

Meeting Minutes

June 20th, 2019

9:00 AM-3:00 PM

Virginia Department of Agriculture

261 Mt Clinton Pike

Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Summary of Actions and Decisions:

- **Decision:** The AgWG approved meeting minutes from the May meeting.
- **Action:** AgWG leadership will update the Ag Directive response document based on conversation and send out to the group for review.
- **Action:** The soil amendment discussion will continue at our next AgWG meeting.
- **Action:** The AgWG will start a conversation with the WQGIT about a template or system for considering emerging technologies.
- **Decision:** The AgWG will table the CREP letter since the re-opening of the CRP/CREP program.
- **Action:** The AgWG will write a letter in support of the CAC letter and our interest in playing a role in the solution.
- **Action:** The AgWG will invite the Chesapeake Conservancy to an upcoming meeting to provide an overview of the EPA-funded project and what value it can have for the AgWG.

Workgroup Areas of Focus

Accounting & Reporting • Implementation • Innovation

Data & Modeling • CBP Assignments

Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes

Workgroup Chairs

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved meeting minutes from the May meeting.

Expert Panel Update (5 min)

Panel Chairs

- Agricultural Ditch Management Expert Panel
 - Ray Bryant: There will be no efficiency for denitrifying curtains, two-stage ditches or ditch dipouts. We have one more meeting to get final approval from the panel and will develop the technical appendix soon.
 - No jurisdictions spoke up that they were relying on these practices for the final WIP.
- Cropland Irrigation Expert Panel
 - Loretta Collins: The AgWG did not come to consensus on the recommendation report. It went up to the WQGIT and did not reach consensus to approve the recommendation

report either. This decision will go to the Management Board in August. The AgWG will receive an update following that meeting.

Prioritization: How Far Have We Come? (45 min)

AgWG Leadership

The AgWG revisited the prioritization items generated at the June 2018 AgWG meeting.

- NRCS BMP Crosswalks
 - Barry Frantz and Mark Dubin are still working on this project.
- Non-Cost Shared BMP Identification
 - PA voiced concern about this issue.
 - Kelly Shenk: Ann Jennings will create a task force with a first meeting on June 25th to start this process.
 - Frank Schneider: In PA we didn't verify all of the volunteer practices on the ground.
 - Jeremy Daubert: In VA there is a communication issue. Farmers are shocked to find out that if practices are not cost shared, they are not in the model.
- Loretta Collins noted that the CAC letter has not been officially responded to yet.
- Animal Data
 - Chris Brosch: We are still concerned about the animal data with many changes with our producers at this point in time.
 - Matt Monroe: It's the same for WV. There are a lot of changes taking place such as clean out changes and organic farming. It may not be the best time to update animal numbers with how dynamic it is.
 - Chris Brosch: For poultry, the data we're using now is most accurate. Updating data now will give an inaccurate snapshot.
 - Dave Graybill: What is the data source currently?
 - Chris Brosch: For poultry population data, NASS data is used. For the litter nutrient concentrations, poultry litter subcommittee data is used.
- Artificial Drainage
 - Clint Gill noted that they need to look into potential Lidar mapping to get a better idea of what is going on
 - Jeremy Hanson noted that this work may align with the Chesapeake Conservancy efforts with high resolution land use data.
- Fertilizer Data
 - Frank Schneider: Penn state is looking at precision feeding and are interested in more research. This would be a peer reviewed paper published by Penn State.
 - Chris Brosch noted that DE has no progress in precision feeding.
- Nutrient Fertility Recommendations:
 - Chris Brosch: This is DE's top priority, but we have plenty of time before the Phase 7 Model. There's interest from many universities but we don't have funding.
 - Frank Schneider: Penn State may be interested.
 - Gurpal Toor: This is an important issue. If we don't have the right recommendations, how can we tighten regulations? We are working with Penn State and Cornell and there's interest from state agencies as well.
- Soil Health
 - Jake Reilly: Generally, we want to move forward several projects with cover crops and soil health. I can come back at the AgWG in August to discuss further.
 - Kelly Shenk: We should look at proposals that came in from CIG field test component.

CBP Assignments

Moving Forward: Ag TA and Conservation Practice Implementation (60 min)

A continuing discussion regarding next steps in regards to the Oct 18th, 2018 charge to the AgWG from the CBP Management Board regarding the CBP Executive Council's [Directive in Support of Agricultural Technical Assistance and Conservation Practice Implementation](#). A formal response to the charge will be presented for approval and any possible edits.

- On September 5 we have to report back about where are we on the Ag directive commitments

#1

- Kelly Shenk: Draft Phase III WIPs have solid information about the gaps state by state. In the fall when the plans are final, we can have a session to find the commonalities and fill gaps by joining forces. It would be helpful to find state, federal, or NFWF funding to fill those gaps.
 - Jake Reilly: I'm interested since we're funding some of these things as well as the Chesapeake Funders Network.

