

Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

Meeting Minutes

July 18th, 2024

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Meeting Materials

Summary of Actions and Decisions

Decision: The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the June AgWG meeting.

Action: Contact Alisha (alisha.mulkey@maryland.gov), Caroline (kleis.caroline@epa.gov), or Eric (hughes.eric@epa.gov) with questions/comments about the Agricultural Advisory Committee bylaws.

Decision: The AgWG approved the list of potential agroforestry EPEG members by consensus.

Action: Email Ashley Hullinger (ahullinger@pa.gov), Caroline (kleis.caroline@epa.gov), or Eric (hughes.eric@epa.gov), with any additional comments or feedback on the Phase 1 Methodology Development Plan for the PA DEP Remote Sensing BMP Verification Pilot Project.

Intro & Announcements

10:00 **Welcome, roll-call, review meeting minutes – 5 minutes**

Kathy Brasier, 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:** The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the June AgWG meeting.

Innovation

10:05 **Overview of proposed Agricultural Advisory Committee – 45 minutes (presentation and discussion)**

Alisha Mulkey, Maryland Department of Agriculture

Alisha provided an overview of the [draft Agricultural Advisory Committee \(AAC\) bylaws](#) written by the AAC Action Team, the work that went into forming the bylaws, and the next steps that will be taken after the AAC Action Team’s recommendations were approved by the PSC at their June meeting. Time was reserved for discussing how the AgWG may engage with the AAC, among other ideas.

Discussion

Jeremy Hanson: My question was primarily about the statement of need because, as you know, the advisory committees advise the partnership across the whole work and breadth of the partnership. The first two sentences are specifically water quality and nutrients based and, not to say I can’t imagine they would prioritize those topics, but they would be advising on other outcomes and goals of the partnership, correct? Is that expectation built in?

Alisha Mulkey: I think the Action Team thought from the lens by which advisory teams are engaged now, in terms of outcomes and certainly the agricultural sector, the most

communication relates to nutrient reductions, right? I think in Beyond 2025, how the outcomes may be evolved is still to be determined. So, the ways in which they liaison or the expertise that they're asked to kind of give feedback to, I think that's certainly part of the lane that they would be in. But we did focus on water quality, given that that's been the majority of the conversation to date about non-point-source reductions and the necessity of the sector to participate.

Jeremy Hanson: Right, and I think the word conservation, when it's used in other parts of the partnership, has different context and implications than the agriculture sector when we talk about conservation practices. So that's just a comment to keep in mind.

Alisha Mulkey: Thank you, Jeremy.

Ruth Cassilly: Each jurisdiction gets to appoint two members and you stressed that industry will be represented. I'm wondering is there going to be Farm Bureau participation in these nominations? Is there going to be outreach at this from the state level to the county level in terms of conservation districts nominees? What is the outreach plan for getting those membership recommendations at the state level?

Alisha Mulkey: That language is not embodied in this document. The discretion is obviously going to be for that senior level of agriculture within the respective state. So, whether that's a secretary or commissioner, they would be the appointing individual. How each state wants to decide how to solicit interest and or select amongst themselves, that conversation hasn't happened yet. As we get closer to a launch of the committee, I am certain that, in my case, Secretary Atticks would be having conversations with his peers on the process and the outreach. So that isn't defined here on what that expectation is, only that it is meant to be diverse and representative. So that expectation is there. The outreach plan was not discussed at this stage of the action team. The point about Farm Bureau, you'll see later in criteria, registered lobbyists are not eligible for the committee so if that were to bring in someone from certain positions in Farm Bureau who do have that role, that particular portion would not be eligible for membership.

Mark Dubin: I've heard a question that's been circulating around, so I thought I would share it and see if you had any thoughts on it. Of course, we have other advisory committees that have been in place for some time at the Bay Program partnership. I believe the appointees for that come from the Governor's office. So, I think the question I've heard out there is why this advisory committee is set up at secretary/commissioner level versus the governor's level on this?

Alisha Mulkey: I think the heart of the advisory team, in terms of the statement of need, is very much about the agricultural sector. I would assume that a governor would consult their respective ag leadership in their state if the appointment was there. We just went straight to thinking that would come from the expertise of whatever respective agency or organization is leading agriculture in the jurisdiction, so we did not talk about it being a governor appointee.

Cassie Davis (in chat): Just to clarify are producers included in the two voting members per jurisdiction?

Alisha Mulkey: Yes, that's what I mean by producer, farmer, full time, part time, those are the first priority of the action team to have represented at the advisory committee. Again, the leadership of the states will select their members, but we put it on paper as the first priority was that folks working in the field of agriculture on a daily basis, that's who we see as being really the audience we are hoping to have as voting members. It may not be two. Maybe they want to do say a soil conservation district staff and a producer, but it should be a producer heavy advisory committee according to this document.

