

Best Management Practice Verification Ad-Hoc Action Team

Task Statement

The Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions have raised several questions and concerns related to Best Management Practice (BMP) verification implementation and reporting. These questions (e.g., credit duration¹ and lifespan² of BMPs) were highlighted by the Water Quality Goal Implementation Team (WQGIT) in a letter to the Management Board in September 2019. To address these questions, several issues and associated actions were described during a Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) partnership BMP verification meeting in January 2020. An outcome of that meeting was the Management Board charging the WQGIT with convening an ad-hoc action team to discuss the Partnership's verification efforts including BMP credit duration and lifespan.

The ad-hoc BMP verification action team will represent the WQGIT signatory representatives, WQGIT at-large members, source sector workgroups, advisory committees, and include national experts on verification. All entities listed above may, but are not required to, have an active voting member who represents them as part of this team. It is critical, however, that the WQGIT approves the action team's charge, timeline, and deliverables.

The ad-hoc BMP verification action team will:

1. **Explore alternatives to BMP re-verification.** What is the potential for partial credit, or variable credit through time? Animal Waste Management Systems may serve as a case study to consider this issue. An important component of this exploration should include a primer on the purpose of the watershed model.
2. **Revisit credit duration.** What is the best available information to determine BMP credit duration for both current and new BMPs? What multiple lines of evidence can be used to update BMP-specific credit durations? There is an opportunity to re-assess the established credit durations and update them using multiple lines of evidence (e.g., more up-to-date data, lessons learned during preceding years, and best professional judgement for how best to use the evidence, including the most up-to-date Expert Panel reports with accompanying appendices).
3. **Explore lesser-used approaches to BMP verification.** As outlined in the Partnership's BMP Verification Framework, there are several approaches to verifying BMPs that are not being used to their full potential. For example, given developments in remote sensing, can BMPs be verified remotely using new technologies such as smart sensors and drones? Other opportunities could include the self-reporting of on-the-ground BMPs by farmers, businesses, NGOs, and other stakeholders or BMP verification using performance-based metrics or presumed compliance principles.

1. Credit Duration – A policy term; The length of time (in years) a CBP BMP is credited towards TMDL (water quality) goals before it must be re-verified to ensure proper function.

2. Lifespan – A technical term; The length of time (in years) that a BMP is expected to function as intended after initial implementation.

4. **Review recommendations from ongoing BMP verification work being undertaken by the Chesapeake Bay Program.** Multiple issues (e.g., timing of updates for BMP verification plans, data collection, verification expectations, and verification costs into the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool) and actions (e.g., charge the Watershed Technical Workgroup to develop options for updating and submitting changes to jurisdictions' Quality Assurance Project Plans) were noted by the Management Board during the BMP verification meeting in January 2020. Many of these issues have been directed to the partnership's Watershed Technical Workgroup. As verification recommendations advance for approval, the ad-hoc action team will review those recommendations and ensure the recommendations are consistent with the CBP partnership's verification framework. Upon review, the ad-hoc team's recommendations will move forward to be reviewed by the appropriate technical workgroup before final approval by the WQGIT.

The timeline for the ad-hoc action team is two years and the team will meet once a month. As recommended actions or updates are finalized by the ad-hoc team over the two-year period, they will be raised to the source-sector workgroup followed by the WQGIT for consideration and potential approval. In accordance with the annual timeline established by the CBP partnership for model and QAPP updates, updates to BMP protocols approved by the WQGIT will be incorporated into the CBP verification framework and associated QAPPs as time and resources allow.

Based on the information gathered on the four topics above, the ad-hoc action team will produce recommendations and options to the WQGIT and broader CBP partnership to ensure BMP verification is transparent, evidence-based, and takes a life cycle approach that allows for learning by doing. Any recommended changes to the CBP partnership's 2014 Basinwide BMP Verification Framework document will follow the partnership's review and approval procedures that are outlined in that Framework document.

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