

Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

Meeting Minutes

February 16, 2023

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Materials

Summary of Actions and Decisions

Decision: Approval of [minutes](#) from the January AgWG call.

Decision: The AgWG confirmed the new at-large members for the 2023-2025 term.

Action: Please contact Tom Butler (butler.thomas01@epa.gov) by COB Friday, March 10th with suggestions for membership of an Expert Panel Exploratory Group (EPEG) to review crediting estimates for the Soil and Water Conservation Plan BMP and determine if updates need to be made through an Expert Panel.

Minutes

10:00 **Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes** – Jeremy Daubert, AgWG Chair.

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants- *Please enter name and affiliation under "Participants" or in "Chat" box*
- **Decision:** Approval of [minutes](#) from the January AgWG call

CBP Assignments/Data & Modeling

10:05 **Agricultural Data Inputs (5 min)** - Tom Butler, EPA.

Tom provided an update on the Phase 7 Agricultural Modeling Team (AMT) and their [February](#) meeting.

10:10 **AgWG At-Large Membership Nominations: Confirmation of At-Large Members (15 min)** - Tom Butler, EPA.

Tom reviewed the results of the online ranking poll and asked for consensus approval of new at-large members for the 2023-2025 term.

Decision: The AgWG confirmed the new at-large members for the 2023-2025 term.

Accounting & Reporting

10:25 **BMP Expert Panel Process (20 min)** – Tom Butler, EPA.

At the January AgWG meeting, there were questions raised from the group about the potential to form an expert panel and/or expert panel exploratory group (EPEG). Tom reviewed what an expert panel is, the process to establish one and the time commitments and expectations required of the AgWG before, during, and after the panel.

Discussion

Mark Dubin: Members are recommended from the AgWG but don't need to be members from the AgWG. If they have expertise in the subject then they can be part of the EPEG.

Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): The EPEGs are also a great way to tap the national expertise on a particular practice for scoping.

Mark Dubin: Sometimes those members go on to be part of the actual Expert Panel too.

Ken Staver: Where does the request come from?

Jackie Pickford (in chat): Any member or interested party of the workgroup can raise a request to form an expert panel. But whether or not it actually comes to fruition depends on whether the voting membership approves it via consensus.

Seth Mullins (in chat): Is there one EPEG per possible EP, or an EPEG for all possible EPs?

Tom Butler: One EPEG per possible EP. But sometimes practices are grouped together for one BMP in the model.

Olivia Devereux (in chat): @Seth EPEGs are specific to the EP topic. That way people with the right expertise are put on the EPEG.

10:45 Crediting NRCS Soil & Water Conservation Plan Practices Expert Panel (30 min) – Tom Butler, EPA.

Tom presented on the merits of forming an EPEG to discuss updating crediting to certain agricultural BMPs. Some of these were referenced at the January AgWG meeting as being NRCS [Soil and Water Conservation Plans](#).

Discussion

Leon Tillman (in chat): @Tom did you state that there were NRCS staff consulted to determine the reduction efficiencies?

Mark Dubin: Yes. NRCS participated in developing those.

Olivia Devereux (in chat): @Leon, the NRCS person on the 2009 Con Plan BMP report was Tim Pilkowski NRCS (tim.pilkowski@md.usda.gov).

Kathy Boomer: There is an increasing interest in a broader range of ecosystem services beyond water quality benefits. Important questions for EP to consider if we want to more effectively engage producers in adopting these practices. Also, these practices tie into soil health. Should be talking about how these practices improve the sustainability of our food system.

Mark Dubin: We'd be following the current bmp protocols that the partnership has in place, so we'd be looking at alternate benefits aside from water quality as well.

Ken Staver: Is the main issue that these practices are lumped under this one BMP? Is it the accounting that is the issue?

Tom Butler: A little of both. This information is old and we'd like to update the efficiencies. In doing that, we can update the accounting framework and see if we can credit these individually.

Ken Staver: An efficiency for each one of those practices is unrealistic. There are a ton of practices under that BMP. That's a monumental undertaking.

Leon Tillman: This also stems from my initial proposal for an adjustment to the NEIEN appendix to crosswalk these practices. There are a lot of practices under SWCP but many of them are in draft status and do not get credit under that plan. It's actually a much smaller percentage of practices that would actually get the credit. Also that BMP category does not look at multiplicative practice effects, as Kathy noted earlier. This EPEG would allow for reevaluation if those efficiencies need to be changed or a recommendation for a new BMP category for those practices to be attributed to.

Alex Echols (in chat): There are also new practices that did not exist when the last assessment was done.

Elizabeth Hoffman: If we move forward with this, would you still have the ability to report composite SWCP BMP? or would you have to do individual practices?

Tom Butler: The EPEG would evaluate that as part of its scope.

Mark Dubin: Yes, that will have to be addressed by the EPEG. We'll look at how things are reported now, where the data is coming from, as well as look at what the opportunity is if this data was changed and what data would need to be available to the states. Also will be looking at how this might affect the model and the calibration period. Maybe this doesn't get implemented until Phase 7.

Leon Tillman: There are several jurisdictions that aren't able to report overall conservation planning through NRCS, as that data is not available anymore.

Action: Please contact Tom Butler (butler.thomas01@epa.gov) by COB Friday, March 10th with suggestions for membership of an Expert Panel Exploratory Group (EPEG) to review crediting estimates for the Soil and Water Conservation Plan BMP and determine if updates need to be made through an Expert Panel.