Ken Staver: Following up on that, you're sort of talking about the membership, but each state gets to pick two and they have their objectives. So, you don't have a collective objective. You can state a collective objective, but each state is going to pick their two.

Alisha Mulkey: I mean that's the discretion of that secretary or commissioner but, again, assuming in the spirit of having formed the action team and this document here, that that was the intent of the action team. I guess we could circle back in a year to see if we achieved our goal.

Ken Staver: It seems to me like the overall objectives might be hard to meet with each state getting to just pick two.

Alisha Mulkey: If you go back to the letter that the agricultural leadership in the Bay Partnership sent to the PSC and Mr. Ortiz, as I recall it, it spoke about producers being represented in the collective conversation. So, I think the spirit of what even drove the creation of the action team is coming from leadership who are saying the customers we serve are not part of some of this decision chain and policymaking. You put a lot of expectations on them, but you're not hearing from them directly. There should be a mechanism for that. I'm going to assume that, giving the benefit of the doubt if that's what the secretaries stated, they're going to honor that in how the selection occurs for the advisory committee. We can circle back in a year and see if we achieved that goal, but that was how it was framed for sure.

Ken Staver: You know the whole line with the committees is, you sort of know what the outcome is after you form the membership, right? So that's a pretty important part of it.

Alisha Mulkey: Yeah, agreed.

Kathy Boomer (in chat): I might have missed this: Do you envision at-large members in addition to appointees? At-large members could help address Ken's concerns (if I understand).

Alisha Mulkey: I'll talk about that with the guest members. We had a couple iterations on what at-large, non-voting, ex-officio, would be. Where it landed was the voting membership who are the designees of their respective state or the District of Columbia, and then guest members. I'll speak to that in just a minute, Kathy, and hopefully clarify your question.

Dave Graybill: My comment is related to the charge. I served on a couple of farmer advisory committees, and I think a lot of times when you have a farmer-heavy committee, it should be centered around discussion and dialogue about the current issues that the Chesapeake Bay at-large is facing. The farmers might have some information about unintended consequences due to the decisions that you're going to make and those are the things that we want to know as a Chesapeake Bay Partnership. That's where I think the strong point of this type of committee would be. You have to be careful that you don't try to make an outcome happen, to Ken's point. You have to be careful because farmers will see through that very quickly and it's like, well, this is just a rubber stamp for what you want to have happen. So, you have to have plenty of folks that are able to do dialogue, but not in an activism type of way.

Alisha Mulkey: Thanks, Dave. I think there's a lot of that same sentiment, like I suggested, of creating policies or expectations to the ag sector at large but hearing directly from them on what are those influences and push-pull of being able to implement some of those things programmatically, financially, otherwise. I think that's very much at the heart of what this advisory committee would be. Certainly, they're also going to have to have some context of governance at the Bay Program, how decisions are made, understanding a little bit about some of the data exchanges and how some of that works. There will be guardrails, obviously, that

would kind of guide and influence presumably those agendas and conversations so it's fruitful for all levels and their time. If we're expecting a producer to give their time to a committee, there are other things they could be doing, so that's what we're also mindful of.

Dave Graybill: My comment is towards that charge. If you can define that charge a little bit better, because currently it's a little too nebulous for me looking at it.

Alisha Mulkey: Ok, I appreciate that.

Alex Echols (in chat): Where is this document available? Link?

Jeremy Hanson (in chat):

<https://d18lev1ok5leia.cloudfront.net/chesapeakebay/documents/Agriculture-Advisory-Committee-PSC-6.25.24.pdf>

Eric Hughes (in chat): Thank you, Jeremy. The document will also be linked on the July AgWG meeting page.

Mark Dubin: If there is a requested addendum, would that formal approval need to go back to one of the other management levels of the Bay Program partnership, such as the PSC, to fully approve those versus it happening only within the ag advisory committee?

Alisha Mulkey: The process would be the same as how it's outlined in the governance and management framework, which is why it's cited there. I don't know what that document says related to bylaw revisions. If that document says it has to go back to other sources versus it's the latitude of the advisory to do amongst themselves, it's whatever the Bay Program has already be established. I just don't know the answer, myself, as to what's written there on that particular topic.

