

# Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

February 15th, 2018

10:00 AM – 3:00 PM

Face-to-Face Meeting Minutes

**Joe Macknis Memorial Conference Room (Fish Shack)  
U.S. EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office  
410 Severn Avenue  
Annapolis, Maryland 21403**

Meeting materials: [http://www.chesapeakebay.net/groups/group/agriculture\\_workgroup](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/groups/group/agriculture_workgroup)

## Actions & Decisions:

ACTION: CBP Staff will follow-up with Modeling Team members to explore options for modifying the interim BMP practices in CAST for irrigation and ditch management. This will be an item on the March AgWG agenda.

ACTION: Chris Brosch and Jason Keppler will coordinate with CBP Modeling Staff in order to understand how the ditch and irrigation management interim practices are handled in CAST.

ACTION: During the March AgWG meeting, the expert panel chairs will provide updates on any progress made towards developing an interim BMP representation in Phase 6 CAST.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the revised AgWG Governance Protocol document.

ACTION: Comments on the draft report should be sent to Mark Dubin ([mdubin@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:mdubin@chesapeakebay.net)) or Lindsey Gordon ([Gordon.lindsey@epa.gov](mailto:Gordon.lindsey@epa.gov)).

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendation report of the Agricultural Stormwater Expert Panel Establishment Group regarding agricultural stormwater management practices.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendation of Jason Keppler (MDA) as the new Workgroup Chair and Matt Monroe (WVDEP) as the new Vice-Chair, endorsed the selected At-Large Governance Membership, and confirmed Chris Sigmund as the alternate member for Peter Hughes.

---

## **Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes**

Workgroup Chairs

- The AgWG approved the meeting minutes from the January 18th, 2018 AgWG Conference Call

## **BMP Expert Panel Update**

T. Sexton, R. Bryant

Chairs and coordinators of on-going AgWG BMP Expert Panels provided updates on their work: Tim Sexton, VA DCR, provided an update on the Cropland Irrigation Panel and Ray Bryant, ARS, provided an update on the Agricultural Ditch Management Panel.

## *Discussion:*

- The Cropland Irrigation panel will be meeting in March to continue discussions.
- The Ditch Management Panel met last week to begin drafting recommendations for the various practices under this BMP.
- Jason Keppler: Is there a potential for an interim placeholder BMP that jurisdictions could use when developing their WIP ILLs? Related to irrigation management – I know that's a draft BMP,

and it's also a draft BMP that maps to a conservation plan that seems a bit different than what an efficiency would be for irrigation management.

- Chris Brosch: If it is mapped to conservation plans, that could present its own unique problem where it excludes us from getting both of those practices on the same acre.
- Tim Sexton: The NRCS practice is not based on an efficiency reduction. We have an NRCS representative on the committee, and we still need to continue looking at available research.
- Jason Keppler: Speaking for MD, we're actively looking at scenarios now using CAST, and these two practices specifically are missing. We've reached a certain saturation level with our traditional practices, and for us to move the needle out to 2025 we need to look at other practices. Drainage management practices would help tremendously on the Eastern Shore, and the same is true for irrigation. I know DE is in a similar situation.
- Mark Dubin: I think the issue here is how the irrigation practice is being represented in CAST, maybe not necessarily the efficiency itself. We do have a recommendation from the group on an interim efficiency that was recommended last year.
- Chris Brosch: Could we make a recommendation today to map it differently?

ACTION: CBP Staff will follow-up with Modeling Team members to explore options for modifying the interim BMP practices in CAST for irrigation and ditch management. This will be an item on the March AgWG agenda.

ACTION: Chris Brosch and Jason Keppler will coordinate with CBP Modeling Staff in order to understand how the ditch and irrigation management interim practices are handled in CAST.

