

Agricultural Inspections
July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025

This document summarizes the accomplishments of the expanded agricultural inspection program from the timeframe July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2025. The expanded agricultural inspection program includes inspections that were conducted as part of the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program in the Pennsylvania portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed on Concentrated Animal Operations (CAOs) and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). As the program was expanded in 2016, it also includes inspections conducted as part of the Chesapeake Bay Agriculture Inspection Program (CBAIP) on agricultural operations that do not meet the definition of a CAO or CAFO.

In addition to Act 38 Nutrient Management status reviews, this report includes the results of both CBAIP Initial Inspections and CBAIP Phase 2 Inspections. Initial Inspections are on-site field inspections during which requests are made to produce the agricultural operation’s written Agriculture Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (Ag. E&S Plan) and/or Manure Management Plan (MMP). Phase 2 Inspections are inspections of production areas and fields to determine compliance with the BMP implementation schedules set forth in the operation’s Ag E&S Plan and/or MMP. Additionally, the BMPs are evaluated during a CBAIP Phase 2 Inspection to ensure they are functioning as intended to minimize the potential for pollution.

MMP Status Reviews are included within this document. These Status Reviews occur on farms that are regulated under Chapter 91 to ensure that the MMP is being implemented. To avoid duplication of the inspected acres that were also inspected during an Act 38 Nutrient Management Status Review, this report does not include Compliance Evaluation Inspections (CEIs) on CAFOs that were conducted by DEP staff.

All data related to the CBAIP and the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program were collected through a centralized geospatial database.

Table 1. Total Number of PA farms in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed as Identified in the 2022 USDA Agriculture Census and Total PA Acres in Agriculture Land Use as Identified by the Chesapeake Bay Program.

2022 USDA Ag Census Farms in PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed	27,621
2024 Ag Land Use Acres in PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed	3,102,802

Table 2. County Locations and Total Number of Completed Agricultural Inspections by Inspection Type

CBAIP Initial Inspections (1175)		CBAIP Phase 2 Inspections (303)	Act 38 NM Status Reviews (723)		Manure Management Plan Status Reviews (6)
Adams	Lebanon	Bedford	Adams	Luzerne	Clinton
Bedford	Luzerne	Berks	Bedford	Lycoming	Juniata
Berks	Lycoming	Chester	Berks	Mifflin	Lancaster
Blair	Mifflin	Clinton	Blair	Montour	
Bradford	Montour	Columbia	Bradford	Northumberland	
Centre	Northumberland	Fulton	Centre	Perry	
Chester	Perry	Lackawanna	Chester	Schuylkill	
Clearfield	Snyder	Lancaster	Clinton	Snyder	
Clinton	Sullivan	Lebanon	Columbia	Sullivan	
Columbia	Susquehanna	Luzerne	Cumberland	Tioga	
Cumberland	Tioga	Mifflin	Dauphin	Union	
Dauphin	Union	Montour	Franklin	York	
Fulton	Wyoming	Schuylkill	Fulton		
Huntingdon	York	Sullivan	Huntingdon		
Juniata		Wayne	Juniata		
Lackawanna		Wyoming	Lancaster		
Lancaster		York	Lebanon		

Table 3. Farms and Agriculture Acres Inspected within Pennsylvania’s portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Since the Inception of the Expanded Agricultural Inspection Program*

	2023-2024	2024-2025	Totals
Total Farms Inspected	2,564	2,207	23,873
Total Acres Inspected	284,241 (9.2%)	230,825 (7.4%)	2,730,495 (88.0%)
PA Bay Farms Inspected under the Act 38 Program	864	723	7,060
PA Bay Ag Acres Inspected under the Act 38 Program	150,004	127,086	1,255,182
PA Farms Inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	1,700	1,478	16,809
PA Acres Inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	134,237	103,225	1,474,799
PA Farms Inspected under Manure Management Plan Status Reviews		6	6
PA Acres Inspected under Manure Management Plan Status Reviews		514	514