Kathy Boomer: Alisha, thank you. Fantastic work and it's so exciting to see space being created at the table for the agricultural community to take part in advancing our Bay goals. In the spirit of the Beyond 2025 Committee, I'd like to take space to take a step back and, on one hand, absolutely necessary to have that voice, on the other hand, I wonder if others share concern that we're kind of embracing that responsibility to reduce nutrients by 80%. What I mean by that is, 50-60% of that load comes from agriculture. The additional responsibility is as much because agriculture represents the most effective place to get practices on the ground to achieve our goals, due to cost and because it is easier. My concern when I think about actually achieving our bay restoration goals, is the lack of focus on development and recognizing that development is having an increasing impact on our waterways and our ecosystems. I'm empowered to share this concern coming out of the opportunity I had to attend the Virginia Tribal Nations Green Sustainability Conference where they talked a lot about agriculture and aquaculture and they're having diminishing influence on managing their lands and waters because of the data centers being built and having an increasing influence on water supplies and watershed conditions. I just share that as an example of, especially as we're going through this process of thinking about how best to organize the Bay Program and our work together, should it be a sector advisory committee instead of an agricultural advisory committee, for example? Thank you for the time and the opportunity to reflect concerns out loud with that group.

Alisha Mulkey: Thanks, Kathy, I'm not sure if I get the distinction of a sector versus an ag advisory. Maybe just clarify that one with me.

Kathy Boomer: Agriculture sector, versus development sector, and then there's the fisheries sector. Those are kind of the three sectors that we think about in the Bay Program. So here we're proposing to have an ag sector which elevates agriculture, but diminishes or maybe, from the

outside, seems to give agriculture kind of an outspoken place. Internally we should have concerns because it feeds this continued momentum to put more and more responsibility on the ag sector without recognizing the impacts and the urgency to also bring development to the conversation.

Alisha Mulkey: I won't speak for the roles of other sectors in terms of advisory. I think the concern is not unwarranted in terms of the ag sector, and I can speak for Maryland's ag sector in this space of they do feel consistent pressure. Maryland is a state where there are a lot of additional goals beyond our Bay goals for renewable energies and climate, so the idea that there's an ever-increasing competition for the same footprint. Whether that's residential development, solar panels, any other number of things, that's very much on the forefront of conversations that we hear when the secretary is engaging and how does the state begin to think about prioritizing because we're not gaining farmland. I do think once this advisory committee is formed, some of the idea of what's feasible for any small farm business versus the community and sector at large relative to expectations of what other sectors can or should contribute, I'm certain that will come up. How we organize those comments and kind of create accountability, I'll leave for someone else. But the producers I knew were not shy.

Kathy Boomer: I'm not advocating to lessen our responsibility, which is often what I am accused of when I share this concern. I'm recognizing that the work that this community can do and the terrific opportunities that we have to help advance all of our collective goals but, again, just sharing a concern that this needs to be broader than just the ag sector.

Kathy Brasier: Thank you, Kathy. I do have one quick question, Alisha, and I don't know if you can answer this, but the phrase "high level policy discussions" has kind of stuck out to me from the charge. Are there examples or ways of thinking about that that would help flush it out a little bit more?

Alisha Mulkey: Words like that both in the statement of need and charge were iterated on multiple times within the group, and I would welcome Marel and Clint to add to this. Being very clear that an advisory committee is an advisory committee, not there to set direct influence policy. We were thinking water quality goals. That's certainly not the only outcome at play, but that's creating policies that the Bay Programs are encouraging, that states are then adopting and kind of carrying it down. The idea that the producers themselves, would be the audience to adopt some of those programs, financial assistance, what have you, those incentives that may come along with some of those conservation practices, again, creating that feedback loop. The states are led in many ways by the direction of the Bay Program as to kind of expectations for meeting these goals, then that trickle down is happening. So, the idea that we would have that kind of liaisoning and conversation at a higher level so that those empowered to be decision makers at the Bay Program may understand more fully the pros, cons, and even unintended consequences of the policies they are setting, that is what was intended. We didn't get into examples of specific policies in conversation with the action team, but Marel or Clint, do you want to add any clarity? They participated in the meetings extensively as well.

Marel King: Nothing really to add. Agreed that that's more about a policy level conversation than the more technical in the weeds conversations that we have at this ag workgroup level, for instance.

Kathy Brasier: So maybe a follow-up to that is, do you envision a way, or a need even, for interaction between the workgroup and the advisory committee?

Alisha Mulkey: I do think there will be, and it's called out to make sure that they are distinct scopes, and then there is the intention of that leadership level to have that cross communication. Presumably the secretaries are also designating staff like me and Elizabeth who sit on work groups like this and the Ag Modeling Team. So, there's an opportunity to come up and down with that conversation, right? Again, and if there's expertise for technical level expertise like Marel is suggesting, that could be in that guest membership role. So, trying to define the lanes, but understanding that sometimes the two are going to need to talk and collaborate to make sure we're staying moving in that forward direction.

