The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation oversees development of resource management plans.

For more information
The Resource Management Plan and Agricultural Best Management Cost-Share programs are managed by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation and implemented by local soil and water conservation districts. For more information on the resource management plan process, go to the DCR website at www.dcr.virginia.gov; click on “Soil and Water Conservation” and then on “Resource Management Planning.” Or you can call the DCR resource management plan specialist nearest you at (540) 332-9231 or (804) 371-0297.
Resource management plans are designed to encourage farmers to use a high level of best management practices that reduce runoff pollution to state waters and the Chesapeake Bay. In many cases these practices help improve the farmer’s bottom line. In return for full implementation of these plans, farmers have “certainty” that they are in compliance with new state nutrient, sediment and bacterial-related water quality requirements during the life of their plan. Plans are effective for nine years with compliance inspections every three. Entering into a plan is completely voluntary.

The resource management plan concept was developed at the urging of the Virginia agricultural community. The approach provides a comprehensive assessment of the conservation needs of a farming operation. Not only will RMPs serve as a tool to encourage BMP implementation, but it will also document practices in use, providing verified data to validate the agricultural sector’s level of conservation implementation. Better tracking of agricultural BMPs through the use of resource management plans will also provide decision makers more accurate data when determining future funding needs for cost-share and other incentive programs.

After the Virginia General Assembly passed legislation allowing the creation of resource management plans, representatives from environmental groups, various agricultural commodity groups, and state and federal environmental agencies developed the resource management plan regulations. The Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board approved the regulations in 2013 with them becoming effective July 1, 2014.

**What are the requirements?**

A farmer can choose to have a plan on the whole farm or any portion of it. Plans must include, at a minimum, specific best management practices including 35-foot buffers to perennial streams on crop and hay land, livestock excluded from perennial streams in pastures, and all fields must have a soil conservation plan to “T” and a nutrient management plan.

**Is funding available?**

Yes, funding is available to pay for the development of resource management plans. Cost-share funding also is available for most of the best management practices needed to meet requirements of the RMP.

**How do you get a plan?**

Plans will be developed by certified resource management plan developers. These developers must be certified nutrient management planners and have demonstrated ability in water quality and conservation planning. Applications for RMP developers will be available from the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation in June. In July, farmers will be able to visit the DCR website for a list of certified nutrient management planners in their region.