

Meeting Minutes
July 21, 2022
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Agriculture Workgroup
Materials: [Link](#)

Summary of Actions and Decisions

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

Action: Loretta Collins, AgWG coordinator, work with partners and USDA-NASS to better understand if Ag Census is reasonably accounting for winter forage (which impact CBP land use assumptions). Expect an update on the August AgWG call.

Decision: The AgWG did not reach consensus to approve the calculation method presented by PA for use in estimating commodity cover crop BMP implementation and reporting annual BMP implementation progress, utilizing roadside transect survey data and CAST estimated land use acres for relevant cropland. The request is tabled for July.

Action: Loretta Collins will work with partners to compile feedback on the PA request and seek a way forward based on that feedback in order to improve accounting for winter cropping and its benefits to soil and water quality. Update on progress for August AgWG meeting.

Action: Reach out to Matt Royer (mzr154@psu.edu) and Aaron Cook (amc521@psu.edu) with further questions on the Cover Crop Enhancement Pilot Study. They are expected to return in August with more detailed information.

Decision: The AgWG ran out of time to come to consensus on approving the proposed Phase 7 Agricultural Modeling Team (AMT) charge and call for nominations with minor adjustment based on today's discussion.

Action: Tom Butler, AMT coordinator, will be making minor updates to the AMT charge language based on today's discussion. **For those who indicated specific concerns, please provide those concerns to Tom Butler.** Thomas01@epa.gov in writing **NO LATER than 5PM on Monday July 25**. Modifications will be made to the charge and distributed next week for a 5 business -day review. The AgWG governance body (signatories + at-large) will be asked to approve the charge via e-mail. Approval by consensus means everyone can live with a decision. Please utilize the consensus continuum to guide your response.

Introduction

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

Workgroup Chair

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

Data & Modeling/Accounting & Reporting

10:05 **Crediting Winter Cover (20 min)**

Loretta Collins

Loretta Collins, UMD- AgWG Coordinator, continued the June discussion regarding a request to consider nutrient reduction crediting for winter forage crops as a beneficial alternative to winter fallow cropland.

Discussion

Amanda Barber: If an effort to get a better handle on this, would you be interested in working with us to identify some farms to serve as “case studies”. I think the problem here is that farmers are interpreting these census questions differently, so maybe we could gather some information and bring it back to NASS to convince them to reword the question.

Loretta Collins: That’s definitely an option and a good idea.

Ken Staver: I don’t think this should get too complicated. Need baseline for comparison. Corn silage shouldn’t be going into double cropped acres.

Dave Montali: Most of the farmers don’t do the ag census, and if they do, they would not likely report that they produce that cereal because it’s not being harvested or sold.

Action: Loretta Collins will work with partners to compile feedback on the PA request and seek a way forward based on that feedback in order to improve accounting for winter cropping and its benefits to soil and water quality. Update on progress for August AgWG meeting.

Accounting & Reporting

10:25 PA Commodity Cover Crop Tracking & Reporting (15 min)

Ted Tesler

PA has developed a means to collect and report annual commodity cover crop BMP information for annual implementation progress scenarios. Ted Tesler, PA DEP, returned to request approval from the AgWG of the calculation method to estimate commodity cover crop BMP acres utilizing data from roadside transect surveys and CAST land use acres, as described on the [May](#) and [June](#) AgWG calls.

*Commodity cover crop BMP = winter small grain that receives no fall application of nitrogen, rather scavenging available residual soil nitrogen. The small grain may be fertilized per agronomic recommendations in the spring and is harvested as a commodity small grain.

Discussion

Dave Montali: West VA has concerns that some key components of the commodity cover crop (CCC) as it’s defined can’t be accomplished by this methodology. If that cover crop gets fall nutrients, then it’s excluded from crediting under CCC. Second, CCC can only be credited on small grains, grains, and double cropped land in the model, but it seems like this methodology doesn’t recognize that constraint. Third, when you report CCC, you must report them as early, normal or late. The early planting gets less credit. If this is approved by the AgWG today, then goes to WTWG and WQGIT and I think these concerns will come up.

Ted Tesler: We are open to adjusting the methodology.

Vanessa Van Note: The definition is really constraining and not really highlighting what you were talking about Ted. Should we revisit that definition and make it broader? Also - there is a nutrient management component of the CCC BMP, and the [Ag Verification Guidance](#) states that nutrient management BMPs cannot be eligible for visual assessments such as the transect survey. Transect surveys can only be used for traditional cover crops. I think it would be good to think about how we want to change the wording in the Guidance to reflect this decision.

Ted Tesler: Changing the definitions could beg the question of changing the efficiencies, which could doom this effort.

Loretta Collins: seems we need to dive into what the Ag Census gives us (do our Land Use acres reasonably reflect the winter grain acres). So, do we need a new BMP efficiency or a revision of Land Uses?

Ken Staver: it seems like a strange thing to vote on this when another option will be presented. I want to see the second one before I decide.

Greg Albrecht: I don't see a way to support this without the changes that Dave Montali and Vanessa Van Note discussed above. Unless we change the definition, we are stuck with not being able to approve this, unless there is a way in the transect protocol to assess the status. Maybe there is a middle ground in the meantime - if the transect method could be used to get a sense of double crops acres within current definitions (using it to supplement ag census).

Ted Tesler: It's interesting to see how state specific data and what is gathered on the ground differ between the USDA survey effort. If this doesn't get approved, we can figure out a different way to address this issue.

Decision: The AgWG did not reach consensus to approve the calculation method presented by PA for use in estimating commodity cover crop BMP implementation and reporting annual BMP implementation progress, utilizing roadside transect survey data and CAST estimated land use acres for relevant cropland. The request is tabled for July.

10:40 **Cover Crop Tracking Pilot Study (30 min)** T. Tesler, M. Royer & A. Cook
PA DEP is working with PSU to utilize existing data from producer surveys, roadside transect surveys, and possible other relevant sources to enhance tracking and reporting of cover crop implementation in PA counties. Ted Tesler, DEP, Matt Royer, PSU, and Aaron Cook, PSU provided an introduction and outline of the pilot project with more details to come in August.

Discussion

Vanessa Van Note: Can you tell us what the producer survey will be collecting that the transect survey is not?

Aaron Cook: The producer survey has about 16 different types of cover crops reported, while the transect only has 'small grains', 'legumes', 'mixture' and 'other'. The producer survey also has date of planting information (month and year) and includes whether or not nutrients were applied in the Fall on the cover crop. The planting survey also has 'acres', 'acres of planting' and 'acres of harvest', whereas the transect survey only has 'presence of cover crop', 'cover crop type', and 'harvesting regime'.

Dave Montali: It looks like Ted's presentation that there was a 'manure – yes/no' box. How is that done?

Aaron Cook: I think it's a visual cue of manure application in the fall.

Ted Tesler: In the transect survey it's visual and/or knowledge of the operation.

Matt Royer: It will be interesting to see the differences between the two surveys in terms of fall nutrient application.

Mark Nardi (in chat): Do these data and transect info connect to other datasets like Practice Keeper?

Aaron Cook: That's our next step. We are in the process of checking these results against another parcel-level dataset to identify possible matches for farmers that operate outside boundaries defined by Lancaster County parcel map.

Action: Reach out to Matt Royer (mzr154@psu.edu) and Aaron Cook (amc521@psu.edu) with further questions on the Cover Crop Enhancement Pilot Study. They are expected to return in August with more detailed information.

11:10 **BREAK (5 min)**

CBP Assignments/Data & Modeling

11:15 **Moving Forward: Addressing Ag Inputs in Phase 7 (30 min)**

Tom Butler

Tom Butler, EPA, reviewed an updated draft charge for the AgWG's role in Phase 7 Watershed Model development and based on AgWG feedback received after the June AgWG call.

Discussion

Dave Montali: When this group is formed, will the charge be more specifically defined?

Tom Butler: yes, we will go into more specificity at our two-day meeting this Fall. We will accept topics that come up later, but prioritize the ones that fit into the scope of these broader topics defined in the charge.

Vanessa Van Note: So the AMT would approve decisions by consensus and consensus would not need to be gained at the AgWG, correct?

Tom Butler: Correct.

Vanessa Van Note: Would we need to take decisions to the WQGIT? Or once it's approved in the AMT then it is final?

Tom Butler: Once it's approved in the AMT, it will be considered final. However, if the AgWG or WQGIT did not like a decision that was approved, they could revisit the decision within their respective group with their own consensus process.

Vanessa Van Note: And the AMT would be temporary?

Tom Butler: Yes, through at least 2026.

Loretta Collins: Will the four at-large positions be rotating like in the AgWG or WQGIT? Or will they remain stagnant?

Tom Butler: We have it set to mimic other groups, so we have a two-year rotating term for at-large members.

Cassie Davis (in chat): Will there be standing presentations at the ag workgroup, WTWG, WQGIT?

Tom Butler: I can do that if there is interest.

Clint Gill: You state that the members cannot be the same as the voting members in the AgWG. However, the only people qualified in DE to participate in this group would be me and Chris, so that's my only issue with this.

Jenn Walls: The knowledge of the model and ag practices that Chris and Clint have make them our best option at this point.

Tom Butler: we hope to give everyone a background of the model at the two-day workshop in the fall.

Dave Montali: WV, DE, and NY have limited number of people with both model and ag experience. It doesn't seem fair to us to exclude us from that. Also, it might be better to keep our at-large members for the entire four years of the charge.

Tom Butler: At-large members could be reelected, so there's some flexibility there.

Paul Bredwell: Why individuals outside of government, academia, USDA, USGS, and land grants couldn't be considered as an at-large member?

Tom Butler: It's more of an encouragement because we only have four spots for at-large members, so we wanted to make sure we got someone with the right expertise we were looking for. That's a good point though, we should remove the wording 'limited to'.

Vanessa Van Note: I'm concerned about the AMT making decisions without consulting the Watershed Technical Workgroup for input because that is part of our scope and purpose.

Tom Butler: We will only be focusing on agricultural related model inputs and the processing of that data. We're not touching how the model functions.

Dave Montali: Won't CBPO modelers have to be involved in this?

Tom Butler: Yes, and they will. But they won't be voting members due to conflict of interest.

Loretta Collins: Maybe we could add "advisory positions" to the charge - people who don't vote but are used as a resource. Just so people know.

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11:45 New Business & Announcements (5 min)

- **Reducing Pollution Indicator (RPI) updated using 2021 Progress**
 - <https://www.chesapeakeprogress.com/clean-water/watershed-implementation-plans>
- **Ag Progress Days (PA): August 9-11**
 - More Info [here](#)
- **Achieving Conservation through Targeting Information, Outreach and Networking (ACTION) Request for Applications: Aug 31, 2022**
 - [Foundation for Food & Ag Research](#) (FFAR) and the [Walton Family Foundation](#) anticipate awarding grants ranging from \$200,000 to \$500,000 for a total of approximately \$1 million to compare and optimize outreach strategies. Projects that support the [Edge of Field Roadmap](#) and commit to implementing conservation practices through a partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will be prioritized. As the Walton Family Foundation provided matching funds for this program, applicants are not required to secure a match; however, securing additional funds that FFAR can match is encouraged.
 - **Pre-applications due August 31, 2022.**
 - More details is available on the [ACTION RFA webpage](#).
- **2022 Ag Census Key Dates:**
 - November 2022 – ag census mails out and data collection begins
 - February 6, 2023 – response deadline
 - 2024 (TBD) – data release

The Census of Agriculture is a complete count of U.S. farms and ranches and the people who operate them. Even small plots of land - whether rural or urban - growing fruit, vegetables or some food animals count if \$1,000 or more of such products were raised and sold, or normally would have been sold, during the Census year. The Census of Agriculture, taken only once every five years, looks at land use and ownership, operator characteristics, production practices, income, and expenditures. For America's farmers and ranchers, the Census of Agriculture is their voice, their future, and their opportunity. - <https://www.nass.usda.gov/AgCensus/>
- **Animal Mortality Expert Panel Technical Appendix**
 - Most recent draft technical appendix available [here](#)- CBPO working through revisions based on feedback. Date for next WTWG discussion TBD.
 - Contact Jeremy Hanson (hansonj@chesapeake.org) with questions/comments.

- **ASA, CSSA & SSSA International Annual Meeting: Nov 6-9**
 - Baltimore, Maryland
 - More information here: <https://www.acsmeetings.org/>
 - July 12 – Abstract submission deadline
 - Oct 3 - Early registration deadline
 - October 14 – Standard registration deadline

Next Meeting:

Thursday, August 18: 10AM-12PM, Call-in Zoom

Meeting Chat

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

In NY, the cover crop terminated as a haylage crop in the spring is squarely seen/used by farmers as a cover crop, so wouldn't be reported as a winter cereal in the census. I

From frank schneider, SCC to Everyone:

Good article in the July/August issue of Manure Manager on our member Dave Graybill

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

Professional experience: in NY, dairy farmers report the main hay crop acres, the main corn silage acres, and might report cover crop acres in the cover crop BMP portion of the Census (but have a sense many skip the BMP questions). They wouldn't consider them double crop acres or in the additional haylage acres.

From amanda.barber to Everyone:

Land used as cropland or hay land and pasture also creates complications.

From frank schneider, SCC to Everyone:

agree with Greg and Amanda for Pa producers

From Matthew Royer to Everyone:

Good ideas Amanda, Penn State AEC would be willing to work with PA partners and identify some participating farmers in such a pilot.

From amanda.barber to Everyone:

Cover crops for spring forage is a new practice.

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

It's not a practice that's been used for a long time; last handful of years.

Ken, that matches how it's seen generally by NY farmers. COS with a cover crop that they take for haylage. Not a double crop.

From Kate Bresaw, PA DEP to Everyone:

Anecdotally, the past decade and a half or so has seen a substantial increase in planting winter cover for harvested haylage in PA.

From Loretta Collins to Everyone:

Seems we need to dive into what the Ag Census give us (do our Land Use acres reasonably reflect the winter grain acres).