Marel King: I think it's integral to the work because it's important for the advisory committee to understand what's going on within the Bay Program and, obviously, the work of the workgroup and GITs, and all the relevant other pieces of the Bay Program are part of what they need to understand and advise about. There's going to be at least four meetings a year. Those agendas need to be created and presented, so absolutely certain that there will be opportunities for collaboration.

Clint Gill: I expect to be attending all these meetings and we might have an agenda on an AgWG after these meetings and just update with whatever progresses come.

Jeremy Hanson: I just wanted to follow up on Clint and Marel's comments and say that the coordinators, they still have to have the budget discussions and discussions on how this would get set up. Assuming it looks something like the other committees, Eric and I and the other coordinators we do have infrastructure that's kind of not seen. We have our own internal meetings and know each other so there's coordination that will occur just naturally, the way it already does between the goal teams and coordinators of the advisory committees.

Jim Riddell (in chat): Is it 4 or 2 year terms?

Eric Hughes (in chat): Jim- according to Sec 4d, voting members have a term of 4 years. Leadership terms are 2 years (sec 3b).

Kathy Brasier: I want to do a quick pulse check from the working group members if there are concerns or issues that you would like addressed. Alisha, are you the main point of contact?

Alisha Mulkey: I can certainly provide any comments up to Secretary Atticks. He'll be leading the charge until the advisory committee is formally established, but I can certainly make sure any of that is provided to him and then back to the action team as needed.

Kathy Brasier: As a workgroup, are there any actions that we want to take collectively? I envisioned that this conversation is somewhat of a consultation process, and do we want any collective feedback to the group? Any comments? Or is this something that you prefer to do individually through your jurisdictions or directly to Alisha?

Ken Staver: So, the 2025 deadline is going to come and go and, in the context of why we didn't meet the 2025 goal and how we're going to ever meet some goal, is this in some response to that shortfall? Is this going to provide something that we didn't have to get to 2025 that is going to help us in the future? I'm still trying to figure out just at the higher level, what the point of this group is. It sounds good, but I'm thinking what is it that we need that we don't have, that this group is going to provide, or maybe the group isn't about that. The origin of the letter was we sort of need a group that looks out for our interests involved in the discussion. So, I guess I am looking for that- where this fits into ever meeting the restoration goal. What's the point? What is it that this group is going to do that's going to help us meet the goal?

Alisha Mulkey: I would say the function will be consistent with the other advisory committees, right? Again, the impetus of the secretaries and the action team is a direct conversation with producers at levels of decision-making in the Bay partnership. I think that is lacking. It has been the consensus of the secretaries and those on the action team, so creating that.

Ken Staver: When we struggle with these data gaps and we have these questions, we get hindered. We are hamstrung all the time about information we don't have. We're trying to move forward, and the modelers are trying to do stuff, but they're working off information that's of shaky quality, estimates based on NASS, and everybody saying it's not this and it's not that. Do you see this group helping solve any of those problems we have down here in the weeds, or not?

Alisha Mulkey: I wouldn't see the advisory committee getting into the level of detail like we would discuss in the Ag Modeling Team. Certainly an understanding of some of the work and the existence of some of those efforts, that's going to be critical. But take the example of an Ag Modeling Team and earlier iterations during Phase 5 and Phase 6, there have been concerns that producers aren't filling out surveys or not responding to the NASS Census request. This is a body in my mind that we analyze the data and interpret what it may say for purposes of the model, creating an understanding in the broader ag community of the value of those data sets, like why it's important to have those and to be thoughtful about completing those, I could see the advisory committee serving in that way. Talking about how the data is used in the model, I think that's a different lane, but creating greater awareness of those tools and the value of those data so that those of us on the receiving end who rely on that as a data set, I could see that being a great opportunity to collaborate more fully.

Ken Staver: That's where I was kind of hoping you might go with that.

Alisha Mulkey: I don't see them being asked about algorithms for animal numbers, right? Double exponential smoothing will not be on an agenda.

Ken Staver: Right, but if they understand that. The models and this kind of stuff we work on is only as good as the information we can get, and the community plays a big role in the kind of information we can get. So that's a spot where I could see a contribution.

Dave Graybill (in chat): Farmer advisory will add the economic impacts to the rural community, because ag is the economic driver in our rural areas.

Marel King: I think Alisha nailed it there, but I just want to call out under the criteria for membership that one of the items is will regularly update their agricultural network on the goals and progress. So, this is really a two-way communication street here. So yes, we're soliciting advice from the agriculture community, but also with the hope that they will take back to their community and their network the what's and the why's of what we do within the Bay Program as well, and why data sharing is important, how these goals come to be, etc. etc. What you're in on, you are not down on, as several people in my line of work like to say.

