Valuing and Paying Farmers for Alternative Yield Levels That Result in Improved Water Quality. (S08-simpson221850-Oral)

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Abstract:

The Chesapeake Bay, like many coastal waters worldwide, suffers from over enrichment of nitrogen that causes excessive algal growth, which results in hypoxic and anoxic zones during algal decomposition. Agriculture is a major source of nutrients to Chesapeake Bay. A six-state commitment to remove nutrient impairments to the Bay requires bold new strategies. Practices are proposed that provide incentive payments to farmers to reduce nitrogen application rates or timing to corn and small grains. Another program strives to produce warm season grasses for bio-energy and carbon sequestration as a possible alternative to the corn-wheat-soybean rotation. Farmer participation is voluntary. These programs result in major reductions in nitrogen losses from cropland while providing market-based or conservation subsidy payments to farmers. The benefits accrue while maintaining or enhancing soil productive capacity for feed stock, should that be needed.

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