Agriculture Workgroup Meeting Minutes

October 16, 2025
10:00am – 12:00pm

Visit the meeting webpage for meeting materials and additional information.

Purpose: To focus on the poultry industry, highlighting trends facing the sector on the Delmarva Peninsula and beyond, and opportunities for partnership-based strategies to accelerate progress toward Bay restoration goals.

Summary of Actions and Decisions

Decision: The AgWG approved the minutes from the September AgWG meeting.
Action: Eric Hughes, EPA, will follow-up on a request made by Dave Graybill, AgWG member, to look more closely at whether or not there are land applications of food processing wastes from the poultry industry and/or other types of plants that should be accounted for.
Action: The AgWG will receive an overview of the STAC report for the July 2025 STAC Workshop: *Advancing Market-Based Approaches in the Agricultural Sector to Support Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration*, once the report has been finalized.
Action: The AgWG is now accepting nominations for a Vice Chair and 6 at-large members for the March 2026 – February 2028 term. Please send all nominations to Caroline Kleis (Kleis.Caroline@epa.gov) and Eric Hughes (Hughes.Eric@epa.gov) by COB, December 30th, 2025.

Minutes

I. Welcome, roll call, review meeting minutes — 10:00 – 10:05 AM

Lead: Kathy Brasier, AgWG Chair

Kathy Brasier, AgWG Chair, opened up the meeting with a call of the governance body and meeting participants.

Decision:

1. The AgWG approved the minutes from the September AgWG meeting.

II. Partners in Conservation: The Delmarva Land and Litter Collaborative — 10:05 – 10:30 AM

Speaker: Alan Girard, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Delmarva Land and Litter Collaborative (DLLC) has a clear mission: build cross-sector relationships to identify science-based solutions and guide their implementation to achieve profitable chicken and grain farming, clean water, and thriving ecosystems on the Delmarva

Peninsula. This is done primarily through convening representatives of the agricultural community, chicken companies, environmental groups, academia, and regulatory agencies – membership resembling that of the AgWG. Alan Girard, Maryland Director of Advocacy with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and current Chair of DLLC, introduced the AgWG to the Collaborative, its priorities, and the efforts of the diverse partnership to achieve those priorities.

Discussion Notes:

Paul Bredwell: Alan, thank you very much. Great presentation. Any way you could expand a little bit more in detail on that ammonia emissions piece that you talked about?

Alan Girard: Sure. I didn't say a lot about that. First of all, if you go to the Delmarva Land and Litter website, we do have a 4–5-page document on the ammonia dynamics exercise we did a few years back. This was trying to better understand what the potential risks to Chesapeake Bay Water Quality are from airborne ammonia emissions that originate from poultry houses. The Bay Foundation did some analysis using real measured data in the watershed that indicates that airborne ammonia that originates from poultry houses on the Delmarva doesn't stay airborne for long. It can be deposited to surface waters relatively quickly, and there is a question of whether that load is being accounted for in Bay restoration work or whether it's through the Maryland Department of the Environment's K4 permits, or air quality responsibility, or other measures. So, we just had that question, and the Collaborative was interested in looking into that further. The Campbell Foundation and others, the state of Maryland, and the Delmarva Chicken Association actually invest in actual monitoring of air quality in certain areas on Delmarva. That information was used in that white paper, again, to try and better understand the potential impact. I know one of the things that we called out in that white paper was the opportunity for hedgerows and trees along poultry houses to trap any ammonia that may come out of houses. "Trapped" is an important word there because it doesn't necessarily mean the ammonia is absorbed in the plant matter. It's a particulate. So, it can hold it, bind it to leaves that may drop to the ground and then make it's way with runoff from the surface water and the groundwater. So, it's a potential BMP that I know there is interest in the Collaborative in advocating for an advancing going forward in ammonia. That might be too far in the weeds on some of this, but that's a part of what we explored here at the DLLC.

Caroline Kleis (in chat): http://bit.ly/ChangingDelmarva

Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): Really impressive site and use of storymaps.arcgis!

Eric Hughes (in chat): DLLC's webpage for ammonia emissions: https://delmarvalandandlitter.net/ammonia-emissions/

Eric Hughes: You were talking about consensus, and I find it to add sort of a unique dynamic to what we do. We want to advance some of these efforts and, we as a workgroup, have 21 voting members. So, for consensus-based decision making, we need agreement from 21 people on any decision that we make. Consensus is great if you have a few people, but with 21 and certainly with 30 for DLLC, it can be a little bit more challenging. In your experience, what has been really the recipe for success for fostering an environment where consensus-based decision making can happen?

