

Meeting Minutes
June 18, 2020
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
AgWG Conference Call

- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the May meeting minutes with minor edits.
- **Action:** The AgWG is asked to contact Dan Read (dread@umces.edu) and Lisa Wainger (wainger@umces.edu) with further feedback on their presentation [Collaborating for Effective Agricultural Technical Assistance](#).
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the formation of an Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG) to address concerns that have arisen regarding non-urban stream restoration tracking, reporting, and crediting.
- **Action:** The AgWG is asked to send nominations for the EPEG to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net) by **COB Wednesday, July 8th**.
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the language, with discussed modifications, of the “[Memo to the Water Quality GIT Regarding Non-Urban Stream Restoration Best Management Practices](#),” a summary of concerns and proposed next steps.

10:00 **Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes** Workgroup Chair

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants
- Approval of meeting minutes from the May 21st Conference Call

Decision: The AgWG approved the May meeting minutes with minor edits.

10:05: **New Water Quality GIT/AgWG staffer**

Whitney comes to us from Penn State with a passion for agriculture. She will gradually be taking over logistics for the AgWG in the coming weeks.

Implementation

10:10 **Engaging Farmers in the Bay Watershed (30 min)** Dan Read

Lisa Wainger and Dan Read, UMCES, are investigating how technical assistance providers engage with farmers about soil and water conservation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Their project involves collaborative research with technical assistance providers to understand what engagement practices are most effective at getting BMPs on the ground and how their effectiveness varies across the watershed. This research is part of a larger USDA-funded project that is working with stakeholders to create a 25-year vision for sustainable agriculture in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Results from the work with technical assistance providers will be integrated with nutrient movement and economic models to inform policymakers on how best to achieve that vision. Dan will provide a brief description of research and solicit feedback from the workgroup.

Summary:

The presentation highlighted the outline for Dan Read and Lisa Wainger's (UMCES) interdisciplinary research project to focus on what technical assistance strategies have the highest engagement with farmers. They plan to first interview technical assistance (TA) providers in addition to farmers in order to co-design a research agenda. The project is also analyzing stages for adoption, field testing, behavioral nudges, and social norms to determine how to reach farmers most effectively. They are seeking feedback from the AgWG regarding their work.

Questions:

Matt Kowalski: TA providers talk with farmers and ask if they have another farmer peer that they think would be interested and they would be encouraged to pass information along. Is this research looking at farmer-farmer interactions or only TA?

Daniel Read: It is testable and other papers have tested for it, there are certain things that could be done to test peer-peer interactions by asking someone to refer them or some robust systematic technique.

Katie Brownson: Are you planning to look at the effectiveness of targeting certain landowners that may be more likely to adopt BMPs?

Daniel Read: Targeting is something done by some groups and not by others, based on the assumption that some people might be more likely to try this out than others. This is open to what TA providers want to test. It is something that we would be open to.

Katie Brownson: Thanks, you might look into the Prime Prospects project in Pennsylvania for one example of a creative targeting method. I definitely agree that we don't just want to go after the "easy" landowners, but seems like a promising way to get more adoption per level of outreach effort

Lisa Wainger: Some of the collaborators have also expressed the inverse of that and are only reaching the landowners who are likely to adopt. We have this in our minds, and we are looking for ways to use different approaches with different types of farmers.

Jeremy Hanson: The outreach in the Choptank that you are splitting 50/50 with and without the nudge: how many total landowners is that targeting?

Daniel Read: This is going to 500 landowners.

Bill Tharp: Is your research looking into the use of public-private partnerships? Also, are you looking at agronomic or structural BMPs?

Daniel Read: We are looking at both agronomic and structural BMPs. We are looking to bring public-private partnerships together.

Kristen Saacke Blunk: Are you examining incentives for TA providers (especially public) for enhancing effectiveness and maximizing force on the ground through professional incentives and otherwise?

Lisa Wainger: Yes, we are examining incentives but have also looked at whether or not an incentive might discourage adopting new BMPs. I would certainly love to think about that with you but it may be beyond the scope of this initial effort.

Dave Graybill: Remember farmers talk to people they trust. Your interpersonal skills are worth more than your technical knowledge to most farmers.

Daniel Read: This is all about building trust and earning trust. Those are things that a lot of people have mentioned and there are a lot of different ways that people have talked about doing that. On the flipside I don't want to discount technical knowledge because I have seen other TAs not know the best way to talk about BMPs or know who to refer farmers to for that specific knowledge, causing the engagement to fall flat. Both of those things are important.

Loretta Collins: There is a whole host of farm operators that are out there and are also a huge part of the solution as well. Is there anyone else on phone that would like to add a comment or question?