- Ken Staver: N use efficiency doesn't necessarily translate to lower losses. I've seen research where there wasn't good news – and so I think there's more here than just getting through due process. There's technical questions related to how irrigation changes the timing of leaching, how yield goals go up, etc.
- Jeff Sweeney: We have this available as an interim BMP in Phase 6 CAST that can be used for planning, so I'm not sure what else we need to do.
  - Jason Keppler: The Appendix document for Phase 6 shows the BMP is currently being mapped to "Conservation Plan", which this group seems to feel is not correct. Mark's recommendation was to go back to what was approved and see if we can map it to its own BMP. The issue we run into is that we have a high level of implementation of conservation planning, and if we're stacking irrigation management on top of that, we're subject to cut-off. So I think it's appropriate to treat it as a separate BMP as opposed to a conservation planning BMP that gets lumped into that category.
  - Chris Brosch: In the Appendix, what we're reading suggests different logic to what you're saying.
  - Jeff Sweeney: The appendix is for submitting progress; not for plans.
- Ray Bryant: I would need to work offline with CBP staff, but we have some practices that we could likely provide efficiencies for.
  - Clint Gill: I remember things tracking closely with NRCS practice standards, so maybe any practice with an NRCS practice standard could be included in this.
- ACTION: During the March AgWG meeting, the expert panel chairs will provide updates on any progress made towards developing an interim BMP representation in Phase 6 CAST.

The Workgroup Chairs briefed the Workgroup on the revised version of the AgWG governance protocol based on comments received during the January 18<sup>th</sup> Conference Call.

*Discussion:*

- Jill Whitcomb: For alternate representatives, seeing as how things move quickly here, I would just like to note that it's likely going to be hard for them to come up to speed with everything that's being discussed.
  - Ed Kee: I think it would be up to the organization or the primary member to keep their at-large person informed and on-task, and go from there. I think this is more of an operational issue, and would entrust the coordinators to manage that. I'm not sure it needs to be codified in the governance document.
- Motion to approve from Jason Keppler, seconded by Gary Felton.
- Chris Brosch: The final statement on consensus making suggests the non-consensus opinion is recorded and taken to the WQGIT, but then it drops off. Do we need to spell out that the WQGIT will make the final decision based on the non-consensus recommendation?
  - Group agreed that this is addressed within the WQGIT protocol and does not need to be detailed in AgWG governance documentation.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the revised AgWG Governance Protocol document.

**BMP Verification Standards**

M. Dubin, J. Harcum

In response to CBP Partnership's interest in developing and implementing alternative approaches for the verification of agricultural BMPs, Mark Dubin, UMD, and Jon Harcum, Tetra Tech, presented the full draft recommendation report regarding the development of an alternate BMP verification evaluation standard for producer surveys, as part of the effort in seeking CBP partnership approval of alternative verification methods for use in the CBP Phase 6 modeling tools. The AgWG will have the coming month to review the draft document and submit comments and questions in preparation for a final report being presented for approval during the March 15<sup>th</sup> AgWG Conference Call.

*Discussion:*

- Bill Angstadt asked which progress run this would apply to. Mark Dubin replied that Progress 2017 was complete, so this is for Progress 2018.
- Jill Whitcomb: This was brought up to expand on the Penn State work that was done last year?
  - Steve Dressing: There's a difference in the data that's being looked at here versus the data from the last version.
  - Jill Whitcomb: My concern then is about what would and wouldn't count moving forward – so nothing aside from nutrient management plans on row crops would be able to be reported? I don't understand.
  - Jon Harcum: To some extent, I echo that comment and this is the reason to have that discussion. Whether we want to make a determination as to how accurate the numbers that go into the model need to be. We started with the most strict option, but now you need to determine where that line needs to be drawn.
- Jill Whitcomb: I'm concerned that we went through this whole thing before, now we're revisiting it and potentially adjusting what it could be in the future.

- Mark Dubin: We're working off of the AgWG decision from January 2017, and that we would evaluate that moving forward. Certainly these results are not optimal, but we're just following up on that decision made a year ago.
- Jason Kepler: Some of these are annual practices, and others are structural in nature – so my question is how NMP implementation will be accounted for in subsequent years. Or would the survey be annual?
  - Frank Schneider: For PA, our NMPs are 3-year plans.
  - Tim Sexton: These results don't necessarily correlate to what you find this year.
- Jason Kepler: If a farmer indicates they have a riparian buffer on their property – it could either be naturally occurring or deliberately planted. So it wouldn't be a land conversion in this case. So one of the challenges here is making sure that those practices meet the standard as defined by the CBP. Specifically related to nutrient management, does that include the verification that those plans were implemented? Or just that the farmer has a plan.

ACTION: Comments on the draft report should be sent to Mark Dubin ([mdubin@chesapeakebay.net](mailto:mdubin@chesapeakebay.net)) or Lindsey Gordon ([Gordon.lindsey@epa.gov](mailto:Gordon.lindsey@epa.gov)).

