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Shapiro Administration Highlights Innovative Research Fueling Progress in Agriculture at Stroud Water Research Center, Announces \$3.6 Million Available for Ag and Conservation Research

Governor Shapiro's proposed \$10 million Agriculture Innovation Fund will support novel solutions to complex climate challenges.

Avondale, PA – Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding visited [Stroud Water Research Center](#) in Avondale, Chester County, today for a first-hand look at research measuring the effects of farming practices that are improving water quality and soil health. Redding and local farmer **Jamie Hicks** and the **Stroud Center's Executive Director Dr. Dave Arscott and Director of Watershed Restoration Matthew Ehrhart** toured a field managed by Hicks. The field is part of a watershed-scale experiment on conservation agriculture. They discussed a new \$1.5 million funding opportunity for further conservation research to develop innovative solutions that farmers can implement to address complex challenges like climate change and loss of critical water and soil resources.

“Boiled down to basics, agriculture innovation is simply doing business in new and better ways to make farming more profitable, efficient, and sustainable,” **Secretary Redding** said. “Investing in research is the first critical step toward solving today’s most costly and complex challenges. This increased research funding, coupled with **Governor Shapiro’s** proposed \$10 million Agriculture Innovation Fund will keep Pennsylvania researchers on the cutting edge of exciting developments in conservation and regenerative agriculture. It will support the work of scientists like those at Stroud Water Research Center who are imagining the engineering and technology we need to continue to be a national and world agriculture leader.”

The Stroud Center received an \$85,000 research grant from the department in 2022 to monitor water quality in a stream flowing through Lancaster County and measure short- and long-term effectiveness of efforts to reduce sediment in surrounding waterways. That work continues, with conservation practices aggregated within small watersheds—rather than widely distributed—to determine how much aggregation is necessary to create durable improvements in water quality. Today, Ehrhart highlighted two installations on the sloped field. The first is a research dam for collecting and measuring runoff from the field. Below the dam is a level-lip spreader designed to reduce water runoff and flooding, increase water infiltration on land, and keep sediment and nutrients

out of creeks and streams. The Stroud Center is measuring the impacts of conservation practices, in combination with no-till planting and cover crops, on two sets of paired fields within the White Clay Creek Watershed.

“Research plays a vital role in enhancing our agricultural practices, livestock rearing, and land management. Its significance in continuously refining these processes cannot be overstated,” noted Ehrhart. “By improving how we manage our agricultural systems, we can better maintain a healthy food supply while restoring our streams and rivers, providing sustenance and opportunity for our children and grandchildren. What’s needed to achieve this is strategic research and rigorous evaluation of resulting changes; through research, we can ensure conservation measures are effective and that public funding in particular is well spent.”

In 2023-24, the [PA Department of Agriculture awarded \\$2.232 million in agriculture research grants](#). For 2024-25, Shapiro Administration has increased research funding, dedicating an additional \$1.5 million from Pennsylvania’s Clean Streams Fund’s Nutrient Management Program for conservation research through the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission. The Clean Streams Fund, which also includes the [Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program](#) was created with \$220 million from the federal American Rescue Plan Act.

Combined with \$2.1 million in state funding for agricultural research, the department is inviting applications for a total of \$3.6 million of available research grant support, contingent upon the 2024-25 budget appropriations.

Research grants funded through the PA Department of Agriculture are developing innovative solutions to controlling animal and plant diseases and pests; increasing regenerative and organic farming methods that enrich and sustain our soil and water resources; advancing human and animal medicine; applying emerging technology in food safety; and protecting pollinators that are crucial to our food supply.

Detailed guidelines for both [general agriculture research grants](#) and [conservation research grants](#) can be found in the April 28 edition of the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

Grant applications must be submitted through the Department of Community and Economic Development’s [Electronic Single Application](#), Friday, June 7 at 5 p.m.

Learn more about [agriculture research funding](#) and initiatives and investments to grow, protect, and sustain Pennsylvania’s agriculture industry at [agriculture.pa.gov](#).

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