Alan Girard: I think it is a couple of pieces. When we have these all-day quarterly meetings, we often book time right after that is informal and unstructured, where there's opportunity for conversation and relationships to grow. Trying to get to specific examples, every year in advance of the general assemblies in Virginia and Maryland, the collaborative will hold a policy roundtable. That's the time when various folks around the table, particularly folks that have roles in the General Assembly, are legislatively active, or have lobbyists, can come and talk among each other about what they see as their priorities as individual groups are going into General Assembly. So, it's been more than once at the policy roundtable where we've talked about funding and the importance of conservation funding for the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, the Chesapeake Bay Trust Fund, etc. These are programs in Maryland that invest in conservation on farms, particularly when tight profit margins in the farm sector make it difficult for those investments to be made otherwise. Land preservation is a big piece of this as well. Those investments are good for the environment, and they're good for agriculture. Everybody at

the table is quickly able to see that to the point where they can relatively quickly come to consensus and say let's put together a letter to the Governor and General Assembly and make that point. Agriculture and environment, we are diversely represented here; we have a diverse representation of folks that are interested in those issues, and we believe that funding for agriculture conservation serves all of our interests. You should take note of that when you draft your budget and the General Assembly debates it. We come to consensus on that because of the trust and relationships that are built overtime and the ability to have the table set to have the conversation about what's on their minds, what we have in common as policy priorities, and if there is a chance to come to agreement on how to advance those. So, there are just a couple of examples there.

Caroline Harper (in chat): Here is a link to the ambient air quality monitoring project, supported by The Campbell Foundation and in collaboration with the Delmarva Chicken Association, University of MD Eastern Shore, and MDE: https://mde.maryland.gov/programs/air/AirQualityMonitoring/Pages/Lower-Eastern-Shore-Monitoring-Pro…

Paul Bredwell (in chat): Thank you for the links!

Zach Evans: As someone who has been lucky enough to participate as a member of the collaborative, Alan's leadership has been tremendous. We're grateful for all of the work you've done on behalf of these initiatives. When Eric asked the question, what does it take to get to consensus, the first thing that popped into my head was patience. Everybody in that room wants to fix problems today, and sometimes we just have to find that common ground. Combined with patience, the group's leadership has ensured we also focus on intentional progress. So, sometimes we're taking really small bites of the apple in those meetings, but I always walk away feeling like we're making progress and we're driving towards this really attainable goal. It's just a huge goal. So, Alan, thanks for sort of framing the Collaborative the way you have. I think you hit the nail on the head, and I think a lot of it has to do with the great leaders we've had in place. So, I appreciate your work on the Executive Committee and at the helm.

Alan Girard: Thank you, Zach. You just reminded me to mention one more critical structural element that's important. I mentioned the quarterly meetings for the workgroups that are set up. There is an Executive Committee that meets monthly, and that's the current chair, the incoming chair, and the outgoing chair. Remember I said they switch from agriculture to environment every year, so you've got diversity built in there, as well as three additional members from the Steering Committee. The Executive Committee is voted in every year. They set the agenda for the Steering Committee meetings; they help to ensure the progress is being driven on the workgroups. So, it's just another opportunity for dialogue to happen.

Eric Hughes (in chat): Well said, Zach!

Eric Hughes: Fantastic. Alan, thank you again. I do want to echo Zach and just thank you for your leadership with the LLC, and I'm looking forward to continuing to work with you and Holly, and Bob. We'll put our heads together and see how our two groups can continue to align our efforts and make good progress toward our shared goals.

III. Industry Spotlight: Poultry 10:30 – 11:55 AM

Speakers: Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg Association; James Fisher, Delmarva Chicken Association; Scott Raubenstine, Perdue AgriBusiness; Zach Evans, Mountaire Farms

This session featured representatives of poultry companies and industry associations discussing major trends in their sector and opportunities for collaboration to progress toward achieving conservation goals. Paul and James led with a high-level overview of industry trends, with Paul providing the broadest perspective and James focusing on trends observed on the Delmarva Peninsula. Scott and Zach presented the insights of individual integrators with significant presence in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, their efforts in conservation, and perspectives on opportunities to enhance collaboration and expand this work.

Actions:

1. Eric Hughes, EPA, will follow-up on a request made by Dave Graybill, AgWG member, to look more closely at whether or not there are land applications of food processing wastes from the poultry industry and/or other types of plants that should be accounted for.
2. The AgWG will receive an overview of the STAC report for the July 2025 STAC Workshop: *Advancing Market-Based Approaches in the Agricultural Sector to Support Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration*, once the report has been finalized.