Jim Riddell: The 2025 and Beyond draft recommended efficiency and perhaps some consolidation as it reads. Is this a direct effort of some of this, or parallel with it? Specifically, are there committees or things that might be discontinued as a result of this?

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): The Beyond 2025 Committee is assigned to that ask, correct?

Alisha Mulkey: The letter that initiated consideration of the committee and the Ag Action Team predated the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee, so this isn't a result of that. Certainly efforts are running parallel, so I wouldn't say they are tied in that way. If the question is about consolidating outcomes, I don't know if this advisory would be consulted on that. I presume it would be like

any other advisory committee as to how their feedback goes into what a future 2025 looks like. That would be, in terms of the number of goals, I feel like it is going to be consistent with how other advisory committees are engaged. I have not heard from the Steering Committee on that expectation.

Jim Riddell: I wasn't specifically talking about outcomes of consolidation, but I guess input or committee work and the number of committees, is this part of an effort to streamline and increase efficiency of the Chesapeake Bay Program. Are there some groups and committees that should be discontinued?

Kathy Brasier: I'm going to suggest, Jim, that that question be held a bit because I think that will come out of our conversation about Beyond 2025.

Action: Contact Alisha (alisha.mulkey@maryland.gov), Caroline (kleis.caroline@epa.gov), or Eric (hughes.eric@epa.gov) with questions/comments about the Agricultural Advisory Committee bylaws.

10:50 Beyond 2025 updates: draft Steering Committee report and opportunity for public feedback – 50 minutes (presentation and discussion)

KC Filippino, Hampton Roads Planning District Commission

KC, the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) representative on the Beyond 2025 Steering Committee, provided an overview of the [Beyond 2025 Draft Steering Committee Report](#) recently released for public feedback. We discussed the relevance of this report and the Beyond 2025 effort to the AgWG and considered whether our group would like to provide collective feedback to the Steering Committee during the public feedback period. Ruth Cassilly, UMD/CBPO, also gave an overview of the [Beyond 2025 Climate Small Group Recommendation #5](#), offering reference materials and additional resources to the group.

Discussion

Jeremy Hanson (in chat): KC has been a fabulous rep for the WQGIT on the steering committee. great overview. thank you, KC!

Kathy Boomer: Ruth, thanks for that fantastic overview and I really enjoyed working with you on the Beyond 2025 Committee. One of the exciting discussions that we had in this work was the need to recognize that a healthy Bay system means having a healthy agroecosystem and also the importance of soil health, not only to ensuring a healthy agroecosystem, but to achieving the broader goals of the Bay Program. So just taking the opportunity to underscore those powerful and important messages. The other comment is a concern that keeps me up at night and that is, we tend to overlook the importance of water management both in terms of irrigation and conservation drainage, and the impacts that those management practices have across all of our Bay Ecosystem goals. So every chance I get, I beat the drum to elevate the need to look more closely at precision irrigation, conservation drainage, including infield, edge of field, edge of stream practices as a way to not only manage soil health, water quality, but also vulnerability to climate events and we have to start focusing more on that toolbox that I would bet place an outsized role on the productivity and impacts of agriculture.

Ruth Cassilly: Thank you, Kathy, for bringing those points up. I know you and I have had discussions a lot about the water management aspect. I think and I'm hoping that that conversation will be a part of Phase Two, the how, and we'll have stakeholders continue to bring that into the

conversation. It is very important especially in light of climate change and dealing with extremes and being able to manage getting too much water and then long periods of none, like we just experienced in Maryland. So, I know it is a very important part of the conversation. Thanks, also, for raising soil health. We did mention making soil health a possible outcome of one of our main outcomes looking forward beyond 2025 because it's a cross-sector outcome that would also help the urbanized landscape, emphasizing soil health with lawns and gardens and those types of things. That soil health component was highly recommended by everyone in the group from multiple aspects and multiple sectors. It's an important thing to keep emphasizing.

Ken Staver: One thing that struck me about all this is it seems like it all should be put in the context of why we aren't going to meet the 2025 goal. Somebody told me there was a document coming out, a couple people did, that's going to basically quantify where the shortfalls were. We had a plan that supposedly was going to get us there, so what happened? It seems to me like it's a little premature. We really should identify where we came up short before we start talking about what we do next. Is such a document in the works, or is that something that somebody didn't understand when they told me such a thing was coming?

Ruth Cassilly: I don't know, maybe they were referring to the CESR report. I don't know if anyone else has heard of such a document. I have not.

