

Chesapeake Bay Watershed **Initiative** Natural Resources Conservation Service

Conservation Beyond Boundaries

Delaware

The Need

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is the nation's largest estuary, encompassing a vast network of streams, creeks, and rivers that covers 64,000 square miles in the eastern United States.

One third of Delaware's land area is included in the Bay Watershed, touching all three counties—half of Sussex County, a third of Kent County, and 10 percent of New Castle County. Some of the state's most prized waterways lie in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed: Broad and Marshyhope Creeks; and Nanticoke, Chester and Choptank Rivers.

About half of the land area is agricultural. Only about 10 percent is considered developed. Forests and wetlands make up another 37 percent.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) identified watersheds with the highest concentrations of nutrients and sediment as priorities in the six-state Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

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Delaware Success

Conservation is a Constant—Not a Trend

The significant conservation work that Richard Swartzentruber (Swartz) implements on his organic farm blends naturally into the agricultural landscape—progressively improving the health of the soil, water quality, animals, and plants.

Swartz is the 4th generation owner of his family's organic farm, Swartzentruber Homestead in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. He currently raises "custom" organic heifers and grows organic corn, alfalfa, soybeans, small grain, and pasture grasses.

Swartz' working relationship with the USDA NRCS spans 15 years and through several changes. He first worked with NRCS to install a hoop structure for his poultry manure in 1998 and then a liquid manure storage tank for his commercial dairy operation in 2002. Together, these practices eliminated the potential for water to reach the manure and runoff into nearby streams. Swartz continued to work with NRCS through his transition to USDA Certified Organic—which he maintains today.

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Fiscal Year 2012 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative NRCS Financial Assistance (FA) and Active and Completed Contracts/Agreements

	Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI)		
State	Number of Contracts	FA Contract Obligations	Total Acres
Delaware	55	\$1,628,703	4,775

Statistics sources: Foundation Financial Information System for financial assistance dollars obligated. ProTracts 10/4/2012 for working

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Resources Inventory and Assessment Division Washington, DC

October 2008; Map ID 10365

Source: Chesapeake Bay Watershed Program

The Needs (continued)

Since 2009, NRCS has worked through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI) to provide targeted financial assistance for faster implementation of conservation practices on cropland, pastureland and private forest land in these priority watersheds. Though some form of conservation has been applied or installed on 96 percent of the Bay cropland, more gains can be achieved with additional practices in the watershed.

Delaware Success Story (continued)

Conservation is a Constant—Not a Trend

Swartz said, "I'm always looking for ways to better manage what I have and be more environmentally friendly and NRCS has been most helpful."

Swartz continues to implement and expand upon recommended conservation practices. His recent work includes the following: proper rotation of his crops for improved soil quality; utilization of nutrients, and reduction of pests and weeds; planting of 40 acres of cover crops to reduce disturbance of the soil for improved soil health; planting of organic hay for forage for on-farm use; and proper nutrient management using his NRCS grazing management plan, which includes frequent herd rotations through small paddocks—allowing them to naturally harvest the alfalfa and native grasses and properly fertilize his crops.

Swartz' extensive history with NRCS has resulted in improvements in the aesthetics and management of the operation, but most importantly, it is the improvement of natural resources that benefit him, his animals, and the community.

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