Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)
Meeting Minutes
February 20th, 2025
9:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Meeting Materials

Summary of Actions and Decisions

Decision: The AgWG approved the minutes from the January AgWG meeting.

Action: Eric Hughes, AgWG Coordinator, will use the successes, challenges, and feedback outlined by the state and ag stakeholder panelists to inform the list of topics of interest for the AgWG to pursue over the next two years. This list will be distributed to the group upon its completion and discussed at a subsequent meeting.

Meeting Minutes

9:30 – 9:40 - Opening Remarks

Kathy took roll, and meeting participants were asked to enter their name and affiliation in the Teams "chat". January AgWG meeting minutes were reviewed, and approval was requested. The purpose of and agenda for the meeting was reviewed with the group.

Decision: The AgWG approved the minutes from the January AgWG meeting.

9:40 – 9:45 – Membership Update

Kathy Brasier, AgWG Chair, named the confirmed 2025-26 AgWG at-large members.

9:45 – 10:00 – Planning Recap and Updates

Eric reviewed the steps taken in the workgroup's planning process over the past several months and discussed procedural updates resulting from the shift from a hybrid to entirely virtual meeting.

10:00 – 11:00 – Discussion: Implementation in the Jurisdictions

The Agriculture Workgroup is responsible for supporting progress toward the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement's 2025 WIP Outcome. The Bay jurisdictions developed Watershed Implementation Plans (WIPs) as roadmaps for how they, in partnership with federal and local governments, would achieve their Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) allocations. The group heard from jurisdictional representatives on what has been done to make progress toward the WIP targets: what has worked well for the jurisdictions, and the challenges that have been faced along the way.

Maryland

Elizabeth Hoffman:

Success stories: We chose to focus on newer initiatives that are still impactful for water quality. I do want to make sure I mention that we had a history of some successful programs like nutrient management and our cover crop program. One thing we've really seen returns from, including in ways we didn't necessarily expect, was our field assessment team that provides verification across

the state. Obviously, this is a requirement. This was a homework assignment for us to verify the existence of these practices in order to get credit in the model, but it has really been an impactful effort and we've seen returns to us greater than what we anticipated. Our field team works regionally. There are about 7 folks that work across the state. They work through their local soil conservation districts. They are looking through plan files, and they are walking farms. They are not only assessing the status of these BMPs, but they are also mapping them, and that is where we really created a valuable data set and tool for us to use from a program planning perspective. The team has been in place since 2017 and, to date, over 80% of reported practices in the state have been mapped and assessed. That's close to the 30,000 mark of individual BMPs. So, everything from grass waterways to waste management systems, whatever we collect for WIP reporting. What that has also provided was connection of BMPs across time. If there are reenrollments of contracts on the same footprint, we have now created that connection. So, as you can imagine, this is really valuable for us as we look at targeting remaining gaps to meet water quality. We have, at the field level, data speaking to implementation and timeline. So, how long have things been present. Again, just a really valuable data set we've created through this effort, and it's usable and applicable for more than just the reason we created it. So, as we have the conservation districts looking to target cooperators that they haven't reached yet, they can utilize that information. We have a very engaged team of folks working through these soil conservation districts, and they are working daily with local cooperators, farmers, and landowners to really promote and provide technical assistance. Our team, because they are really visiting farms a little more rapidly in order to achieve verification, they are able to see cooperators a lot more frequently. This bolsters their ability to connect with cooperators and farmers. If the farmer has a question and they haven't made it into the office for technical assistance, our team can relay that information back. They also are just directly sitting in front of a farmer in their field, ready and able to promote available programs on the farm. The team was put in place for the purpose of verification, but they continue to diversify their role.

Healthy Soils Program - The team coordinates with the healthy soils program by providing some healthy soil assessment of field samples, and then the ability to plug those folks in to support our suite of programs is unlimited. Pivoting to the healthy soils program and what value we've seen from that, the healthy soils program has been around for a few years now, and it is a competitive grant program that awards applicants to support three years of enhanced soil health practices. The types of projects funded are things like cover crops, multi species, conservation tillage, pasture management, crop rotation, nutrient management, integrated pest management, soil carbon amendments, silvopasture, alley cropping, hydro planting, a lot of things that are providing water quality benefits as well, but the idea that sometimes having the lens of healthy soils is how we are seeing cooperators come in the door and want to engage, so that's been a success for us.

Conservation buffer initiative - another newer program that is working with farmers to plant riparian buffers, both grass and forest, some with exclusion fencing, some without, depending on the operation. Sometimes we heard that with participation in federal programs, there's some challenges that cooperators feel exist in terms of ability to maintain these buffers, contract lengths, things like that. So, the conservation buffer initiative really put purpose over program and recognized that there's still a value of having riparian buffer. The buffers are meeting RI standards, so they are not something that would go through a traditional CREP program, but once again, they're still providing a water quality benefit. They provide technical assistance to install these buffers. So, it's kind of a way to allow flexibility while still achieving water quality with our farmers.

Horse Outreach Workgroup (HOW) - A fun fact about Maryland is that we have more horses per square mile than any other state in the nation. There's a lot of equine operations out there, and

they sometimes were not aware of our traditional conservation efforts or programs. So, really, making a concerted effort to include them in the idea that the diversity of operations across Maryland, everyone has a part to play in watershed restoration.
Whole Watershed Act and Fund - The last thing I'll highlight is a success story that is not MDA specific. It is multi agency. The Whole Watershed Act and Fund was a direct response to the CESR report, and it is kind of in its pilot stage. It will be a five-year project. Those watersheds and projects will be announced March 1st. It will be bringing together DNR, MDNA, kind of all our agencies to help support this project proposal, hopefully expediting permitting processing. It combines funding through those different channels to really try to target on projects proposed in watersheds where we will see the greatest impact, and also projects that are addressing multiple things- water quality, increased public access, wildlife habitat, fisheries improvement, as well as environmental justice and climate resiliency.