Ken Staver: Specifically for us in Ag, we had the WIPs, but did we just not get the stuff done?

Ruth Cassilly: I'm going to go out on a ledge and say we've had a huge effect by implementing our BMP practices and our conservation efforts since we started this, in the face of ever-intensifying agricultural production. So, we can't lose sight of that because we've increased our yields vastly and increased our animal production numbers vastly and, in spite of that, agriculture continues to have decreasing load. I know you are probably right we need to get a better in-depth analysis of that, but I don't think we can say we have not made progress and that what we've been doing hasn't been working.

Ken Staver: I'm with you on all that part. I'm just saying that if we are talking about formalizing a strategy and a path forward after 2025, it seems like the first thing to do is really break down why we didn't meet the 2025 goal.

Ruth Cassilly: Thanks, Ken. I do appreciate the comments.

Elizabeth Hoffman: Another layer I wanted to add to Ken's comment is I think we should be careful when we say "the 2025 goal" because that's where we get a little bit of crossed wires. Not achieving a TMDL does not mean we've not made progress, like Ruth said, in implementation towards our WIP commitments and that larger plan. The system that we're operating within is changing. We're developing, our population grows, climate change conditions are affecting things, the impact of BMPs doesn't get us quite as far as we thought. That's kind of the purpose of having this Beyond conversation. It's all outcomes, all progress, habitat, water quality is just one of those things. I think that's something we should be thoughtful of when we have these conversations moving forward. The media, anyone, has a tendency to say we aren't going to reach our goal, but there's not a singular goal and there has been progress made. I think that's hard because sometimes we only harp on the things that haven't worked, and I understand that. But, just wanted to add that layer to things that there's not a single 2025 goal.

Ken Staver: I think in the Ag part, we have been given a load of nutrients to reduce- there's numbers. I'm totally with you on all this stuff about Ag's change...you talked about soil health, and we ought to be talking about it in urban areas. Well, maybe when we talk about soil health, the first thing we ought to lead with is if you make an impervious surface, it's pretty bad for soil health

and I think we're losing 10,000 acres a year to impervious surface. I'm never going to pass up a chance to mention that when you say soil health, priority number one is don't turn it into asphalt. We have these numeric goals with nutrients and that's sort of what I concentrate on. We need to basically say we had a WIP that was supposed to make it and we didn't make it, what practices that we thought were going to do it didn't get it done? There's a certain class of practice where we got it all done. We met the goal. There's another class of practice where we couldn't meet the goal. Why didn't we meet the goal? A lot of success is down to small level now solving these implementation challenges. Are there practices that don't work? They're very precise questions and answers relative to why we didn't meet the 2025 goal. I just feel like we need that before we go on, at least in the Ag side. The report card now for the Chesapeake Bay has a social/economic factor in it in the watershed. It's like, ok, that's all good, but we're working on water quality and nutrient reduction goals. That's the primary thing for the AgWG is nutrient reduction goals. So, I think we ought to really nail those things down in a way that's really crystal clear what we're trying to do.

Jim Riddell: Yeah, I think it is important that we recognize misstatements when we make them and the discussion we just had took little information about livestock, yields, everything was increased and, in our state in Virginia, we've lost 5,000 farms in the last five years. Livestock numbers have really gone down. Yields are not what they were. So, when we roll through this, we need to recognize that the metrics are not the same. Just what Ken said, land use has changed. There's a whole lot of different information out there that we're not necessarily picking up, that gets left on the table because it's old information. I think it's part of this process with Beyond 2025. We must have accurate, transparent information of the current status of where we are. Let's make sure that we represent the information accurately, and carefully, and not misrepresented.

Ruth Cassilly: Thanks, Jim. When I said increasing yields in animal production numbers, I know they've gone up and down in various places, but overall, watershed-wide, they've increased. I guess that goes back to that nutrient imbalance that we were speaking to that we need to deal with. Some areas have increased tremendously, and other areas have decreased, and how can we balance out those issues.

Elizabeth Hoffman: I do agree with Ken, and I do support the questions he's asking. I think the prime example is the one statement he said of how did we miss the mark? For Maryland agriculture, we are well on track to meet the full implementation of our WIP plan and the thing that is challenging to communicate is that, if we fully achieve all our WIP goals that we set out to do in 2017, 2018, the model is now going to say that we are 3 million pounds of added nitrogen away. So, the same plan that we put in place is now at the commitment level, the implementation of acreage and BMPs, is not achieving the same in the eyes of the model from a load reduction. Again, that is a sticking point of when we start to ask the question of how we missed the mark. I think some of that's being explored in the Ag Modeling Team. I think some of it's being explored by inputs to the model. Fertilizer, is that the best data source? Where I struggle sometimes is like who is responsible for exploring and answering those questions? It's a tricky thing to kind of broadly say we're not meeting our goals because for implementation of practices in Maryland for agriculture, we are meeting our goals, and we aren't seeing results. That's a question bigger than just our state, just our sector. So, I just want to add that level of where we struggle with addressing how to move forward without sometimes having a grasp on what tools will be adjusted, what tools would be newly added to the toolbox. Some of this is all happening in parallel, but I think it's hard to start with that big and not get into all the parallel elements that are trying to fix that and address

some of this at the same time. That's just something that I struggle with when we broadly say we're not meeting goals, because in some ways we are.

