the PMT Advisory Committee and stakeholder groups to ensure that the transition goes as smoothly as possible.

There are a number of new initiatives already underway, including:

Improving the Manure Transport Program

With more manure to move, MDA is making it easier than ever for farmers and haulers to participate in the Manure Transport Program with a shorter application forms and more flexibility in submitting claim forms. The program has established a dedicated manure hotline (410-841-5864) for farmers interested in moving or receiving manure. The program will also receive an additional \$1 million in Governor Larry Hogan's FY21 budget via the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

Partnering with Poultry Integrators

To ensure that we have a complete picture of transport needs, the department will work closely with the state's major poultry companies and growers to better coordinate the supply and demand for poultry litter on the Eastern Shore. This will greatly improve the efficiency of the Manure Transport Program by identifying farms who need to move litter off their farm and matching with farmers who are able to land apply litter.

Utilizing State Resources

MDA is working with the Maryland Environmental Services (MES) on an Intergovernmental Agreement to haul and store poultry litter. MES is identifying facilities statewide that could serve as regional storage areas for litter until it is ready to be hauled to a farm or an alternative use facility.

Exploring Partnerships with Maryland and Delaware Railroad Company

In addition to identifying in-state solutions for the hauling and use of poultry litter, MDA is working on an agreement with the railroad that would allow Maryland farmers to haul litter across the state and beyond. In addition to reaching farmers and growers in central/western Maryland, this could provide service to Midwest corn growers who have expressed interest in using poultry litter as fertilizer.

Outreach Campaign

In an effort to encourage more eligible farmers to use poultry manure as a crop fertilizer, MDA has launched a public outreach campaign that includes advertisements in trade publications, targeted social media ads, and banners at grain elevators throughout the region. The ads will promote changes to the Manure Transport Program, and focus on the benefits of using manure and poultry litter as a fertilizer.

PMT Field Science Study

To ensure we are working with the best available science, MDA has signed an MOU with the University of Maryland to complete a \$1 million, five-year study on the field science of the PMT. The study will be funded in part by a \$350,000 United States Department of Agriculture grant, with the remainder coming from the Chesapeake and Atlantic Coastal Bays Trust Fund.

Continued Commitment to Identifying Alternative Uses

The department will continue soliciting proposals through its [Animal Waste Technology Grant](#) program, which aims to establish reliable alternative use facilities for manure and poultry litter. The following are promising alternative use projects:

- Bioenergy DevCo - This company recently purchased the Perdue pelletizing facility in Delaware for anaerobic digestion that would use poultry litter and other animal waste products to create renewable natural gas and an odor-free nutrient-rich soil amendment.
- CleanBay Renewables - A regional manure-to-energy plant in Somerset County that could generate electricity by processing 80 tons per day of poultry litter as feedstock. The company estimates a capacity to produce 48 megawatt hours of electricity per day.
- Mid-Atlantic Microbial - Current pilot program on a Queen Anne's County farm that uses poultry litter for compost and is looking to expand to eight additional farms.
- Planet Found Energy Development - This project is designed to reduce the amount of phosphorus contained in poultry litter while generating electricity. This is done using an anaerobic digester to convert poultry litter into methane, which is then used to generate electricity.

Reducing Phosphorus Levels in Fields with 150+ FIV

In addition to finding new ways to move litter out of areas with high phosphorus levels, the department is working with University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science to study the use of aragonite, a high-calcium lime product, as a means to reduce phosphorus levels on fields with high concentrations. Aragonite is believed to absorb phosphorus, changing it into a plant-ready form of the nutrient, which thereby reduces phosphorus levels in the soil.