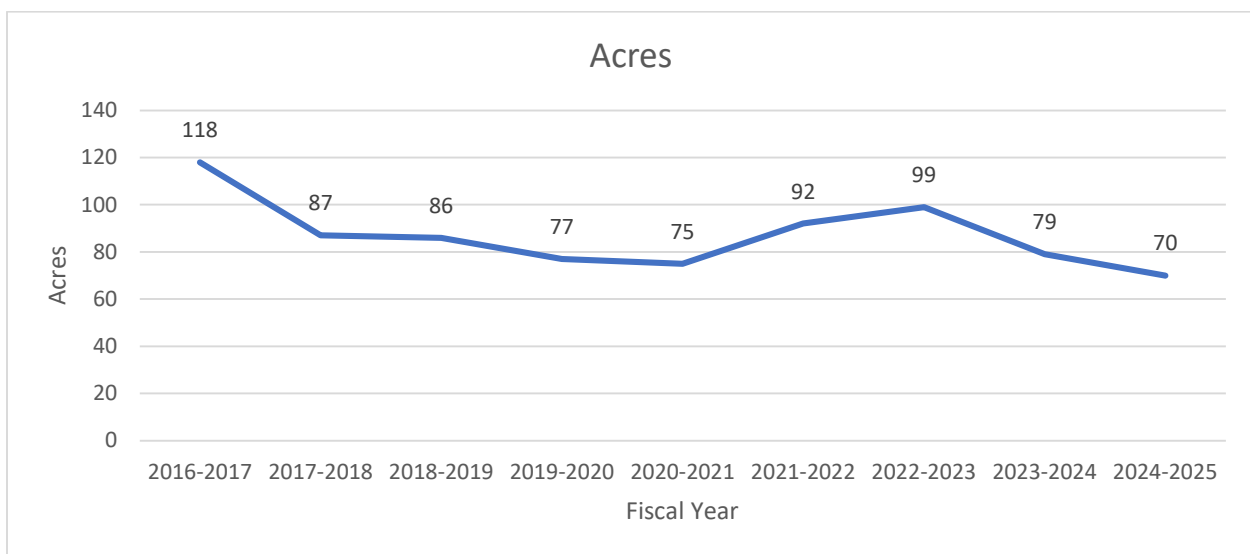
*Please see Appendix A (on page 9) to view historical data associated with Table 3.

In 2024-2025, the total number of agricultural operations inspected decreased by 357 and the acreage inspected decreased by 53,416 acres. Since 2022, routine inspections on poultry operations in Pennsylvania have been impacted due to highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) outbreaks, likely resulting in fewer overall inspections completed than we would expect in normal years. This year, the HPAI outbreak affected numerous animal types, including poultry and dairy cattle, so due to enhanced bio-security measures affecting all agricultural inspection programs, including CAFOs, less inspections could occur. The safety and wellbeing of our producers and livestock is of utmost importance so extreme sensitivity was considered for bio-security measures.

DEP Regional Office staff turnover significantly affected the 2024-2025 CBAIP inspection totals. Both County Conservation Districts and DEP Regional Offices have been conducting an increasing number of CBAIP Phase 2 Inspections. Phase 2 Inspections are equivalent to two Initial Inspections which leads to CBAIP participants being able to conduct less inspections yet still meet their overall Initial Inspection equivalent goals.

Additionally, as represented in Figure 1, the average operation size decreased again this year. Conservation district staff continue to reiterate that most operations managing large acreages received Initial Inspections during previous years of the CBAIP. However, several outlying large operations were inspected during 2024-2025.

Figure 1: Average Size of Agricultural Operations Inspected Under CBAIP by Fiscal Year



Compliance

The compliance rate for Act 38 Nutrient Management Plan development and implementation in the Pennsylvania portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed was found to be 93% at the time of inspection. Reasons for non-compliance included failure to obtain a manure or soil sample, failure to apply manure consistently with the recommendations in the Nutrient Management Plan, and failure to keep adequate records. For non-compliant CAOs and CAFOs, the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program compliance assessment required follow-up activities resulting in majority of them coming into compliance within 6 months after the annual inspection.

Out of the total 1,478 agricultural operations inspected as part of the 2024-2025 CBAIP, 1,228 were inspected by conservation districts and 250 were inspected by DEP regional offices. Of those inspected, regardless of inspection type, 65% were found to be compliant with MMP requirements and 65% were found to be in compliance with Ag. E&S Plan requirements. This is consistent with previous years. If implementation was evaluated, the compliance rates above include operations with complete plans as well as demonstrated BMP implementation and maintenance in accordance with the schedule set forth in the

plans. With follow-up from the participating conservation districts and DEP, the regulatory compliance rate associated with the relevant plans for these operations increased slightly to 99.7%.

The compliance rates listed above include both CBAIP Initial Inspections and Phase 2 Inspections. Verification of structural and agronomic BMPs outlined in the plans is a mandatory component of CBAIP Phase 2 inspections and may be completed during an Initial Inspection if the agricultural operation is willing to provide the information. The quantitative outcomes of the BMP verification component of the inspection program and the resulting progress reported toward implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) is described in detail in the BMP data collection and tracking section of this report.

Additionally, Table 4, provided below, identifies the BMP implementation and maintenance evaluation outcomes. Nearly all plans evaluated were being actively implemented and addressed the resource concerns associated with the operation.

