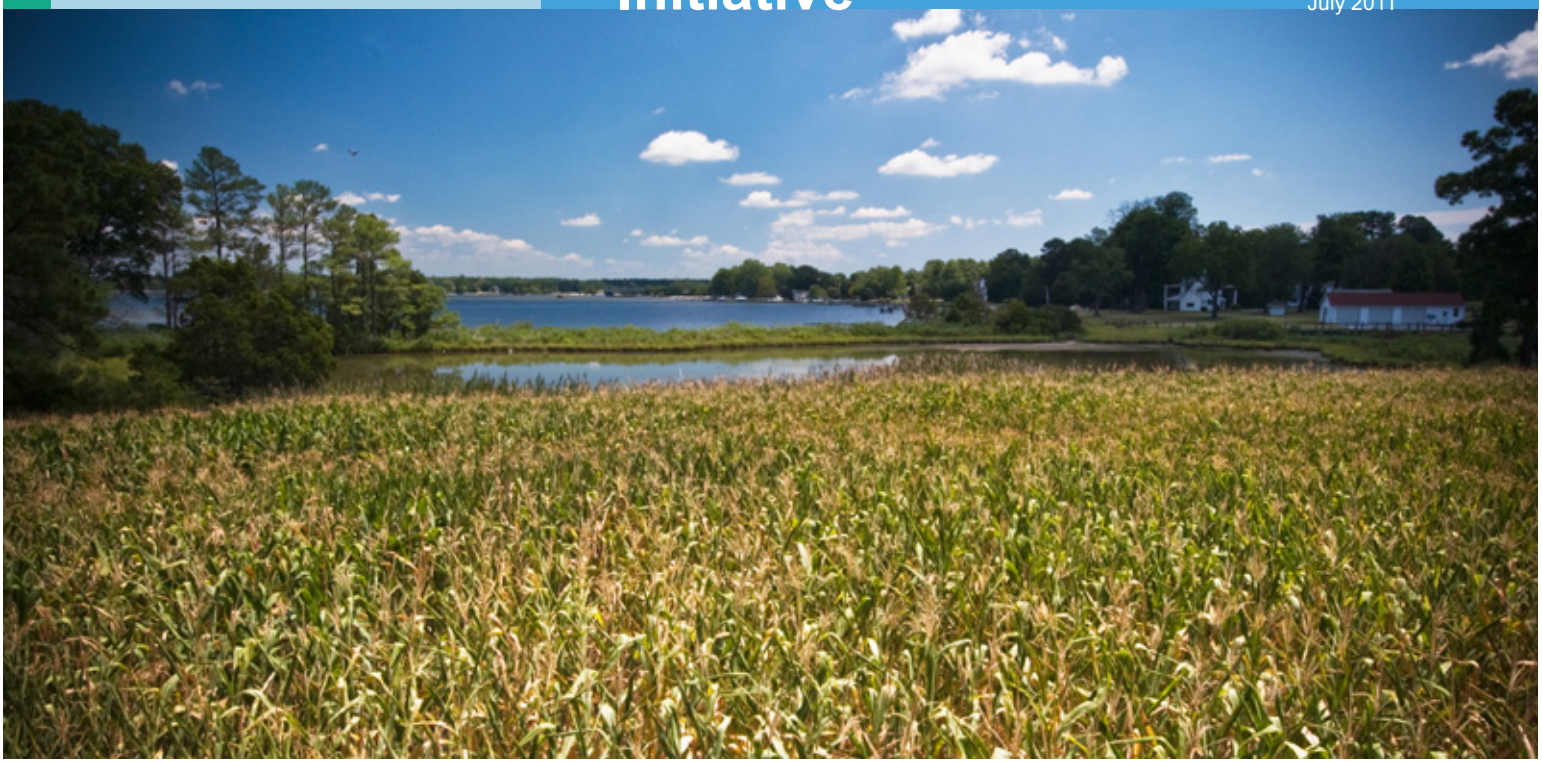
USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative

July 2011



This corn field on a farm in Maryland will be planted to cover crops to help take up excess nutrients and prevent soil erosion.

Overview

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI) complements State and Federal conservation efforts that improve water quality and quantity and restore, enhance, and preserve soil, air, and related resources within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. CBWI helps producers enhance land and water resources by:

- controlling erosion and reducing sediment and surface water; and
- planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating habitat conservation, restoration, and enhancement measures.

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is defined as all tributaries, backwaters, and side channels and their watersheds that drain into the Chesapeake Bay in the states of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia as well as the District of Columbia.

CBWI is carried out through the—Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative, and Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program.

Priorities

President Obama's Executive Order, signed in May 2009, charges the federal government with exercising greater leadership in restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and its partners are helping farmers voluntarily implement conservation practices to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff into the Bay.

