DRAFT 11/5/24

Planning for the Future of the Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

At the October AgWG meeting, the AgWG leadership team initiated the process of developing a list of the group's priorities for the coming two years. This document will be regularly updated to capture workgroup participant feedback and discussion related to the planning process through February. This document will be considered a draft until it is formally reviewed by the workgroup.

Goal: Identify AgWG Priorities for 2025-26

The role of the AgWG has evolved over time, with changes in what the group discusses and produces being influenced by broader Chesapeake Bay Program partnership activities (namely, CB model development). The CBP is now entering a new period of change, with the Beyond 2025 effort potentially shifting program-wide priorities and an Agriculture Advisory Committee possibly being established. These changes, and the desire expressed by several AgWG members to reevaluate how workgroup time is spent, were the impetuses for this effort to identify the group's priorities for the coming two years. In February, the group will meet in person to formally prioritize proposed discussion topics and deliverables and draft a plan to help guide workgroup activities through 2026.

Planning Timeline

	October	November	December	January	February
What is the purpose and role of the AgWG moving forward?					
Discussion Topic	Brainstorm areas of interest, future deliverables	CESR Report	*Beyond 2025	*Agriculture Advisory Cmte and other CBP entities	Prioritization of interests, focus areas, at in-person meeting
Guiding Questions	What would you like to see the AgWG accomplish in the next two years?	How should findings presented in the CESR report influence the direction of the AgWG?	How might Beyond 2025 influence the direction of the AgWG?	How do we engage with the AAC, other groups, to best support our purpose and goals?	
Suggested Reading		CESR Report in Brief CESR Report, Chapters 3, 6.5	TBA	TBA	

*Information availability may impact which topic is covered first. If we determine that, for example, more information about Beyond 2025 will be available very close to the December meeting, we may choose to discuss B25 in January to ensure the meeting is as informative as possible.

Distillation of Mentimeter Feedback

Learning: The AgWG should serve as a forum for information exchange among stakeholders. The AgWG should be a platform where farmers' voices are amplified, and we should learn, directly from the folks "on the ground", what does and does not work to help us move toward our water quality goals.

What should we strive to accomplish? (Menti Question 2)

Evaluate innovative implementation strategies	Support localized water quality monitoring to determine impact of practices	Support increased implementation of effective BMPs
Share programs/policies effective in conservation and restoration	Identify what works well and build on successes	

Which topics should we discuss? (Menti Question 3)

Farmer input	Challenges facing small farms	Industry trends
Partnership beyond TA	Lessons Learned	On-farm water mgmt

Leading: As the only CBP decision-making body focused solely on agriculture-related topics, a unique opportunity exists for the AgWG to provide leadership on ag issues. The AgWG should work with other CBP entities and support existing initiatives to ensure meaningful representation of ag stakeholders in CBP activities. The AgWG should host discussions with folks advancing cutting-edge, innovative ag research, technology, stakeholder engagement programs, and more.

What should we strive to accomplish?

Provide leadership in Beyond 2025 effort (X2)	Collaborate with Agriculture Advisory Committee (X2)	Provide *fair* recommendations to the ag community
Support sustainable agriculture (X4)	Explore cutting-edge research, technology, and programs (X3)	

Which topics should we discuss?

Climate resiliency (X2)	Farm resiliency (profit, health) (X2)	Nutrient use efficiency (X2)
Edge-of-field studies	Water quantity monitoring	Pay-for-performance/-outcomes models (X2)
Agroforestry	Carbon cycling	Farmland conservation

Improving: The AgWG remains responsible for identifying, defining, quantifying, and incorporating pollutant reduction and conservation practices into the CBP decision support system (including CBP modeling tools). We should dedicate time to thinking about improving what currently exists.

What should we strive to accomplish?

Validate/improve model assumptions through a focus on BMP verification.	Create policies/programs that minimize admin. burden on states	Add additional NRCS BMPs to model toolbox
Establish adequate crediting for implemented practices	Accurately model real-world processes and outcomes	

Which topics should we discuss?

BMP Verification (X4)	BMP Valuation (X2)	Credit/Data Loss (X2)
Stream exclusion/pasture fence (X3)	Liquid manure incorporation (X2)	Down-scaling model
Data Accuracy	Nutrient Applications	Legacy nutrients

Menti Results: "Clean" Version

Question 2 – From your perspective/position, what do you most want the AgWG to accomplish?

Leadership for beyond 2025; what do we need to do to meet ag nonpoint source pollution reduction goals?
Continue looking at innovative implementation strategies.
Contribute expertise to the newly to-be formed Ag Advisory Committee. Rethinking our contributions to beyond 2025.
Support more localized water quality monitoring to determine the impact of conservation practices.
Provide recommendations that are fair and reasonable for agriculture in the watershed.
An examination of nutrient mass imbalance across the CBP including economic barriers or reasons for the imbalance, ways to approach the issue that support regenerative ag and local food production economy.
Reduce nutrient loads, adapt to climate change and make farms sustainable.
More work on ag conservation, and specifically supporting small/medium diverse farm operations. Keeping farms in farm use while also reducing pollution and keeping them economically viable.
Better understanding of how our efforts in ag have impacted those downstream.
Validate or improve on the assumptions the CB model uses through BMP verification in each state.
Create less burdensome policies and programs that will increase our ability to achieve conservation by minimizing administrative burdens on the states.
Increased implementation of existing, effective BMPs (e.g., livestock exclusion and buffers)
Accurately represent real-world processes and outcomes in the watershed model.
Sharing programs and polices that have been effective in environmental conservation and restoration - much like the information that Hunter Frame shared today - that can inform programs, policies/regs.
Work collaboratively with new Ag Advisory Group. Can offer technical assistance, and also ground-truth ideas with them.
Find what is working well and build on those successes.
Take steps toward "sustainability", and in terms for the bay (e.g., water quality, planting more trees, doing agroforestry, hear what our farmers need).
As part of CESR and Beyond 2025, add existing NRCS practices to the toolbox that are recognized already, utilized in their efforts towards wildlife habitat programs and climate-smart ag.
Adequate crediting for implemented practices.
Nutrient legacies.

Question 3 – What topics or issues would you want to see the workgroup work on?

Ag Climate Work
Agroforestry
BMP Clarification

BMP Valuation X2
BMP Verification/verification bottleneck X4
Carbon Cycling
Climate Resiliency X2
Conservation of Farmland
Difficult Problems
Downscaling Model
Edge-of-Field Studies
Farm Resiliency (Maximize Farm Profit and Health) X2
Farmer Input
Improve Data Accuracy
Industry Trends
Lessons Learned
Liquid Manure Incorporation/NP Losses X2
Lost Data/Credit X2
Water Quantity Monitoring
Nutrient Applications
Nutrient Legacies
Nutrient Use Efficiency X2
On-Farm Water Management
Opportunities
Partnership Beyond TA
Pay-for-Performance/-Outcomes Models X2
New Research and Technology X3
Small Farms
Stream Exclusion, Pasture Fence/Buffers X3
Sustainable Agriculture X4