Gary Felton: I would like to add one thing, we have TA providers on this [workgroup], farmers on this [workgroup]. One farmer who has worked with NRCS and [LGU] extension. Think about working with some of our people, they might be good resources for you.

Lisa Wainger: We encourage anyone who has thoughts to e-mail us, we want this to be a co-learning experience and will welcome comments or thoughts from everyone.

Action: The AgWG is asked to contact Dan Read (dread@umces.edu) and Lisa Wainger (wainger@umces.edu) with further feedback on their presentation [Collaborating for Effective Agricultural Technical Assistance](#).

Innovation

10:40 Proposed GIT-Funded Project (10 min)

Katie Brownson

Katie Brownson, USDA-Forest Service, will provide a quick summary of a GIT Funded Project Proposal related to stream restoration entitled, "Improving synergies between riparian forests and stream corridor restoration and sharing lessons learned to improve stream restoration design and placement." The Water Quality Goal Implementation Team selected this proposal as one of four possible projects to receive funding in the 2020 funding cycle.

Summary:

Growing concern among forestry workgroup members where new or mature forest buffers have been removed for stream restoration projects in order to get more credit/money. [Changes in] hydrological conditions can also cause unintended consequences for tree mortality. Urban stormwater, stream health, and wetlands workgroups are all participating in this project to address these problems. The key tasks of the project include to look at how forests are accounted for in numerous jurisdictions at multiple phases of stream restoration, quantify the impacts of stream restoration on forest buffers, and then preform a web-forum with practitioners and regulators to share key lessons learned.

Questions:

No discussion or questions

Data & Modeling

10:50 Next Steps: Non-Urban Stream Restoration (30 min)

Loretta Collins

On the May AgWG call Loretta Collins, UMD, summarized concerns related to tracking, reporting, and crediting non-urban stream restoration projects and solicited feedback from the AgWG on next steps to present to the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT). Loretta will provide a revised “Memo to the Water Quality GIT” based on comments received after the call.

Discussion/Questions:

Gary Felton: First thing we need is the discussion of an establishment of EPEG. Is there anyone that has discussion on that?

Gary Felton: No discussion? Is there an objection to approving the AgWG formal establishment of the EPEG? If there is no objection, I think we just approved it Loretta.

Decision: The AgWG approved the formation of an Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG) to address concerns that have arisen regarding non-urban stream restoration tracking, reporting, and crediting.

Loretta Collins: Does anyone have an opinion on timeline? Are there any comments or questions about the lose charge provided to the EPEG and what you think the time constraints on it should be?

Matt Kowalski: The only comment I have is not the timing but it would add a little bit of clarification if after it says “default removal rates, figure 3, lane 3” I think we should say either “recommend appropriate” or “provide appropriate”

Gary Felton: Whatever timeline we suggest to them (EPEG members), they (EPEG members) need to have input on it. Not a dictation to them but more so – here is what we would like, and can you do that?

Loretta Collins: I’m not hearing any fervent opinions about when this gets done.

Marel King: I am really struck by 80% of stream restoration reported is nonurban, it seems to imply that this is a pretty urgent matter. Not to mention that we have got a lot on agricultural implementation between now and 2025. This should rise up the urgency.

Loretta Collins: There are [USWG stream restoration] memos circulating that are in review by the partnership and are looking to get them approved and have recommendations implemented by the 2021 milestone. For us, advocating for the AgWG, this wasn’t really on our radar until the Prevented Sediment memo came [before the CBP partnership last fall] for approval, so we are playing catch-up of the potential ramifications for that. I certainly think it would be valuable to address the #1 task of the EPEG to ensure we are talking in the same language. This is extremely important especially if non-urban [projects] is the major driver. In the review process for the Prevented Sediment memo language was added that says this is only for *urban* stream restoration practices. If we are seeing that the majority of the [project] linear feet reported to the [CBP] office are non-urban – the question is are non-urban practices to follow the protocols that have been updated or are we looking at the 2013 report? Yes, I fully agree this is an urgent issue which is one of the reasons I got feedback saying, “When is this going to be done?”.

Marel King: Is the 2021 milestone our goal?

Loretta Collins: That is our goal, but it also depends what recommendations come back from the EPEG. I do not know where this group will end up. It is clear there are issues as far as how NRCS practices fit in to the CBP stream restoration definition we have now. They may need their own category, maybe that is a Chesapeake Bay Program Expert Panel, etc. I am just putting out possibilities. I don’t know what those are. I don’t know if all of the questions we have right now will be open and shut by this EPEGs recommendations or if some of the recommendations will need some more steps.

