

Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)
Meeting Minutes
March 21st, 2024
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Meeting Materials

Summary of Actions and Decisions

Decision: The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the February 2024 call.

Action: For those interested in joining the Chesapeake Agroforestry Network, contact Ruth Cassilly and Katie Brownson (rcassilly@chesapeakebay.net; Katherine.brownson@usda.gov).

Introduction

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

Kathy Brasier, AgWG Chair

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants - *Please enter name and affiliation under "Participants" or in "Chat" box*
- Acknowledging Jackie Pickford for her time with and service to the AgWG.
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the February 2024 call.

Implementation/Accounting & Reporting

10:10 **Supporting Agroforestry Implementation in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed – 60 minutes (presentation and Q&A)**

Ruth Cassilly, UMD; Katie Brownson, USFS-CBPO

Support for the implementation of agroforestry practices continues to increase in an effort to enhance agricultural climate resilience and mitigation. USDA has allocated \$60 million dollars for agroforestry implementation as part of the Climate-Smart Commodities grant effort and our Chesapeake Bay Forest Restoration Strategy advocates increasing agroforestry practices to provide multiple co-benefits for farms and the Chesapeake Bay. Katie and Ruth presented an overview of agroforestry practices in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, including current status, benefits, implementation challenges, and efforts to improve capacity and incentives for implementation in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

Discussion

Alex Echols (in chat): What kind of chestnut are you promoting? The GM natives are still not approved for release. Probably don't want Asian varieties proliferated.

Ruth Cassilly: I think it was a hybrid, but I don't know off the top of my head. I need to double check what they are using. Thank you for that note, though.

Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA (in chat): Glad we're talking about this, a suggestion as we continue to explore this topic - Dr. Leigh Archer just presented at the Delmarva Soil Summit about her work researching orchard crops and agroforestry systems.

<https://rodaleinstitute.org/about/staff/leigh-archer-phd/>

Alex Echols (in chat): Not hearing much discussion from farmers. A real gap in our group.

Nick Hepfl (in chat): The Pennsylvania ACAP program provides a funding source to implement Silvopasture and will be reporting projects that are implemented through that program.

Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA (in chat): Might consider prescribed grazing (528) as an element of the system, from a parallel crediting perspective.

Ruth Cassilly (in chat): Thanks Elizabeth! In my rush I neglected to mention that is yet another way to multiply the benefits of this system

Jim Riddell (in chat): I would encourage CAST inclusion for sure of silvopasture- as VA NRCS recognizes and also there is a lack of shade bmp cost-share from va DCR program-all the while most stream exclusion - fences out the trees along with the stream.

Katie Brownson: That's helpful input, thank you.

Nick Hepfl (in chat): Could a credit framework be explored, similar to the urban tree canopy sqft/tree credit system? 144 sqft/tree?

Katie Brownson: Potentially. Probably not as urban tree canopy BMPs entirely, but we could look at the approach and see if we could do something similar.

Olivia Devereux: I am very excited about this presentation. I know it's important to get into CAST for tracking WQ benefits, but we should also look at impact on other living resources and make sure it's included in tracking progress towards other outcomes in the Watershed Agreement.

Katie Brownson: I know NRCS has some info about practice implementation but it's not complete. Implementation tracking is pretty fragmented right now.

Eric Hughes: Katie, you mentioned a literature review? Who will be conducting that?

Katie Brownson: We haven't figured that out yet. Perhaps the agroforestry group, perhaps CBP staff.

Kathy Brasier: Can you talk more about the agroforestry group and how often you meet?

Katie Brownson: We meet quarterly. Next one is in late April. It's pretty informal, let us know if you want to be on the list.

Dave Graybill (in chat): pasture practices are complicated. The video showed well managed pastures. over grazing would highly impact the practice.

Katie Brownson: Good point. That's probably true of many of our BMPs.

Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA (in chat): Sometimes we have not reported these practices because they didn't get a WQ benefit, but that does not mean they're not happening - we just need to make that effort to capture them better moving forward. Like Olivia mentioned, we are expanding our efforts in many ways moving forward in order to better account for all the benefits these systems bring.

Kristen Hughes Evans (she/her) (in chat): Can they be included in CAST as tree planting?

Katie Brownson: If we count it as ag tree planting, we have to justify that it's a conversion to a forest for WQ purposes, which is why we need to dig a bit into the literature. My instinct is that they aren't functioning as a full forest, but I'm not sure. Need to look into it.

Ruth Cassilly: NRCS defines agroforestry as management of an area with trees. They don't stipulate that it's newly planted trees on pasture. NRCS has said they are redefining that, but it might take a while.

Katie Brownson: I think NRCS might track those two forms of agroforestry separately.

Kristen Hughes Evans (she/her) (in chat): Thanks, that makes sense. Do we need an expert panel for this?