### **Agricultural Stormwater EPEG Recommendations**

Loretta Collins

Following a month-long AgWG review period, Loretta Collins, UMD, presented the final recommendations developed by the Agricultural Stormwater Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG) regarding agricultural stormwater management practices. Should the recommendation report be approved by the Workgroup in its current form, it will be presented to the Watershed Technical Workgroup for review at their March 1<sup>st</sup> meeting.

#### *Discussion:*

- Jim Cropper: What impervious surfaces would be captured under this practice?
  - Jill Whitcomb: I believe this would be looking at runoff from new barn post-construction separate from barnyards and feeding spaces. That was why we looked at using performance standards from USWG.
  - Jason Kepler: We have existing BMPs for roof runoff management, etc.
- Motion to approve from Gary Felton, seconded by Chris Brosch.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendation report of the Agricultural Stormwater Expert Panel Establishment Group regarding agricultural stormwater management practices.

### **Livestock and Poultry Mortality Management EPEG**

Frank Schneider

Frank Schneider, PA State Conservation Commission, presented and discussed the draft recommendation report developed by the Livestock and Poultry Mortality Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG) regarding livestock and poultry mortality management practices. The AgWG will have the coming month to review the document and submit comments and questions. The final report will be presented for approval during the March 15<sup>th</sup> AgWG Conference Call. Should the charge document be approved by the Workgroup, a call will be put forth for nominations to the Expert Panel regarding livestock and poultry mortality management practices.

**From the Field: Mercer Vu Farms**

Rick Hissong

Rick Hissong, co-owner Mercer Vu Farms Inc., discussed his experiences with BMP implementation and verification on dairy farms in both Franklin County, PA and Clarke County, VA. Mercer Vu was named Franklin County Area Development Corporation 2016 “Small Business of the Year” and received an honorable mention for Outstanding Achievement in Resource Stewardship from the Innovation Center for U.S. Dairy in 2017.

*Discussion:*

- Lindsay Thomspson: In MD, we’re experiencing the loss of dairy farms at a rapid pace. It sounds like you’ve been able to comply with regulatory requirements, and are still in business – so what do you credit to your continued economic success?
  - Rick Hissong: Early on, we brought a lot of financial experts on board to help us know our numbers.
- Ann Swanson: Regarding ag construction permits – they’re incredibly expensive. Is any part of that in VA or PA cost-shared?
  - Rick Hissong: No – I had to borrow that money.
- Barry Frantz: You mentioned P – do you anticipate soil P getting to the level where that will start limiting cropping manure spreading choices?
  - Rick Hissong; That’s why we did the manure centrifuge.
- Gary Felton: You referenced managing your relationships with your neighbors – we can’t state enough how important that is.

**Boots on the Ground**

Chesapeake Bay Commission

Marel King and Ann Swanson, Chesapeake Bay Commission, introduced and expand on the topic of technical assistance available to farmers in the watershed to help reduce and manage agricultural pollution, based on the framework proved in the Commission’s recently released publication, [Boots on the Ground: Improving Technical Assistance for Farmers.](#)

*Discussion:*

- Barry Frantz: Even if we expand what we’re doing now by 50%, will that really fix all of our problems? It’s still important to encourage farmers to implement these practices on their own, because there simply isn’t enough government assistance to do it for everyone. So I’d recommend we have a dialogue on what suite of practices will really solve these problems based on those priority maps, because it may be a different set of skills than what we’re focusing on now.

**Agricultural Research Project Proposals**

Mark Dubin

Mark Dubin, UMD, provided an overview of the development of proposed future CBP agricultural research projects to prepare for the next Phase 6 model updates in 2019, and to identify new opportunities to support Phase III WIP agricultural BMP implementation tracking, verification, and reporting. Partnership comments, suggestions, and support for the potential research projects are being requested for the draft proposals.