Marel King: My guess is that if it goes to a full expert panel, this won't be resolved by 2021. But it seems like whatever could be resolved by this EPEG in time for a 2021 milestone is good, so maybe we just backtrack from there as far as a timeline.

Loretta Collins: Jeff Sweeney- what is our deadline for having everything approved, is it Sept. 2021?

Jeff Sweeney: Yes

Loretta Collins: The Urban Stormwater WG is recommending protocol only submissions. No default rates for submission purposes. We need to clarify some of this because if we get to Sept. 2021 and the EPEG's recommendation is to have a deeper dive on the NRCS side on how to deal with some of this, we are going to get to 2021 and some of these non-urban practices will still need a default value in order to get the credit they have been getting. The way it's viewed, and I can understand why, is that they [non-urban] have had this default option for better or worse since 2013 and now there is a feeling that it is being taken away without a chance for the ag and non-urban folks to discuss it. Just so you all understand, and based on the feedback I received, there are different perspectives coming at this. There are the bean-counting and on-the-ground perspectives. Bean counters need to meet their WIP goals and they have had this tool in the tool-box which they have relied on for many years and its about to be taken away from them without any real discussion which is kind of why we are where we are. So, for the non-urban folks we cannot be in a situation where the default is taken away without due diligence which is what we are trying to do now. We have questions about whether the default rate will be available in 2021 and that is what we need to figure out.

Emily Dekar: My phone is having issues coming off of mute, from NY, we are currently using the default option for all of our non-urban stream restoration. I am a little bit unclear as to if that will still be usable for non-urban in the interim until we have an approved process for an updated default rate?

Gary Felton: As I read that question Loretta, "are we currently using the default option, will it be available?" That is what the 2013 memo says, my understanding is that it will be available until we make a statement that it is not available, and everyone agrees on the decision.

Bill Tharpe: Has USWG looked at projects that have been funded and credits go towards a MS-4 goals but were physically located in a non-urban land use?

Gary Felton: I don't know the answer to that, that may be something we have to put up to the USWG.

Loretta Collins: Is there anyone from PA that could comment on this?

Loretta Collins: We will hold onto that question.

Ruth Cassilly: I can speak to that a little bit, the MS-4 permit has expanded its border by one mile for projects one mile outside the MS-4 boundary to be counted on ag lands towards MS4 credits. That is currently the limit and there are on-going talks about the watershed permitting concept which may expand that further, but those talks are still preliminary between the DEP and Lancaster and York county.

Gary Felton: To understand that statement, they expanded the MS-4 boundary by about a mile is that state, local, or federal extension?

Ruth Cassilly: It is a state decision with DEP.

Loretta Collins: Timeline – does anyone have any strong opinion on this? We will have an official call for nominations for that EPEG leaving this meeting, deadline two weeks from now, follow up in the recap email – feel free to send feedback to me between now and the next meeting to put together a rough timeline for the EPEG members to review. It won't be a final say because we have a little bit of flexibility with the timeline since we are talking about non-urban projects. It sounds like we need to stew on a timeline a little bit longer but know that we have the 2021 timeline to think about.

Action: The AgWG is asked to send nominations for the EPEG to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net) by **COB Wednesday, July 8th**.

Marel King: Will you send out criteria for membership for this particular EPEG? It might skew a little bit more towards expertise that you would see on an expert panel itself so help us out there with the types of folks we should be boarding with.

Loretta Collins: Will do. We have another decision.

Gary Felton: Second question we had, AgWG is asked to approve language of the associated memo to the WQGIT regarding non-urban stream restoration and the summary of concerns. Is there any further discussion on the language in that memo?

Matt Kowalski: Two other small edits to offer: one is on page two about a third of the way down from the top, on item number 2 edit suggested: "can not be estimated" to "are not estimated" in order to have consistency. That and then at the bottom of issue #2 did you mean to say restorative practices. Is that intentional or did you mean to say restoration practices?

Loretta Collins: The reason I did that is because when I am only trying to say stream restoration with the definition the CBP currently has in regards to stream restoration because in the NRCS piece there is still some disagreement along where its projects fit in. They are definitely stream-related projects but may not be stream restoration depending on how the Chesapeake Bay Program defines it.

Matt Kowalski: That makes perfect sense, I just wanted to check if there was intention behind it. Sounds good.

Gary Felton: Is there anybody that objects to the wording of the memo as it sounds right now?

Marel King: Approved

Jeremy Hanson: Second

Gary Felton: We have got a motion and a second not discussion. Is there anybody that objects to the motion? Hearing a great deal of silence again we are going to move onward.

