

MEETING MINUTES
April 16th, 2020
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
AgWG Conference Call

Workgroup Areas of Focus

Accounting & Reporting • Implementation • Innovation
Data & Modeling • CBP Assignments

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS AND DECISIONS

Decision: AgWG approved the February meeting minutes.

Action: The AgWG is asked to send feedback regarding next steps on addressing Non-Urban Stream Restoration issues to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net) by **COB Monday April 27, 2020.**

MEETING MINUTES

10:00 **Welcome, introductions, rollcall, review meeting minutes**

Workgroup Chair

- Rollcall of the governance body
- Rollcall of the meeting participants
- Approval of meeting minutes from the Feb 20th Face-to-Face Meeting
 - **Decision:** AgWG approved the February meeting minutes

Implementation & Innovation

10:05 **STAC Multi-functional Buffers Workshop (30 min)** Lara Fowler and Veronika Vazhnik

In November 2018, the Chesapeake Bay Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) hosted a workshop on multi-functional buffers. Lara Fowler, Penn State, STAC member and member of the leadership committee for [*How do we accelerate riparian buffer plantings across the Chesapeake Bay with the greatest economic, social and environmental impacts?*](#) will briefly describe the workshop and its findings. The workshop participants focused on the opportunities and limitations for implementing multi-functional buffers that meet more than just water quality concerns. They identified a number of potential paths forward.

Discussion

Saacke-Blunk discussed the control of the multi-functional buffers and was wondering if there was any comparison between normal forest buffers and multi-functional buffers. Herbstritt said she is working with PA to see if there is pasture or other ag land that is susceptible to drought that would be a good fit for multi-functional buffers. She then mentioned that for their buffers they are using native grasses and trees along streams. Herbstritt said that by implementing multi-functional buffers by profitable corn land they saw an increase in corn crop. If anyone has questions, please let the project leads know. Lara Fowler's email is: lbf10@psu.edu and she can forward questions to Veronika & Steph as well.

Data & Modeling

10:35 Non-Urban Stream Restoration (45 min.)

Loretta Collins

In December 2019, the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) approved [Recommendations for Improving the Application of the Stream Restoration Prevented Sediment Protocol](#)*, sponsored by the Urban Stormwater Workgroup (USWG). At the same time, the WQGIT requested that the Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG) convene an expert panel (EP) to evaluate USDA-NRCS stream restoration practices that do not fall within the qualifying conditions outlined by the USWG in both the recent *Prevented Sediment* report and the 2013 [Recommendations of the Expert Panel to Define Removal Rates for Individual Stream Restoration Projects](#) report. Concern was also raised regarding the recommendation in the *Prevented Sediment* report to discontinue use of default removal rates for TN, TP, and TSS that have used to credit projects reported under both the Urban & Non-Urban Stream Restoration BMP. Per AgWG request in January 2020, an ad hoc group of interested parties convened a phone conference to discuss and clarify concerns regarding the new USWG recommendations. Loretta Collins, UMD, will discuss the outcomes of the call and what the AgWG should address before the partnership-approved recommendations of the USWG are integrated into the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Model (CBWM) in July 2021. A decision will be sought from the AgWG on the May AgWG call regarding how to proceed in addressing the WQGIT's request and associated concerns.

*A webinar recording discussing the Prevented Sediment report can be found [here](#).

Discussion

Ken Staver asked what the scale of the loads for these practices? Dave Montali said that they are implementing non-urban stream restoration for its benefits to the watershed, but it's not make or break in WV WIPs and it's a fairly small number. Montali then said that for a path forward to focus on the prevented sediment part of this issue and make it into a per foot benefit and do statistical analyses for a default value. He said that over the years that they should use the protocol because that will get you a better value than the default.

Felton asked for clarification about data from states- is this significant data? Montali said for his state it's a no, but there have been some glitches from other states. Coleman said that this is fairly significant for NRCS and that they will be investing significant amounts in legacy sediment restoration. Barry Frantz said that there are a lot of projects that could be done but they aren't because they don't meet the stream restoration protocol. Collins said that there are a lot of practices going on out there that don't have a home and they need to find a home within the CBP suite of BMPs. Whitcomb said this is significant in PA and that a lot of documentation (going back 8 years) doesn't support this default rate. This means we need to explain how we got it and why we need it. Whitcomb then stated that the impression from the call several weeks ago is that there is better data to look at.

