

Message from UMD AGNR Leadership on Changes to the Nutrient Management Program

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The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (AGNR) wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the state of Maryland and its citizens. As a trusted partner in the community, University of Maryland Extension (UME), administered by AGNR, has been providing timely, research-driven, problem-solving assistance to the public for over 100 years. Our dedicated faculty and staff not only serve their counties and regions, but live and thrive as your neighbors and colleagues.

We would like to address the recent announcement from the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) concerning funding for the Nutrient Management Program (NMP) and AGNR's nutrient management services to farmers across the state. The funding for the NMP comes from MDA and has been used to hire nutrient management planners who are contractual and are employed by the University of Maryland. MDA has made the decision to reduce the funding to the UMD Nutrient Management program. UMD Advisors that have been writing plans for farmers will no longer be employed after August 31st and UMD will no longer have the capacity to write plans for the general farm community. MDA is planning to redirect much of the funding in order to offer cost share assistance to farmers to help offset the costs of having plans written by private industry.

As background, nutrient management advisors within county Extension offices have been developing nutrient management plans at no cost to Maryland farmers since 1989. Over the last 34 years, the nutrient management program has built a trusted partnership with our agricultural community by providing field specific, research-based fertility recommendations for farmers. The program has resulted in increased farm profitability and production and reduced nutrient inputs into the Chesapeake Bay watershed. In 2021, 1585 farmers worked with AGNR advisors for a total of 305,873 acres planned statewide. 148 new and updated "no land plans" were also generated.

We understand the difficulties surrounding this decision by MDA, but please know that AGNR remains committed to providing nutrient management planning services for our producers. **AGNR is actively pursuing alternative plan development models and funding sources.** We are committed to working with our partners at all levels to find workable solutions to this issue.

In addition, MDA will continue to provide limited financial support for 4 UMD NM Specialists to support education and research. These NM Specialists will help farmers learn how to write plans and support them in doing so. There will be a limited number of plans written by these specialists for small scale farms.

The modifications to the nutrient management program in no way diminish UME's service or commitment to the people of Maryland. We continue to provide solutions based on sound science to the public, not only in the agricultural realm, but also in healthy living, financial wellness, youth development, leadership and professional development, environmental quality, home gardening, and much more.

Thank you for your support as we transition through this period of change.

Sincerely,
Craig Beyrouthy and Jinhee Kim