

www.bayfriendlyfarms.com

What is the Bay-Friendly Farming Program?

Farmers who go the extra mile to keep our water, farmland, and other natural resources healthy deserve benefits and recognition for a job well done.

The Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming (BFF) program — established by the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts — certifies farmers who demonstrate outstanding stewardship and provides them with three-year waivers from state nutrient management inspections. Certified farmers also gain access to new resources, conservation programs, and promotional benefits.



Who created and administers Bay-Friendly Farming?

For more than 75 years, Maryland's 24 soil conservation districts have helped hundreds of exceptional farmer-conservationists install BMPs on their farms to protect natural resources.

The Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) wanted a recognition program that would be respected and valued by farmers and environmentalists alike, which is why MASCD brought together a team of agricultural and environmental experts to develop the program.

Core Partners:

- Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts
- Maryland Farm Bureau
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Maryland Department of Agriculture
- USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service

Bay-Friendly Farming Is Made Possible with Generous Grants From:

- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Maryland Soybean Board
- Maryland Grain Producers Utilization Board
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Chesapeake Bay Trust



Maryland
Bay-Friendly
Farming



Maryland Bay-Friendly Farming

Rewarding farmers
for their conservation efforts.

What criteria is used to evaluate Farm Stewardship?

Maryland BFF certification uses a multi-part approach to evaluate stewardship:

1. Farms must demonstrate successful implementation of a nutrient management plan that meets state standards. We use the Agricultural Conservation Stewardship Certification Standard to measure the level of compliance of a farm's nutrient management plan against state requirements.
2. Certification also requires a high level of best management practice (BMP) implementation that address all resource concerns identified on owned or leased property.
3. A site assessment and evaluation is conducted to verify the implementation of a soil conservation and water quality plan.
4. All streams in active pastures must be fenced.

“[This program] is an excellent way for us to demonstrate to the environmental community that we are doing a great job; I encourage farmers to participate.”

Steve Ernst, Clear Spring, MD.
Maryland's first certified farmer.

REWARDING
FARMERS
FOR THEIR
CONSERVATION
EFFORTS.

How does the certification process work?

- Farmers volunteer to be evaluated for certification.
- Bay-Friendly Farming staff work with you and your local soil conservation district (SCD) to schedule a two to three-hour visit to your farm to review the existing nutrient management plan, soil conservation and water quality plans, and other relevant documents and determine whether the farm complies with the Conservation Stewardship Certification Standard.
- During the visit, the BFF assessor and SCD technical staff walk the farm to verify that all resource concerns have been addressed. If additional BMPs are recommended, the farmer may elect to receive free technical assistance from the SCD to install conservation measures to address the concern, after which the BFF certification evaluation can be resumed.
- Any additional work to achieve certification is a completely voluntary choice of the farmer.

Throughout the visit, the BFF assessor and the farmer may discuss other new conservation opportunities not required for certification, such as participation in nutrient trading. More information on nutrient trading and other innovative conservation programs is available in the Stewardship Notebook, which is provided to farmers following certification.

What are the benefits of certification?

As a certified Bay-Friendly Farm, you'll enjoy:

- Three-year waiver from state nutrient management inspections. As a measure of confidence in the program, the Maryland Department of Agriculture has agreed to waive state nutrient management inspections for three years, as long as no formal complaints are received and timely annual reports are submitted.
- Signage. You'll have the opportunity to receive an attractive metal sign to post on your property recognizing you as a Bay-Friendly Farm.
- Recognition. Your farm will be recognized on the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts website. If you sell directly to the public, you can add product and contact information.
- Marketing. You'll gain access to free promotional items (stickers, table tents, shirts, etc.) to help spread the word to the public — including potential customers — about your status as a certified Bay-Friendly Farm.
- New opportunities. You'll receive the Stewardship Notebook, which contains information about promising new conservation opportunities, such as nutrient trading. You may be eligible to earn income from nutrient trading by installing additional BMPs.

In addition to these benefits, you'll be part of a larger effort that benefits communities across our state. By recognizing farm stewards, BFF aims to encourage even more Maryland farmers to achieve certification and participate in conservation, which ultimately improves water quality in rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.