#2

- Barry Frantz: We're looking into the TSP training and we're trying to streamline it. The online process has some hoops to jump through and we are hoping to make that easier.
- Amanda Barber: TSP training is helpful, but we already know our job. It's more of a collaboration getting our RCP projects in NY.

#3

- Kelly Shenk: When we get together in the fall, we should brainstorm as a partnership, not just one agency.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: I understood this as EPA working with NRCS
- Loretta Collins: We can revisit the language for this one

#4

- Loretta Collins: Do you feel practices that are priority in the WIP committees are identified?
 - Yes, MD, PA, and WV have them identified.
 - Jake Reilly: We need to focus on maximizing flexibility where appropriate.
 - Adrienne Kotula: If there's not flexibility in federal or NFWF dollars, there are other options.

#5

- Frank Schneider: I think many don't know they need assistance which comes back to education and outreach. In PA

Action: AgWG leadership will update the Ag Directive response document based on conversation and send out to the group for review.

Innovation

Advancing Implementation: Notes from NFWF (45 min)

Jake Reilly

Jake Reilly, Chesapeake Bay Programs Director with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, will provide work group members with updates on a variety of efforts to advance implementation of agricultural conservation practices in the Bay watershed. Topics will include ongoing soil health program and policy development efforts, a summary of implementation proposals recently received via NFWF's

2019 Chesapeake Bay grants programs and pending efforts to facilitate stakeholder dialogue on optimizing the various sources of ag conservation funding among federal, state, and private funders.”

- Jake Reilly: We have trends of supporting innovative agricultural practices. We are committed to what is in Phase III WIPs and we have to figure out how to get practices implemented faster. That is our core priority moving forward.
 - We have a request to ask EPA recommendations on soil health benefits in the WIPs. From a technical perspective, how far are these practices getting us?
 - We have a request to leverage STAC’s capacity to review current methodology to account for soil health and identify data gaps.
 - We have a request to assign soil health to a CBP group (most likely the AgWG).
 - There are many openings in the STAC membership. There is not a soil scientist nominated to be in the membership.
 - Perhaps a STAC workshop can address these issues with definitions, and lots of research.
 - A key outcome is getting the CBP infrastructure behind soil health.

Data & Modeling

Ag Census 2017: The Nuts & Bolts (30 min)

Laura Exar, Sara Ramotnik

Laura Exar and Sara Ramotnik, UMD, will discuss the 2017 Ag Census, including response rates and notable trends emerging from the 2017 data release earlier this spring.

- Chris Brosch: Did you come across how mailings are targeted? DE has many rented farms that are short term. We find in annual reporting that farmers confuse mailings from DE and from USDA. It may be going to the incorrect address.
 - Sarah Ramotnik: I didn’t see any information on that, but there is more details on the FAQ page.
- Tim Sexton: Farmers say they don’t answer because they ask for too much personal information and it’s very long.
- Kelly Shenk: Assuming 70% is correct information for the response rate, how do they extrapolate that over people that have not responded? Statistically are we assuming things correctly?
 - Laura Exar: The methodology explains how they fill in the gaps.
 - Kelly Shenk: So, should we use the Ag Census to characterize agriculture in the watershed?
 - Loretta: The 70% is much different than the 25% everyone on the AgWG says anecdotally. There’s something not lining up.
- Jason Keppler: The next step is getting Ag Census data into the model. Will new data be incorporated into final WIP III or wait until next milestone period?
 - Jeff Sweeney: We will show trends in animal and crop types and compare this between 2017 and 2012. Then show how we project that out to 2025. It is used in progress runs for 2019 progress (1 current) (1 new version of CAST) that will incorporate any new methods and BMP panels all by the end of the year. It will not be a part of the WIPs.

Implementation

VA Perspective (45 min)

Tim Sexton, Megen Dalton

Tim Sexton, DCR and Megen Dalton, Shenandoah Valley SWCD, will discuss their perspectives on challenges and successes related to BMP implementation and technical assistance in the state.

