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May 8, 2017

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Delmarva collaborative recommendations embraced by poultry farmers and environmentalists

DELMARVA– An innovative collaboration between leaders from the Delmarva poultry industry, agricultural community, environmental groups, regulatory agencies, and academic organizations has just released its first work product- model attributes for poultry litter transportation programs.

The group – called the Delmarva Land & Litter Challenge (DLLC) – formed in 2015 to develop new approaches to effectively tackle poultry litter challenges and ultimately protect the peninsula’s waterways.

Members reached consensus on recommendations for state poultry litter transport programs to improve their effective functioning. The group identified a number of “model” components, including ways to eliminate duplicative enforcement or oversight provisions within state cost-share transport programs; encourage farmers to use available programs; and create new record-keeping systems to identify eligible participants. These recommendations have been shared with state officials in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia who have responded positively to the report. The DLLC Poultry Litter Transportation Program Recommendations report is available on the group’s website: www.DelmarvaLandAndLitter.net

Kim Coble, Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s Vice President of Environmental Protection and Restoration and one of the members who led the effort to develop this set of recommendations, says “It’s incredibly powerful to have the environmental community and the poultry industry mutually develop and support the same set of manure transport recommendations.”

Next on the group’s agenda is the development of a nutrient budget for Delmarva through its Mass Balance Assessment. One of the initial objectives for quantifying the amount of poultry litter produced on Delmarva was to support an evaluation of its potential for alternative uses. The work is expected to identify whether counties in our region have a general surplus or deficit of nitrogen or phosphorus relative to crop needs to guide nutrient applications, including the use of poultry litter as a fertilizer.

The group recently elected new leadership as it moves into groundbreaking territory. Andrew McLean, newly elected DLLC chair and poultry grower from Queen Anne’s County, Md. explains, “The farming community cares deeply about being good stewards of the land and water quality. This group provides a constructive forum for us to develop proactive solutions with many parties and voices at the table.”

The DLLC largely sprang from a Campbell Foundation initiative to support a consensus forming multi-stakeholder group that would constructively address issues surrounding the Delmarva poultry industry and water quality. The group benefited from the leadership of its members and their strategy to strive for early successes by focusing on data, while also respectfully exploring the different perspectives and realities faced by all stakeholder groups surrounding Delmarva agriculture and water quality. Those preliminary efforts served as incentive for the group’s members to also contribute toward operating expenses that now support the DLLC’s collaborative effort.