Challenges and obstacles: there's some real Maryland specific ones I could have gotten into, but for the effort of trying to make sure it's something other folks have something to add to, I think the fact that the act of identifying barriers and obstacles is a barrier and obstacle. Sometimes it's hard to know what we don't know, like what is unfair about our programs or initiatives. What groups are we not reaching? That's just part of our challenge. Maryland has a really diverse state in terms of operations. We have dairy on the Western Shore, poultry on the Eastern Shore. The need to serve all communities in all sectors is a challenge. So, need for stakeholder engagement in many forms. We work with our soil conservation districts; they are kind of a hub for technical assistance and information. In Maryland, we have an agricultural commission that serves to bring together industry reps that then provide recommendations to our secretary. We've been engaged with a committee focusing on watershed strategy, so trying to speak directly to industry folks and get feedback there. Then, again, just reaching beginning farmers in all industry sectors is something we aim for. Sometimes we aren't sure how well we are doing there.
Staff capacity - something everyone can understand and sympathize with. We can have as many programs in place or funds, but having the boots on the ground to deliver them is something we struggle with. It takes many farm visits before the implementation of a single BMP. I think there was a study done recently that quoted that it takes about 12 site visits for a BMP to be finalized with the farmer, and that's a lot of staff time. So, that's something we struggle with and, obviously, we work in acres, we don't work in full system wastewater treatment plant updates, so how to get around that is always a struggle. Paperwork- obviously necessary to document and utilize public funds, provide public services, but trying to help farmers navigate that paperwork, streamlining and providing clarity to questions, is something we try to improve. So, if other people have things that are working, we'd love to hear that.
There are a lot of cooks in the kitchen, which is not necessarily a bad thing. There are a lot of groups doing this work, meaning conservation in the Chesapeake Watershed. Sometimes the challenge there is are we capturing all of what is occurring? It can, we have heard, overwhelm farmers and landowners with where to start. Do they go to NGOs? Do they go to state or federal? It's a little hard to navigate and so how we organize that or collaborate between. If there's not a fit for you in one of our programs, is an NGO doing something that you could work with?

New York

Amanda Barber: Just a little background before we get started, we thought it was important just to talk about the Upper Susquehanna Coalition. We're going to be talking from the Coalition's perspective, which is really, you know, the programs that are ag and rural landowner oriented,

though we do overlap with other municipal programs as well. So, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition was established in 1992. It was all the soil and water conservation districts in the Upper Susquehanna watershed banding together, looking at a tributary strategy, and we've stayed together since then. So, there's 18 soil and water conservation districts in New York and four in Pennsylvania that are part of the coalition. Districts in New York are the lead for ag nonpoint source pollution control and abatement, and so we are responsible for collecting, reporting, and verifying all the ag BMPs in New York's portion of the watershed. We provide technical assistance to all our landowners and, really, our organization provides for collaboration among districts to protect water quality in our local lakes and streams and to improve the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay. So, with support from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and Tioga County Soil and Water Conservation District as our administrative lead, the USC has successfully increased our capacity in the watershed through partnerships and collaboration. So, we've developed many new partners over time, working with our existing agency partners to bring together programs and funding that can offer flexibility to a large variety of projects that we've been able to implement, using the resources of our entire membership to provide match for some of the larger funding sources and grants we've been able to tap into, and providing an efficient way to manage those grants through one main organization. We've obviously been successful; we've leveraged over $32 million, which is triple the amount that DEC has dispersed to the USC.

Success stories- There are several similarities between what we do and what Maryland presented. Our USC Water Quality Program is something that we developed to provide funding for projects from a variety of sources. There's a rolling application process, and we use it to fill gaps to fund projects that, for whatever reason, were not funded through other traditional state or federal funding and/or we're not fully funded through those programs. We can make up the difference through our Water Quality Program. Again, there's a rolling application process. They are reviewed quarterly and then projects are funded from the variety of grants and funding sources that we have available to us. Our best management practice verification program, the soil and water conservation districts take the lead on collecting all the BMP data, reporting that, USC manages the database, and then districts are responsible for verification. The USC provides funding for that and provides oversight through the QAQC process. Our data is collected on a farm specific basis, but we do report it on a county level to the program.
Buffer stewardship program - has been a great way for us to engage additional staff support. During the summer, we hire interns. They perform buffer maintenance, assessing future needs, and developing new skills, as well as context and connection that'll help them in the future. So, they're assessing plantings for survival and for future needs. They do maintenance which would include replanting if needed, but also just replacing tubes and stakes, doing weeding, both hand weeding as well as mechanical weeding and mowing. We assist the landowners with understanding their contractual obligations. These are buffers that might be funded through the state buffer program and through CREP. Our focus is on trying to make sure that these buffers are successful, because buffers are an important practice here in New York. We've been successful in engaging other volunteer groups to help with the plantings and really putting together a large cohort of groups that are assisting with these buffer projects as we move forward. In 2024, we had 12 buffer stewards across the watershed that were active in stewarding almost 1200 acres.

Challenges and obstacles- Competition for funding is something that we should be talking about. We are all tapping into the same sources of funding, and, recently, we've seen some new NGOs

and others that are competing for the same funding that we are utilizing and have been utilizing. They are offering support to farmers for the same practices that we're providing support for, and that's creating some confusion among the farmers. It's also creating challenges for us when we have contracts or funding agreements in place already and other funding is being offered that may actually not be eligible for match for those same practices. So, we're really struggling with making sure that we have all the information that we need to implement these projects and adhere to our programmatic requirements. Sometimes, in the absence of any district involvement, this is an obstacle for reporting and verification because if we don't know the practices were implemented, we may miss that for a couple years or until that farm comes up for verification. Certainly, if we don't have that farm specific data, we're not able to do verification at all on practices. The NRCS funding programs in general, it's been talked about a little bit, and I know we've talked about it in the past, but really here in New York, NRCS has program priorities and obligations which we understand, but unfortunately our priorities and the WIP don't always align. Their programs can be challenging for our landowners to navigate. That's been discussed as well, and it can be frustrating sometimes because staffing and work backlog can cause delays. Not only is that a challenge in and of itself, but when we have grants on the farm for same practices or companion practices, it can create a real obstacle to implementing our projects. The data sharing, we've talked about this in the past. We host the database. Districts report all the BMP data, and it's reported back to the Chesapeake Bay model at the at the county scale and data collection sharing with partners, including NRCS, is difficult. We need to get that farm specific data, and if we don't get it, there's the potential for implementation and verification to be missed. Practices are different and used differently in New York. We have different climate and weather patterns. They perform and function different. Soil health practices, we talked about cover crops being one example. Other states are implementing them primarily for soil health and carbon sequestration but, in New York, they are key practice for manure management as part of nutrient management.

