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Shapiro Administration Begins Roll-out of Clean Streams Fund Program to Build Healthier Soil, Cleaner Water, Farm Viability

Commitments to Conservation in Governor Shapiro's Budget will Multiply Impact of \$154 Million Investment

Cogan Station, PA – Yesterday, **Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** visited Matthew and Samantha Stahlnecker's Lycoming County farm to announce the first funding rolling out under the new, \$154 million Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP). **Governor Shapiro** made it clear in his budget address that he understands the significant role of our farmers in Pennsylvania's vitality. His words are matched by his proposals for investments that will grow and strengthen agriculture and the commonwealth through commonsense solutions. This announcements builds on the Administration's commitment.

Lycoming County is receiving \$1.9 million in ACAP funds based on a formula that considers number of farms, number of livestock operations, and number of impaired stream miles. The Stahlneckers plan to apply for the program to boost conservation measures on their farm.

"As young farmers, the Stahlneckers have demonstrated their care for the water and land," Secretary Redding said. "It's our goal to honor their stewardship, and the stewardship of other PA farmers by investing ACAP funds in the future of their farm and the future of Pennsylvania."

ACAP is a result of 40 years of Pennsylvania governors showing their dedication to ensuring clean water and land resources, going back to Governor Thornburgh, who entered Pennsylvania into the Chesapeake Bay Program, and continuing today with the commitments by Governor Shapiro. In his 2023-24 budget proposal, continued to support the conservation tax credits, loans, grants, incentives and initiatives in the Pennsylvania Farm Bill -- proposing a new \$2.5 million investment that will help guarantee the integrity of state and local investments in preserving prime farmland for the future."

Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Fund was created with \$220 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act, and funds conservation programs including ACAP, designed to share the costs to farmers for farm management practices that reduce sediment in waterways, keeping the nutrients out of waterways, and on the farm to build soil health.

Funding will help provide site design and engineering support for measures like concrete barnyards, heavy use area protection, manure storage, and expertise to institute agronomic or ecological practices like cover crops, planted streamside buffers, stream-bank fencing, and grazing systems – the best management practices, or "BMPs" proven to conserve water and soil resources and farm productivity.

ACAP funding, administered by the State Conservation Commission (SCC) is part of a coordinated package of state conservation initiatives, grants, loans, and tax incentives that leverage Pennsylvania's long-standing partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Conservation Districts.

Funds must be committed by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026. In order to meet this aggressive timeline, the State Conservation Commission is partnering with Penn State University and USDA's NRCS to create a technical assistance center that will provide necessary engineering and design support.

"The partnership between the SCC and Conservation Districts has existed for decades," NRCS State Conservationist Denise Coleman said. "It has resulted in a significant amount of voluntary conservation practices applied on the Commonwealth's landscapes. ACAP marks a new era in state-level conservation funding. NRCS looks forward to continuing its work in areas like technical training, quality assurance, and financial assistance program delivery."

To apply or find detailed information on the [Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program](#), as well as more State Conservation Commission programs and investments in the future of Pennsylvania farms at agriculture.pa.gov.

Editors: Photos and video of yesterday's event are available at PACast.com.