Katie Brownson: I'm not sure. An expert panel would be desirable, but it depends if something comes out of the EPA-USDA task force. Right now we'll look at the literature and see what plays out with the Task Force to see if we need to pursue an expert panel.

Eric Hughes (in chat): Agree with Katie - literature review is a good first step

Olivia Devereux (in chat): USGS provides the NRCS data (easements, cost-share, and CTA) to states in a way that protects PII. The data include all practices, not just those that are approved by CBP for WQ benefits. Some states report all the practices, other states stick to just those that are approved for WQ. We can track all practices, but only credit in CAST for WQ. Other Goals/Outcomes can track the data for credit.

Jenna Schueler, Chesapeake Bay Foundation (in chat): Silvopasture tree density seem to range a lot (30-70%) which makes sense since different producers have different goals for their trees (shade, fruit crop, etc.). I feel this would complicate trying to standardize this into the model.

Nick Hepfl (in chat): This is what made me consider the credit/tree system. Higher density will result in more credit.

Jim Riddell (in chat): So as farmers add stream exclusion with incentives—there are consequences that prescribed grazing and silvo can mitigate as part of the conservation effort.

Amanda Barber (in chat): I do think that silvopasture is a forest, planting trees on pasture is something else.

Amanda Barber (in chat): I think my point is that one is managed as a forest, one is managed as a pasture.

Dave Graybill (in chat): you mentioned wildlife in your presentation. No expansion of that wording was given. I think some folks have used marginal areas as grazing/hunting areas and have even looked at hunting leases. i.e. bowhunting for deer. Can silvoculture include hunting lease activities?

Ruth Cassilly: Great question. I'm not sure. Some of the species that are used would draw wildlife. A great co-benefit to include as well. The same thing could happen with windbreaks and other practices as well.

Alex Echols (in chat): Wooded savannas are superior hunting habitat. Documented in wildlife management literature and recommendations.

Action: For those interested in joining the Chesapeake Agroforestry Network, contact Ruth Cassilly and Katie Brownson (rcassilly@chesapeakebay.net; Katherine.brownson@usda.gov).

Innovation/Accounting & Reporting

11:10 Update: Remote Sensing Verification of Conservation Tillage BMPs in Pennsylvania – 10 minutes (presentation and Q&A)

Ashley Hullinger & Scott Heidel, PA DEP; Tom Howard, Resolve Hydro

Ashley Hullinger and Scott Heidel, PA DEP, provided an update on Pennsylvania's project focused on remote sensing verification of conservation tillage BMPs.

Pennsylvania (PA) has developed a Phase 1 contract with ResolveHydro. The Bay Program Office has reviewed the contract and provided comments. The Phase 2 and 3 contracts will incorporate their comments. Also, PA is forming an Advisory Committee with jurisdictional representation to ensure the final project methodology and recommendations can be replicated in other states across the Bay. Ashley, Scott, and Tom will return to the AgWG in May for another presentation.

Data & Modeling

11:20 Preliminary discussion: Use of Agricultural Industry Data in Phase 7 Modeling Tools – 25 minutes (presentation and Q&A)

Mark Dubin, UMD; Paul Bredwell, U.S. Poultry and Egg Association

Mark and Paul provided an introduction to available opportunities for using agricultural industry data in the Phase 7 suite of modeling tools. Mark and Paul will return to the AgWG at a future meeting for further discussion.

Discussion

Olivia Devereux (in chat): For clarity, is this a decisional item? Has the AMT approved this approach for data collection/source?

Jackie Pickford (in chat): No, this is not a decision item. Informational only at this time

Eric Hughes (in chat): Hi Olivia - no decision item for this

Olivia Devereux (in chat): Is the VT Turkey Manure Nutrient data available, or just the verification guidance on how to perform the statistical sampling method?

Mark Dubin: The VT turkey report does include specific values that were collected and analyzed for various types of turkeys and production methods. We looked at those as a weighted average value. The model only represents one turkey type because of NASS, so we had to break that down into a single value for Phase 6. It was based on the population numbers we collected. It's a statistically valid number though.

Olivia Devereux (in chat): UM/CBPO Commercial Layer Production Research Project---This is actually the project where I don't see the data, just the citation to the statistical sampling method recommended for verification. I may have missed it in Mark's presentation.

Mark Dubin: The thrust of that was looking at population values and comparing population of birds with what was being reported by NASS over time in Adams and York counties. There was also some work on manure generation and nutrient values too but that was not the main focus. That didn't move forward with approval for Phase 6. We want to look at it again for Phase 7.

Clint Gill (in chat): Yeah, I can find the turkey one, but not the commercial layer

Paul Bredwell: The industry has been involved with this data collection process and have put money into it, about \$100,000. We have a level of commitment for the accuracy of this information.

Mark Dubin: There was not a final report that was produced for the layer project because there was a decision from the AgWG not to move forward with it. We gave a few presentations to the AgWG that cover the information, though.