Elizabeth (in chat): Yes, we have also had NGOs do work that then gets brought to the SCD for "fixing". The farmer is frustrated then, the SCD wishes they had been consulted with to start, we need practices to meet standards for reporting. Etc.

Ken Staver: On the last comment about cover crops, the soil carbon thing and soil health thing has gotten to be what everybody is talking about. But in Maryland, our focus of the cover crop, cost share program has been not so much for nutrient cycling like you do in livestock operations, but in terms of keeping nitrate out of groundwater. Soil health is kind of a new topic, but the foundation for it, the justification for it, and why we have money for it is based on the nitrogen reduction in terms of nitrate leaching. So, we're with you on nutrient management as the focus of cover crops, even if these other things are getting the headlines these days.

Kathy Boomer (in chat): Competing projects also represent obstacles to getting grant funds out: private (matching) partners are pulled in different directions.

Pennsylvania

Kate Bresaw: Before I dive into the successes and the challenges, I want to give some background in that Pennsylvania kind of has very much a "yes, and" approach and very much a patchwork approach to the work that we do. As some of the other states have said, there's lots of stakeholders, lots of different programs that are all kind of like coming together to build this beast, if you will, and our approach is to figure out how all those different programs can complement one another. Whether they're compliance based, whether they're voluntary with the grant programs etc., how they can all come together as well as our many players from the ground level, all the way up to the governor, to play a role in building this patchwork. So, I don't want to

understate the massive endeavor that it is to manage all of that, but we have seen in Pennsylvania that that approach really is the way that we're going to get to the finish line. If we discount one, then we're not going to get there. I can echo what Maryland said that that poses its own challenges. But what we found is that creating those synergies and nourishing the energy that we all have for this ultimate goal and our mutual benefits, is what is getting us any progress.

From that place, I'll just dive into some of the programs that we've seen that have been really beneficial. I think the program that demonstrates that approach the most is our county wide action planning approach to WIP development where we have folks coming together at the county. We got as many stakeholders in the room as we possibly can to create their own "mini-WIP" at the county level, and that WIP comes together into our larger WIP. So, getting that stakeholder investment of the folks that are going to be doing the implementation work, that are going to be implementing these practices on their farms, has been a true success story for us. Really, once we started that process with our WIP 3, the energy just started moving. We started to get a lot of progress with that approach.

Underlying that, some counties, not all counties, participate in our Chesapeake Bay Ag Inspection Program, and they choose to explore that space where compliance can be a tool to implementing these practices. So, in Pennsylvania, we have regulations under our Chapter 102.4 A for erosion and sediment control and Chapter 83 for concentrated animal operations and our manure management, which is 91 3 6. So, these state regulations require plans that have these BMPs that are nutrient and sediment reducing BMPs and, back in 2016, we pursued an initiative to do routine inspections on these operations and, up until that point, we were mostly checking compliance when there was a complaint. Then, through this process, we initiated an effort to do routine inspections on those operations and, to echo Maryland's database success story, we started keeping track of all of those compliance plans and all of the BMPs within those plans that can be reported for progress, and that has been a real benefit to the verification of BMPs that are existing, as well as a motivator for folks to put stuff on the ground. Couple that with the many grant programs that we have to support those practices as well, and you've got a beautiful patchwork forming. I just kind of want to highlight that those are big programs that were big initiatives, but we also have seen some incredible successes by making small, little, tiny tweaks with within existing programs. So, our Act 38 program, CAOs/CAFOs get annual inspections every year. They're not required to implement supplemental nutrient management, but they are required to have an Act 38 nutrient management plan. But, within that plan, there are lots of opportunities for folks implementing those supplemental nutrient management. Brady took the lead on this, and he encouraged conservation districts, through their annual status review, to check up on those that supplement nutrient management. It has been a huge success story as far as our ability to track supplemental nutrient management in Pennsylvania. So, again, small tweaks as well as big programs and this patchwork approach are really things that I wanted to highlight here in Pennsylvania as success stories.

Moving on to what's not working, I will definitely echo New York's comments about reverification of USDA practices and the problems that we all have associated with it. It's a giant hole in our data set that we can continue to see get bigger as practices drop out through time. So, it's something that that we need to tackle and figure out a way to not let that happen.

I also wanted to bring up that we as the Bay Partnership sometimes paint ourselves into a corner, and we don't have the appropriate amount of flexibility to react to emerging technologies, new strategies for BMP verification, and we are slow or make it impossible for us to adopt those

emerging technologies and new approaches to verification. So, just putting it out there. I think we step on ourselves too much; I'd like to figure out a way past that.

Virginia

Seth Mullins: I work in a nutrient management program, so the first couple of stats here, I'm not the expert on. If you have questions related to these, let me know, and I'll find the person that has the answer.

This first success story for FY25, we've got our SL-8B practice. It's a cover crop practice. It involves small grain mixed with other species. We've got almost 8000 acres signed up under that. This has been a very successful program. It started as a pilot. It's available in a limited number of soil water districts, but this whole farm approach, it has 17,000 acres of cover crop signed up for '25. But what this is, is rather than making a farmer come in and sign up for a bunch of individual practices that they're implementing, they can use this "whole farm approach" and sign up a host of practices under one contract, and that seems to have been very successful. I can get specific data on this if somebody's interested.

For livestock stream exclusion, in 2024, we had 300 practices under contract, and then an additional 172 instances under continued conservation initiatives. Those are either practices that have reached the end of their initial lifespan and the farmer has signed them up again, agreed to maintain them for another period of time, or it could be voluntary if the farmer self-implemented something, there wasn't an initial contract for installation of the practice, but they've agreed to maintain something that they've done. As far as livestock stream exclusion, we have a kind of a range of payment scale depending on setback distances. We've got a portable stream exclusion practice where, I think in the past, some farmers have been kind of hesitant to implement or sign up because of maintenance cost where flooding is a concern and the continued maintenance of maintaining that practice. This portable system is not as robust as a permanent exclusion, but it doesn't cost as much to replace if it gets taken out in a flood, less cost initially. I don't know the details on what gets reported and how that that's addressed in the model, but we do have folks that are making an effort to exclude livestock from streams.

