

Meeting Minutes
October 17th, 2019
10:00 AM-12:00 PM
Conference Call

Summary of Actions and Decisions:

- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the meeting minutes from September.
- **Action:** Contact Jeff Sweeney (sweeney.jeff@epa.gov) with further questions or data requests on Ag Census 2017: Notable Trends.
- **Action:** Loretta Collins will work with CBPO staff to draft a simple reporting template for reporting identified technical assistance gaps in the final Phase III WIPs.

Workgroup Areas of Focus

Accounting & Reporting • Implementation • Innovation
Data & Modeling • CBP Assignments

Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes

Workgroup Chairs

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the meeting minutes from September.

Data & Modeling

Ag Census 2017: Notable Trends (30 min)

Jeff Sweeney

Jeff Sweeney, EPA CBP, returned to the AgWG to present adjustments to the 2017 Ag Census trends emerging from the 2017 data release following his July presentation to the AgWG.

- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: What occurs with the counties that are partially in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed?
 - Jeff Sweeney: We calculate pounds of nitrogen per acre from the county data and that is what the model uses.
- Paul Bredwell: Why would MD trend down when all other states are trending up?
 - Jeff Sweeney: These projections are based on annual numbers. This projection method uses a greater weight on recent years which emphasizes 2017-2018. The trend for that time period in MD is downward.
- Paul Bredwell: Since we are getting data every year instead of every 5 years, are we still using the double exponential smoothing?
 - Jeff Sweeney: Yes, we will use that projection method for another few years since the data is released at least a year after the date. These numbers will be used for the 2-year milestone period, and then will be adjusted using the new annual numbers.
- Mark Dubin: We originally used double exponential smoothing to address the 5-year gaps in census data. Using this method will annual data may look different. I wonder if this approach picks up more volatility over time.

- Jeff Sweeney: It may, although it focuses more on slope than the raw numbers.
- Jeremy Hanson clarified that for broilers, the data includes 2018, while for others it does not include 2018.
- Jeremy Daubert: When will 2019 monitoring data be available?
 - Jeff: 2019 data will be incorporated sometime next year since it will be released in the spring. If you follow the [link](#) to the CAST documentation, it shows how weighted regression is done. The [USGS Chesapeake Bay website](#) has a lot of helpful information.
- Ted Tesler: Was there a change in definitions of beef and other cattle? I'm wondering if the changes in cattle are due to reporting changes or definition changes.
 - Ruth Cassily: In Appendix B of the Ag Census it describes three definition changes to cattle, so it may be because of that.
- Kelly Shenk: You mentioned the new projections are not used in the Phase III WIPs but will be used for progress. Can you explain further what will happen if projections result in a higher load prediction in 2025?
 - Jeff Sweeney: If change occurs by bringing in new data that is higher/lower in manure nutrients, the loads would likely go up or down a bit. The new amount would be reflected in 2020 progress. Jurisdictions are gauged against what is written in their WIPs, not these projections. This is strictly for the next 2-year milestone period.
- **Action:** Contact Jeff Sweeney (sweeney.jeff@epa.gov) with further questions or data requests on Ag Census 2017: Notable Trends.

Implementation

Approaches to Streamlining Technical Assistance (45 min)

K. Hughes Evans and C. Rivera

Carol Rivera, NRCS, provided a brief overview of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake, led a discussion regarding efforts made to engage in stakeholder dialogue on optimizing the various sources of ag conservation funding among federal, state, and private funders in light of the call for proposals from the RCPP.

- Kelly Shenk: Every year we have states applying to RCPP and I'm excited to see you specifically note that federal funding from non-USGS agencies are applicable. We are working with EPA and lawyers on how we can use funding as partner contributions from EPA.
 - Carol Rivera: With our conservation innovation grants you can "double dip" with RCPP. I don't want to get more specific until the final rules comes out in December.
- Loretta Collins: Who are the eligible partners or organizations that can participate?
 - Carol Rivera: On page 8 and 9 of the announcement there is a list of eligible partners.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: We have tried to bring together state agency partners responsible for the agricultural portions of the WIPs with NRCS to accomplish goals set in the WIPs through RCPP. We are trying to be strategic about what we can accomplish in the next 5 years. At the AgWG, there is opportunity to make sure jurisdictions and partners view RCPP as a mechanism to get more funding.

Review of Feedback Related to Technical Assistance (20 min)

Loretta Collins

Loretta Collins, UMD, reviewed comments received from the AgWG regarding technical assistance (TA) over the summer. Loretta asked the AgWG for feedback on the capacity of the AgWG to address TA challenges. The CBP Water Quality Goal Implementation Team has requested input from the AgWG on how to address TA challenges moving forward.

- Marel King: I think we need more common language and definitions. In addition to financing, we need authority to hire and capacity to get the work done at the state or county level.