Ken Staver: I think it's very important to say what you just said, quantify that, and say look, we checked every box on implementation that was supposed to meet the goal, but this is the reason why, on paper, we're not making it. This is the factor in the model that's creating this situation, so let's take a really close look at that factor, right?

Elizabeth Hoffman: I'm not disagreeing with that. I'm just saying, I think that's what some of these teams are doing. Sometimes, when the question is asked, there's this need for an instant response and some of this is just going to take time, but I don't feel like it means we abandon everything that has worked to this point. What I've struggled with is the language of how we say things. Not meeting "the 25 goal" doesn't sit well sometimes, to dismiss the work that's been done.

Ken Staver: But, I mean, that's the headline we're dealing with, right? In the ag sector especially, that's the headline we've got to deal with. That's the way I feel like, too.

Kathy Boomer (in chat): I won't say that it's the most comprehensive/inclusive resource, but the CESR report highlights some important reasons why we haven't achieved our targets. These include the need for a more nuanced approach to placing practices and predicting outcomes; and, also, a need to focus on our tributaries (in addition to tying our water quality goals to the Bay's main stem).

Accounting & Reporting

11:40 Agroforestry BMP Expert Panel Establishment Group – 10 minutes (discussion and vote)

Eric Hughes, AgWG Coordinator

Eric briefly reviewed the proposed membership of the Agroforestry Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG), as discussed at recent AgWG meetings and shared directly with AgWG members on 7/8/24.

AgWG Voting Item:

The group was asked to vote to approve the list of potential agroforestry EPEG members.

Discussion

Ken Staver: At the end of the day, what you end up with are coefficients to go in the model for crediting a BMP. My only comment is about the water quality side, the technical side of coming up with coefficients, that's the real challenge is figuring out how these things work for nutrients. It's not anything to keep me from voting for this group, it's just a comment that you don't seem to have the expertise there that's going to deal with nutrient transport issues related to this practice.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): This is just the group to decide if we need an EP. The EP would provide that expertise.

Eric Hughes: I appreciate that, Ken. This is just the group to decide whether an expert panel is warranted. If we were to decide to move forward with an expert panel, membership would look different. We would have folks with that level of expertise to get to what you are flagging there for us. So that's a good point, but I would say that's to come if that's ultimately the direction in which we decide to move.

Ken Staver: Totally acceptable answer, thank you.

Ruth Cassilly: Not to play devil's advocate, but I do want to point out that another purpose of this group is to determine if these BMPs are similar enough to existing BMPs that they may be credited under some of our existing BMPs or a combination thereof. So, in that case, we wouldn't be establishing any efficiencies or additional reductions. We would be crediting them by crosswalking them to an existing BMP, so that is a possible outcome of this group.

Scott Heidel (in chat): Excellent point, Ruth! Thank you.

Ken Staver: But the first group or the second group of this group?

Ruth Cassilly: It would of course be a recommendation that would have to be decided on and voted on, but one thing that this group could recommend is that these practices be credited under existing Bay Program approved BMPs.

Ken Staver: I didn't know that was a possible outcome of this group, so that's good to know.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): To Ken, I am certainly not an agroforestry expert but represent Maryland's interest in this group existing given our state's climate goals and advancement of WQ goals. I would not advance to the EP, for example, just supporting the CBP process.

Decision: The AgWG approved the list of potential agroforestry EPEG members by consensus.

Data & Modeling

11:50 **PA DEP Remote Sensing BMP Verification Pilot Project: updates and MDP discussion – 10 minutes (discussion)**

Tom Howard, Resolve Hydro; Ashley Hullinger & Scott Heidel, PA DEP

The [Phase 1 Methodology Development Plan \(MDP\)](#) for PA DEP's BMP verification pilot project was released for feedback on 7/10/24. The DEP/Resolve Hydro team dedicated time to addressing questions or comments from the group on the MDP.