- Megen Dalton: Much of our stream bank fencing is above 25% because of the voluntary amount farmers are putting on the ground. I think it's even higher.
 - Adrienne Kotula: I have stats that show 1195 projects for 5.2 million dollars of stream bank fencing.
- Tim Sexton: Since 2010, most streams are fenced. You can't see stream bank fencing from 4,000 feet away, so you can look for signs of no fencing.
- Megen Dalton: There are barriers with cost, getting farmers interested in programs without tracking and reporting as it connects to the Bay Program and getting credit. There are many that do not enroll in cost share and there are many that have voluntary practices. If we have to verify things, the farmers want to know who will check on them and how often.
- Kelly Shenk: Farmers who do not use government funding and have conservation practices they want to track. Are you on those farms for other reasons?
 - Megen Dalton: No, unless they have a need for us to get technical advice. Challenges are time and trust.
- Gary Flory: It's not just new people that are a challenge as well, but it's the need for specific people with relationships and understanding of the area and community.
 - Matt Monroe: It takes sometimes 5-10 years to get this relationship that you can't teach a new hire.
- Megen Dalton: We call your "RI" practices CCI (continuing conservation initiative) in VA and I call them voluntary BMPs.
- Tim Sexton: There's a rule to spend a percent of money on priority practices, and that was devastating to progress. Average farms are only 180 acres. 90% of these smaller farms have never heard of our cost share program.
 - Megen Dalton: That's not the case in Shenandoah Valley. We use FSA handouts, newsletters, and are very actively talking with FSA. In all three valley districts we are collocated. I rarely meet a farmer who doesn't know us or what we offer.
- Megen Dalton: We have more cover crop in the valley than is being reported. A lot of cover crops are going down and we understand the soil health benefits and use it for feed source. Corns and beans are not coming off the fields before the deadline so can't get credit because of that. If you miss it by 1 day, it does not count. That sours the farmer and they stop doing it.
 - Frank Schneider: That occurs in PA as well and I agree with you.
- Kelly Shenk: Do you use cover crop implementation transect surveys?
 - Megen Dalton: We have done that in other ways, so potentially could implement that.
 - Kelly Shenk: With crediting cover crops, we credit commodity crops. A big challenge is farmers meeting the planting date requirement to get credit.
 - Adrienne Kotula: I've heard that from the shore too.
 - Ken Staver: I don't understand how they can't make a late planting, but they get less credit.

Data & Modeling

Soil Amendments (20 min)

Group Discussion

Feedback from the AgWG is desired on the issue of soil amendment (e.g., compost) application on agricultural land in the watershed. Soil amendments are not currently accounted for as a load source in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

- Jason Keppler: In phase 6 of the model, there are 3 nutrient sources: commercial fertilizer, manure application and biosolid application. There has been interest in adding in another nutrient source where we quantify soil amendments.

- Frank Schneider: Wouldn't inclusion of this material be considered as part of the manure application?
- Chris Brosch: There's misunderstanding about soil amendments that are not captured. If it includes N and P on label, it's captured. I think whatever is left unaccounted for is small. I'm not sure of the best way to do this but does not seem like juice is worth the squeeze.
 - Frank Schneider: I agree. In PA if it has a label it is tracked. I think it just goes into the balance.
 - Adam Lyon: In MD, if you put compost in nutrient management, you assume 5% mineralization.
- Jason Kepler: So you think it works itself out and is a wash?
 - Frank Schneider: That's my thought. Quantity wise in PA, food waste is well above what we would have imagined. We came to consensus that if they add food waste to manure, we are treating it as manure. If it's applied land food processing they have to follow those regulations.
- Gurpal Toor: How many tons are we talking about?
 - Jason Kepler: We don't know, that came up in our conversation is it worth it?
 - Frank Scheider: I would say 3-5% of all that is manure.
 - Gurpal: Is there accounting of compost in the urban sector? How much is coming in and out?
 - Tim Sexton: In VA, box stores don't report, and compost is not regulated.
- Jason Kepler: If it was considered a load source, would there be an option to treat mushroom substrate or food waste so a nutrient reduction can be claimed?
- Peter Thomas: One county that has an issue with mushroom substrate is Cecil County where one customer produces 56,000 tons and we are interested in processing with treatment.
- Jason Kepler: Do we want to explore this issue and ask the CBP to perform an expert panel to quantify spent mushroom substrate and organic material?
 - Tim Sexton: How would you determine what that waste load would be? We would need to see if it's even possible.
 - Ken Staver: It won't make any difference.
 - Adam Lyon: The source would be reported as exported manure out of the watershed and already getting credit.
- **Action:** The soil amendment discussion will continue at our next AgWG meeting.

Considering Emerging Technologies (30 min)

Group Discussion

Partners across the watershed are consistently developing and implementing innovative practices aimed at maintaining viability and sustainability on agriculture while also improving/maintain healthy waters. As part of this process, CBP regularly receives requests to review and potentially approve these practices as BMPs that can be implemented, tracked, and reported for load reduction credit towards the Bay TMDL. These requests are often made to multiple individuals independently in the Bay Program Office and in state and federal agency offices across the watershed, occasionally resulting in contradictory or misleading information. Can we streamline this process?

- Jason Kepler: How do we handle these requests and have them reviewed by the partnership? We've had a number of these requests in MD. We can go to the WQGIT with some concerns and ask for a better protocol.
 - Tim Sexton: If there is something with research to back it up, we can look into it.
 - Gurpal Toor: I deal with this a lot. You have to have a peer reviewed paper and submit a proposal before we can have any conversations.