*Discussion:*

- Frank Schneider: How would this manure and litter sampling data be used? I think there may be bigger problems that we could address than this. Why don't we just run these statistical analyses on the sample data we already collect, instead of doing it all over again?
  - Mark Dubin: I think this would more be used to generate a verified data source on feed management systems and provide that back to PA.
  - Jill Whitcomb: The timing of this seems a bit off, because we need to identify, with the help of our industry, which BMPs they want to hone in on, and then those are the ones that we have to come back and ask for help with.
- Chris Brosch: Some of these proposals have a lot of merit, and I think there is going to be a big disparity between what projects benefit some states and those that benefit all states. In my mind, addressing the poultry and turkey questions at this point is going to have a small return for almost every state, because that data doesn't have much age yet. I think the option of fine tuning the fertilizer sales data, and looking at how non-manure resources are being allocated would be very useful.
- Jason Keppler: MD agrees with the fertilizer data suggestion. My questions are more management driven – in terms of funding, do we have a dedicated pot of funding to manage this project, and is it enough to cover all of these initiatives?
  - Mark Dubin: There's a cooperative agreement between the CBP and Virginia Tech that would be funding for these proposals. Another option is to look towards the industry to see if they'd help out.
- Chris Brosch: I think it would be useful for the states to huddle and have a discussion on the prioritization.
- Jeremy Hanson: I'd suggest if we could take this and put together a strategic plan in written form, and then we can build on that and have it documented more formally.
- Paul Bredwell: I don't think the idea of moving forward with collecting new poultry data re-opens the past data. The Poultry Litter Subcommittee report recommended more outreach to get more accurate data. We did that by going through this pilot project with the turkey population, and we were able to identify a more accurate set of data. So this is right in line with recommendations made in 2012.
- Ed Kee: I definitely support using locally-generated data if we have any doubt at all on the nationally-generated data. This discussion is good, and I would just say that the CBP really needs to listen to this group.
- Kelly Shenk: I'm wondering if we're doing an analysis of integrator data compared to NASS annual survey data, just so we understand how far off are we in using NASS?
  - Tim Sexton: We did this for turkeys in VA.
- Ann Swanson: A number of concerns with ammonia have come up, and whether we're quantifying accurately these increases related to livestock. That's coupled with the Clean Air rules, but the question is whether we're sufficiently addressing the air loads. So related to this, is there some way to better understand the ammonia emissions, and also the question of alum use?
  - Paul Bredwell: By and large, the entire poultry industry is generally using alum or PLT, and that will affect the amount of ammonia generated on farms. Overall, we're a long way of being able to quantify it.
- Ken Staver: But would we really need to estimate the amount of manure out there based on animal units -and on a potentially flawed data source- if we had a better accounting of just nutrients going out on the ground?

## At-large Election Results and Election of New Chairs

## Workgroup Chairs

Nominations to serve 2-year terms as an At-Large member on the AgWG were due to Lindsey Gordon and Loretta Collins by January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Results of the selection process were announced, and the new At-Large members were confirmed. The AgWG was asked to select and approve a new Workgroup Chair and Vice-Chair based on nominated candidates. The recommendations of the Workgroup will be submitted to the WQGIT for final partnership approval per the governance protocols.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendation of Jason Keppler (MDA) as the new Workgroup Chair and Matt Monroe (WVDEP) as the new Vice-Chair, endorsed the selected At-Large Governance Membership, and confirmed Chris Sigmund as the alternate member for Peter Hughes.

## Next meeting: Thursday, March 15th, 2018: Conference Call

### Participants:

Ed Kee	DDA Retired
Lindsay Thompson	DE-MD Agribusiness Assoc.
Loretta Collins	UMD
Mark Dubin	UMD
Lindsey Gordon	CRC
Clint Gill	DDA
Chris Brosch	DDA
Jason Keppler	MDA
Alisha Mulkey	MDA
Greg Albrecht	NYS DEC
Amanda Barber	Cortland Co SWCD
Jill Whitcomb	PA DEP
Frank Schneider	PA SCC
Tim Sexton	VA DCR
Bobby Long	VA DCR
Gary Flory	VA DEQ
Matt Monroe	WV DA
Dave Montali	WV DEP
Ann Swanson	CBC
Kelly Shenk	EPA
Peter Hughes	Red Barn Consulting Inc.
Gary Felton	UMD
Paul Bredwell	US Poultry & Egg Assoc.
Jeff Hill	LCCD
Ken Staver	UMD
Rick Hissong	Mercer Vu Farms Inc.
Barry Frantz	USDA NRCS
Denise Coleman	USDA NRCS
Bill Angstadt	Angstadt Consulting

Jim Cropper	Northeast Pasture Consortium
Ray Bryant	USDA ARS
Emily Dekar	USC
Jeff Sweeney	EPA
Ron Ohrel	ADANE
Steve Dressing	Tetra Tech
Jon Harcum	Tetra Tech

DRAFT