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## **Conservation Programs Deadline Approaching**

### *\$14 million Available in Conservation Funding for Maryland Farmers*

Annapolis, Md., January 11, 2012– An important deadline is coming up for farmers, forest, and agricultural landowners who want to sign up for Fiscal Year 2012 Farm Bill Conservation programs. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Maryland has set the deadline for the initial round of program funding consideration as Friday, February 17, 2012. This deadline includes the Maryland Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI).

EQIP is a voluntary conservation program that supports production agriculture and environmental quality as compatible goals. Through EQIP, agricultural producers receive financial and technical assistance to implement projects that will improve their natural resources. CBWI is a part of EQIP, and provides technical and financial help to producers to minimize excess nutrients and sediments in order to restore, preserve, and protect the Chesapeake Bay.

The deadline for NRCS's National Initiatives (EQIP Organic, Seasonal High Tunnel, and On-Farm Energy) remains February 3, 2012. Through these initiatives NRCS seeks to help producers who are certified organic growers or working to achieve organic certification install conservation practices for organic production, help eligible producers plan and implement high tunnels, and help producers to develop farm energy audits that assess energy consumption on an operation, and develop energy conservation recommendations.

Applications for NRCS programs can be submitted throughout the year, but those received after the deadline will be held until the next cut-off date.

In Fiscal Year 2011, Maryland NRCS obligated over \$18 million in EQIP and CBWI funds statewide. However, the number of applications received far exceeded the amount of funding available. Agricultural and forest landowners are encouraged to apply immediately to ensure consideration for this funding cycle.

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# NEWS RELEASE

NRCS's natural resources conservation programs help people reduce soil erosion, enhance water supplies, improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and reduce damages caused by floods and other natural disasters. Public benefits include enhanced natural resources that help sustain agricultural productivity and environmental quality while supporting continued economic development, recreation, and scenic beauty.

For additional information, landowners are encouraged to contact their local NRCS Service Center. Service Center locations and more information on the programs can be found at [www.md.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.md.nrcs.usda.gov).

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