The Maryland Department of the Environment is in the process of renewing the General Discharge Permit for AFOs. The current General Discharge Permit expires on November 30, 2014. The renewed General Discharge Permit will be effective on December 1, 2014, once it undergoes a public participation process that will occur this autumn. The Maryland Department of the Environment has been sending letters to all registrants with information about permit renewal procedures and a new Notice of Intent (NOI) for the new General Discharge Permit. If you operate or own an AFO that is registered under the department’s General Discharge Permit, this letter informs you of the deadlines you need to meet to apply for the new permit. You are asked to respond to that letter immediately.

**Deadlines:** CAFOs and MAFOs that are registered under the current General Discharge Permit must notify the Maryland Department of the Environment by September 30, 2014, that they intend to renew their registration under the new Permit. This notification to the department will allow it to extend the AFO’s General Discharge Permit coverage until it processes a new Notice of Intent. The new Notice of Intent can be submitted now and it will serve as this notification. If the CAFO or MAFO registrant cannot complete the new Notice of Intent at this time, the registrant can return the department’s letter marking his/her intention on the appropriate space on the letter. If the new Notice of Intent is not submitted now, it must be submitted by January 30, 2015 to fulfill permit renewal requirements.

“Current CAFOs and MAFOs that are registered under the current General Discharge Permit must notify the Maryland Department of the Environment by September 30, 2014, that they intend to renew their registration under the new Permit.”

**WARNING:** If current registrants plan to continue to operate their facility and fail to notify the Maryland Department of the Environment of their intention to continue coverage under the General Discharge Permit, and follow-up by submitting the new Notice of Intent, coverage will cease as of December 1, 2014. The operation may be subject to enforcement action for failure to obtain coverage under the General Discharge Permit.
If registrants know that they will NOT be operating the AFO after November 30, 2014 and, therefore, will not need General Discharge Permit coverage after that date, they should notify the department indicating that they will not need the permit. By January 30, 2015, they also should notify the department of the disposition of the operation (who it was sold to, the new operator’s name and contact information, whether it will remain a farm, etc.) in their notification.

In material sent to growers there is mention of a fee up to $1,200. That fee is not being charged now and there is no need now to send a check to the Maryland Department of the Environment.

The department will hold an official “public hearing” on the draft CAFO permit on Tuesday, October 14th in the Richard A. Henson Center on the campus of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore at Princess Anne starting at 6:00 p.m. This meeting will allow persons to offer comments and suggest changes to the draft permit. These suggestions then will be considered by the Maryland Department of the Environment prior to official adoption of the permit.

DPI’s Grower committee will hold two committee On-the-Road outreach meetings for our members on September 22 near Denton and September 23 at Salisbury where the department process and paperwork requirements will be explained so growers know what they need to do and how they should complete the paperwork. Details have been mailed to DPI grower members in areas near the meeting sites.

Please contact Gary Kelman at the Maryland Department of the Environment at 410-537-4423 or gary.kelman@maryland.gov with any questions about the new CAFO permit system.

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DPI Seeks to Launch Generator Dispatch Program for Members
Timely Topics, Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. - September 2014

Several years ago, DPI investigated launching a program where members could earn revenue by running their back-up generators for a few hours per year when the electric grid was under stress. In 2008, a pilot program was launched that included seven farms in Maryland and Virginia. The member farms in the pilot have had a good experience and received several thousand dollars since then and have been asked to run their generators no more than twice per year.

DPI’s Board of Directors recently approved a program to roll out the program to all Maryland and Virginia grower members later this year. DPI will continue to work with our energy consultant Ed Jackson of Affinity Energy Management to select a Curtailment Service Provider to manage the program, negotiate a contract on behalf of DPI members, and promote the program later this year.