Innovation

11:15 Maryland Agriculture Climate Vulnerability Assessment (35 min) – Terry Nuwer, and Josh Bollinger, UMD.

Terry discussed a preparatory study which has been completed by the University of Maryland. This study is the first step in a series which will create a full assessment to address and mitigate the impact of climate change on Agriculture in Maryland.

Discussion

Mark Dubin (in chat): What is your timeline?

Josh Bollinger: The request for proposals was released last Fall. The deadline to submit was yesterday. We're reviewing what has been submitted right now.

Terry Nuwer: We will be awarding the grant by mid-March.

11:50 New Business & Announcements (5 min)

- **Cover crop BMP verification hybrid method**
 - Present AgWG approved [cover crop survey hybrid method](#) to WTWG for update to verification protocols (date pending).
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund**
 - Small Watershed Grants (SWG) Program, delivered in partnership with EPA and the CBP partnership, NFWF is soliciting proposals for projects within the Chesapeake Bay watershed that promote voluntary, community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse and vital habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams.
 - Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense Grants (WILD) Program, delivered in partnership with FWS, NFWF is soliciting proposals for projects that conserve, steward, and enhance fish and wildlife habitats and related conservation values in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.
 - Soliciting proposals until **Thursday, April 20, 2023.**
 - NFWF is holding an **informational webinar** for prospective applicants on **Friday, March 3, 2023.** Interested applicants must register in advance [here](#) in order to participate. NFWF will also record and post the webinar to the Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund [webpage](#) shortly after its conclusion.
- **Conservation Drainage Network Annual Meeting. April 4 - 6, 2023.** Hybrid.

- Theme: ADVANCING IMPLEMENTATION. The 2023 meeting is being designed differently than the previous spring meetings. Specifically, it focuses on substantially advancing implementation of conservation drainage. Not just how to better do conservation drainage, but how to get more of it done.
- [Meeting program](#) and [Website](#).
- **Registration:** Click [here](#).
- **Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR) Seeding Solutions Grant Opportunity** (LOI deadline - 3/6): <https://foundationfar.org/programs/seeding-solutions/>
- **Frank Schneider (in chat):** Just an FYI, HPAI has surfaced earlier than expected, as the migration has started. Pa is dealing with a few farms at this time. BIOSECURITY is IMPORTANT.

11:55 **Review of Action and Decision Items (10 min)**

12:00 **Adjourn**

Next Meeting:

Thursday, March 16th: 10AM-12PM, Call-in Zoom

Participants

Jackie Pickord, CRC
 Tom Butler, EPA
 Jeremy Daubert, VT
 Kathy Brasier, PSU
 Clint Gill, DE
 Elizabeth Hoffman, MD
 Greg Albrecht, NY
 Frank Schneider, PA
 Seth Mullins, VA
 Cindy Shreve, VA
 Adrienne Kotula, CBC
 Leon Tillman, NRCS
 Dave Graybill, Farm Bureau
 Ken Staver, UMD
 Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg
 RO Britt, Smithfield Foods
 Tyler Groh, PSU
 Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting
 Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal
 Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC
 Grant Gulibon, PA Farm Bureau
 Ruth Cassilly, UMD CBP

Scott Heidel PA DEP
 Cassie Davis, NYS DEC
 Matt Monroe - WV Dept of Agriculture
 Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
 Kathy Boomer, STAC/FFAR
 Josh Bollinger, Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology
 Alex Echols Campbell Foundation
 Mark Dubin, CBPO/UME
 Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake, NFWF Field Liaison
 Dave Montali, tetrach, WV, MWG
 Leah Martino, EPA R3
 Jenna Schueler, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
 Emily Dekar, USC
 Clare Gooch, DNREC
 Greg Sandi, MDE
 Jeff Hill, YCCD
 Jeremy Hanson, CRC/WQGIT
 Terry Nuwer, UMD
 Josh Bollinger, UMD

****Common Acronyms**

AgWG- [Agriculture Workgroup](#)
 AMT- [Agricultural Modeling Team](#) (Phase 7)
 BMP- Best Management Practice
 BMPVAHAT- [BMP Verification Ad Hoc Action Team](#)

CAST- [Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool](#) (user interface for the CBP Watershed Model)
CBP- [Chesapeake Bay Program](#)
CBPO- Chesapeake Bay Program Office (houses EPA, federal partners, and various contractors and grantees working towards CBP goals)
CBW- Chesapeake Bay Watershed
CRC- [Chesapeake Research Consortium](#)
DPF – Dairy Precision Feeding
EPA- [United States] Environmental Protection Agency
EPG – Expert Panel Exploratory Group
FWS – [United States] Fish and Wildlife Service
MUN – Milk Urea Nitrogen
NEIEN- National Environmental Information Exchange Network
NFWF- [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#)
PA DEP- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
PSC – [Principals’ Advisory Committee](#) (CBP)
PSU- Penn State University
STAC- [Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee](#)
SWG – Small Watershed Grants Program
TMDL- Total Maximum Daily Load
WILD - Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense Grants Program
WQGIT- [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)
WTWG- [Watershed Technical Workgroup](#)
UMD- University of Maryland
USDA-ARS- United States Department of Agriculture-*Agricultural Research Service*
USDA-NASS- United States Department of Agriculture-*National Agricultural Statistics Service* USDA-NRCS- United States Department of Agriculture-*Natural Resources Conservation Service*