



FACT SHEET: **MARYLAND'S PHOSPHORUS MANAGEMENT TOOL**

WHAT IS THE PHOSPHORUS MANAGEMENT TOOL?

- Many Maryland farm fields have phosphorus levels far in excess of the level needed for successful crop growth, and these fields can pollute local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay.
- The science-based Phosphorus Management Tool (PMT) would reduce pollution by limiting the use of manure applied to farm fields already contaminated with excess levels phosphorus.
- The PMT is based on a decade of research by University of Maryland scientists, in collaboration with regional and national experts.
- The PMT first calculates the level of risk for phosphorus migration from the farm field and then determines the permissible amount of manure a farmer can apply to that field.
- Since 2001, Maryland and other states have been using the Phosphorus Site index (PSI) to calculate the risk of phosphorus pollution reaching waterways. This tool is now out of date, and recent research, particularly by the University of Maryland, has established the PSI is seriously flawed.
- In addition, the PMT also helps farmers determine which best management practices they can use to reduce phosphorus pollution on their fields and thereby lower their PMT score.

WHY IS IT NEEDED NOW?

- Numerous studies show that phosphorus pollution from manure, is getting worse, not better in the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland rivers. Maryland scientists say that, without action, phosphorus "hot spots" will continue to pollute local waters.
- Phosphorus pollution from animal manure is a risk to public health. Phosphorus pollution is a major contributor to the toxic algae bloom in Lake Erie that contaminated drinking water in Toledo, Ohio. In Maryland, toxic algae is on the rise.
- Tests by the University of Maryland show that many fields in Maryland pose a far greater risk of polluting the Bay than previously believed.
- The updated PMT is a major part of Maryland's commitment to clean up the Chesapeake Bay, but it has now been delayed four years.
- A recent scientific analysis from the Chesapeake Bay Program demonstrates the state would meet most or all of its federally required goals to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution by implementing the Phosphorus Management Tool.
- If Maryland fails to implement new rules to reduce phosphorus pollution from agriculture, we will be forced to reduce phosphorus pollution through other, costlier measures, much at the expense of the taxpayer.
- According to BayStat, agriculture is the single, largest source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland waterways, and more than half of Maryland's phosphorus pollution comes from farms.
- Phosphorus pollution causes algae blooms that threaten public health; kill underwater grasses; harm aquatic life like blue crabs, oysters and fish; and create an enormous "dead zone" in the Bay.

FOUR YEARS OF DELAY: THE PMT TIMELINE

- **December 2010:** Maryland's 2010 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan commits the state to updating the Phosphorus Management Tool by 2011.
- **April/May 2012:** University of Maryland scientists present latest phosphorus research and proposed PMT updates.
- **January 2013:** MDA publishes draft PMT regulations. During the 30-day public comment period, MDA receives seven comments.
- **July 2013:** MDA proposes "emergency" regulations to make up for delay and implement the PMT in fall 2013.
- **August 2013:** MDA pulls the emergency regulations in order to address stakeholder concerns. The O'Malley Administration holds three stakeholder meetings and forges a consensus agreement among environmental and agriculture organizations.
- **October 2013:** Per stakeholder agreement, MDA proposes revised PMT regulations. The PMT must be used on all applicable farm fields beginning January 2015. The agricultural community reneges on the consensus agreement and AELR schedules a hearing for November 20, 2013.
- **November 2013:** O'Malley Administration withdraws PMT regulations for the second time in four months. Governor O'Malley reiterates his commitment to implement the PMT by the end of his term.
- **March 2014:** Despite the failure of legislation designed to further delay the PMT, the General Assembly passes a budget amendment requiring an expansive economic study before any implementation attempt.
- **June 2014:** New findings show that phosphorus produced by the Maryland poultry industry is increasing because of larger birds that produce more waste, and that phosphorus pollution has remained unchanged in nearly two-thirds of the rivers and streams tested and worsened in 16 percent.
- **July 2014:** A report by the nonprofit Environmental Integrity Project analyzed trends in phosphorus pollution levels from 2003 to 2013 in the eight major waterways on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Their analysis showed no improvement over the decade – despite the agriculture industry's claims of success in reducing runoff.
- **August 2014:** Analysis by Chesapeake Bay Program scientists shows that implementing the PMT would allow the agriculture sector to make significant phosphorus pollution reductions.

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The Maryland Clean Agriculture Coalition is working to improve Maryland waterways and protect public health by reducing pollution, and increasing transparency and accountability, from agriculture and other associated sources of water degradation.