



Request for Proposals for Farmer-Led Innovations in Cover Cropping

Application Due Date: Friday April 19th, 2024 at 11:59 PM

Selections will be made by May 15, 2024

I. Project Overview/General Information

A. Purpose of Request

The goal of the Farmer-Led Innovations in Cover Cropping project is to improve water quality, soil health, and crop production goals by expanding the acres of cover crops planted in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed, especially those planted after soybeans. To achieve this goal, Sustainable Chesapeake is collaborating with Innovation Roundtable farmer participants and other partners (Virginia Soil Health Coalition, Virginia Tech, Virginia Natural Resources Conservation Service, Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation, and TWI) to demonstrate and evaluate the performance of innovative cover crop technologies that reduce time, tractor passes, fuel use, or other input costs, and otherwise expand adoption of cover cropping systems.

Timeframe/Anticipated Period of Performance

The project timeframe is June 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024. All eligible project activities must occur within this timeframe, although a one-year extension may be possible.

C. Funding Amount and Source

We have \$89,250 in funding remaining for this project. Funding is provided by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Chesapeake Bay Program through the Small Watershed Grant Program (\$69,250 remaining unallocated). Funding is also provided through a 2023 grant from Norfolk Southern (\$20,000).

II. Scope of Work

A. Geographic eligibility:

Most farm fields enrolled in the project must be located within the Virginia Chesapeake Bay watershed. However, thanks to a contribution from Norfolk Southern, we can allocate up to \$20,00 in funding for this project in Virginia, *outside* of the Chesapeake Bay region.

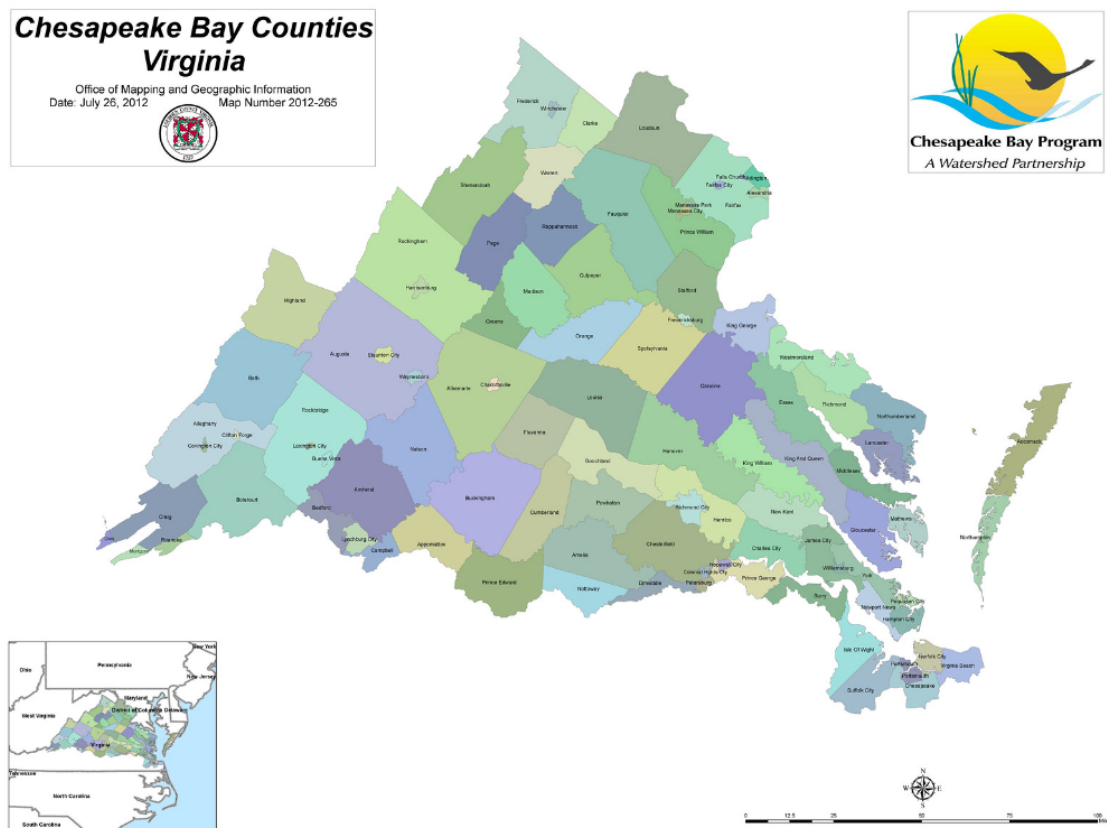


Figure 1. Map showing the Chesapeake Bay watershed in Virginia.