Nutrient management for FY24 statewide, we had 1.2 million acres in nutrient management plan. In the Bay watershed in Virginia, we had 826,000, and you can see the breakdown between crop, hay and pasture. Those 450,000 outside of the Bay probably have a little lower ratio of crop to hay and pasture, but it's pretty similar. Our WIP goals is 951. Those numbers fluctuate from year to year, of course. I think, to me, we're getting there. If you look back at the numbers when the WIP went into effect, I want to say it was close to 500,000 acres. So, over the last few years, we've added a significant number of acres.

Poultry litter transport- one of our WIP goals is to move about 90,000 acres out of those 3 counties, and that's total, that doesn't have to go through our program. In '24 our program moved 33,500 tons out of those counties into counties with less available nutrients. There were 87 participants. To give some scale, in 2020 it was 13,000 tons. So, in four years, we added 20,000 tons of litter movement. Virginia DEQ that permits the poultry growers, they have a new permit requirement that the first-year data would have been '24. We don't have that data yet. I'm working on getting it but, going forward, we are going to have a better picture of how much litter is transported out of these counties.

As far as challenges and obstacles, the drought in the fall of '24 is expected to really affect the cover crop acres. Folks are not signing up because it was dry, and they weren't going to have establishment. For our nutrient management program, I think the challenge is we've got a lot of

the low hanging fruit. We've got Virginia permits that require nutrient management. We have cost share programs that require nutrient management. The big challenge going forward is going to be the truly voluntary folks that don't have any requirement. They don't participate in cost share, they don't have a have a permitted operation, and we're just going to have to convince them that we have something to offer with our nutrient management program.
Pasture acres- for a long time we've not gotten a lot of credit for nutrient management on pasture. Those that are on the AMT know that Virginia is working to or trying to get this to be addressed, but if the current management is within our nutrient management standards, and we don't get credit in the Bay Model, the farmers, the planters are not putting in a lot of effort to get those acres included in plans, and we think there's a significant number of acres in Virginia that are being managed, that are receiving nutrients, and we are trying to get some credit for those acres. Another thing, as far as nutrient management, there is a lot of fluctuation from year to year. Virginia probably has 400 to 500 nutrients that are, we call, transfer plans for poultry growers that don't routinely apply their own litter, they sell it. There's a lot of acres that move in and out of those plans at times, so there's some fluctuation there. I don't know how we address it, but it leads to leads to fluctuation in our total number.
As far as the Poultry Litter Transport Program, most of the time talking to the participants, litter availability is the big issue. They don't know who to contact in the areas where we want to move the litter away from, or there's not spreaders, and it's not the same as calling the co-op and getting fertilizer applied. There's some planning and some time there. I've got commercial fertilizer cost on there. If commercial fertilizer is cheap, a lot of times folks will avoid the litter just because of the hassles and headaches that that come with it. The litter transport incentive, it's been successful, but I think we're kind of to a point with our funding where we have funding, we have good funding for it, but at our current rates that we pay, sometimes the hassles of finding the litter, getting the litter applied, we run into issues with some of our cover crop requirements, and the timing as far as when they can put nutrients on, there's a lot of issues. But it's been pretty successful in recent out outreach efforts. I think a lot of word of mouth in those areas that haven't historically received a lot of litter, success stories from neighbors, really helped that program to grow.
Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): to the note about how to connect for transport - Delmarva Chicken Association has an app they created to try and address this challenge. https://www.littr.io/

West Virginia

Matt Monroe: I'm the assistant director of environmental programs with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture. I've been working with Bay program since about 2002. It's been a few years, so we've been through a lot, but one of the go tos at our state that we've kind of set since day one and we've stuck with the entire time, is running essentially a 100% voluntary program. That's kind of our hallmark. We weren't going to enact regulations. We're probably unique in that in the whole Bay watershed. The voluntary approach worked a lot better for our state. The other thing we based a lot of our programs on was long term relationship building. That's something that we've had huge success with. We don't always have good acceptance if we have newer, unknown people just door knocking or doing cold calls. We have employees that have worked here for quite a while, and they even had previous relationship with a lot of the farmers. So, we're talking 5, 10, 20, 30-year relationships, and that's led to tremendous success in all of our agriculture programs.
At different times over the years, we focused or had larger outreach efforts for CREP buffers or cover crops, litter transfer. It's kind of gone up and down over the years. I can't just say there's one

that's been a standout, but one that we did increase focus on over the years was nutrient management. It wasn't all that long ago that we didn't have a program really organized at all. Over the last, 10, 12, 15 years, we now have a staff in the Department of Agriculture of six full time nutrient management planners. That's all they do. We maintain over 90,000 acres of nutrient management plans in the Bay Watershed, and that's a success. Just to make sure we're applying correctly, not over applying, but the other benefit that nutrient management has brought has really been, as we build relationships with those farmers, a lot of times our staff are able to do more BMP outreach and help them know all the programs that are available or that would help them. We're always recommending things, and that's worked really well. One of the things that gave us success in our ag programs was the non-tidal water quality monitoring program. Not to harp too much on the model, but we did have folks in our area that were not comfortable when we give them information and say we need to do some more of this because the modeling results don't look favorable. People did not want to hear that. But, when we approached them and said we have water quality monitoring data that is exceptionally accurate, it really represents our state well, then people could buy into that. You know, this water is bad in this watershed, we'll do a little bit more work there. So, that's kind of something a little different that we've used a lot over the years to lead people to adopting new practices.

So, let's go to a few challenges. As many people have already mentioned, verification. Unless something drastic changes, we will have difficulties for the foreseeable future in verification of especially federal practices. We do have some verification of our nutrient management plans. The conservation agency with many of their programs, they do a lot of verification. But, as far as the federal NRCS/FSA, that's going to remain a challenge. One specific one that I think was super successful early on was CREP buffers, and as we've gone through many years seeing some of the challenges with CREP buffers, some of the lack of success, it seems like we're having a harder time selling that one as well as what we once did. You know, tree survivability wasn't good, invasive species crept in, so we still have a fence. It's probably just a more natural region buffer, which is still ok, but that program has been a unique challenge over the years. We've already gotten a lot of the low hanging fruit. I think people are going to experience this in all the jurisdictions. The further along we get, we've hit a lot of that low hanging fruit, it's going to get a little more challenging for your late adopters. So, that'll remain a challenge. Four on challenges is holding the line. West Virginia, many of you've all seen the statistic, we have met our 2025 goals. We're in a good place. Now we have the long-term challenge. We have to hold the line indefinitely. We, in the face of development, loss of ag land, whatever the land use change is, have got to hold the line. Last on challenges, Maryland mentioned equine challenges, and I was reminded that's one area in our state that I think we haven't done a good job on. We have a lot of areas with very high concentration of horses on low acreage that are in pretty bad shape, and I think we can do a better job reaching out to those folks in the future.

Amanda Barber (in chat): Do you have a regulatory program for CAFOs?

Amanda Barber: You said you have an all voluntary program, but do you have a regulatory program for CAFOs?

Matt Monroe: Our CAFO program is very interesting. It started out to be larger and kind of more heavy-handed from day one. I don't know if anybody remembers the court case that happened in in West Virginia, but basically the CAFO program was, for all practical purposes, shut down, other than large unpermitted. But as far as CAFOs, I think we currently have two permitted CAFOs in West Virginia. One is a guy that just wanted to do it for some reason, and the other is the Charlestown racetrack with maybe like 1000 horses or something. That's an interesting one. Our

CAFO program, the only way it would advance at this point and our approach from DEP is basically complaint driven. If there was a serious complaint about one, they may look into it. But, overall, it's not something that's being pushed at all.

Discussion:

Kathy Boomer: Great panel. I wonder if you all could share your thoughts and concerns about whether or not you're tracking water management practices, irrigation and tiling, at all.

Kate Bresaw: I can speak to that in Pennsylvania. This would not be a required practice as part of their ag E&S plan, or their manure management plan, or their nutrient management plan, but some folks will include it as part of their ag E&S plan to have a full farm approach to planning. If it would be included in that plan then yes, we would track it.

Seth Mullins: In Virginia, there's some threshold as far as usage, but there's a two-tiered thing at DEQ. DCR is not involved, but there is a surface water and/or groundwater withdrawal either reporting, or if usage is enough, permitting. It's really tied to planning and use of groundwater, but there are a number of farmers that have a reporting requirement that I know of.

Elizabeth Hoffman: For Maryland, there's a lot of work that occurs for ag drainage management, and soil conservation districts on the shore work very closely with public drainage associations. Then we do track water control structures and those associated drainage management plans, as well as other filters and practices. We also have a lot of NGOs on the Eastern Shore that do work in this realm of practices.

Kathy Boomer: I think you could argue these are easily maybe the most important practices to focus on, and yet it's really not well embedded or captured in our planning or thinking about how do we advance our restoration goals of the entire Bay Program.

Rosita Musgrove (in chat): Can the NY representative clarify the statement regarding a funding disbursement that compared to DC

Amanda Barber (in chat): That was funding compared to DEC (NYSDEC) - sorry for speaking so fast.

Hunter Landis: A question for Elizabeth on the Delmarva Chicken Association. We've looked at that app in the past, and we even tried to do something similar on our end of creating kind of an in house or a state app. What we have struggled to find is the folks that have the litter don't enroll their litter. So, we are seeing an issue of availability. We've got a great demand, but it doesn't seem like an issue on the producer side for the poultry producers. It's not an inconvenience for them. They can easily get rid of their litter without selling it or putting it into our program. It may not go in the best environmental direction, but they don't have an issue with it. So, circling back to a question, do you see a large inventory of available litter through that app, in your experience?

Elizabeth Hoffman: I shared the app from an awareness perspective, but I don't know if I can speak to how it's being used. Holly Porter over at DCA would be better able to answer that. So, I can put her information in the chat. That's a good question. I'm not sure I have an answer.

Zach Evans: I'm with Mountaire Farms and on the board for DCA. I know Holly and Grayson and Liz aren't here, but I could share anecdotally that there is a high level of utilization in regard to the litter that gets put on the app typically doesn't last long. So, inventory turns over relatively quickly there. As a percentage, I don't know the exact number of farmers that use it. I don't know the number of unique users. That would definitely be a Holly question, but I know that when inventory is introduced into that market, it doesn't hang around for long. There's usually a farmer or a litter broker who specializes in aligning the litter with the corresponding farm that needs it, according to their nutrient management plan. Typically, that match is made pretty quick.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): Thanks, Zach! porter@DCAchicken.com Holly Porter with DCA

Amanda Barber: I just wanted to speak to Virginia's comment about those that are implementing nutrient management voluntarily. It's something that we've been talking about, and we believe that one of the obstacles to that voluntary participation is the reporting aspect and the documentation aspect of nutrient management. So, to that end, we are working to develop an app that farmers can use to report nutrient management activities that will allow us to, hopefully, fairly easily verify that they are meeting nutrient management standards and then be able to continue to take credit for that. Still haven't worked out all of the details, just wanted to mention that we are working on that. We assume that maybe there will be a small incentive for the farmers that'll go along with using that and doing reporting but, again, I think making it easy for them is key. So, we're trying to address that hurdle.
Eric Hughes: Amanda, on that point, the first I had heard about that was when I talked with Greg, Cassie, and Emily, and I was just jazzed to hear that that's something that is being developed. Do you have a timeline on that? I think it's still in the early stages of development, but is that something that maybe relatively soon we could hear more about? Or is that still a way away?
Amanda Barber: I'll see if Emily wants to chime in, but we've already piloted one program and we're working with the developer to make some changes to that so that we can utilize it for our own purposes and pilot it truly the way we want it to.
Emily Dekar: We are hoping to have something later this spring for our farmers to actually pilot. I'm hoping that once we get it out for our farms to pilot, we could bring it to the workgroup for a presentation to show the other states what we are doing.
Eric Hughes: Great, we'll see how it goes. Looking forward to hearing more about that.
Seth Mullins: We don't actually have a requirement for farmers to report. Our plans are written by certified planners, and DCR does regulate those planners. Those planners have a reporting requirement. We've got a new software for plan development that makes that exponentially easier for us to get the data. There's a group of farmers that don't have nutrient management plans and aren't interested in getting them.
Amanda Barber: We're looking at this as being that there are a lot of farms that don't necessarily have nutrient management plans or can't afford to pay someone to write them a nutrient management plan, but they are limit input farmers that we know or suspect would meet standards. We just don't have a good way of getting a plan on paper and documenting their storage activities. So, our hope is that this will be a way for them to do much of the planning, if you will, on their own, and we will just do some level of verification.
Jeff Hill: What we're talking about here on nutrient management and trying to get the farmers the plans and the cost, this is a prime example of what this Ag work group could really be successful in, truly having states and our entities working together. Kate's been on and talked about what we've done in Pennsylvania and some of the programs that we've developed to help pay and offset the costs of some of these program and plans and things. To me, yes, it may not be a one size fits all approach, and it may not work for everybody, but there may be something that could be passed along from Pennsylvania to Virginia, Delaware, New York that we've experienced that might assist and get some of these guys over the humps in the grand scheme of things. This is what interests me in this group more than anything because, for so long, I believe that we got hung up in having to deal with the model and the 36 different versions of cover crops and who was going to get the most credit for this BMP in their state. But, yet, they didn't want to have another state get any credit for it because well, you didn't do what you were supposed to five years ago. That's where this group lost some of what I consider the credit with the local communities and the local people that were invested in some of this stuff. Now, as you hear this, what we're doing today is a prime example of what we can build on. It may not move the needle, but it's something for us to build

