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## **GOVERNOR MARTIN O'MALLEY ANNOUNCES ACTION FOR EASTERN SHORE POULTRY FARMERS**

*State revises regulations to assist farmers struggling to recover from record-snow*

**ANNAPOLIS, MD (March 10, 2010)** – Governor Martin O'Malley announced today new assistance for poultry farmers in Maryland, as the state works with poultry industry stakeholders to address environmental standards and recover from snow-related damage last month. Governor O'Malley met with the Eastern Shore delegation Monday evening, along with the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment to discuss concerns and solutions.

“We’re working together to find solutions that protect our natural resources and strengthen family farming in our state,” said Governor O'Malley. “Maryland farmers serve as stewards of the environment by protecting land that might otherwise be developed. It’s our obligation to find way we can continue to protect the environment while keeping family farming profitable. I’m pleased we’re able to come together on these actions to support our family farms and the jobs that support them.”

“The Department of Agriculture is dedicated to putting farmers first and helping farmers in their times of need, such as recovery from the recent severe snow storms, and also to help farmers comply with regulations that protect soil and water quality, the Chesapeake Bay, and all Maryland families,” said Agriculture Secretary Buddy Hance.

Because of the time it has taken to approve the final new source poultry operation guidelines, the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) will see that new poultry operations take first priority in obtaining technical assistance to prepare Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans (CNMP) that are required by the new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations Permit. In addition, to assist farmers who are required to obtain CNMPs, MDA has secured commitments from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service to increase the level of technical assistance available with three additional staff members to develop these plans statewide. Additionally, more than 30 Maryland Soil Conservation District staff will be cross trained to assist with plan development.

Governor O'Malley also discussed ways the state can continue to support farmers struggling to recover from snow-related damage to chicken houses. MDA continues to identify, along with federal agency partners, the damage caused by the snow storms and respond to needs that the agriculture community may have in order to clean up, recover and rebuild from storm-related damage. The goal is to help producers get back in full operation and recover losses as quickly as possible. MDA has compiled a list of available resources for producers, which includes information about indemnity programs, emergency grants and loans, instructions for emergency burning permits, information on disposal of poultry and livestock mortality and information about rebuilding and rebuilding in more energy efficient ways as well as cash incentives for energy projects.

Working with MDA, today the Department of the Environment announced it would extend the deadline allowing the temporary burning of poultry houses to April 18, 2010, other livestock shelters and manure storage structures that suffered structural collapse during the heavy snowstorms of February 2010, subject to conditions that protect the environment and public health.

Following Governor O'Malley's request for an expedited review process, Maryland has completed and EPA has approved construction guidelines needed to build new poultry houses. Maryland is the first State in the country to have final, EPA-approved New Source Review requirements, which allow new construction to proceed under assurance farmers will be in compliance with EPA standards. The Departments of Agriculture and Environment worked closely with farmers on these new requirements.

Maryland is developing rapid response teams led by MDA with MDE to evaluate the conditions on farms when environmental issues arise and help farmers take corrective actions if necessary. These teams reinforce the existing MDA-MDE partnership to jointly respond to water quality complaints on farms. The plan is to swiftly make available existing technical expertise and financial assistance to avoid delay in identifying and resolving on-farm environmental impacts if they exist to protect water quality.

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