Table 4. Percent of Operations Evaluated Meeting the BMP Implementation Requirements of the MMP and Ag. E&S Plan

MMP – BMP Implementation & Maintenance		Ag. E&S Plan - BMP Implementation & Maintenance	
BMPs are actively being implemented according to the schedule outlined in the MMP.	99%	BMPs are actively being implemented according to the schedule outlined in the Ag. E&S Plan.	98%
BMPs in the MMP are functioning as intended	99%	BMPs in the Ag. E&S Plan are functioning as intended	98%
BMPs in the MMP address all manure-related resource concerns	96%	BMPs in the Ag. E&S Plan address all sediment-related resource concerns	97%

Verifications performed via the Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program, which is administered by the State Conservation Commission are not included in the above results. Since 2007, REAP has approved over 5,500 applications from almost 4,000 operators (operators can apply more than once to the program). An operator must have their environmental compliance status verified each time they apply.

Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program: Compliance and Enforcement

Including Initial Inspections and Phase 2 Inspections, compliance rates for maintaining the applicable MMPs and Ag E&S Plans on the operation fluctuated slightly when compared to the previous year of the inspection program. A 65% compliance rate was demonstrated for maintaining a complete MMP and a 65% compliance rate was demonstrated for maintaining a complete Ag. E&S Plan.

It is important to note, as is identified in Table 5, the percentage found to have had planning or technical assistance provided by an agency staff person or private consultant was 92% to develop the MMP and 99% to develop the Ag. E&S Plan.

This information excludes compliance and enforcement associated with water quality concerns handled by the DEP Regional Offices.

DEP’s enforcement strategy has shifted away from consent order and agreements towards petitions to enforce due to lack of sufficient cooperation. Table 6., shown below, illustrates this movement.

Table 5. Percent of Administratively Complete Plans Found at the Time of Inspection for Agricultural Operations Required to Have and Implement the Plan(s).

Manure Management Plan		Ag. E&S Plan	
Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Initial and Phase 2)	65%*	Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Initial and Phase 2)	65%*
Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Initial Only)	60%*	Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Initial Only)	58%*
Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Phase 2 Only)	89%*	Administratively Complete at the Time of Inspection (Phase 2 Only)	91%*
Planning/Technical Assistance Provided	92%	Planning/Technical Assistance Provided	99%

*99.7% of all agricultural operations inspected in 2024–2025 met planning obligations by the end date of this report.

Table 6. The total referrals to the DEP Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management for continued non-compliance for plan violations and enforcement actions taken on those operations.

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
Referrals to DEP Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management	21	87	66	66	40	65	63	29	56	493
Notices of Violation	21	87	66	64*	39*	64*	62	30	55	488*
Field Orders	0	22	47	16	30	13	8	10	15	161
Consent Order and Agreement	0	1	2	3	4	3	0	0	0	13
Petitions to Enforce	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	4
Closed Cases	7	42	64	64	44	39	31	20	53	364

*Corrective actions identified on the inspection report were satisfied before the NOVs were drafted or the referral was withdrawn.

BMP Data Collection and Tracking

The expanded agricultural inspection program will report the BMPs verified at the time of all CBAIP Initial and Phase 2 Inspections and all Act 38 compliance checks completed in the reporting period to the Chesapeake Bay Program for annual progress. These BMPs include but are not limited to: implementation of MMPs and Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans for nutrient management, supplemental nutrient management, waste storage facilities, barnyard runoff control, heavy use area protection, forested and grassed buffers, fencing, and rotational and prescribed grazing. Verification of BMPs is a required

component of CBAIP Phase 2 Inspections and Act 38 compliance checks. BMP verification may also be completed during CBAIP Initial Inspections if the agricultural operation is willing to provide the information.

The Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership has instituted credit durations for all BMPs. The nutrient management BMPs for nitrogen and phosphorus are considered annual practices, and therefore states must report progress toward meeting those goals annually. The expanded agricultural inspection program is responsible for the annual verification of nutrient management BMPs associated with both the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program and the CBAIP.

While agricultural operations and acres inspected via the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program typically remain constant over time, regulatory compliance and BMP implementation is assessed annually. After follow-up, nearly 100% of CAOs and CAFOs demonstrate full compliance with the implementation of their Act 38 Nutrient Management Plan within six months. Therefore, all active Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans are reported for Core N and Core P. When reporting nutrient management supplemental BMPs from the Act 38 Nutrient Management Program for Chesapeake Bay annual progress, the implemented acres are directly reported from the annual compliance check. In addition to nutrient management BMPs, verification of the structural BMPs, including but not limited to: waste storage facilities, heavy use area protection, barnyard runoff control, and riparian forest buffers occurs during the Act 38 annual compliance check and are reported for Chesapeake Bay annual progress.

The agricultural operations and acres inspected during CBAIP Initial Inspections are unique operations. This means that the operations have not been revisited unless a follow-up inspection was needed, or a Phase 2 Inspection was conducted. Since November of 2017, CBAIP Initial Inspections have included a voluntary MMP records check which demonstrates the operation is implementing the required MMP.