Clint Gill (in chat): Found most of it Mark, the supporting documentation is in the August 2021 AgWG <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/agriculture-workgroup-conference-call-august-2021>

Post-meeting note: Mark Dubin provided the following reference materials on presentations to the partnership regarding Hillandale Farms production data:

- AgWG Presentations
 - [January 2022](#)
 - [February 2022](#)
 - [March 2022](#)
 - [November 2021](#)
 - [October 2021](#)
 - [August 2021](#)
- Watershed Technical Workgroup (WTWG) Presentations
 - [July 2021](#)
 - [August 2021](#)

Wrap-up

11:45 New Business, Announcements & Updates – 15 minutes

- **Agricultural Modeling Team**
 - Tom Butler, Coordinator of the AMT, provided a brief update on the group's latest activities. The group has been focusing on crop yields, land uses, calculation of manure acres, etc.
- **Staffing Updates & Housekeeping**
 - Thank you, Jackie!
 - Plan for AgWG staffing moving forward will be discussed.
- **PSC Updates**
 - Agriculture Advisory Committee
 - USDA-EPA Task Force on Crediting Chesapeake Bay Conservation Investments
- **In-Person Meeting Poll**
 - Overview of the results of the in-person meeting poll and brief summary of the next steps that will be taken toward holding a meeting in person.
 - Reach out to Eric if you have suggestions on in-person meeting venues.
- **Ag BMPs and Remote Sensing**
- **Joint Climate Resiliency, Urban Stormwater, and Modeling WG Meeting**
 - The AgWG has been invited to a [joint virtual meeting](#) with CBP's Climate Resiliency, Urban Stormwater, and Modeling Workgroups on **April 4th, 9:00-3:00**. The purpose of this meeting is to
 - 1) support information transfer and facilitate a collective understanding in the opening discussion of the 2027-2028 climate assessment using the Phase 7 Suite of models, and
 - 2) facilitate discussion and provide an opportunity for partners to offer feedback on priorities, remaining needs, and how best to coordinate efforts.
 - Attendance is optional, but AgWG members who are interested in this topic are encouraged to join. This will be an informational meeting *only*; there are no decision items on the agenda.
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Request for Proposals**
 - **Small Watershed Grants (SWG) Program**
 - More information can be found on [NFWF's SWG website](#).
 - Proposals due April 3rd, 2024.
 - **Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) Program**
 - More information can be found on [NFWF's WILD website](#)
 - Proposals due April 10th, 2024.
- **Other Announcements?**
 - Send to Jackie Pickford (Pickford.Jacqueline@epa.gov) and Eric Hughes (Hughes.Eric@epa.gov) for inclusion in "Recap" email.

12:00 Review of Action and Decision Items; Adjourn

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 18th, 2024: 10AM-12PM, Call-in Zoom

Participants

Jackie Pickford, CRC
Eric Hughes, EPA-CBPO
Kathy Braiser, PSU
Caitlin Grady, GWU
Tom Butler, EPA-CBPO
Clint Gill, DE
Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
Greg Albrecht, NY
Brady Seeley, PA
Hunter Landis, VA
Matt Monroe, WV
Anna Killius, CBC
Dave Graybill, Farm Bureau
Jenna Schueler, CBF
Paul Bredwell, US Poultry & Egg
RO Britt, Smithfield Foods
Emily Dekar, USC
Jim Riddell, VA Cattlemen's Association
Nick Hepfl, HRG
Nicole Christ, MDE
Tyler Trostle, PA DEP
Alex Echols, Campbell Foundation
Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting

Hannah Sanders EPA R3
Nick Miller, MDA
Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
Emily Heller, EPA, CBPO, Grants Team
Tom Howard, Resolve Hydro
Auston Smith - EPA
Leah Martino, EPA
Scott Heidel, PA DEP
Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake
and NFWF Field Liaison
Katie Brownson, USFS
Mark Dubin. UME/CBPO
Amanda Barber, NY
Ruth Cassilly, UMD-CBPO
Katie Brownson, USFS
Dylan Burgevin, MDE
Jeff Hill, YCCD
Kate Bresaw, PA DEP
Mark Nardi
Patrick Thompson
Jeff Sweeney, EPA
Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters
Marel King, CBC

****Common Acronyms**

AgWG- [Agriculture Workgroup](#)
AMT- [Agricultural Modeling Team](#) (Phase 7)
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
EPA- [United States] Environmental Protection Agency
FSA – Farm Service Agency
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
NFWF – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
OpTIS – Operational Tillage Information System
PSC – [Principals' Advisory Committee](#) (CBP)
PSU- Penn State University
SWCD – Soil and Water Conservation Districts
SWG – Small Watershed Grant Program
WQGIT- [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)
WILD – Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense
UMD- University of Maryland
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
USGS – United States Geological Survey