The NRCS and its partners identified more than 1,000 high-priority watersheds based on several factors. The main factors include soils having a high risk for nutrient and sediment runoff or nutrient infiltration; and areas scientifically identified as having high agricultural nitrogen and phosphorous concentrations.

Expected Outcomes

The expected outcomes for the CBWI are producers applying new conservation practices on agricultural working lands in the high-priority watersheds; restoring tidal and non-tidal wetlands and enhancing the function of degraded wetlands; and protecting lands identified as high conservation priorities.

Eligibility

CBWI participants must meet all eligibility requirements for the Farm Bill programs they choose to use to carry out their conservation plans. Also, the land must lie within the defined Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

More Information

For more information about the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative, please visit the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/chesapeakebay/chesapeakebay.html

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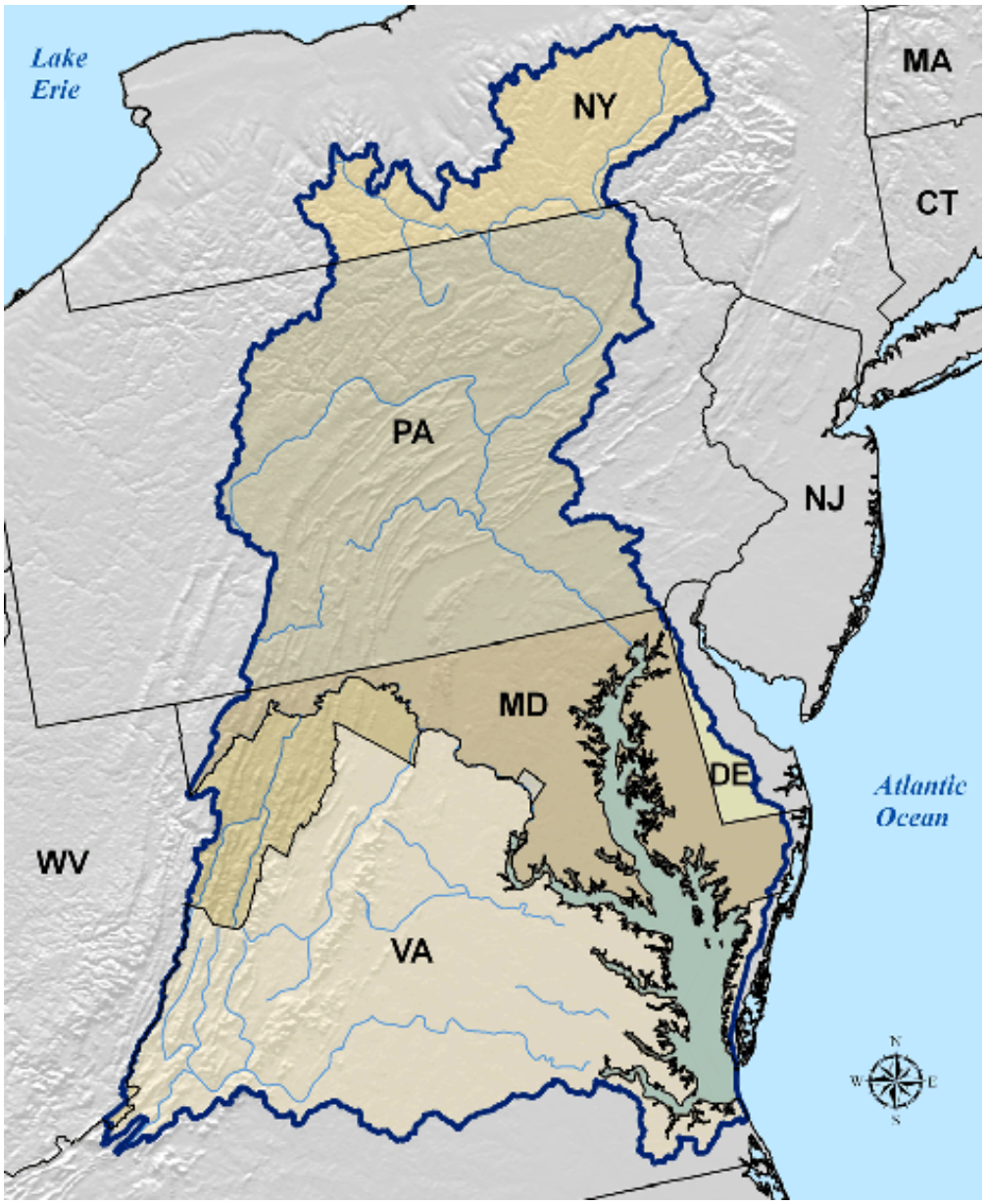

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