

## **MDA Withdraws Phosphorus Management Tool Regulations; Department to Consider Comments and Resubmit Regulations**

November 15, 2013

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) today announced it will withdraw its proposed regulations to implement the new Maryland Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT) from consideration by the Joint Committee on Administrative, Executive, and Legislative Review (AELR). This action also cancels the AELR hearing on the regulation scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 20.

“The O’Malley-Brown Administration remains committed to adopting the PMT through rule making and developing an approach that further considers comments raised by policymakers and citizens alike.” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance. “MDA is confident that the PMT science is sound, based on 20 years of evolving federal and state research to better understand soil phosphorus and managing risk of loss to our rivers and streams.”

As a result of concerns identified in the public meetings and public comment process, MDA is withdrawing the regulations. The department will consider all comments and critical issues raised by stakeholders, develop an approach that addresses concerns raised to date, and resubmit a new proposal to AELR in 2014 that includes a phased implementation schedule for the new tool.

Secretary Hance added, “The Administration stands behind our commitment to EPA to implement a Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) that ultimately provides for a healthy Chesapeake Bay. We will meet our Chesapeake Bay restoration goals, taking every step possible to protect water quality and ensure the viability of our family farms in Maryland.”

The Phosphorus Management Tool replaces the Phosphorus Site Index to reflect the most current research by University of Maryland scientists in collaboration with regional and national experts. This environmental risk assessment tool is used to identify areas where excess phosphorus is present in the soil and where a high potential for phosphorus loss exists. It allows users to evaluate management options that can reduce the risk of phosphorus losses from agricultural fields to nearby waterways. Revising and updating the tool is an element of Maryland’s WIP, the federally mandated document that outlines specific steps the state will take to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay.