

AgWG Briefing

Assessing the capacity of agricultural technical providers in meeting WIP objectives for the agricultural sector

Chesapeake Bay Funders Network

April 20, 2017



Today's discussion

- Background
 - Why an assessment of technical assistance capacity for agricultural conservation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed?
- Project approach and timeline
- Initial findings from roundtable discussion conducted in 2016
- Bay-wide survey
 - Currently underway spring 2017 (May 10 deadline).

Background – Technical Assistance and the TMDL

- Getting farmers to adopt ag BMPs relies on time-intensive and relationship-based interactions with individual producers – “technical assistance”
- For the assessment, “technical assistance” or TA includes all activities associated with:
 - Outreach and recruitment of farmers
 - Planning and selection of appropriate BMPs
 - Engineering and design, and best management/conservation practice implementation
 - Practice monitoring
 - Associated administrative processes
- A range of partners help provide these services
 - USDA NRCS/FSA
 - Soil and water conservation districts
 - State agencies
 - Non-governmental organizations
 - Cooperative extension
 - Private ag and engineering consultants
- Even regulatory compliance efforts often rely on an effective network of on-the-ground technical assistance staff to assist with plan writing, compliance and inspection, etc.

Project Approach

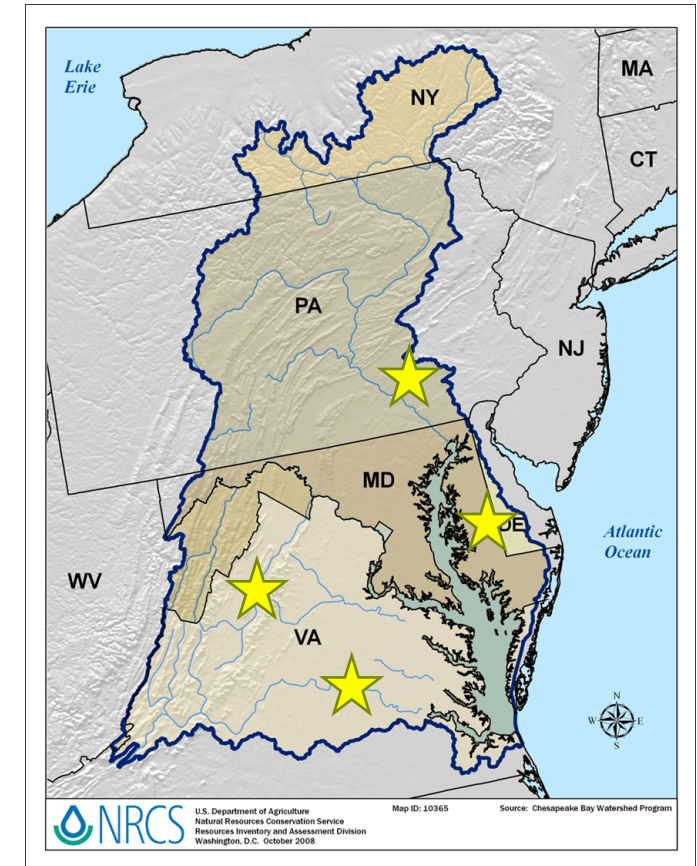
- Phase I: Regional roundtables with technical assistance providers in a handful of representative geographies of the Chesapeake Bay watershed
 - Generate **qualitative** feedback on the character and context of current technical assistance capacity challenges
 - Validate the importance of known issues and surface new issues for further investigation
- Phase II: Chesapeake Bay Watershed-wide survey to ag technical assistance organizations
 - Generate **quantitative**, watershed-wide data on existing capacity and future needs
 - Provide fodder for policy, program, and project-scale solutions
 - **Note:** Phase II is a survey, not a census of technical assistance capacity

Project Timeline

- Winter 2016: Development of regional roundtable assessment methods
- Spring 2016: Regional roundtables held
- Summer/Fall 2016: Development of watershed-wide survey instrument
- Winter 2017: Beta-testing of watershed-wide survey instrument
- Spring 2017: Administration of watershed-wide survey instrument
- Summer 2017: Data analysis and presentation of findings

Phase I: Regional Roundtables

- Conducted four regional roundtables in 2016
 - Denton, MD
 - Farmville, VA
 - Harrisonburg, VA
 - Lancaster, PA
- 8 – 12 participants each, representing USDA NRCS, state agencies, cooperative extension, local soil and water conservation districts, NGOs, and ag service providers
- Questions focused on conservation challenges for local farmers, organizational capacity for technical assistance, staffing and retention issues, etc.



Phase II: Watershed-Wide Survey

- Incorporated feedback from regional roundtables to develop online survey instrument
- Survey questions crafted to obtain detailed information on:
 - Baseline capacity
 - Needs to meet farmers and WIP needs
 - Scope and scale of contextual issues (e.g. WIP implementation, training needs, budgets)
- Invited responses at the functional organization level to capture inter- and intra-organizational dynamics
- Current invites to N = 700 across all sectors. A response rate of 28% or better is desired. (4/17 count – 93 responses).
- Utilizing known technical assistance provider networks where possible, including the State Associations for SWCDs, NFWF grantees, land trusts.

Survey Sections

1. About this survey – why the CBFN seeks the information
2. About your organization and the geography you serve.
3. Your TA team – both in budget and make-up (training, experience, positions)
4. Familiarity with Watershed Implementation Plans (WIP)
5. Coordination and partnerships – interaction with other sectors and TA providers
6. Program administration and management, time and challenges
7. Training, education, recruitment and retention of TA staff
8. By state, the types of practices your TA team most commonly provides.



Technical Assistance Chesapeake

2. Your organization and the geography you serve.

This section asks a series of questions about your organization and the geography you serve in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that you are

- * 1. Please identify the sector that you are most closely associated with as an organization that provides technical assistance to agricultural producers or agricultural land managers:

▼ Multi-County Conservation District (Soil and Water, Soil, or otherwise)	10.87%	10
▼ Single County Conservation District (Soil and Water, Soil, or otherwise)	19.57%	18
▼ Resource Conservation and Development District (RC&D)	1.09%	1
▼ USDA NRCS	6.52%	6
▼ USDA - Other	0.00%	0
▼ State Agricultural Agency	0.00%	0
▼ State Environmental Regulatory and/or Protection Agency	0.00%	0
▼ State Natural Resources Agency	1.09%	1
▼ Cooperative Extension	6.52%	6
▼ University or Other Higher Education Institution (not connected to Cooperative Extension)	0.00%	0
▼ Research Institution	1.09%	1
▼ Local Non-profit Organization (e.g. watershed group, conservancy, land trust at county or watershed level)	5.43%	5
▼ Regional Non-profit Organization (e.g. conservancy, land trust, river keeper, watershed group etc. at a multi-county or larger river watershed level)	4.35%	4
▼ Bay-wide Non-profit Organization (e.g. an organization that specifically serves the Chesapeake Bay geography)	4.35%	4
▼ National Non-profit Organization (e.g. an organization that operates nationally but delivers technical assistance within the Chesapeake Bay geography)	3.26%	3
▼ Private Sector - Individual Agri-Consultant (agronomic, crops, soils, nutrient management and other conservation plans)	17.39%	16
▼ Private Sector - Multiple employees - Agri-Consultant (agronomic, crops, soils, nutrient management and other conservation plans)	11.96%	11
▼ Private Sector - Individual - Engineer	2.17%	2
▼ Private Sector - Multiple employees Engineer	4.35%	4

31. **NEW YORK** For New York, the following practices are a part of the Phase II Watershed Implementation Plan. Please identify the frequency with which you and your organization work with producers on these practices.

	Always (required by the state)	Often (weekly or monthly)	Occasionally (quarterly)	Rarely (once every year or two)	Never
Enhanced Nutrient Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nutrient Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Decision Agriculture	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conservation Plans	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cover Crops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conservation-Tillage	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Continuous No-Till	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dairy Manure/Poultry Litter Injection	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tree Planting	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Forest Buffers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grass Buffers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Stream Access Control with Fencing (Grass Buffers)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Non Urban Stream Restoration	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Land Retirement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Survey Link

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/TAChesBay>