



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **Pennsylvania Invests \$5.5 Million in Projects to Improve Regional Waterways, Help Farmers Increase Economic Output and Improve Environmental Health on Farms Throughout Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

*Pennsylvania Agriculture Secretary announces 22 grants to conservation organizations and farmers in Adams, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Northumberland, Schuylkill, and York counties.*

*Agriculture is essential to both Pennsylvania's economic future and to the quality and vitality of life of the Chesapeake Bay waterways — and these grants will help double down on the progress the Shapiro Administration has made to help restore these waterways in Pennsylvania. Under **Governor Shapiro's** leadership, efforts to improve water quality in the Susquehanna River alongside farmers have helped the portion of the Chesapeake Bay it feeds — which drains the largest watershed and provides most of the Bay's freshwater — earn the second-highest score in the entire watershed for two years in a row.*

**Manheim, PA** – The **Shapiro Administration** announced today that Pennsylvania is investing more than \$5.5 million to improve the region's soil and water quality and make farms in the Susquehanna River Basin more environmentally and economically sustainable. The **Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture** awarded 16 farms with \$392,119 in Sustainable Agriculture Grants, and six conservation organizations with \$5.1 million in Public Private Partnership Grants — both funded through competitive federal funding to the department through the Most Effective Basin program.

“What farmers do and how they do it matters,” **Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding** said. “Pennsylvania has long been a national leader in conservation of farmland and the soil and water resources we all depend on. That leadership is reflected in the expectations the federal government places on our farmers to improve the Chesapeake Bay's water quality. But in federal models that measure progress, our farmers don't always get credit for the work they are doing toward those goals. These grants are both an acknowledgement of Pennsylvania's leadership, and a tool that will help sustain their farms, and help give them the credit they deserve for improving the quality of life for our entire region.”

Grants are funded through the [Pennsylvania Most Effective Basins](#) program, a partnership among federal and state government and the private sector to support Pennsylvania in achieving its water quality goals for the agricultural sector under the Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) and [Pennsylvania's Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan \(WIP\)](#).

Sixteen Sustainable Agriculture Grant recipients, selected by the newly appointed [Pennsylvania Sustainable Agriculture Board](#), are receiving funding for management practices that keep valuable nutrients out of streams and in the soil, where they will support crops and livestock. Funded practices include cover crops, rotational grazing, tree plantings for conservation, and silvopasture — integrating trees and livestock grazing to fix nitrogen in the soil and diversify farm income. Today's announcement started with a tour of **Nathan Drager's** 50-acre Lancaster County farm along the Susquehanna River in Marietta, where a \$20,965 grant will enable him to add 300 trees to his operation, expanding existing silvopasture with the help of agroforestry expertise from [Trees for Graziers](#).

"You see a big difference working with nature instead of against nature," said Drager of the changes he's seen since using silvopasture methods on his farm. If you give a hand to nature, it's amazing how much it gives back. Having experts from Trees for Graziers here regularly has made a huge difference."

"Partnerships that bring the right expertise to the table are how real progress happens," said **Pasa Sustainable Agriculture Executive Director Hannah Kinney Smith**.

"Pennsylvania's new Sustainable Agriculture Board is the result of years of committed collaboration to align the right people and drive action. These grant programs mark meaningful new momentum toward a more sustainable future for our region's farms, food, and waterways."

Pennsylvania leads the nation in preserved farms and has been at the forefront of adopting many conservation practices sustaining our farms for future generations. Since the Shapiro Administration began, Pennsylvania has invested nearly \$154 million to preserve 524 farms and 43,533 prime acres of farmland across the state. On preserved and other farms across the state, conservation initiatives, including the [Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program \(ACAP\)](#) are greening the landscape, feeding families, and restoring waterways across Pennsylvania.

More than 2,900 Pennsylvania farmers have sought financial and technical support through ACAP to implement farming practices that have a positive impact on the entire region's water and soil health. To date, 165 ACAP-funded projects totaling \$25 million are on preserved farms, where they will continue their impact even if the farms are sold. These and many other advances toward meeting watershed improvement goals, along with successes of numerous other Pennsylvania conservation initiatives will be measured and have their impacts amplified through team projects funded by new Public Private Partnership (PPP) Grants.

[Rosetree Consulting](#), a Shillington-based agricultural and environmental engineering firm, received a PPP grant to collaborate with [Deer Country Farm and Lawn John Deere](#) dealership where the announcement was made, along with Lancaster County Conservation District, the Lebanon County Conservation District, and commercial manure haulers, to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus losses in fields and improve efficiency and profitability for farms across southeast Pennsylvania.