One of the other issues is that there are projects on the ground where they have measured these load reductions but for some reason, they are not getting reported. It all depends on what the AgWG wants to focus on moving forwards. Jill Whitcomb said NRCS is going to be giving a lot of funding into legacy sediment removal. Some of the things Whitcomb is confused about are:

- is the difference in the upland in the sediment reduction potential, but the practices are the same? However, the way they go about doing sediment reduction in urban and ag is similar.

PA would not support a full fledge BMP expert panel report. They would prefer the method used within the USWG for stream restoration memos as addendums to the original protocols. PA said that there is value to the second option of putting together an ad hoc team that would allow us to accomplish the goal without the extensive resources for an expert panel.

Staver said that to any extent that we can encourage people to adopt these practices we should be. He then stated that in terms of default rates, we have used them and had a conservative rate when you can't gather site specific data. Jill Whitcomb said there has been a significant amount of time put forth on those protocols in the USWG and that needs to be considered when moving forwards. The experts for urban stormwater were wholistic in their approach.

Montali made some clarifications that the reason they were concerned was the lack of site-specific monitoring. They have a general understanding that their projects meet the standards but no data. So, if they are doing comprehensive stream restoration but no bank armoring or monitoring there needs to be a default credit. If you look in that urban restoration group there was a default rate at some point. If there is data out there for site specific monitoring, then you could process that data and have another data source to say, “what are these protocol methods getting to get that conservative low-end number as a default number?” If we start talking about practices that don’t meet the minimum qualifications, then it will be hard to get approval without an expert panel.

Matt Kowalski asked about a default value and said one of the needs for a default value is data sensitivity and they can’t report site specific data back to the states and asked if that’s one of the key drivers. Montali said they were hoping they could get it tacked on through the NGO side of things to try and avoid having a WIP do things that don’t get credit. Frantze said that in NRCS they have privacy standards to keep them from sharing data, but they do not have that level of detail after it’s installed in terms of monitoring a protocol once it’s been installed. Kowalski said that with the amount of engineering that goes in ahead of time it would be easier to do a soil test in the beginning than to come up with a default rate after the fact. Collins said that in a perfect world they would sample for bulk density but that at a big project this is sometimes tricky. The big thing is how fast it washes away after you install it, so bulk density doesn’t solve all the problems. However bulk density is easier to collect than rate of erosion.

Kowalski said he was thinking in this situation that AgWG or ad hoc group experts would find a default with similar conditions that would qualify you to use the USWG rate. David Wood said that when they revisited it during this memo, they found there was too much variability to justify a linear foot default rate for stream restoration practices. What they provided was they left some of the default rates in the report for planning purposes. The difference is that now sediment delivery factors are being included in the phase 6 model. If you knew you were located in a certain type of soil you could hone it into a specific default for that project. Kowalski was suggesting, since there are so many similarities between these practices, to figure out a way to say these are similar enough that by default we will use the stream restoration conditions for a, b and c. Wood said that he wants to give a warning that there is not a lot of difference between implementation in these practices. Additionally, while there is a lot of support for stream restoration practices there are a lot of people who do not think these are beneficial. Felton said we do not have to make a decision today but that this discussion was helpful.

Action: The AgWG is asked to send feedback regarding next steps on addressing Non-Urban Stream Restoration issues to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net) by **COB Monday April 27, 2020.**

Implementation

11:20 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
- Structural BMPs (design and construction)
- Outreach and Education
- Health & Safety
- Ag Markets Outlook
- Federal and State Agencies
- Non-Governmental Organizations/ Non-Profits

Discussion

Frank Schneider said that in his position within Ag that he has spent very little time on Bay issues. In PA they are dealing with lack of capacity for milk (manure and feeding guidance). Jason and some of the other states will be receiving this guidance. Also dealing with meat processing plants shutting down due to COVID- 19. Whole flocks of chickens, turkeys etc. have been put down due to COVID- 19, so they have been working on providing guidance for mass mortality. Mushroom industry is down by 60% and not inputting the amount of manure they usually do. They are also forming guidance for where that extra manure will go.

Barry Frantz said nationwide they have been doing social distancing but still able to provide resources for people at NRCS. They have been doing a lot with phone and email. Still working with farmers for manure storage and erosion control. However, it is slowing down their ability to look at new practices. Farmers are lacking money to implement new practices and may, depending on finances, not be able to implement current projects. A lot of the farmers were having to dump milk, which means they aren't making money.