Discussion Notes:

James Fisher- Delmarva Chicken Association and Paul Bredwell- US Poultry & Egg Association

Dave Graybill (in chat): Do you track the Food Processing Residuals produced?

James Fisher: DCA does not. That is just not something that we gather in our data gathering. So, no, we haven't.

Paul Bredwell: Can I ask a question of Dave? Dave, are you refereeing to the byproducts that might go to rendering? I will assume that's what Dave is talking about. If that is the question, we know what kind of byproducts that the feathers and things that are not consumed by humans are. We know exactly what those numbers are and the numbers that go to render. So, if there is a benefit of knowing that, we can certainly track down that information.

Zach Evans: I know those types of figures are reported typically through what goes to rendering but also associated with wastewater. So, through wastewater permitting, you could also aggregate those numbers pretty easily working with MDE, DNREC, and DEQ in Virginia.

James Fisher (in chat): More Delmarva chicken production data available here: https://www.dcachicken.com/facts/facts-figures.cfm

Nick Hepfl (in chat): What specific sustainability targets or trends are top priority?

Eric Hughes: Nick just put a question in the chat and, Nick, this is actually a really good segue into our next two presenters. I'm interested in hearing what James and Paul have to say, but Scott and Zach are certainly going to get into that in their remarks here in a minute.

Paul Bredwell: Each one of the poultry integrators out there have set sustainability goals. Certainly, those goals relate with mortality of birds. The ability to process birds, that's related to mortality, but also the kind of pollutants that they might be discharging into the environment from their wastewater treatment plants. The largest part of their footprint is always going to be the feed that's grown to produce those birds. So, they've also made commitments that are related to that. It's been kind of a hard nut to crack because when you look at the Delmarva, for instance, most of the grain that provide feed for those birds on the Delmarva is imported into the Delmarva. So, to make those connections has been difficult for the industry. U.S. Poultry was tasked by its board of directors back in 2012/2014 to really begin developing its own sustainability program for the industry. We've been very successful in doing that. The one big problem that we've had is trying to get a better handle on how we make sustainability reduction commitments as it's related to the feed aspect of what's going into the birds. Dave is on the call. He can probably attest that for pigs and beef. So, we are working very closely with Field of Markets and AFIA and others to try and figure out how we crack that nut. We will do it at some point in time. But, we buy this grain quite frankly on the open market. They want to get this grain at the cheapest possible cost. Of course, cost is associated with residuals from last year, the weather, and all those things come into play. So, again, it's a very difficult aspect of sustainability for any animal agriculture industry.

James Fisher: I should note, too, for DCA and the work we do with chicken growers, our top priority as a group is to convince and make possible for as many growers total to install vegetative environmental buffers on their farms as we can. DCA has applied for and gotten a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to facilitate more cost share programs so that we can subsidize chicken growers who decide to add evergreen trees, tall seasonal grasses

opposite of tunnel fans, pollinator friendly species in the swales between chicken houses that will both capture non-point nutrients that are just in the soils and also have concrete benefits for those growers reducing mowing time and expenses. The wind breaks that tall evergreen trees can provide can cool the air that is coming into those chicken houses in the summer and act as a windbreak in the winter to possibly lower their heating costs. So, from our perspective, just within our walls as a non-profit with hundreds of members who are growers, we are trying to make it as easy as possible for them to install a set of conservation practices and vegetative buffers that we are trying to convince them are both beneficial to the environment and may have some quality of life improvements for them as growers, as farmers, on their property.

Dave Graybill: For the benefit of those on the call, I spent seven years in the rural industry of Pennsylvania. So, I am very familiar with what you are talking about. James did an excellent job portraying how the industry works and how all those things work together and you, Paul, too, with what you said. Those things are really important for everyone on the call to understand about the poultry industry at large, whether it's broilers, turkeys, or layers. The question I had about food processing residuals comes out of the obvious thing that, apparently, those food processing wastes are moving N out of Maryland and creating a problem in Pennsylvania, and Pennsylvania legislature has taken some action on that recently. You've obviously said that there are more pounds of meat being produced in Maryland. That movement of nutrients out of that particular state, is that being tracked any way in the model? Is that showing up? How is that working into our model?

Paul Bredwell: Do you mean the litter nutrients, Dave?

Dave Graybill: No. I am talking about all of the stuff that comes out of the processing plant that has to go somewhere and be land applied. There are nutrients involved with it. It's a good nutritional source of nitrogen and phosphorous, I believe, and I'm not quite sure the other attributes of that. Somebody else can maybe speak to it. I'm just wondering how we have accounted for that movement of material. Obviously, I think Maryland has some restrictions on land application of that material.