The MMP records check is a required component of all Phase 2 Inspections and therefore was completed on all 303 Phase 2 Inspections completed during 2024-2025. When referencing only operations that received Phase 2 Inspections, 99% of the acres inspected had nutrients applied in accordance with the nitrogen and phosphorus nutrient management BMPs in the MMP. When considering only operations that participated in the records check, regardless of inspection type, 99.5% of the acres were applied in accordance with a nutrient management BMPs in the MMP when nutrient application records were reviewed.

Through the efforts of participating county conservation districts and DEP staff and the on-going multi-agency integration of tracking and reporting using a centralized geodatabase, MMPs and Nutrient Balance Sheets covering over 1,035,311 acres have been verified as complete and documented in Pennsylvania's portion of Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

In 2024-2025, a statistical subsample of over 61,735 acres of cropland covered by MMPs were directly inspected as part of the CBAIP resulting in over 624,825 reportable acres of core nitrogen and phosphorous nutrient management BMPs and over 75,072 reportable acres of supplemental nutrient management BMPs.

Additionally, in 2024-2025, there were over 199,820 reportable acres of core nitrogen and phosphorous nutrient management BMPs from Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans and over 199,822 acres of supplemental nutrient management from Act 38 compliance checks on CAOs and CAFOs.

This is a total of over 824,645 reportable acres of core nitrogen, 824,645 reportable acres of core phosphorus, and 274,894 acres of supplemental nutrient management BMPs (nitrogen and phosphorus rate, timing, and placement combined) toward Pennsylvania's Chesapeake Bay annual progress.

Through the activities conducted as part of the expanded agricultural inspection program and other technical assistance provided by county conservation district staff, over 1,617 BMP records will be reported as reverified. Of these reverified BMPs, 94% passed the inspection. Over 8,032 BMP records will be reported as verified for the first time in 2024-2025 Chesapeake Bay Progress.

Conclusion

Another successful year of the expanded agricultural inspection program has shown that most agricultural operations are getting the plans they need. Completed Phase 2 inspections have demonstrated that these plans are being implemented.

This year, 7.4% of the agricultural land use acreage within the Pennsylvania portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed was inspected. This figure falls slightly short of the 10% goal, however, there are several potential reasons for this shortfall. The average farm size decreased from 79 acres last year to 70 acres this year, and most years since 2016, the average farm size is consistent with the number of acres inspected. There were less farms inspected under the CBAIP this year likely due to DEP Regional Office staff vacancies, as well as more time dedicated to new staff training. HPAI outbreaks hindered inspections again this year. CBAIP participants transitioning from Initial Inspections to Phase 2 Inspections have had an impact as well. More resources are needed to meet the goal of inspecting at least 10% of the acreage within the Pennsylvania portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed in the future.

A large part of the inspection program is education. County conservation district and DEP staff are using inspections as a catalyst to help operators understand what is needed and to get them on track to implement their plans. Implementing BMPs on the land helps to ensure long-term operational sustainability and environmental protection.

Planning and technical assistance are of paramount importance. The development and implementation of plans hinges on the professionals who provide technical assistance. Funding resources continue to be needed as well. Existing state programs like the Small Business Advantage Grants, Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Program, Conservation Excellence Grants (CEG) and Growing Greener, new state programs such as the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), and federal programs like NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCP), EPA Chesapeake Bay Implementation Grant (CBIG), and EPA Chesapeake Bay Regulatory Accountability Program (CBRAP), Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) are critical for the continued improvements made to our local waters.

Acknowledgements

This work would not be accomplished without the active participation of county conservation district and DEP staff. Their efforts are appreciated and the individuals performing inspections and enforcement activities are recognized for the professional and effective way they continue to carry out these functions.

Appendix A.

Table 3. Farms and Agriculture Acres Inspected within Pennsylvania’s portion of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Since the Inception of the Expanded Agricultural Inspection Program

	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Total Farms Inspected	2,823	2,924	2,951	2,538*	2,650	2,670	2546
Total Acres Inspected	393,426 (12.7%)	329,468 (10.6%)	315,823 (10.3%)	258,805* (8.4%)*	275,568 (8.9%)	322,750 (10.5%)	319,589 (10.4%)
PA Bay Farms Inspected under the Act 38 Program	743	814	886	670*	702	822	836
PA Bay Ag Acres Inspected under the Act 38 Program	147,762	145,680	138,139	115,083*	129,578	152,177	149,673
PA Farms Inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	2,080	2,110	2,065	1,868	1,948	1,850	1,710
PA Acres inspected under the CB Ag Inspection Program	245,664	183,788	177,684	143,722	145,990	170,573	169,916

*Adjusted to reflect all unique agricultural operations inspected during the period of interest.