- Kelly Shenk: It could be a template with a form and specific instructions.
- Jason Kepler: It's a balance between innovation and real scientific practices. We can't endorse proprietary practices and technologies.
- Jeremy Hanson: Having a template and review of how new technologies fit into existing BMPs and a clearinghouse to have specific protocol.
 - Chris Brosch: We don't have to overcomplicate this. Not all technologies are proprietary if there is only one person selling it. We should still offer an avenue where they can be added if they are good technologies.
- The group noted that there are many other programs that work well that we can take examples and ideas from to create a more established technology verification protocol.
- **Action:** The AgWG will start a conversation with the WQGIT about a template or system for considering emerging technologies.

AgWG Letters Regarding CRP/CREP and Account & Reporting (20 min)

Loretta Collins

Loretta Collins, UMD, will present and discuss two draft letters from the AgWG to respective parties with influence regarding the CRP/CREP programs and accounting and reporting of BMPs for water quality improvement credit.

- CREP has reopened.
- Jason Kepler noted that now the program is open, this letter may not be necessary.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: It may be important to thank them and note that we are looking to RCPP to get the additional acreage necessary in the Bay.
- **Decision:** The AgWG will table the CREP letter since the re-opening of the CRP/CREP program.
- Kelly Shenk noted that there may be more effective formats to express concern than a formal letter.
 - Ken Staver: Nothing was happening at our workgroup level, so we came up with the letter idea.
- The group considered writing a new letter piggybacking on the CAC letter.
- Kelly Shenk: I wish EPA already got their response out to the CAC letter and it was already outlined in the CAC letter that ideal group to deal with this issue may come to the AgWG.
 - Matt Monroe: Maybe this could be used to speed it up. It seems like following this letter, we may want to form another workgroup now.
 - Barry Frantz: We don't want multiple tracks, they already know we need a workgroup. We can say the AgWG will commit to it.
- Jason Kepler: Do folks think it would be redundant?
 - Barry Frantz: It could be an informal group or a formal AgWG committee potentially.
- **Action:** The AgWG will write a letter in support of the CAC letter and our interest in playing a role in the solution.

New Business & Announcements (15 min)

- Paul Bredwell brought up concerns with the poultry data collection effort. I believe the states that would like the dust to settle before collecting new poultry numbers may not understand fully. I don't understand why states would not want to collect updated poultry data. If there are changes happening, why not collect data now to show the changes over time. We have been looking to collaborate with the AgWG with the US Poultry and Egg and have 40,000 dollars to look into this. We expect to be assigned a large burden to reduce N and P. They don't collect that data at a county level now, which does not assist the model. It seems like a no brainer to utilize the data from producers. If there's not state interest, this cannot move forward.

- Upcoming Meetings:
 - July 18 Call
 - Aug 15 Call
 - Sept 19 Face-to-Face OR Call
 - Oct 17 Face-to-Face OR Call
- Chesapeake Executive Council (CEC) Meeting: Sept 5th, 2019
- Soil and Water Conservation Society Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA

Next meeting: Thursday, July 18th from 10AM- 12 PM. Conference Call

Meeting Participants

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| Jason Keppler | MDA |
| Matt Monroe | WV DA |
| Loretta Collins | UMD |
| Allie Wagner | CRC |
| Chris Brosch | DDA |
| Clint Gill | DDA |
| Amanda Barber | Cortland Co. SWCD |
| Frank Schneider | PA State Conservation Commission |
| Tim Sexton | VA DCR |
| Seth Mullins | VA DCR |
| Marel King | CBC |
| Kelly Shenk | EPA |
| Jill Whitcomb | PA DEP |
| Cindy Shreve | WV DA |
| Adam Lyon | MDA |
| Kristen Saacke-Blunk | Headwaters, LLC |
| Paul Bredwell | U.S Poultry and Egg |
| Jeremy Daubert | VT |
| Dr. Gurpal Toor | UMD |
| Ken Staver | UMD |
| Jeremy Hanson | VT |
| Mark Dubin | UMD |
| Jeff Sweeney | EPA |
| Dave Graybill | PA Farm Bureau |
| Jeff Hill | Lancaster County Conservation District |
| Barry Frantz | NRCS |
| Elliott Kellner | NRCS |
| Ray Bryant | USDA ARS |
| Gary Flory | VA DEQ |
| Laura Exar | UMD |
| Sara Ramotnik | UMD |
| Jake Reilly | NFWF |
| Mark Dubin | UMD |
| Adrienne Kotula | Chesapeake Bay Comission |
| Megen Dalton | Shenandoah Valley SWCD |