

WHEREAS, Many farmers have now entered into soil and water conservation plans, which have proven to be beneficial both to long-term agricultural and economic values and to effective reduction of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay and its watersheds; and

WHEREAS, Current economic incentives for farmers to enter into soil and water conservation plans are inadequate; and

WHEREAS, A system of incentives, including tax credits for farmers, will be an effective tool for efforts to reduce and eliminate to the greatest possible degree pollution from nonpoint sources in the State; now, therefore,

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Tax - Property

9-225.

(A) THE GOVERNING BODY OF A COUNTY MAY GRANT, BY LAW, A PROPERTY TAX CREDIT AGAINST THE COUNTY PROPERTY TAX IMPOSED ON REAL PROPERTY THAT IS USED FOR AGRICULTURAL PURPOSES AND IS SUBJECT TO A CURRENT SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PLAN APPROVED BY THE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND, IF ELIGIBLE, THAT IS SUBJECT TO A NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN UNDER TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 8 OF THE AGRICULTURE ARTICLE.

(B) (1) THIS SUBSECTION GOVERNS THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT GRANTED UNDER SUBSECTION (A) OF THIS SECTION.

(2) (I) THE GOVERNING BODY OF A COUNTY MAY ADOPT PROCEDURES TO DETERMINE THE AMOUNT OF AND THE CONDITIONS OF ELIGIBILITY AND METHOD OF APPLICATION FOR THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT.

(II) THE PROPERTY TAX CREDIT FOR A PROPERTY MAY NOT EXCEED 50% OF THE REAL PROPERTY TAX ASSESSED ON THAT PROPERTY.

(III) THE CREDIT MAY BE GRANTED ONLY FOR A PROPERTY THAT IS SUBJECT TO A CURRENT SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PLAN EXECUTED BY THE PROPERTY OWNER AND THE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT AND, IF ELIGIBLE, THAT IS SUBJECT TO A NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PLAN UNDER TITLE 8, SUBTITLE 8 OF THE AGRICULTURE ARTICLE.

(IV) THE CREDIT MAY BE GRANTED ONLY IF THE SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PLAN UNDER SUBPARAGRAPH (III) OF THIS PARAGRAPH IS CERTIFIED BY THE COUNTY SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT AS BEING IMPLEMENTED AS SCHEDULED BY AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PLAN.

(3) THE SOIL CONSERVATION AND WATER QUALITY PLAN SHALL SET FORTH THE PRACTICES TO ELIMINATE OR REDUCE NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION FROM AGRICULTURAL RUNOFF ON THE PROPERTY.