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Perspectives on Conservation and Leased Farmland

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Improving Soil Health on Leased Land



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- More than 40% of farmland nationwide is leased
- Conservation practices are less prevalent on leased acres
- Complex problem with similar causes nationwide



Photo credit for presentation
Edwin Remsberg

Value of Conservation Practices

- Practices can lead to improved:
 - soil health;
 - water quality; and
 - farm property value
- In the Chesapeake Bay watershed nutrient reduction is needed.

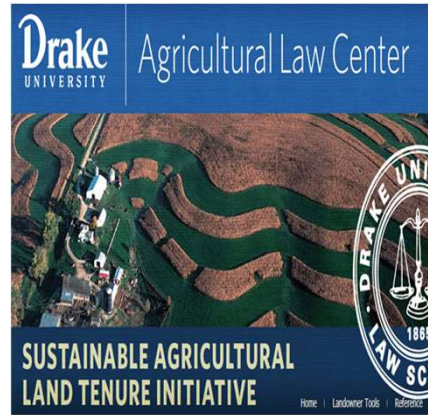


Leasing as a tool

- Think of a lease as a tool
- Start with communication
- Consensus on conservation goals/priorities
- A Conservation Plan can start the process



Communication Resources



Agricultural Conservation Leasing Guide

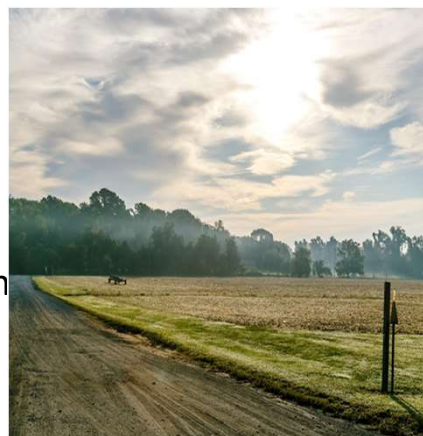
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Structuring a Lease for Conservation



- Lease Options:
 - Think beyond cash rent
 - Crop share/Flexible
 - Term matters
 - Rent should reflect investment and impact on yield
 - Share in the cost-share love



What are the Standards?

- What is good farming?
- Is a Conservation Plan referenced?
- Are desired nutrient management standards outlined?



Specific Practice Provisions

Sample riparian buffer provision:

- *Tenant shall not plant, harvest, plow, disc or use fertilizers or pesticides within the vegetative buffer area(s) (define area)*



Specific Practice Provisions



Sample riparian buffer provision:

- *Tenant shall maintain the vegetative buffer, in accordance with SCD and NRCS standards, by mowing and/ or applying recommended herbicides to control noxious weeds and/or invasive species.*

Specific Practice Provisions



Sample riparian buffer provision:

- *To compensate Tenant for the buffer maintenance, Tenant shall receive ___ % of the annual CRP rental payment received by Landlord.*



Consider the Consequences?

- What is a breach?
- Is there a grace period to allow for correction?
- Is the failure grounds for termination?
- Trust but verify
 - Reserve right to inspect and take soil samples



Troubleshooting

- Maintenance
 - Who?
 - What?
 - Buffers tend to shrink over time
 - Include restrictions in practice area
 - How much?
 - Agree to meet annually to verify practices
 - Amend as needed!

Thanks



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