Developing and Implementing Science-Based Policy: Lessons from the Mid-Atlantic U.S. (S04-sims074502-Oral)

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Abstract:

Agricultural nonpoint source pollution of surface waters and ground waters by nitrogen and phosphorus has been an environmental issue in the Mid-Atlantic U.S. for more than 30 years. In 1997 a series of fishkills in Maryland that were also linked to outbreaks of the toxic dinoflagellate Pfiesteria Piscicida and to human health problems resulted in intense public and media pressure to control agricultural nonpoint source pollution. By 1999 nutrient management laws had been passed in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia. Concurrent with this were total maximum daily load (TMDL) lawsuits, changing regulations for concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and new nutrient management policies by USDA-NRCS. All involved have sought 'science-based' solutions and policies from the outset of these changes. We review the steps taken to integrate past and ongoing research into the development and implementation of nutrient management laws and guidelines for the Mid-Atlantic and provide a critical assessment of the current and future status of efforts to improve water quality in this region.

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