



Ag Commission Meeting

September 20, 2023



THE ANNOUNCEMENT



- June 1, 2023 MDA announced that the Nutrient Management Plan writing program would be pivoting to a new model by summer's end.
- The Nutrient Management Summit was held at Anne Arundel Community College on July 17, 2023.

NMP and PLAN WRITING CHALLENGES



- UMD vacancies led to limitations of service
- One-year plans instead of three-year plans
- Must address the issue of non-compliance, finding solutions to providing NM Plans to all operators
- NuMan software is difficult to use, outdated
- Underlying research not reflective of all industries or modern/precision farming
- Usefulness of the NuMan NMP
- Meeting farmer needs for plan

COMMENTS FROM REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS



- MDA hosted listening sessions around the state in:
 - Western Maryland
 - Southern Maryland
 - Eastern Shore
- Plus one virtual session
- *GOAL:* to hear farmer concerns and questions about program changes

COMMENTS FROM REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS



Themes were consistent throughout

- Farmers were not given a chance to provide input before decision was made
- Farmers who used the system believed it worked
- NuMan plan writing software is difficult to use, not responsive to different devices
- The software does not work well for small farmers who grow many different crops
- Concern for loss of jobs for current UMD plan writers
- Fear that losing UMD writers meant losing connection with Extension

COMMENTS FROM REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS



Western Maryland Farmers...

- Plain sect communities do not accept cost-share
- Lack of private plan writers

Southern Maryland Farmers...

- Concerned about the added expense to farmers who are under enough stress due to the loss of a major grain market in the area
- Lack of private plan writers

COMMENTS FROM REGIONAL LISTENING SESSIONS



Eastern Shore Farmers...

- The Maryland NMP requirements do not align well with the newer technology of precision agriculture
- Some farmers do not connect economic benefits to having a CNMP or NMP
- MDA needs to utilize the Nutrient Management Advisory Committee more before decisions are made

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



The New Agreement:

- MDA and UMD will enter into a 3 year MOU to continue funding UMD plan writers (*renewed annually, contingent upon funding*)
- Program will be administered day-to-day by Extension rather than ENST

Funding & Staffing:

- MDA and UMD will seek more permanent funding
- UMD will look for ways to increase salaries and offer benefits for plan writers

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



NuMan Software:

- Build a more modern program that:
 - is a better fit for today's modern agricultural production
 - incorporates latest research
 - is web-based and responsive on most devices
- While still meeting environmental safeguards

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



New NM Oversight Committee:

- MDA and UMD, chaired by the Secretary of Agriculture and the Dean of AGNR will be created to:
 - oversee the plan writers,
 - draft annual report on the program, number of engaged farms/farmers, other metrics to measure success of the program
 - set goals for increasing percentage of plans written thru UMD

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



Expanded Training Opportunities:

- MDA will hire a NM Training Coordinator
- More training opportunities will be available for both Farmer Training Certification (FTC) AND fundamental classes for consultants
- Work to develop online training modules
- Find class announcements on the website:
bit.ly/NMP_Training

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



The NMP Taskforce:

- A 30 member Farmer Taskforce has met and discussed ways to improve the NMP so to be more practical for farmers to implement
- Farmer Task Force members makeup
 - Regions
 - commodities (grain, poultry, beef, dairy, vegetable, etc.)
 - MDA and UMD extension serve as advisors

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NM PLAN WRITING MODEL



NMP Task Force Role:

- Provide recommendations streamlining the process
 - Make nutrient management more practical for the farmer
 - Requirements for a revised NuMan/alternative tool
- Review the certification process
- Make recommendations to the Nutrient Management Advisory Committee this fall

FOUNDATION FOR NMP FARMER TASK FORCE



- Compliance with Maryland nutrient management regulations
- Using nutrient management plans to farm smarter and more efficiently
- Realizing economic benefits from sound nutrient management planning utilizing the latest technology that the private sector offers
- Better/more measurable water quality improvements in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries as a result of increased program compliance

QUESTIONS



Questions?