From Loretta Collins to Everyone:

So we need a new BMP efficiency or a revision of Land Uses?

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

I didn't want to take up any more time, but I had a question on the harvested category you included in your presentation, Ted. How do we have the confidence that what is being observed in the spring (what has not been terminated, i.e. traditional cover crops or cover crops with fall manure), is only commodity cover crops or double cropped land?

From Loretta Collins to Everyone:

Greg's idea is interesting to me

Using transect survey to supplement ag census

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

Yup, good stuff, Ted.

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

It's a really great idea.

From Ruth Cassilly to Everyone:

Not all winter cover is double cropped, so this would need to be differentiated. Also commodity cover crops can fall within the double cropped category- it is not mutually exclusive

From Loretta Collins to Everyone:

I will work to better tease out how the land use acres work to get everyone informed on a future meeting. With the CAST experts...

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

Thanks, PA, for pursuing new ways to efficiently verify practices. Will only be more important, as we all know we're undercounting what farmers are implementing.

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

That's really helpful, thank you Aaron!

From Mark Nardi to Everyone:

Hi Aaron - sorry if I missed this, do these data and transect info connect to other datasets like Practice Keeper?

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

This is really exciting work. Thank you for bring this forward.

From Kathy Boomer to Everyone:

To Matt's point, exciting to learn about your multi-scale approach... might be helpful also to refining ground-level data collection methods and interpretation. Will you preserve location data so that we can explore the geography of practice implementation and (maybe some day), perhaps practice performance?

From Cassandra Davis, NYS DEC to Everyone:

Will there be standing presentations at the ag workgroup, WTWG, WQGIT?

From Kate Bresaw, PA DEP to Everyone:

For clarification: it will require consensus at the Ag. Workgroup to change a decision made by the AMT, correct?

From Jeremy Daubert to Everyone:

@Kate, Yes that is correct

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

@Kate Bresaw, that is how I am understanding it.

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

Would the AMT also engage non-voting "guest" experts to assist the AMT depending on the topic?

From Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA to Everyone:

Agreed with DE, our team is small and those closest to the model and this work may overlap across workgroups and this team.

From Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM) to Everyone:

How about something like, "Voting members are encouraged to not already be voting members of the AgWG." ?

Leave it to the state's preference.

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

At large members can include local practitioners as part of our CBP governance.

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

Your explanation that the input data will be the focus of the AMT is helpful, so thank you Tom! The WTWG does review input data and how that data is processed, but we will be able to get more context from our membership on August 4th if you would like to attend that meeting.

From Vanessa Van Note, EPA CBPO to Everyone:

Was the time commitment slide the time commitment expected of voting members? (I would assume the non voting member time commitment is less?)

From frank schneider, SCC to Everyone:

This is EXTREMELY FRUSTRATING, It is clear that the group rather talk more about governance and structure versus doing things that can help achieve our shared goals.

Meeting Participants

Jeremy Daubert, VT

Loretta Collins, UMD-CBPO
Hilary Swartwood, CRC
Kathy Braiser, PSU
Greg Albrecht, NYSAGM
Frank Schneider, PA
Seth Mullins, VA
Marel King, CBC
Kelly Shenk, EPA
Matt Royer, PSU
Emily Dekar, NY
Tim Rosen,
Gurpal Toor, UMD
Aaron Cook, PSU
Cassie Davis, NYSDEC
Dave Montali, Tetra Tech WV MWG
Ruth Cassilly, UMD
Karl Blankenship, Bay Journal
Kathy Boomer, STAC/ FFAR
Tom Butler, EPA
Ted Tesler, PA DEP
Kevin Antoszewski, MDA
Jeff Sweeney, EPA
Jennifer Walls. DNREC
Vanessa Van Note, EPA- CBPO
Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Katie Walker, CC
Jeff Sweeney, EPA- CBPO
Kristen Wolf, PA DEP
Mark Nardi, USGS
Hunter Landis, VA DCR
Leon Tillman, NRCS
Matt Monroe, WVDA
Amanda Barber, NY
Grant Gulibon, PA Farm Bureau
Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting
Clare Sevcik, DNREC
Kate Bresaw, PA DEP
Leah Martino,
Fiona Koye,

*Common Abbreviations

AgWG- [Agriculture Workgroup](#)

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 and myriad contractors and grantees working towards CBP goals)

CBW-Chesapeake Bay Watershed

CRC- [Chesapeake Research Consortium](#)

EPA- [United States] Environmental Protection Agency

NEIEN- National Environmental Information Exchange Network

NFWF- [National Fish and Wildlife Foundation](#)

PA DEP- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

STAC- Scientific & Technical Advisory Committee

WQGIT- [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)

WTWG- [Watershed Technical Workgroup](#)

UMCES- University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science

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*

DRAFT