B. Participating Farmers/Agribusiness Requirements/Deliverables

Sustainable Chesapeake is seeking proposals from Chesapeake Bay watershed farmers, or agribusinesses that serve Chesapeake Bay watershed farmers, that are willing to invest in innovative technologies or management systems that have the potential to expand the adoption of cover crops, especially cover crops following soybeans. Specifically, we are seeking the following deliverables:

1. Invest in innovative technologies with strong potential to reduce time and/or fuel use and expand adoption of cover cropping systems and receive reimbursable payments for using the equipment on a per acre basis. Only acres that meet Virginia Agricultural Cost Share program requirements for the following practices are eligible:
 - A. [SL-8](#) Protective Cover for Specialty Crops
 - B. [SL-8B](#) Small Grain and Mixed Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Residue Management
 - C. [SL-8M](#) Small Grain and Mixed Cover Crop for Nutrient Management and Residue Management with Fall Manure Application
 - D. [WQ-4](#) Legume Based Cover Crop
2. Collaborate with Sustainable Chesapeake and project partners to track implementation, monitor performance, and share results with other farmers and conservation professionals at field day events and farmer meetings, etc. Participating farmers must also be willing to work with Sustainable Chesapeake and partners to ensure cover crop acres are credited towards Virginia's Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan goals. Virginia Tech is our lead partner in data collection and performance monitoring of the innovative practices selected.
3. Follow insurance requirements. Please reach out with any questions or concerns regarding these limits. New policy costs can be built into payment for contractors.

Insurance type	Businesses or Organizations	Farmers
Occurrence Liability	\$1,000,000	\$2,000,000
Aggregate Liability	\$2,000,000	N/A
Umbrella Insurance	\$1,000,000	\$1,000,000
Workers Compensation	\$500,000	\$500,000
Auto	\$1,000,000	Commercial - \$1,000,000* Personal - \$500,000*

III. Proposal Instructions and Evaluation

A. Proposal Contents

Farmers and agribusinesses supporting farmers managing land in Virginia's Chesapeake Bay watershed are invited to submit proposals that include responses to the following:

1. Please tell us about your farm or agribusiness and your experience with cover cropping systems.
2. How do you plan to expand the adoption of cover crops, particularly after soybeans?
3. Will your proposed strategy reduce time, fuel use, and/or tractor passes? Please elaborate.
4. Are you willing to share information about your project with other farmers, agribusinesses, and conservation professionals? If you have experience in sharing information through farmer meetings, field day events, or field trials, please tell us about your prior efforts to share information.
5. Are you willing to manage participating fields according to your certified nutrient management plan?

6. What payment rate per acre would you need to implement the project? How many acres would you propose to enroll? Please justify.
7. Are you able to receive funding on a reimbursable basis? We are proposing to pay farmers to implement cover crops using innovative technologies, rather than paying for the purchase of innovative technologies directly.
8. Are you proposing to purchase new equipment or use equipment you already have?
9. Do you or your clients meet historically underserved status as defined by NRCS? (e.g socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers). See here for more information: <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/getting-assistance/underserved-farmers-ranchers>
10. For agribusinesses, please tell us about your client base and explain your qualifications (experience, equipment, etc.) to implement the project on your clients' farms.
11. Please provide contact information and the best method to contact you with further questions.

B. General Process

Sustainable Chesapeake and partners will evaluate and assess submitted proposals according to the following criteria: the likelihood of success, the likelihood the technology will be transferable to other farming operations, historically underserved status of applicants and/or customers. Sustainable Chesapeake reserves the right to accept or reject responses on any basis it deems appropriate.

C. Selection Criteria

The point system detailed below will be used to assist Sustainable Chesapeake and partners in making awards. This point system will not be the only determining factor in the selection process but will play a large role in determining the agribusinesses or farmers that are the best fit to meet the requirements.

1. Likelihood of success in expanding adoption of cover crops, especially after soybeans or on farms new to cover crops (50 points)
2. Likelihood the technology will be transferable to other farming operations (e.g. cost-effectiveness, practical application, ease of use, etc.) (35 points)
3. Small or beginning farmer, veteran farmer, and/or historically underserved status (15 points)

IV. Submission

A. Questions

Potential applicants are welcome to reach out with any additional questions to Ginna Morris at 804-213-2482 or virginia@susches.org

B. Deadline and submission requirements

1. Please submit (1) hard copy of the proposal by mail OR (1) electronic copy to:

By mail:

Sustainable Chesapeake

c/o Ginna Morris

4628 Anderson Hwy

Powhatan VA, 23139

OR

By email:

Ginna Morris, Sustainable Chesapeake: virginia@susches.org

2. Submissions should be 20 pages or less (20 single-sided, 10 double-sided).

3. All submissions shall be *received* by April 19, 2024 at 11:59 PM, EST.

D. Freedom of Information Act Disclosure

All documents submitted to Sustainable Chesapeake related to this RFP may be subject to requirements of the Freedom of Information Act and may be deemed public records.

E. No Discrimination

All applicants will be afforded the full opportunity to submit qualifications and will not be discriminated against on any grounds in consideration for award.

F. Reservation

Sustainable Chesapeake reserves the right to accept or reject a proposal without a stated cause. Further, Sustainable Chesapeake reserves the right to terminate, restructure, or amend the stated process at any time. If no proposals are satisfactory, Sustainable Chesapeake has the right to re-issue or cancel the RFP.