Decision: The AgWG approved the language, with discussed modifications, of the "[Memo to the Water Quality GIT Regarding Non-Urban Stream Restoration Best Management Practices](#)," a summary of concerns and proposed next steps.

Ann Swanson: I would suggest something for the expert panel, giving the statistics of 80% of stream restoration projects being in non-urban areas, it might be useful if Jeff or someone with access to the data simply offered the bottom-line tally based on the current WIP, what is the kind of nutrient/sediment reduction that you are banking on even before the expert panel? What I'm trying to do is illustrate the magnitude of how important this examination is. Because, as this goes to the Management Board and the PSC I think it's really important for them to understand how important this expert panel is in making sure that those values are correct.

Loretta Collins: The only clarification I want to make on that Ann is, right now we are just talking about Expert Panel Establishment Group because I know there are people on this call that are not in favor of an expert panel we are going to use the EPEG to see what the needs are.

Ann Swanson: Just within this group would that piece of information be helpful?

Loretta Collins: Yes

Gary Felton: Noted that is a useful piece of data. First, the amount of nutrients and the difference between urban and non-urban. Just because it's a non-urban doesn't mean it hasn't been counted so we would have to narrow some of that 80% down also. But I would like to ask Ann, that does not preclude us from establishment?

Ann Swanson: No, I think you are on a terrific trajectory.

Loretta Collins: I will give the WQGIT a quick update so that they know what we are doing. If they want to have a discussion at more length, we can set that up for next month. But for now, I will send them this update to let them know we are working on it.

Implementation/ Accounting & Reporting

11:37 Updates on Impacts of COVID-19 (25 min)

All

The current international health crisis is having impacts across every aspect of society. Time is allotted here to provide CBP partners the opportunity to share their recent experiences and what the short-term and potential long-term impacts of stay-at-home orders and critical response efforts will be on the agricultural community and conservation efforts. Below is a non-exhaustive list of possible areas of discourse:

- Technical Assistance Capacity
- Outreach and Education
- Health, Safety, Wellness
- Industry Impacts
- Ag Markets Outlook
- Federal and State Agencies
- Non-Governmental Organizations/ Non-Profits
- Tracking, Reporting, & Verification Challenges
- Adaptive Strategies

Gary Felton: Anyone from NY with comment?

Greg Albrecht: I think Amanda's report and the information I provided Loretta via e-mail are still relevant except by the numbers people are healthier and the weather is a lot better for crops. Crops are looking really good although, there is certainly economic uncertainty at all sectors across the farm and state levels.

Gary Felton: Anyone from PA have comment on updates?

Frank Snyder: Nothing really new to report since last, working to get essential assistance of PPE to our producers.

Gary Felton: Delaware comments?

Chris Brosh: Finishing up field response on the supply chain issues experienced with poultry producers. No major externalities there except financial, expecting the changes on the state budget to influence our WIP progress. Other than that, no major news to report.

Gary Felton: Maryland COVID-19 updates?

Bill Tharpe: Update on MDA agency – we are opening the state office to administrative staff with a whole list of restrictions while being in the office. Most of the conservation districts are starting to get back in the field to do planning and construction. The past couple of weeks verification has been able to get back into progress. Following the roadmap to re-opening the state from the governor.

Gary Felton: Thanks Bill, for next month I am going to ask that you and Jason [Keppler] chat a bit to tell us how your work is coming with partners on remote sensing verification.

Bill Tharpe: Okay, I can talk with him and see what updates we have regarding that.

Gary Felton: Virginia Comments?

Jeremey Daubert: We are currently in Phase 2, whole state is, expected to go to phase 3 in a week or two, what that means not 100% sure. Most places are open with limited capacity or appointment only. Soil and water offices are going on and doing visits. FSA is still closed but are meeting with people for CREP sign-ups in parking lots. Of course, there are budgetary concerns state-wide although no one fully knows how that will shake out. There is a hiring freeze statewide expected to be in place for a long time. Still doing farm visits and answering calls but all face-face meetings/programs has been cancelled through July.

In addition, in Virginia, our districts now have the authority to meet electronically which has been a significant help for monthly board action to ensure contract approvals, etc. Thanks!

Gary Felton: West Virginia comments on impacts

Cindy Shreve: Finally doing field visits although all conservation staff is still in telework mode. Sign up periods for cautionary practices are getting ready to open up. So, that's going to look a little bit different, rather than producers, being able to come into the offices, they're going to either have to submit via email or we have installed drop boxes as well. But that may cause confusion when doing applications. People doing field visits are still wearing PPE.