Paul Bredwell: So, we are talking about DAF/sludge, that kind of stuff. Is that what you are referring to, wastewater residuals?

Clint Gill (in chat): DAF in other words.

Dave Graybill: No. We are talking about the guts of the animal that's not being used, those parts of the chicken that come out of a processing plant. Those are called your food processing residuals.

Paul Bredwell: We don't waste anything on the chicken except the cluck. Anything that is not consumed by a human (the feathers, the guts, the intestines), all that material is transferred to a rendering plant. That material is essentially just, for a lack of a better word, pressure cooked, feathers included. Feathers are about 90 plus percent protein. Materials are transferred to a rendering plant where it is pressure cooked and a meal is made out of it. That material is then sent to pet food plants. A lot of it goes back to the poultry plants where they make meal out of it and feed it back to the chickens. So, that material is not land applied. In fact, there have been years, quite frankly, where the rendering side of the poultry industry has made more money on a pound per pound basis than chicken breast meat that's sold to the public. So, that material is all upcycled back to something that's a beneficial use.

Dave Graybill: I agree that does happen, Paul, but the difference I would make is that it's not all upcycled, and we see that because it is being land applied in Pennsylvania. There are folks with contracts, and it has created a problem, especially in some of our southern counties, and that's the reason for the legislation that has been taken. That's the reason why there is legislation being done.

James Fisher: On the Eastern Shore, the name for that in policy discussions is dissolved air flotation residuals or DAF residuals. What that is is it's solids that are remaining after processed wastewater goes through a processing plant's wastewater filtration system.

Dave Graybill: No, we are not talking about water here. We are talking about the actual body parts.

James Fisher: I know, but it is the water that goes through and is processed and goes out as a regulated point source discharge. What is left is solids basically skimmed off of the top of the tank. That's dissolved air flotation residuals. So, those solids that are basically taken out of the wastewater before it's discharged which, in other words, is the process that helps the wastewater point source meet its nutrient reduction goals. You're left with a material that contains a lot of nutrients that can be transported and land applied as plant food to help crops grow. On the Eastern Shore, in the Delmarva, that discussion on what to do and how to regulate those residuals that are left after a processing plant wastewater process has been completed sounds like what you are discussing. So, it's a solid.

Zach Evans: Animal remnants or animal parts can't be land applied. I think, Dave, DAF is considered a food residual because dissolved air flotation is the method in which those suspended solids are removed from the wastewater. So, it's a food processing residual, the process by which we aggregate it is DAF residuals, but it's an FPR. That's how it is classified at the state.

Clint Gill (in chat): Same process as biosolids.

Dave Graybill: I think the problem here is there's a difference in regulations between the states. I think this is probably one thing that you, Eric, may have to double down on and check out. I don't want to continue the discussion, and we're talking about two different things. We know that there are actual body parts, I am talking about guts, being land applied in counties in Pennsylvania coming out of Maryland. It's happening to a degree that we have to do something about the odor management, and Farm Bureau is very well aware of it, and we are working with a lot of the parties involved. A good resource for you here, Eric, would be Grant Gulibon at Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

Amanda Barber (in chat): Dave, also in New York

Jeff Hill (in chat): Dave is correct that it is a major issue in South Central PA... But it may not be all related to poultry.

Dave Graybill (in chat): Eric, please look at processing wastes from other types of plants per Jeff Hill's comment. It is possible that the pet industry and the protein meal uses can be poultry meal and not mamalian.

Eric Hughes (in chat): Appreciate this comment, Jeff. Want to reiterate that I have personally seen confusion about this among members of the public, and having conversations with experts like James, Paul, Scott and Zach at this forum and others will hopefully ensure we can all be clear on what is happening in this region. Thank you, Dave. We will explore this as you've requested.

Seth Mullins (in chat): The VA (on the shore at least) plants land apply a residual material. If it's DAF or from another part of the wastewater treatment process I'm not sure.

Eric Hughes: Thank you, Dave. If others want to weigh in on this, we would appreciate that, but it is potentially something to follow up on later. It sounds like there is a little bit of confusion here. I want to make sure we're on the same page so that we don't just continue to go down a rabbit hole one way or the other. As a Pennsylvanian from one of those counties, it had a lot of people frustrated in my home township as a matter of fact. There was a lot of speculation and, frankly, misinformation around this. So, I think it's really important that as we have these discussions, we make sure that we put the facts first, we get all on the same page, and we move forward from there. So, looking forward to continuing this with you all offline. Maybe we can follow up with the discussion at a later time.