Members in Maryland and Virginia with two or more chicken houses would be eligible to participate. We do not expect Delaware’s strict air emissions requirements will allow member growers in Delaware to be part of this DPI program. Participating farms can expect to receive between several hundred dollars to more than $1,000 per year with larger farms earning more. After this autumn, watch for additional information from DPI on how to sign up for the program or ask any questions about it.
Maryland Taxpayers Help Jump Start 
Alternative Manure-Use Project
Timely Topics, Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc. - September 2014

The Maryland Department of Agriculture last month awarded more than $1 million in grants for three animal manure management technology projects. One of them is on a chicken farm in Worcester County. Secretary of Agriculture Buddy Hance and Maryland Energy Administration Director Abby Hopper presented a ceremonial check for $676,144.47 payable to Plant Found Energy Development to Jason Lambertson, owner of Millennium Farms near Pocomoke City.

The money came from the state’s Animal Waste Technology Fund that was created to provide incentives to companies that demonstrate new technologies on farms and provide alternative strategies for managing animal manure.

The state of Maryland presented a $676,144.47 check to Plant Found Energy Development to install a manure-to-energy system on a chicken farm in Worcester County.

The Planet Found Energy Development anaerobic digester system on the Lambertson farm will generate energy for use on the farm and on the regional electric grid. Additionally, nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium are to be partitioned into three separate fertilizer products for on-farm use or sale. The dry weight of the poultry litter is reduced by 50 percent and the fiber by-product has the potential to be re-used as poultry bedding. About 1,500 tons of litter are expected to be processed annually.

“There are significant challenges in managing manure under new nutrient management requirements,” said Secretary Hance. “Projects funded have the potential to increase energy independence, enhance animal waste management, improve water quality, and reduce greenhouse gases — all of which will result in advanced Chesapeake Bay restoration and help farms become sustainable.” Previously Secretary Hance has said this project could serve as a prototype that can be constructed on other chicken farms.

Health insurance coverage provides peace of mind and security. Navigating health insurance options and financial assistance, however, can seem challenging. You can get local, in-person assistance from a certified Navigator or Assister who can answer questions about health insurance plans and offer guidance through Maryland Health Connection, the state’s insurance marketplace for private health plans and Medicaid. Financial help to lower the cost of health plans is available to those who qualify.

Enrollment is closed for private health insurance plans, but will re-open November 15, 2014 for coverage beginning January 1, 2015. Consumers who have experienced a life-changing event may be eligible to enroll in a private health plan prior to open enrollment. Examples of qualifying events include getting married or divorced, having a child, losing or changing jobs, moving into Maryland or from one Maryland county to another, or losing current health insurance. Enrollment in Medicaid is open all year.

Residents of Somerset, Wicomico, and Worcester counties can get free help through the Lower Shore Health Insurance Assistance Program, administered by the Worcester County Health Department. A local call center is
In recent years, Vegetative Environmental Buffers (VEBs) have gained significant attention throughout the poultry industry as a way to capture and reduce particulate matter from poultry houses. Research has shown that VEBs (strategic “hedgerows” composed of trees, shrubs, and grasses) can survive and capture exhaust from the poultry fans. With help from a USDA conservation grant, the University of Delaware is approaching an innovative way to reduce air emissions from poultry houses using VEBs in conjunction with a new technology and quantify the effectiveness of them.

Dr. Hong Li, Project Director with the University of Delaware, suggested that this project was intended to be a proactive solution for future air quality regulations. Although Delaware does not have any air quality regulations for poultry emissions, Dr. Li thinks they’re coming. In 2005, EPA conducted a National Air Emissions Monitoring Study, a two-year examination of air emissions from poultry, swine, and dairy animal feeding operations (AFOs). The primary goals of the study were to promote a national consensus on methodologies for estimating emissions from AFOs and reduce air pollution. “Since it is likely that EPA will step up regulations concerning these emissions, cost-effective best management practices to reduce air emissions from AFOs are needed,” said Dr. Li.