on and show it like a coalition, truly a workgroup that covers the Chesapeake Bay that we can all work together and try and help each other on some of the stuff. This is what matters. This is what improves water quality. Not, discussing .1 credit in the model. I may not need to speak here in a little bit, Eric, because that's pretty much the gist of it. I think you guys have hit it on the head right away this morning. There's been a lot of talk already on what's being done at the local level, and there's a lot of good stuff. I've been super pleased to participate so far just this morning.
Kathy Brasier (in chat): Key question to ponder especially for our discussion at the end: What are ways in which we can work collectively - across jurisdictions - to share successes and address challenges?
Kathy Brasier: That is the key question that I want us to be able to ponder over the course of today and especially as we get towards the end. I wrote a version of this question that I'm hoping will drive our conversation after these two panels, and it would have been the focus of our in-person conversation, too. Jeff, you perfectly encapsulated what we want to get out of today.

11:00 – 12:00 – Discussion: Ag Perspectives in the Ag Workgroup
The Agriculture Workgroup and Agricultural Modeling Team are the only Chesapeake Bay Program partnership decision making entities explicitly focused on the agriculture sector. AgWG members and other participants bring to the table a wide range of ag expertise, and it is important that this expertise is sufficiently incorporated into workgroup discussions. This session explored opportunities for including ag stakeholder perspectives into our work.

Introduction
Eric Hughes: We heard through the establishment of the Ag Advisory Committee that the ag voice is not included in Bay Program discussions, and there's a lot that goes into that. I think it's fair to take that face value and say what do we do about that? Us and the AMT, we are the two decision making entities in the Bay Program that focus on ag issues. We aren't really making decisions right now, so maybe that is a fair statement. Really important to highlight that we do have those people here, folks we can turn to to get your ag perspective, whether you're farming, whether you are doing ag research, you are technical assistance providers, industry reps. So, let's turn to some of them and say what have we done well, what haven't we with regards to bringing the ag voice into the conversation, and what could we do better?
Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): I think that comment - ag voices not being heard - was not aimed at saying the AgWG doesn't do work but rather the challenge in how those decisions or concerns get diluted or lose traction as they rise through other teams and committees. Just a note.
Eric Hughes (in chat): Very good point, Elizabeth.
Marel King (in chat): And Ag Workgroup has had a more technical role, and the "voices being heard" was directed to the policy level.
Eric Hughes (in chat): Important point of clarity, Marel.

Paul Bredwell- U.S. Poultry and Egg Association
Paul Bredwell: I appreciate the opportunity to provide some insight into these questions. I'll do my best to answer them. I've been involved on behalf of the poultry industry with the AgWG since 2011/2012, so I'm one of the senior individuals on this on this call. There are others: Olivia, and Jeff Sweeney, Mark Dubin, and Matt from West Virginia. We've all been around a long time. I became involved, obviously, because poultry has a big footprint within the watershed. Moreso because the poultry industry lives and works in the watershed, and they want to be they want to be responsible. They want to do the right thing. So, we wanted to make sure that that we knew

what was going on. To start off, I want to say that the AgWG has done well simply by being open minded and being in a mind to collaborate. I've noticed that from the very beginning. The expertise, the passion, and the ability to talk about these issues has always encouraged me. That continues to this day. But to be specific, way back when in 2013, I spoke with the chairman of the AgWG at that point in time. I spoke with Kelly Shenk and Rich Batiuk, and we talked about how we get the poultry industry more involved in this, and we came up with this idea of putting together a seminar/summit. It was called Building a Better Bay Model summit or conference. We had a lot of participation by the poultry industry, where the poultry industry really had not been involved before, except for the State Poultry Associations. We put all this together, and I think that summit really opened the eyes to the poultry industry, maybe what a what a big footprint they had. It really opened their eyes to try and provide some gentle push back on some of the things that came out within that meeting. For instance, at that point in time, there was an assumption that 15% of the poultry that was loaded from a poultry barn was simply lost to the environment, and not only was it simply lost to the environment but, in the model it was applied at the stream edge. Well, if you run the numbers on 15% loss from a poultry barn, it's basically a semi-truckload, and certainly we knew that wasn't the case. So, that discussion came up many times past the summit, and that was adjusted. It was very positive for us to understand the model better, be able to have input, and make sure that things were modified in a reasonable manner. Some of it is still lost, I think in the model, but we were able to address those things. Other things that came out was that nutrient management plans in the model are based on nitrogen. Well, I would ask the states if you're nutrient management plans are developed, is it based on nitrogen or is it based on phosphorus as a limiting nutrient? I would guess it's based on phosphorus, but I don't know to this day whether or not the model has been modified to make that change that these nutrient management plans are really based on phosphorus. But, nonetheless, this was an opportunity back in 2013 to really engage the poultry industry. There were other people that were involved. The extension and the states were all involved, and it was a very positive thing. Fast forward to 2016, one of the things that came out in in this Build the Better Bay Model program was that there had been work done out of Virginia Tech by Doctor Pease, and a report that he put together, this poultry litter subcommittee, reported that there was an overestimation of manure. So, with some great work by Mark Dubin and Tim Sexton, they put together a pilot project to go out there and collect poultry industry information as it related to the Turkey industry. So, this data collection effort took place, and I know many of you've heard me talk about this before, they went out and they collected information from the integrators. So, they got number of birds that were going on to the farm, number that were harvested, so they knew mortality and the weight of those birds. What came out of this was an ability to really take a look at manure generation rates that were coming from the Turkey industry in both Virginia and West Virginia. What we found was incredibly eye opening. It was 44-77 percent less manure generation coming at that point in time than what the model was using in an outdated ASABE technical report. So, those are very positive things. While we weren't able to use the population of turkey in the model moving forward, it did allow us to have these new generation rates, new concentration rates, used in the model. I know Mark's on the call, and he might be able to add a little bit to this later. But, nonetheless, it allowed us to start looking at these things from other sources that weren't NRCS or weren't slaughter numbers. It really got industry involved and, quite frankly, industry was happy to be involved because they got a better understanding of not only the model, but a more comfortable feeling that they were involved in the process and knew that the data sets were accurate. Unfortunately, in an attempt to take that same model and collect information for the broiler industry, it kind of fell short. I brought that particular subject to you a number of times, and I think in 2023, the AgWG made the

