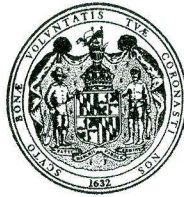


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STATE OF MARYLAND
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

To: Members of the Maryland General Assembly

From: Lewis R. Riley
Maryland Secretary of Agriculture

Date: December 31, 2003

RE: Nutrient Management Plans in Maryland

Pursuant to §8-807 Annotated Code of Maryland, the Maryland Department of Agriculture is reporting on the coverage, implementation and evaluation of nutrient management plans.

Farmers are required to file nutrient management plans beginning December 31, 2001 and begin their implementation by December 31, 2002. 5211 plans have been officially submitted to the Department as of December 31, 2003 covering 1,076,252 acres.

The law also allows farmers who have been unable to obtain the services of a nutrient management consultant to file a "Justification for Delay" form with the Department. As of December 31, 2003, 1492 farmers have filed these forms indicating they were in the process of completing nutrient management plans on 259,647 acres of land.

Evaluation of the implementation of these plans has not been initiated. The Nutrient Management Summit held August 5, 2003 resulted in 55 recommendations for modifying the Nutrient Management Program. Legislation will be proposed in 2004 to address a number of these recommendations, the most contentious being the requirement that farmers sign off granting a right of entry to their property when they submit their nutrient management plan. We believe that this requirement has been the biggest obstacle to compliance. Additionally, we are seeing a pattern of stalled compliance activity emerge in the farm community as they wait to see what changes may occur in the program as a result of the Summit. These factors have impacted progress in the nutrient management program more so than the availability of cost share or nutrient management consultants.

In the interim, MDA staff has been demonstrating the process to be used for compliance reviews on farms. In conjunction with local workshops and field days, MDA staff reviews the nutrient management plan and implementation records of a volunteer farmer. The process is explained to those attending and questions encouraged.