Ken Staver: My only comment was about the grain part. Paul, you were talking about this grain imbalance. I know, in Maryland, we've looked at this, and I look at the statistics coming out of Delmarva Chicken Association. In Maryland, we produce enough corn for the chickens, and we export some soybeans. So, in Maryland, we deal with what's inside our state. I know everything flows across state boundaries and the integrators work across state boundaries and everything else. But, for the Maryland case, I always feel like people run around thinking that we are importing all this grain and manure is not going back to the Midwest where we get all this grain from. Well, that's not the case for the Maryland Eastern shore. The 8 counties produce enough corn and more than enough soybeans to supply the needs of the poultry industry. So, we are kind of in balance. We're not crazy out of balance from a grain versus a meat production standpoint.

Zach Evans (in chat): I have some figures to share regarding feed conversion and corn use in my presentation that will also help shed light on that.

Paul Bredwell: I appreciate that, Ken. I stand corrected. Grain markets flow. There might be enough corn in Maryland to supply to Pilgrim's and Amick and Mountaire, but when those companies go out and buy corn and soybeans to make their feed rations, they're probably going to the commodity market in Chicago to get that price. So, I just don't know where that corn is grown quite frankly. So, is there a way to put a program in place that says all the corn in Maryland has to go to the poultry industry? Maybe. But, I doubt that that's happening at this point in time. Zach, you probably have a better understanding of this than I do.

Zach Evans: We're one of five companies, and we have 12 rural grain elevators on Delmarva, 8 of which are in Maryland. We have over 10 million bushels of storage capacity at those elevators. We've got a couple million bushels of storage capacity at a feed mill in Maryland. Assuming 400,000 acres of corn land, which is the number from '24 in Maryland, 189 bushels on average yield, we could buy half of the corn in Maryland just to feed our birds as one company. So, that's not Delmarva. That is the whole state. We could take half the corn gown in the state of Maryland, and we are one of five companies.

Ken Staver: I am just going by the numbers and bushels of corn used on the Delmarva Chicken Association website. That's if I look at that or if I do the feed conversion myself. We don't have a lot of other livestock. It's not like there's a lot of competing livestock on the Eastern Shore, right?

Zach Evans: We use about 38 million bushels of corn to feed our chickens on Delmarva at Mountaire. If we assume average yields of 189 across 400,000 acres, it's about 75,000,000 bushels. So, we could use half of it just as one company.

Ken Staver: I'm not saying the whole Delmarva is imbalanced. I'm just saying, from a Maryland perspective, our policy in our state, we do not have a lot of net movement of nutrients. Markets being what they are, there is grain that leaves and grain that comes in, but we do not have a big net flow of nutrients into Maryland that goes into the poultry industry.

Zach Evans: I understand what you are driving at there.

Ken Staver: Our nutrient management policy in Maryland can't be for Delaware or Virginia. It has to be for Maryland. That's kind of a state approach to things. So, for us, we're still buying a fair amount of inorganic phosphorous and inorganic nitrogen. The phosphorous is way down as we've used the litter more efficiently for phosphorous. We've gotten better at distributing our phosphorous nutrients around the whole crop base. Still, we're buying inorganic phosphorous. I am Maryland-centric on this, and people in Maryland have sort of started saying our problem is we're importing all these nutrients and grain, and the nutrients don't go back to where the grains produced. But, in Maryland, we have the crop base to actually match our poultry production. That's the way the numbers look to me. Coming at this from an AgWG and water quality standpoint, what we would really love to see are some of those graphs translated into nutrients and sort of how the nutrients flow. That's really the bottom line for us. What are the nutrient quantities that need to be field applied in our crops? The rest of it is all very interesting, and it is an amazing story in terms of protein production, but the real thing we are dealing with is how many nutrients do we have to land applied. Thanks.

Scott Raubenstine- Perdue AgriBusiness

Kathy Boomer (in chat): Scott- So grateful/relieved to hear focus on water. Weak focus on water management and shallow groundwater could be undermining soil health, soil C, water quality, biodiversity, and aquatic habitat restoration efforts.

Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): Millennials surpassing baby boomers on protein consumption.

Greg Albrecht (in chat): Scott, thank you. I realize it's early, but could you expand how value is being created, such that proceeds are returned to farmers (while also covering verification costs)? Who (in general) is paying more for more environmentally sound production?

Kathy Boomer (in chat): Would like to see Bay Program focus more on managing land-water connections at the field scale.

Zach Evans- Mountaire Farms

Scott Raubenstine (in chat): Great presentation Zach! Carbon sequestration on grass is super! 1.1 excellent. Jumping to another mtg. Thank you all for the opportunity to share! Cheers!

Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): Really terrific input from each of the speakers. Zach, thank you. Appreciated the questions too. The feed conversion information is so helpful/hopeful.

Paul Bredwell (in chat): Great presentations Scott and Zach - thank you!

Ken Staver: How many acres do you think you need for your operation on Delmarva? Are you looking to expand this to do all your litter? What do you need or do you maybe already have all you need, and, for a farmer, is it cost effective? Or do we have the NRCS and the other kind of conservation subsidies to make it work? Is it standalone cost effective, or does it have to be subsidized?

James Fisher (in chat): DCA profiled a farmer working to supply Mountaire with miscanthus: https://www.dcachicken.com/media/docs/delmarva-magazine/April-2022-DCA-Magazine.pdf (pages 8-9)

Zach Evans: Right now, with the acreage and the yields that we have on Delmarva, we are exceeding our yield expectations. So, believe it or not, we have enough capacity. The only reason we've not converted that last 30% of housing just has to do sometimes with clean out schedules. Also, you don't necessarily want to have all your eggs in one basket. If we should lose access to miscanthus, we need to have to some wood shavings providers as well. So, we want to still satisfy that market that exists on Delmarva and be a participant in that market. In terms of profitability, the farmers that grow miscanthus commercially here on Delmarva all did it initially without any investment or any cost share funding from organizations like NRCS or any grant money. They all did it stand alone as part of an agreement basically with the end use purchasers. We said we are going to buy through the product if you can grow it. Now there is more demand for miscanthus, especially in marginal fields on Delmarva, because it has other uses. It's becoming a great feedstock for all compost, not just litter-based compost. It also is a great animal bedding substitute for large animals, for rabbits, for different industries not just related to feathers. So, yes, I think more of it could be grown. We'd hate to see it compete with corn acreage, but I don't think that's the problem. I think it's actually enhancing operations. The other way we are using it is as a vegetative buffer, because all that research that was done by USGS was really to address its use on field edges and in proximity to ditches. What we are seeing is that it does help with nutrient leaching. It helps stabilize that soil. It prevents sediment erosion. So, we're also using it as vegetative buffers not just on farms, but on fields. It's also, we think, potentially a wildlife buffer. But, you've got to plant it really thick, and then you're just giving up good land. So, I think it has a lot of values in our model, and people can make a lot of money growing it. It doesn't take highly specialized equipment. It's very similar to a silage chopper and to bailing hay. That's kind of how it's taken out of the field.

Ken Staver: Thanks, and you are very convincing!

Zach Evans: It's my pleasure. The farmers convinced us. They grew it and promised us they could provide it as a bedding source, and now we're incorporating it into our production in North Carolina as well. So, we really do believe in this crop, not just to help animal performance, but to help us address some of the environmental conservation goals that we have on Delmarva. The other thing is we were talking about housing, and Paul and James both kind of alluded to this, but I'd like to share firsthand perspective and firsthand numbers. Mountaire, as a company, when we look at natural rate of attrition, houses coming offline because of retirement or because of the useful life of the asset, it's just no longer performing efficiently. It doesn't have the technology enhancements that a modern house does. It'd be like driving a 40-year-old stock car in a race today versus a modern-day NASCAR, right? So, we need 28 houses a year just to supplement natural attrition. We're not going to grow any more birds. Our hatcheries can't hatch anymore, and our plants can't process more. But, we need 28 new chicken houses a year, and we are just one company. So, that investment is a substantial investment by the Ag community. They're all independently owned. Just Mountaire's demand for new housing on an annual basis represents about $17 million of investment from family farmers in the region. So, when you see those new

houses going up, we believe a new house can grow a better chicken, a healthier chicken, and be a better neighbor. So, that's not new production. It's just supplementing attrition.

Jim Riddell (in chat): What's avg value -sold per ton miscanthus?

Eric Hughes: Thank you for that, Zach. Very insightful as always, and we're fortunate to have you in the fold here as part of the group in addition to the DLLC and the myriads of other groups that you participate in. So, any last-minute questions here for Zach or any of our other presenters? I wanted to note Greg and some other people's comments in the chat. This was for Scott, but Greg asked "could you expand on how value is being created? Who is paying more for more environmentally sound production?" That's not one I'm going to kick to you necessarily, Zach, unless you want to run with that. What I will say is Scott participated in a STAC workshop several months ago. It was essentially focused on market-based solutions to some of the conservation challenges we face. A big part of this was leveraging corporate ESG priorities. Something that stands out to me is we hear a lot about Scope 3 emissions reductions and GHG and, as we know, that's not necessarily something that is a focus of this group. When we think about co-benefits, that seems like a pretty distinct co-benefit in our world. For our corporate partners, the nutrients and sediment that we are focused on seem to be a co-benefit of the work that they're doing in the greenhouse gas reduction space. So, it seems prudent that we come together to figure out a way we can start speaking the same language. We can sort of align our efforts in a way. I think a follow up to this discussion, because we didn't have maybe as much time to talk with Scott and Zach as we would have hoped, is an overview once that STAC report has been finalized. We can bring some of those leads to the workgroup and have a conversation about market-based approaches to conservation. So, that's just an idea I wanted to put out there. Certainly open to more questions, but if we don't have any others, Scott, Zach, James, Paul, really appreciate your time in the session.

