

## Nutrient Management Regional Offices

**Alleghany, Garrett and Washington counties**  
12407 Naves Cross Road, NE  
Cumberland, MD 21502  
301-777-1747, ext 3

**Frederick County**  
92 Thomas Johnson Drive,  
Suite 110  
Frederick, MD 21702  
301-694-9290, ext.136

**Baltimore, Cecil and Harford counties**  
2205 Commerce Road,  
Suite C  
Forest Hill, MD 21050  
410-838-6181, ext. 118

**Anne Arundel, Carroll, Howard, Montgomery and Prince George's counties**  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway,  
Suite 201  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
410-841-5959

**Calvert, Charles and St. Mary's counties**  
26737 Radio Station Way,  
Suite B  
Leonardtown, MD 20650  
301-475-8402, ext.122

**Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's and Talbot counties**  
28577 Mary's Court, Suite 4  
Easton, MD 21601  
410-822-8120 or 8126

**Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties**  
27722 Nanticoke Road,  
Unit 2  
Salisbury, MD 21801  
410-677-0802, ext. 4



**Maryland Department of Agriculture**

*Office of Resource Conservation*

**Nutrient Management Program**  
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway  
Annapolis, MD 21401  
[www.mda.maryland.gov](http://www.mda.maryland.gov)



## AGRICULTURAL NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

# Step into Compliance with Maryland's Nutrient Management Regulations



*A Checklist for Farm Operators*

# Step Into Compliance

## Maryland's Nutrient Management Regulations

*Maryland law requires all farmers grossing \$2,500 a year or more or livestock producers with 8,000 pounds or more of live animal weight to follow nutrient management plans when fertilizing crops and managing animal manure. These plans—developed by consultants and farmers certified by the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA)—specify how much fertilizer, manure or other nutrient sources may be safely applied to crops to achieve yields and prevent excess nutrients from impacting waterways. Nutrient management plans generally are required for all agricultural land used to produce plants, food, feed, fiber, animals or other agricultural products.*

*Farmers are required to submit copies of their initial nutrient management plans to MDA, update plans before they expire, take new*

*soil samples a minimum of once every three years and submit Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) documenting how they implemented their plans during the previous year. AIRs must be filed with MDA by March 1. Compliance with the Nutrient Management Program is a requirement for participation in the Maryland Agricultural Water Quality Cost-Share (MACS) Program.*

*Follow the step-by-step instructions outlined in this brochure to step into compliance with Maryland's nutrient management regulations.*

## APPLY FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Financial assistance is available to help farmers install best management practices (BMPs) outlined in their nutrient management plans. Many BMPs may qualify for cost-share funds, including fencing and other stream protection practices, animal waste storage structures, heavy use areas, manure transport and cover crops. These practices provide environmental, financial and aesthetic benefits to farms. Technical assistance to install BMPs is available through local soil conservation districts.



## Step 1



### *Get a Nutrient Management Plan*

The first step in complying with Maryland's nutrient management regulations is to get a nutrient management plan. Due to their complexity, nutrient management plans must be developed by one of the following:

- University of Maryland Extension (UME) specialist
- Private consultant certified and licensed by MDA
- Farmer who is certified by MDA to develop a nutrient management plan solely for his or her operation

Farmers interested in becoming certified to write their own nutrient management plans should contact MDA or their local Extension office for a training schedule. Classes are held in fall and winter and include approximately 11 hours of classroom instruction and practice in writing plans for livestock, poultry, crop or nursery and greenhouse operations. MDA maintains a training calendar and list of private consultants at [www.mda.maryland.gov](http://www.mda.maryland.gov).

## Step 2



### *Update Plans Before they Expire*



Nutrient management plans must be revised and updated before they expire. The expiration date can be found on the actual plan. Major changes to an operation may require the plan to be modified or updated sooner. In addition, farmers must have a soil test completed at least once every three years. Farmers who use manure must have it analyzed for nutrient content at least every other year.

## Step 3



### *Keep Accurate Records*



A good record-keeping system allows farmers to evaluate crop and nutrient management decisions while contributing significantly to the accuracy of their nutrient management plans. During an audit, these records help MDA nutrient management specialists verify farmer compliance with nutrient management plans. Both MDA and UME have record-keeping tools that can assist farmers with this task. The following information is required:

- Current nutrient management plan
- Receipts for fertilizer purchases, including nutrient source information and analysis
- Actual field-specific or management unit yield information for the last five years
- Farm map detailing crop fields
- Current soil test results and manure analyses, if applicable
- Field specific nutrient recommendations
- Phosphorus risk assessment and related recommendations. Farms with a Fertility Index Value (FIV) of 150 or more should run both the P-Site Index and the Phosphorus Management Tool.
- Nutrient rates, quantity and application, timing and method
- Fertilizer applicator voucher or certificate number
- Records/justification of plan modifications



## Step 4



### *Implement the Plan*

Farmers should follow and implement their current nutrient management plan. Changes in crops, nutrient sources, animal numbers, market factors or unanticipated weather may affect how a nutrient management plan is implemented. These factors should be recorded to justify changes in how the plan has been implemented. Modified or updated plans are not submitted to MDA; they are kept on file by the farmer.

## Step 5



### *Keep Nutrient Applicator Vouchers Up to Date*



Farmers who apply nutrients to 10 or more acres of cropland are required to attend a two-hour nutrient applicator training course once every three years. Free voucher training and recertification courses are offered in fall and winter by MDA and UME. Farmers who are certified to write their own nutrient management plans are not required to attend this training.

## Step 6



### *File an Annual Implementation Report*

Farmers are required to submit Annual Implementation Reports (AIRs) to MDA by March 1 summarizing their nutrient applications for the previous year. Most of the information needed to complete the report is contained in the nutrient management plan, but crop acreages, fertilizer receipts and records of other types of nutrient inputs will be needed as well. AIRs are mailed to farmers in December. Additional forms and instructions are available at regional nutrient management offices or online at [www.mda.maryland.gov](http://www.mda.maryland.gov).

## HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN ON-FARM REVIEW



MDA nutrient management specialists

conduct several hundred farm audits annually to verify that farmers are using valid nutrient management plans to protect water quality. The majority of farms are selected randomly for audit; however, farms with previous violations or complaints may be targeted for inspection. As part of the inspection process, specialists inform farmers about technical and regulatory requirements and provide advice on required record-keeping systems.

During the review, the specialist will compare nutrient recommendations outlined in the farmer's nutrient management plan to application records and fertilizer receipts. The specialist will ask to see the farm's most recent nutrient management plan and the documents outlined in Step 3. In some instances, the specialist may walk the farm property to confirm the installation of new stream protection practices or ask to see the farm's soil conservation and water quality plan.

Following the audit, the farmer will be given a copy of the report. If the operation is found to be in compliance with the program, no further action is necessary. If program requirements have not been met, recommendations will be provided and a follow-up visit may be scheduled.