Kendall Tyree: To add to Virginia COVID impact, our SWCDs have throughout continued to provide technical assistance, further sign-ups, etc. often providing outreach by appointment. Our Soil & Water Board at the state level just allocated \$35 million to our districts for cost share in FY21 and provided grant agreements for technical assistance. While districts are certainly looking closely at budgets we are glad to see those state funds moving forward.

Gary Felton: Any one else that has some input? NGOs?

Kelly Shank (EPA): I've been sending our EPA COVID-19 updates to all of you. Two to highlight include the EPA provided some guidance on its website of two issues including:

- 1.) carcass management for non-diseased animals due to meat processing plants and closures. We have updated our website for guidance on this issue
- 2.) Due to the shortage of PPE for ag sector particularly for pesticide applicators some temporary guidance was submitted as appropriate alternatives which has been shared for the workgroup

11:45 **New Business & Announcements (10 min)**

- Consensus Recommendations to Improve Protocols 2 (Instream Denitrification) and 3 (Floodplain Reconnection) for Defining Stream Restoration Pollutant Removal Credits: Report [here](#). May 19 presentation to Urban Stormwater Workgroup (USWG) [here](#).
 - The USWG is seeking comments on **no later than June 19th**
- Law and governance in the Baltic Sea and the Chesapeake Bay ○ Surrounded by several states and objects to multilevel jurisdiction, the Baltic Sea and the Chesapeake Bay have a lot in common. During the seminar Law and governance in the Baltic Sea and the Chesapeake Bay researchers discussed how efficiently these areas are governed concerning serious environmental problems, and how effective the legal frameworks and the competent institutions are in dealing with these issues. Link to further information and recorded webinar [here](#).
- Verification Action Team

- The Management Board charged the WQGIT with convening an [Ad-Hoc action team](#) to address BMP credit duration and lifespan. This is in response to the [BMP Verification memo](#) the WQGIT sent to the Management Board in September 2019.
 - The AgWG will be kept in the know of how this proceeds as it will have an impact on Agricultural BMPs
- Animal Mortality Expert Panel Report- in process
 - Jeremy Daubert: The updated timeline for that has been impacted by COVID. Right now we are hoping to report in August and have feedback later that month so the approval process can begin. Just to note, as we go into that approval process due to the funding mechanisms we will need to make sure that anyone interested in this report review is and send back feedback in a timely manner because it needs to be done by the end of this calendar year. There will be less wiggle-room in terms of getting that whole process wrapped up. Reach out to me if you have any questions or interest in that panel. It really addresses routine mortality management so don't expect any updates with COVID.

Loretta Collins: There has been a lot of questions in the modeling input world on certain issues with nutrient management and the Ag Census, especially soybeans and how they are characterized in the model. We will be having some discussions about that in the next AgWG meeting.

Kelly Shank (EPA): Dave Graybill has been appointed to the EPA committee that consults on agriculture. Provides independent policy advice and recommendations to the EPA on the environment and agriculture. Had 33/150 applicants and Dave received Mid-Atlantic appointment. Having someone like Dave will be an asset to the EPA administration. Congratulations Dave!

12:00: Meeting Adjourned

Next Meeting:

Thursday, July 16th, 10AM-12PM: Conference Call

Call Participants

Loretta Collins, UMD
 Hilary Swartwood, CRC
 Whitney Ashead, CRC
 Gary Felton, UMD
 Clint Gill, DDA
 Chris Brosch, DDA
 Adam Lyon, MDA
 Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
 Greg Albrecht, NYS AGM
 Frank Schneider, PA DEP
 Cindy Shreve, WV DEP
 Seth Mullins, VA DCR

Marel King, CBC
Ann Swanson, CBC
Kelly Shenk, EPA
Emily Dekar, USC
Evin Fitzpatrick, County View Family Farms
Matt Kowalski, CBF
Dave Graybill, PA Farm Bureau & Dairy operator
Barry Frantz, NRCS
Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg Association
Jeremy Daubert, VT
Gurpal Toor, UMD
Kendall Tyree, Virginia SWCD
Bill Tharpe, MDA
Jeff Sweeney, EPA / CBPO
Jeremy Hanson, VT
Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC
Ruth Cassilly, UMCES / CBPO
Tyler Groh, PSU
Mark Dubin, UME / CBPO
Jason Keppler, MDA / WQGIT
Elliot Kellner, WVU
Katie Brownson, USFS (CBPO)
Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake
Virginia Morris, Sustainable Chesapeake
Lisa Wainger, UMCES
Dan Read, UMCES
Gary Flory, VA DEQ
Carlington Wallace, ICPRB
Ginna Morris
Ron Ohrel, Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association
Shalom Fadullon, NOAA CR Intern
Selaam Dollisso, EPA CPBO Intern