IV. Wrap-Up — 11:55 AM – 12:00 PM

Lead: Eric Hughes, AgWG Coordinator

Announcements:

- **Important Update on the December AgWG Meeting Date and Bay in the Balance Conference:**
  - Last week, the Bay in the Balance Planning Committee announced that they would be rescheduling the December 8-10th Bay in the Balance Conference to March 2-4th, 2026, given the federal government shutdown. As such, the AgWG will no longer be meeting in person on December 10th.
  - In lieu of the December 10th in-person meeting, the AgWG will return to its regularly scheduled December meeting date and time. The AgWG will meet virtually on December 18th from 10:00AM-12:00PM, and the group will work towards scheduling another in-person meeting in 2026. Please accept the updated calendar invitation.
- **AgWG Call for Nominations**
  - A call for nominations for at-large member and Vice Chair positions was sent to AgWG members and interested parties in early October.
  - **Action:** The AgWG is now accepting nominations for a Vice Chair and 6 at-large members for the March 2026 – February 2028 term. Please send all nominations to Caroline Kleis (Kleis.Caroline@epa.gov) and Eric Hughes (Hughes.Eric@epa.gov) by COB, December 30th, 2025.
  - All nominations should include the following: Contact information (name, affiliation, email), and a short C.V., resume, or bio (addressing the nominee's background).
- **Chesapeake Research Consortium Roundtable: Sowing Seeds, Growing Relationships: Chesapeake Bay Restoration and Agriculture**

    - The next CRC Roundtable, Sowing Seeds, Growing Relationships: Chesapeake Bay Restoration and Agriculture, is Wednesday November 19th, 12 – 1pm. The webinar will discuss the economic and environmental sustainability of Chesapeake farmlands and explore how to move together towards a healthier watershed. Speakers include Kristen Hughes Evans, Executive Director, Sustainable Chesapeake, and Jen Nelson, Coordinator, Chesapeake Bay Program's Agricultural Advisory Committee. Register for the webinar here.
- **Update on Beyond 2025**
    - On October 28th, the Principals' Staff Committee (PSC) approved the revised *Watershed Agreement.* The Executive Council will approve and adopt the revised Agreement at their meeting on December 2nd. Additionally, the PSC discussed and approved structure and governance recommendations for submission to the Executive Council at their November 6th meeting. One-pagers on the recommendations are posted here. Discussions regarding workgroup structure and structure below the Goal Team level will continue in 2026.
- **Executive Council Meeting**
    - The Chesapeake Executive Council will meet on Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at the National Aquarium in Baltimore, Maryland. The Chesapeake Executive Council consists of the governors of Delaware, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and West Virginia; the mayor of the District of Columbia, the chair of the tri-state legislative Chesapeake Bay Commission; and the administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency, who represents the federal government. At this meeting, the Executive Council will approve and adopt the revised Watershed Agreement, and discuss governance and structure recommendations and the Tribes as a Formal and Enduring Partner in Chesapeake Bay Program Partnership charge. Additional materials will be posted and available on the Executive Council calendar page.
- **New Chesapeake Bay Program Office Director: Dan Coogan**
    - The EPA has appointed a new Chesapeake Bay Program Office Director, Dan Coogan. You can read more about Dan in his biography here.
- **November Agricultural Advisory Committee Meeting**
    - The Agricultural Advisory Committee met again on Wednesday, November 5th, from 11:00AM-2:00PM. At this meeting, the group discussed annual draft recommendations to the Executive Council and a potential letter of recommendation to be written for the Gettysburg Energy and Nutrient Recovery Facility/Integrated Environmental Management System (GENRF/IEMS) Demonstration Project.
- **Chesapeake Community Research Symposium**
    - The 2026 Chesapeake Community Research Symposium is accepting special session proposals through November 21, 2025. The 2026 edition of the biennial symposium will be held June 1-3, 2026, in Annapolis, Maryland. The theme of the 2026 Symposium is Chesapeake Bay Research and Restoration: Next Generation Tools for a Dynamic Future. Learn more and submit a proposal here.
- **Keep Maryland Beautiful Grant- Track 3 (Tree Planting on Agricultural Lands)**
    - The Keep Maryland Beautiful Grant Program Application is due December 1, 2025. Applications are welcomed for projects in Maryland focused on three tracks: Community Stewardship, Land Trust Assistance, and Tree Planting on Agricultural Lands. For more information on the application process and to view the Request for Proposals, visit the following site.
- **Pooled Monitoring Initiative's Restoration Research Award Program RFP**
    - The Pooled Monitoring Initiative's Restoration Research Award Program is now open, and applications are due January 29, 2026. The goal of this research program is to answer several key restoration questions that are a barrier to watershed restoration project implementation. The Pooled Monitoring Initiative pools funding resources to answer these key restoration research questions, as