Adam Lyon said they have some personnel that are considered essential and are able to check on important projects. However, it's not good timing for cover crop program in terms of verifying those and checking. Their planners have just started using conservation desktop and using this time to get a good handle for a training opportunity and prepare for future BMPs. Lyon said Maryland is on budget and hiring freeze currently.

Jeremy Daubert said that Ag markets are down about 40%. None of the poultry plants have closed down in VA. From an extension standpoint, they are still chugging along, but they are concerned about budget cuts. Since everything is closed, that's a lot of income that the state is not getting.

Greg Albrecht said that in NY they are in a similar spot as PA, MD and VA. They are working on providing guidance to farmers in terms of essential and non-essential. For Cornell Cooperative extension they have issued guidance about using milk as fertilizer and guidance on reducing production in terms of feeding their herds. He recommended checking out the dairy page at Cornell with those resources, if anyone is interested.

Kendall Tyree said in VA, their SWCDs continue to meet where possible (holding parking lot meetings to provide for social distancing, keeping under the 10-person limit in place, etc.) They are hoping their FOIA laws will be relaxed by the General Assembly when they reconvene next week, allowing electronic meetings. Although their districts are open by appointment, staff are limiting access to the office and following guidelines like not sharing vehicles, etc. They have been able to continue conducting site visits and still move on their Ag and urban cost share program funds. They also expect budget cuts and have seen that in state government budget amendments for FY22. However, they do continue to have cost share and TA funds of roughly \$45 million for FY21. Kendall also learned a lot from today's meeting and thanked everyone for sharing.

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

- Wetland Expert Panel Report
- Animal Mortality Expert Panel Report
- [NRCS Conservation Practice Standards Revisions](#)
 - NRCS intends to issue a series of revised conservation practice standards in the National Handbook of Conservation Practices (NHCP). **The public comment period on revisions closes April 23, 2020.**

11:55 **Review of Action and Decision Items (5 min)**

Hilary Swartwood

Hilary Swartwood will review action and decision items from the meeting.

Decision: AgWG approved the February meeting minutes.

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12:00 **Adjourn Meeting**

Next Meeting:

Thursday, May 15th, 10AM-12PM: Conference Call

Call Participants

Hilary Swartwood, CRC
Loretta Collins, UMCES
Gary Felton, UMD
Clint Gill, DDA
Adam Lyon, MDA
Greg Albrecht, NYDESC
Amanda Barber, Cortland Co. SWCD District Manager
Frank Schneider, PA DEP
Jill Whitcomb, PA DEP
Cindy Shreve, WV Conservation Agency
Jerry Ours, WV DA
Matt Monroe, WV DA
Seth Mullins, VA DCR
Marel King, CBC
Kelly Shenk, EPA
Ken Staver, UMD
Jeff Hill, Lancaster County Conservation District
Matt Kowalski, CBF
Dave Graybill, PA Farm Bureau, Dairy Operator
Barry Frantz, USDA-NRCS
Paul Bredwell, U.S. Poultry & Egg Association
Jeremy Daubert, VT
Emily Dekar, USC
Kendall Tyree, VA SWCD
Ruth Cassilly, UMD
Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
Bill Tharpe, MDA
Alison Santoro, DNR
Ted Tesler, PA DEP
Sally Claggett, USFS-CBPO
Ron Ohrel, Mid-Atlantic Dairy Association
Steph Herbstritt, Penn State
Kristen Saacke- Blunk, Headwaters, LLC
Julie McGivern, MDA
Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake
Gary Flory, VA DEQ
Jason Keppler, MDA
Annabelle Harvey, CRC (STAC)
Tyler Groh, Penn State
David Wood, CSN
Dave Montali, WV DEP
Katie Walker, Chesapeake Conservancy
Gurpal Toor, UMD
Veronika Vazhnik, Penn State

Lara Fowler, Penn State
Jeremy Hanson, VT
Denise Coleman, USDA-NRCS
Matt Royer, Penn State
Margot Flynn, student
Meg Cole, CRC (STAC)
Julie Reichert-Nguyen, NOAA
Katie Brownson, USFS-CBPO
Mark Hoffman, CBC
Dean Hively, USGS
Carlington Wallace, ICPRB
Sarah Lane, MD DNR
Mark Dubin, UMD
Doug Austin, EPA-CBPO

DRAFT