Action: Email Ashley Hullinger (ahullinger@pa.gov), Caroline (kleis.caroline@epa.gov), and Eric (hughes.eric@epa.gov), with any additional comments or feedback on the Phase 1 Methodology Development Plan for the PA DEP Remote Sensing BMP Verification Pilot Project.

Wrap-up

12:00 **New Business, Announcements & Updates**

- **Agricultural Modeling Team**
 - Brief verbal update on the group's latest activities.
- **Beyond 2025 - Public Comment Period Now Open**
 - At its 2022 annual meeting, the Chesapeake Executive Council charged its Principals' Staff Committee to review progress toward achieving the 10 goals and 31 outcomes of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement and make recommendations for the future of the partnership. The Chesapeake Bay Program partnership formed a Steering Committee to review, discuss and determine recommendations for Management Board and Principals' Staff Committee consideration. These recommendations are included in the [draft Beyond 2025 Report](#), which is open for public comment.

- The public comment window is July 1 – August 30, 2024. For instructions on the process for submitting comments, please refer to this [FAQ sheet](#). All comments must be submitted to comments@chesapeakebay.net in order to be considered.
- **Agriculture Advisory Committee**
 - At the June 25th Principals’ Staff Committee (PSC) meeting, the Agricultural Advisory Committee (AAC) Action Team presented a [draft bylaws document](#) with three recommendations related to the establishment of an AAC.
 - The PSC concurs with Ag Action Team’s three recommendations: 1) establish a CBP AAC; 2) finalize bylaws that establish the procedures and membership of the AAC; and 3) convene a meeting with EPA Regional Administrator Ortiz to explore budgets and funding to financially support the AAC.
 - Action: The PSC directs the Ag Action Team to develop an Executive Council Directive that formally establishes the AAC. The Directive will be reviewed and discussed by the PSC at its September 17 meeting and will be brought up for approval at the PSC’s October 25 meeting with final adoption by the Executive Council at its December meeting.
- **Other Announcements?**
 - Send to Caroline Kleis (Kleis.Caroline@epa.gov) for inclusion in “Recap” email.

12:00 **Review of Action and Decision Items; Adjourn**

Next Meeting: September 19, 2024 from 10 AM-12:00 PM

Participants

Eric Hughes, EPA
Caroline Kleis, CRC
Kathy Brasier, PSU
Kendrick Flowers, NRCS
Emma Chaplin, AEC Intern
Emily Dekar, USC
Caitlin Grady, GWU
Suzanne Trevena, EPA
Dave Graybill, Farm Bureau
Seth Mullins, DCR
Virginia Hogsten, EPA
Alex Echols, The Campbell Foundation
Tyler Groh, PSU
Tom Butler, EPA
Cindy Shreve, WV
Tyler Trostle, PA DEP
Grant Gulibon
Cassandra Davis, NY DEC

Emily Heller, EPA/CBPO
Mark Dubin, UME/CBPO
Mark Nardi, USGS
Matt Kowalski, CBF
Clint Gill, DDA
Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Jeremy Hanson, CRC
Caroline Harper, The Campbell Foundation
KC Filippino, HRPDC
Kathy Boomer, FFAR/STAC
Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal
Jim Riddell, VA Cattlemen Association
Auston Smith, EPA
Cliff Williamson, VA Agribusiness Council
Arianna Johns, VA DEQ
Alisha Mulkey, MD
Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
Ruth Cassilly, UMD/CBPO

Doug Austin, EPA/CBPO
Scott Heidel, PA DEP
Ken Staver, UMD Wye
Jenna Schueler, CBF
Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
Matt Royer, PSU
Marel King, CBC
John Clune, USGS
Kate Bresaw, PA DEP

Amanda Barber, NY
Bo Williams, EPA
Katherine Brownson, FS, MD
Patrick Thompson
Tom Howard, Resolve Hydro LLC
Jackie Pickford, USGS
Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg

Acronym List

AgWG- [Agriculture Workgroup](#)
AMT- [Agricultural Modeling Team](#) (Phase 7)
BMP – Best Management Practice
CAST- [Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool](#) (user interface for the CBP Watershed Model)
CBP- [Chesapeake Bay Program](#)
CBPO- Chesapeake Bay Program Office
CBW-Chesapeake Bay Watershed
CTIC – Conservation Technology Information Center
CVN – Conservation Validation Network
EPA - [United States] Environmental Protection Agency
FSA – Farm Service Agency
MLRI – Modeled Load Reduction Indicator
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
NFWF – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
ORISE – Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education
PADEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
PSC – [Principals' Advisory Committee](#) (CBP)
PSU- Penn State University
SWCD – Soil and Water Conservation Districts
WQGIT- [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)
UMD - University of Maryland
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
USGS – United States Geological Survey
USFS – United States Forestry Service