recommendation to ask the Agricultural Modeling Team (AMT) to incorporate data that would come from the poultry industry. So, I was invited to make a presentation to the AMT back in October of ’24, and while there seemed to be consensus that it would be a good idea to do that, they got hung up on the unknowns of it all. Could we actually collect this data? Would the data be verified? The QAQC protocols that Mark's put so much effort into as it related to the Turkey project back in 2016, would have certainly sufficed for the broiler project but, unfortunately, at the end of the day, they decided not to move forward. I had an opportunity to review the meeting minutes from that meeting, and one of the stakeholders in the meeting said, well, are we only chasing 5%? Are we only going to change these numbers 5%? Well, one of the other presenters today from one of the states said the low hanging fruit is gone, and that's certainly the case. So, we're talking about quite a bit of volume of poultry litter generated on these farms. We all know that. But, if we're chasing 5% of the volume of that is out there, that is not really low hanging fruit in my opinion. I didn't understand that comment at the time, I don't understand that comment now. If we have any question whatsoever, whether or not we're 5% off on our estimates, then I don't see a reason why we shouldn't try to get better data if it's available to us. Quite frankly, I've said this to you before and I've said it to other groups before, we the poultry industry know that our datasets are more accurate than what are being used at this point in time, and they go well beyond just estimates, which is the term that I've heard many times as far as what's going in to the model.

So, I'll move on to the second the second question, what actions can we better incorporate? I would say engage your stakeholders. I've offered it many times. I've been in front of the industry many times. Eric, Tom Butler, and Lee McDonnell, and I did a road trip. I think it was in ‘23. We've had three meetings, one in Harrisburg, PA, one is one in Harrisonburg, VA, and one out on the Delmarva Peninsula to pull the industry together to gauge their willingness to collect this data for the broiler industry. We had good participation by the industry. We weren’t met with “no, we're not going to do this”. I think, once again, the industry was really willing to be a part of the solution, be involved in the process, but when the AMT decided that they weren't going to give us an opportunity to do so, my report back to the poultry industry, as you can imagine, wasn't good. So, I never try to paint a picture that something's trying to be done to the poultry industry, but that's how it comes across when some form or fashion of the Chesapeake Bay Partnership will engage the industry and use them as a resource as we're looking for inputs into the model. So, I would say that's how we can do better within the AgWG, within the whole Chesapeake Bay Partnership, to make sure that we, at the end of the day, return the Bay to a healthy state.

I’ve seen the AgWG and how they make decisions, how they make recommendations, change greatly since my participation back in in 2011/2012. Quite frankly, and I've talked to other individuals on the AgWG about this, I see an erosion of the relevance, almost, of the AgWG. This AgWG is made-up of professionals in agriculture and regulatory agencies, but all this input is needed and, quite frankly, it's discouraging to me to see what I perceive as an erosion of the input that this group can make to the process. I don't know if I'm alone in that thought, but it certainly seems that way to me. So, I just want to make that known to you all. Again, your input is highly needed moving forward, and if there's anything that I can do moving forward it is making sure that this AgWG remains relevant in this process and that that relevance is not diminished or dismissed entirely.

Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): well said, Paul.

Patrick Thompson (in chat): What are the AGWG and jurisdictions doing to manage agricultural mass balance (CESR Report Priority)?

Cassie Davis (in chat): NY's land-grant University Cornell has been working on Whole Farm Nutrient Mass Balance Assessments
http://nmsp.cals.cornell.edu/NYOnFarmResearchPartnership/MassBalances.html
Eric Hughes: Very much appreciate that input, Paul. It's critical that we do stay relevant. We've highlighted that we, along with the AMT, do distinct things, but we are the ag decision-making bodies in the watershed, so it is critical that we are making decisions. Really looking forward to working with everybody here, and incorporating all of our diverse perspectives, to make sure that relevance is maybe reestablished.