- Jason Keppler: Establishing a baseline may help answer these questions because each state handles things differently including how TA is distributed, where people are located and at which agencies.
- Loretta Collins: I want to use a template that states fill out to find comparisons and contrasts with challenges and see where RCPP may fit in to address those issues. We must start with an understanding of the challenges.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: Looking at the WIPs, does the cost to remove “x” pound include TA money used to pay for the people or just the practice? There are also differences in types of technical assistance that is a gap in several states.
- Jeremy Daubert: in VA, we run into time issues with training and maintaining employees. It’s difficult to line up training and implementing practices within a 1-year grant period. Realistically, we need the TA a couple years before project implementation.
- Ken Staver: Is there a sense of how much implementation money goes unspent due to a shortage of TA?
 - Kristen Saacke-Blunk: Using examples like RCPP or Farm Bill programs, the TA may not be the limiting factor, but the ability to recruit for it may be the issue. Unless we have proactive recruiting to get FA funds in the location, there is a bottle neck issue.
 - Ken Staver: It seems like there should be some assessment of where the need causes a lack of progress. Where is the bottleneck specifically?
- Jason Keppler: I see the importance in developing this survey, what can come from it that the AgWG can do?
 - Loretta Collins: Part of the process is reporting back to the WQGIT on what we can tangibly do as the AgWG and move forward from there.
 - Kristen Saacke-Blunk: It also could help states provide clearer guidance to partners that secure funding. States can be in a good position to meet priority WIP practices if they reference this when applying for funds.
- **Action:** Loretta Collins will work with CBPO staff to draft a simple reporting template for reporting identified technical assistance gaps in the final Phase III WIPs.

New Business & Announcements (15 min)

- Nitrogen fixation value for the *other haylage, silage, and greenchop* crop category changed to 30.24 lbs N per acre.
- Agricultural Ditch Management Expert Panel Report
 - The comment deadline has passed. The report will be coming to the AgWG at a future meeting for approval.
- Wetland Expert Panel Report
 - The Wetland Workgroup and WTWG did not have consensus. PA has concerns that we are actively working to resolve. Hopefully the report will come to the AgWG in December, pending approval.
- Update on Cropland Irrigation Expert Panel recommendations:
 - **Decision:** The Management Board (MB) decided on an approach that would allow Delaware to petition the Agriculture Workgroup (with input from STAC and STAR) to open a new expert panel once it documented new relevant science. Note: A decision on whether to approve the Expert Panel’s report will be raised during the October MB meeting.
 - Jason Keppler will seek approval at today’s Management Board meeting at 12:30 PM.
- Upcoming public comment period for FSA CRP/CREP program

- New rules expected by the end of the month.
- Post-rule release education and discussion forum webinar is tentatively scheduled for November 6. More information to follow.
- Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)
 - The 2018 Farm Bill requires NRCS to develop a regulation for RCPP. NRCS plans to publish the RCPP interim final rule in late fall or early winter. Upon release of the interim final rule, NRCS will accept public comments on the contents of the rule.
 - The application period for RCPP is open from September 3, 2019 through December 3, 2019.

Next Meeting:

Nov 21st, 2019: Conference Call → 10AM – 12PM

Pending Topics:

Accounting & Reporting: Resource Improvement BMPs- Are they being accounted for at full potential?

• BMP crosswalk updates

Implementation: Strategizing technical assistance • Addressing the gaps- What the Phase III WIPs can tell us

Innovation: Hemp- What are nutrient & sediment implications? • Furthering research to update nutrient fertility recommendation- Why the time is now and where is the support?

Data & Modeling: Data input updates for animal; fertilizer sales; soil phosphorus • USGS- Latest information tying water quality trends to BMP implementation

CBP Assignments: Adapting to climate change in the ag sector

Meeting Participants:

Jason Keppler	MDA
Matt Monroe	WV DA
Loretta Collins	UMD
Allie Wagner	CRC
Clint Gill	DDA
Greg Albrecht	NY State Dept. of Ag and Markets
Tim Sexton	VA DCR
Seth Mullins	VA DCR
Marel King	CBC
Cindy Shreve	WV DA
Kelly Shenk	EPA
Adam Lyon	MDA
Elizabeth Hoffman	MDA
Paul Bredwell	U.S. Poultry & Egg
Kristen Saacke-Blunk	Headwaters, LLC
Ted Tesler	PA DEP
Jeremy Daubert	VT
Kristen Hughes Evans	Sustainable Chesapeake
Ken Staver	UMD
Emily Dekar	USC
Gary Flory	VA DEQ

Carol Rivera	NRCS
Ruth Cassilly	UMD
Jeremy Hanson	VT
Dave Graybill	PA Farm Bureau
Mark Dubin	UMD

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