My name is Wade Biddix. I am the Assistant State Conservationist for Programs with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). I manage the Water Resources and Farm Bill Programs for NRCS in Virginia.

I will discuss how our agency is RAMPING UP FEDERAL ASSISTANCE FOR AGRICULTURE IN THE BAY WATERSHED

- **NRCS has a history in the Bay**. NRCS has been helping farmers address water quality concerns in the Chesapeake Bay since 1983, when the six states and District of Columbia first signed the Chesapeake Bay Agreement.

- **Our mission is "Helping people help the land"**. Created by Congress in 1935 to address the natural resource disaster known as the Dust Bowl, NRCS continues to focus on helping farmers voluntarily install conservation practices based on sound science.

- **Conservation technical assistance (CTA) is the basis of all NRCS programs and services**. Local NRCS field staff provide site specific, one on one technical assistance to help landowners identify resource problems and to plan and implement solutions.

- **In the 2002 Farm Bill, Congress created new programs to address environmental concerns** such as water quality, disappearing farmlands and wetlands, and declining wildlife habitat. These programs offered landowners financial help as well as technical help.

- **The 2008 Farm Bill offers a new opportunity for the Bay.** The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative (CBWI) contained in the 2008 Farm Bill provided new funds for the first time directed specifically to the Chesapeake Bay. This law authorized $188 million in federal Farm Bill funds over 5 years to help farmers establish priority practices in high priority watersheds. NRCS worked with state partners to identify the priority watersheds and the priority practices. The five priority practices are **no-till, cover crops, nutrient management, livestock access control and riparian buffers**.

- **So how does NRCS plan to Support the WIP?**

    - NRCS as a federal agency has a different mandate than the state, but what we do dovetails with the state's activities and helps them to reach the Chesapeake Bay goals. We want to be the best partner we can be.

- Over the past two and a half years, NRCS in Virginia has worked closer than ever before with DCR, conservation districts and other partners to develop and support the Watershed Plan for the Bay.
- In FY2011, we have more money for direct financial assistance to landowners than ever before ($14.3 million in CBWI and over $11 in EQIP).

- **Progress to date** . More acres of the 5 priority practices have already been applied in the first two and one half years of the 2008 Farm Bill than all five years of the 2002 Farm Bill. CBWI funding, plus partnering with others, contributed to increased boots on the ground and more practices being applied.

PRACTICES APPLIED CHESAPEAKE BY IN WATERSHED

Farm Bill Program Funding for Priority Practices: no-till, cover crops, nutrient mgt., buffers, livestock exclusion	FY2009-2011 Acres of Practices Applied	FY2003-2008 Acres of Practices Applied
EQIP	39,628	60,142
CBWI	60,143	No CBWI
CTA General	196,820	202,541
CRP	2,658	5,903
Total Acres	298,085	296,715

- In the past 2 ½ years using CRP, CTA, and EQIP, almost 1,400 acres of riparian forest buffers were established in the Bay Watershed. With an average width of 50 feet, that converts to about 229 miles of buffers.

- **This year's signup**

  - Our top two programs, CBWI and EQIP, make up more than 90 percent of Virginia's Farm Bill funding. This fiscal year is the largest signup to date. Almost all of the funds have been allocated out to farmers. In addition, we have preapproved 94 applications totaling $1.25 million for the Conservation Stewardship Program.

  - We normally can fund about a third of the applications received. This year is no exception and there is a very large backlog.

    - CBWI has a backlog of 126 applications totaling more than $4.4 million.

    - The EQIP backlog is 424 applications totaling more than $12.6 million.

    - These unfunded applications can be deferred until next year so that individuals have an opportunity to improve and resubmit their applications.

- NRCS stands ready to do what we can to assist with the implementation of the WIP.

Conservation Effects Assessment Project = CEAP Cropland Study

- Designed to quantify the effects of conservation practices used on cropland in the Bay.
- Evaluate the need for additional conservation practices
- Evaluate what would happen if we put those practices on the ground.