

Mich. Dept. of Agriculture's Water Program Offers Assistance for Farmers and Homeowners in 2010

LANSING, Mich. - The Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA) program addressing environmental risks for farmers and homeowners has changed its name to the Michigan Water Stewardship Program (MWSP). The program formerly known as the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program is a legislatively enabled partnership, established in 1994, designed to help individuals reduce the risks of water contamination.

The Michigan Water Stewardship Program is nationally recognized as the standard for voluntary environmental risk reduction and regulatory compliance, said James Johnson, Director of the MDA Environmental Stewardship Division. Our program addresses meaningful, permanent, and voluntary practice changes - one property at a time.

The MWSP addresses environmental risks through several distinct programs, including: Agriculture, turfgrass and residential technical assistance Clean Sweep (free pesticide disposal to Michigan residents) Pesticide Container Recycling Groundwater Monitoring Clean-up and disposal advice for large spills involving pesticides, manure and fertilizer

The MWSP is available locally through Conservation District offices. The primary means for identifying on-farm environmental risks are with assessment tools such as Farm*A*Syst and Crop*A*Syst. The A*Syst evaluations are conducted by Conservation District Stewardship Specialists who work one-on-one with farmers to identify environmental risks, create a plan to eliminate the risks, and provide the technical assistance needed to implement the plan.

Additionally, the MWSP in cooperation with federal, county, and local government has established 15 permanent Clean Sweep sites located throughout the state for the proper disposal of unused and unwanted pesticides. Michigan residents may dispose of pesticides at any Clean Sweep site, which will collect packages for shipping and properly dispose of free of charge.

The Pesticide Container Recycling Program provides a way for agricultural producers and agribusinesses to collect and recycle #2 plastic high density polyethylene (HDPE) pesticide containers. Collecting and recycling properly cleaned pesticide containers conserves valuable landfill space and reduces the need for new raw material. The plastics collected are recycled.

The groundwater monitoring program samples private wells across the state for general chemistry, pesticides, and volatile organic compounds. The program supports the State Groundwater Management Plan by providing data on private drinking water well quality to retain pesticide product registrations, where those products can be used without negative impacts on groundwater quality.

For the rapid, cost-effective clean up and proper use or disposal of manure, pesticides, and fertilizer, MDA has established a Spill Response Program. Department staff respond to incidents reported to the toll-free MDA Spill Hotline at 800-405-0101 by emergency first responders, responsible parties, or other persons that observe an uncontrolled release.

The Michigan Turfgrass Environmental Stewardship Program (MTESP) is dedicated to protecting environmental resources by advancing turfgrass management practices, preventing pollution, and increasing regulatory compliance within the golf and commercial turf industry. The program represents a partnership between MDA, Michigan State University, and the

Michigan Turfgrass Foundation. MTESP staff work with golf course superintendents and lawn care companies to conduct site visits that identify environmental risks on the property and develop Environmental Action Plans to address those risks. Golf courses and lawn care companies that have identified and abated all environmental risks on the property become certified courses in the MTESP.

For additional information on the MWSP visit www.michigan.gov/waterstewardship or call 517-335-6529.