outlined in the request for proposals (RFP). The RFP and application link are available at the following website.
    - Two online information sessions will be held at the following dates and times:
        - Register for December 12, 2025, from 12 pm to 1 pm (EST) Info Session
        - Register for January 6, 2026, from 12 pm to 1 pm (EST) Info Session
- **2026 Mid-Atlantic Agroforestry Conference**
    - The 2026 Mid-Atlantic Agroforestry Conference will take place on June 4-5, 2026, in Pennsylvania Furnace, PA. The agenda will include farm/site tours, panel discussion, and resource guidance and statuses. Registration for this conference will open in early 2026. Sign up for the Woods and Wildlife Newsletter to keep up to date with conference developments.
- **SEEC Institute's Thriving Economy Project Request for Information**
    - The Sustainable Energy and Environment Coalition (SEEC) has issued a request for information (RFI) key issue areas and questions for consideration regarding their Thriving Economy Project. This project is described as "a policy blueprint for an American economy to achieve long-term, sustainable growth and prosperity for all Americans across all economic sectors, to help realize a secure energy future, affordability, reliability, and jobs." Key issue areas include 21st Century Agricultural Opportunities, Growing Rural Economies, and more. The RFI is accessible here. Responses to the request for information will be accepted on a rolling basis. See the bottom of the RFI page for submission instructions. To learn more about the project, visit the following website.
- **Chesapeake Research Consortium Executive Director Position Opening**
    - The Chesapeake Research Consortium is seeking an experienced environmental scientist and leader to serve as its next Executive Director. To view the position description and application form, please visit the following webpage. Applications for the Executive Director Position Opening are due by December 7, 2025.

V. Adjourn **12:00 PM**

Next Meeting: December 18, 10:00AM-12:00PM

Attendees:

Kathy Brasier, PSU
Caitlin Grady, GWU
Eric Hughes, EPA
Caroline Kleis, CRC
RO Britt, Smithfield Foods
Emily Dekar, USC
Tyler Groh, PSU
Laura Zielinski
James Fisher, DCA Chicken
Nick Hepfl, HRG
Alan Girard, CBF
Matt Kowalski, CBF
Grant Gulibon, PA Farm Bureau
Brady Seeley, PA DEP
Jim Riddell, VA Cattlemen Association
Cindy Shreve, WVCA
Pat Thompson, EnergyWorks
Tom Butler, EPA
Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal
Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC
Jenna Schueler, CBF
Jenna Talbot, DNREC
Jeff Hill, YCCD
Matt Royer, PSU
Caroline Harper, Campbell Foundation
Greg Albrecht, NY Dept of Ag & Markets
Scott Heidel, PA DEP
Tyler Trostle, PA DEP
Seth Mullins, VA DCR
Hunter Landis, VA DCR
Hannah Sanders, EPA
Clint Gill, DDA
John Lancaster, PA DEP
Natasha Rathlev, Sustainable Chesapeake

Dave Graybill, Farm Bureau
Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg Association
Marel King, CBC
Krista Crone, PA DEP
Amanda Cather, AAC Member/Plow & Stars Farm
Amanda Barber, NY Cortland County SWCD
Zach Evans, Mountaire
Ken Staver, UMD Wye
Christina Lyerly, MDE
Samantha Cotton, DNREC
Auston Smith, EPA
Kathy Boomer, FFAR
Jeremy Hanson, CRC
Tracy Clarke, EPA
Jessica Shippen, TJSWCD
Denise Uzupis, PDA
Bailey Robertory, MD DNR
Doug Bell, EPA
Scott Raubenstine, Perdue AgriBusiness

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
DLLC- Delmarva Land and Litter Collaborative
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
PADEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
PSC – Principals' Advisory Committee (CBP)
PSU- Penn State University
SARE- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
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