Using John Deere's HarvestLab precision sensors, they will collect field data to support advanced nutrient management alongside Deer Country technicians, who will service equipment, providing an in-kind match for the grant. Commercial manure-haulers will use collected field data to implement precision nutrient applications based on Rosetree staff recommendations. Lancaster and Lebanon County Conservation Districts will provide record-keeping and technical assistance to collect valuable data for modeling and to tell farmers' stories.

"Technology can be a wonderful tool for our farmers," said Eric Rosenbaum agronomy consultant at Rosetree. "This technology helps farmers make good decisions to make sure they're economically sustainable. They also get realtime data to identify where the highest risk of nutrient loss is, so they can minimize the amount of nutrients that runoff into our waterways."

## **Restoring Waterways and Protecting the Chesapeake Bay**

**Governor Josh Shapiro**, who [was elected chair of the Chesapeake Bay Executive Council in December 2025](#), recognizes how essential agriculture is not just to Pennsylvania's economic future but to quality and vitality of life for the millions of residents who depend on entire Bay region's waterways. Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, efforts to improve water quality in the Susquehanna River have helped the portion of the Chesapeake Bay it feeds — which drains the largest watershed and provides most of the Bay's freshwater — earn the second-highest score in the entire watershed for two years in a row.

Under the Shapiro Administration, Pennsylvania has made significant, measurable progress in restoring waterways and protecting the Chesapeake Bay:

- Investments: Over \$1 billion invested across state, local, agricultural, and nonprofit collaborations in the last four years.
- Nitrogen reductions: Over the past five years, Pennsylvania has reduced nitrogen pollution flowing to the Bay ten times more than in the previous decade.
- Stream restoration: 139 miles of streams restored in the last six years — more than the distance from Harrisburg to Annapolis.
- Forest buffers: Nearly 945 miles of streamside forest buffers planted in the past two years, adding 1.5 million new trees. In 2024 alone, the Shapiro

Administration invested \$10.5 million in tree planting and lawn-to-habitat conversions.

- Farmer support: More than 2,000 farmers have accessed financial and technical assistance through the [Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program](#) (ACAP), adopting conservation practices like no-till farming, streambank fencing, and wetland restoration.
- Water quality improvements: Monitoring of the Susquehanna River shows long-term reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment. Local streams, including Turtle Creek in Union County, have been removed from the impaired waters list.

### **Sustainable Agriculture Grant recipients by county, grant amount, and project:**

#### **Adams County**

- Alfred Leer – \$28,365 – cover crops
- Amanda E Lee-Milner – \$29,211 – rotational grazing
- Benuel King – \$25,000 – silvopasture
- Ashley Petaccia – \$21,000 – multifunctional conservation trees

#### **Centre County**

- Tristen Bressler – \$15,300 – silvopasture

#### **Columbia County**

- Robert Klinger – \$21,116 – silvopasture

#### **Cumberland County**

- Rowan K. Miller – \$9,237 – rotational grazing

#### **Franklin County**

- Adam Hornberger – \$25,000 – silvopasture

#### **Lancaster County**

- Nathan Drager – \$20,965 – silvopasture
- James Shirk – \$25,000 – no-till and cover crops

#### **Lebanon County**

- Matthew Bomgardner – \$25,000 – silvopasture

#### **Mifflin County**

- Matthew Byler – \$47,539 – silvopasture

#### **Northumberland County**

- Ivan Stoltzfus – \$24,325 – silvopasture

#### **Schuylkill County**

- Steve/Heidi Flory – \$25,060 – silvopasture

#### **York County**

- Daniel Crawford – \$25,000 – multifunctional conservation trees
- Jonathan Weaver – \$25,000 – silvopasture

**PPP Grants by grantee, amount, county location and project name:**

**Stroud Water Research Center** – Lancaster County – \$1,267,079

- Leveraging Partnerships in Priority Watersheds to Address Critical Agricultural Pollution Concerns

**Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay** – Lancaster, Adams, Lebanon, Mifflin, Snyder, Tioga – \$2,274,000

- Full-Farm Conservation through Corporate Partnerships: Advancing BMPs in Pennsylvania MEBs

**Lebanon County Conservation District** – Lebanon County

- Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Initiative – Blecker Farm – \$250,000
- Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Initiative – Musser Farm – \$250,000

**Rosetree Consulting** – Lancaster and Southeast PA region – \$287,058

- Precision Pays: Empowering Farmers to Reduce Nutrient Loss and Improve Profitability

**Herbert, Rowland, & Grubic** – Blair, Centre, Snyder – \$771,863

- Public-Private Solutions for Agricultural Water Quality in Central Pennsylvania

Read more about Pennsylvania investments and progress supporting the health of the Chesapeake Bay and MidAtlantic region's farms, fields, and waterways [here](#).

Learn more about Shapiro Administration efforts to grow and sustain Pennsylvania agriculture at [agriculture.pa.gov](http://agriculture.pa.gov).

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