Dr. Li has worked with Delmarva Poultry Industry, Inc.’s Jim Passwaters, researchers from USDA Agricultural Research Service, staff from USDA’s Plant Materials Center, and neighboring universities and partners to go one step beyond traditional research. While research has shown that VEBs capture pollutants; determining the efficacy of VEBs combined with the new technology of scrubbers answers the question of ‘how efficient are these technologies in reducing pollutants from the air?’

A scrubber is a permanent fixture attached to a side wall fan of a poultry house. A scrubber removes ammonia, particulate matter, and other pollutants from poultry exhaust fumes as air passes through a scrubbing liquid (water and diluted acids), reacts with the liquid and forms ammonium salts—effectively “scrubbing” the air. While most scrubbers are extremely expensive at $50,000, this study uses a new type that may offer effective remediation at $10,000 a unit.

Why VEBs and scrubbers together? Vegetative Environmental Buffers reduce air emissions best during warm seasons when trees and grasses are fully leafed out and growing, which coincides when tunnel exhaust fans are used most—late spring through early fall. Scrubbers compliment VEBs because they are used on side-wall fans during cold seasons when these fans are used the most.
The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service provided a $967,000 Conservation Innovation Grant in 2012 to the University of Delaware to help it achieve the goal of this project, which will help poultry producers improve their environmental performance to achieve sustainable operations. Currently there are five scrubbers and two different VEBs being evaluated on four sites in Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Arkansas.

Utilizing partner research, the VEBs are already designed with the most durable plants in mind. Dr. Li and his team set up a measuring instrument in and around the VEBs and scrubbers to measure emission reductions. At least seven months of data have been collected.

The final data will be reported once the project ends in September 2015. “Once the project has final data, we will develop criteria concerning the design and implementation of scrubbers to be used in conjunction with VEBs for inclusion in new or existing National Conservation Practice Standards,” said Dr. Li. “Then VEBs and scrubbers can be used in the model for TMDL, to estimate nitrogen deposition from air, to show reduced emissions.” Workshops are being planned this fall to give updates on the project status.

For more information, contact Hong Li at hli@udel.edu and visit the project website: http://sites.udel.edu/vebscrubber.

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**Edible VEBs?**

Jim Passwaters, DPI Vegetative Environmental Buffers Coordinator

Since 2001, I have been working on Vegetative Environmental Buffers around poultry farms, first as a contractor installing the buffers and then as the program coordinator for DPI. During those 13 years the program has evolved as new concepts were explored. Some were successful while others were not. I have been contemplating trying other plant species for their viability as a buffer.

In the landscape industry, changes have been occurring as well. Recently edible landscapes are becoming more popular. Many local nurseries’ plants such as blueberries, aronia, blackberries, figs, and other edible plants are becoming more popular. These plants are being planted around homes for ornamental and edible qualities.

This concept led me to wonder about edible buffers around chicken farms. A lot of folks think that the area surrounding chicken houses is a “harsh” environment and that limited species of plants would survive. It has been my experience that the only harsh areas are around fans. The areas not adjacent to fans are like any other agriculture area where many plant types can survive.

The idea of the buffers is to provide shade, protect from wind, block views, and utilize any nutrients that may escape. There are many edible species that will meet these qualifications. With large spans available, it would seem that edible buffers could potentially provide an extra income source for those inclined to plant them. I should caution, however, that dust from fans may gather on plants and may not be healthy; therefore, edibles should not be planted near the fans.

Some species to consider are aronia, blueberries, blackberries, hazelnuts, raspberries, many different fruit trees, elderberries, and Saskatoon berries. All of these (and more) could potentially provide additional income. It should be noted that these plants do require work. These are not just a “plant and forget” species if harvest is expected.

When applying for cost share benefits, rules apply to those wanting funding. Cost share rules for a poultry windbreak buffer only allow for certain species that have been tested and approved by the USDA. The only edible plant that is currently on the list is hazelnuts. I know of one farm that has planted this particular plant. Farmers may choose to pay for their own windbreaks and then these rules don’t apply. Anyone interested in furthering this idea should contact me at 302-236-0470 or passwaters@dpichicken.com.