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News Release

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Farm conservation awareness pilot program launched in Virginia's Valley Region

Radio, print and billboard advertising campaign designed to encourage increased adoption of state's Cost-Share Program and agricultural best management practices

(RICHMOND, Va.) – In an effort to increase participation in government-funded programs that compensate farmers for adopting water-pollution-reducing practices, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is launching a pilot advertising program that targets farmers in 15 Valley Region counties.

The ultimate goal: improve water quality by reducing nonpoint source pollution. (Nonpoint pollution is generally defined as the runoff from agricultural and urban areas.)

The advertising campaign, including radio, print and billboard ads, begins this week within the six Soil and Water Conservation Districts throughout the Shenandoah Valley. It was developed in response to the dramatic increase in conservation practices called for to meet the state's Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

"Many Virginia farmers are conservation leaders, but to meet our water quality goals for the Chesapeake Bay and the rivers that flow into it we need to triple the farm land with conservation practices," said Joseph H. Maroon, director of DCR.

"For that reason we needed to look at new ways to encourage more farmers to put widely

(more)

Conservation pilot launched 2-2-2-2-2-2

accepted best management practices to use. This campaign is designed to improve awareness of the resources that are available – resources that can help farmers more readily adopt the most effective conservation practices.”

In appealing to farmers, the advertising strikes a balance between the pressure farmers feel to produce and their desire to conserve. Most of the ads encourage farmers to either attend a specific event (e.g. a Crop Production Field Day) where conservation practices will be presented or to visit their local Soil and Water Conservation District for information on state- and federal-funded cost-sharing programs.

The advertising campaign, conceived and produced by McFadden Clay Marketing Group of White Stone, Va., grew out of qualitative research commissioned by DCR into farmers’ awareness levels and attitudes toward government-funded cost-share programs. The Valley Region was selected to pilot the advertising campaign given its agricultural variety and comparatively low media costs. The campaign will be evaluated to see how it will best be used in the future.

[Note to media: electronic copies of the ads are available upon request.]