Zach Evans- Mountaire Farms

Zach Evans: I work with Mountaire Farms, which is a chicken company with their primary basis of operations on the Delmarva Peninsula, and so a large majority of the 570 family farms that we work with here on Delmarva are in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. So, I appreciate the opportunity to be a part of the workgroup, and I'm relatively new to the workgroup, so my perspective is limited. I think it actually is nice that I get to follow Paul because I am going to talk about this from a totally different approach. For the first question, in what ways has the AgWG done well incorporating Ag stakeholder perspectives? Again, fully acknowledging my limited scope of experience and still getting to know everyone within the group and what my role should be as sort of a chicken company representative and liaison. I think this workgroup does a great job at providing a platform of collaboration. Sort of the underlying precursor to all the conversations we have is the desire to collaborate amongst all stakeholders. I think naturally that creates a welcoming and a very informative environment and, because you have the notion that you're going in there for collaboration, and you feel welcome, and you're getting great information, I think we also often times intend to have a solutions oriented approach. We do spend time talking about the problems, and we have to look at the report card, and we have to be realistic about what it's telling us. But I still do believe that we are trying to take a solutions-oriented approach here and, as it pertains to my world, emphasizing the importance of Best Management Practices at the farm level and the role they play in tying back to Bay goals is important. With that being said, Paul made a good point. The low hanging fruit is gone and part of that is being a nationwide regional leader in the way that we pay attention to environmental goals because of this unique and really cherished and treasured estuary that we have in the Chesapeake Bay, we got started a lot earlier than a lot of folks throughout the country in implementing some of these goals and best practices. That means that we're really trying to capture a slim margin. So, to Paul's point, if the low hanging fruit is gone and we're going after 5%, I just want to remind folks that it can be deflating sometimes to be constantly reminded that, despite all the best efforts, we're not seeing the improvement in the water quality or in the model as anticipated and, anecdotally, we can go to individual farms where these BMPs have been incorporated, and if they've been measured over a decade or over 15 years, we can show progress at that specific site. So, it can be discouraging for a landowner or business operator to hear that as an industry, we've been really proactive and we've got great adoption rates for things like cover crops, and we've got great adoption and compliance rates for things like nutrient management, and the litter app is working, but we're not hitting our Bay goals. The report card still looks bad. So, I just want to remind everybody that that can be a little deflating. It can take the wind out of your sails sometimes if you're someone new to this conversation. Now, luckily, I'm new to this group, but I'm not new to the conversation. So, I recognize that reality for what it is, but messaging is important. As we try to onboard more participants and get more engagement in this group and, to Paul's point, make the group valuable and meaningful and impactful, we want to make sure that we encourage folks and we give some context to the fact

that, although we're doing everything we intended to do, we're not maybe seeing the results. So, we've got wonderful examples of real-world applications that are shared through this group, oftentimes. Eric, you and the team do a great job at providing farmer testimonials and putting together panel discussions where we get to see these real-world examples. In my experience with the workgroup, I don't have any specific examples of ways that we've enhanced the conversation by bringing ag expertise to the table. I think that when we do bring farmers into the mix, we all have a great ability here as a group to simplify complicated issues and present ways to implement on the farm. I just want to make sure we're doing a good job recognizing a farmer's operational challenges when it comes to implementation and also where implementation of BMPs lives in a real business life cycle. My background is in agriculture. I've worked in this industry for 15 years, but my formal training and my master's degree are in marketing. A big part of marketing and being realistic and self-aware if you are to offer a product or service, is your position in the marketplace. Are you best? Are you better? Are you good, or are you good enough? There's nothing wrong with filling any of those roles in the marketplace, but where do BMPs and environmental best practices and mitigating environmental impact work into a business life cycle? I think it would be helpful to keep that top of mind when we're talking about the implementation of solutions and the buy-in from the farm community. Unintended consequences probably isn't the right word to use, but more so the unintended impact or burden on a landowner or operator. We suggest these BMPs because we know they're going to work, but do we always have a realistic scope of how this is going to impact the farmer, and are we considering the scale of that farming operation? Small farmers, large farmers, all industries.

So, that kind of leads me into the second question. I'm going to start again with that self-awareness, that position in the business life cycle. Building a farming operation and running a successful farming operation is no different than any other business, right? There are some core covenants and some core things that you need to do to ensure that you can be viable. Where do water quality and soil quality and overall environmental goals align in a farmers business model? Before I worked for a chicken company, I worked for farm credit. When people would come into the bank and they'd outlay a business plan, one of the required sections was compliance and regulation, but it was not environmental goals and standards. I only share that because early on in my career, my understanding was that the financial viability of an operation is really the foundation of sustainability and long-term environmental impact. The future of the operation for the next generation is kind of a moot point if you don't feel like you can make a living doing it, let alone grow the business and/or transition the business to your kids or your grandkids. When I think about that, I think about Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs at the most basic level, sort of the foundation you have physiological needs. So, food, shelter, and then you have safety and security at the next level. So, a farmer has to be able to provide for their family. They have to be able to make a living doing that. They have to be able to appease their debt service. They have to be able to remain in regulatory compliance. So, as you build the bricks of those of that foundation, as you as you look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs, where do environmental goals and best practices fit into there? More importantly, recognizing the point in the process in which a farmer can begin to think critically about environmental goals, how can we as a workgroup introduce these concepts and these conversations earlier into that chronological chain of the business priorities. So, how do we go from the top of Maslow's pyramid to one of the more foundational levels of Maslow's pyramid? That's a complicated question. There's probably no simple answer, and I shouldn't have asked it of myself in real time on this call, but how can we articulate the economic impact of BMPs and novel or innovative approaches to reaching Bay

Goals? So, does it save a farmer money this year, or is it an outlay of resources? If it's an outlay of resources, does that return happen in five years or 10 years, and how does that return happen? Is it through a true reduction of resources? Are you going to be able to apply less fertilizer because you have healthier soils? Bring in less organic matter because you're mitigating sediment and erosion control? Can you reduce labor? Can you reduce the need for specialized equipment when you convert to no till? These are conversations that happened early on, decades ago, and they were used as selling points, and I believe that they're still the selling points that we need to convey to really get the buy-in on the back end so that farmers implement this. When farmers begin to implement this, that's when we also get the participation as a workgroup, and we get to hear and work through those real-life examples. Staff and capacity are restrictions, and I think Elizabeth shared that example in her slide earlier, and all resources are restrictions for farmers. So, do some of these things reduce the cost of compliance or reporting or regulatory oversight? Is there a true economic gain for the farmer? In my role at Mountaire Farms, industry and stakeholder affairs, government relations, and policy and regulatory work, it's hard to quantify the economic impact of the work I do every day to my supervisor. How do I capture the economic impact of a negative? Something that was going to adversely impact our business model didn't happen. How do I reflect that as an economic gain?

I think we have a similar challenge here when we talk about Bay goals. So if we're proactive and we do the right things, we can spearhead the initiative at a grassroots level and we can get in front of bad policy and bad regulatory suggestions that aren't going to have the impact that that we know as a scientific community some of our best practices will have, but they are lower hanging fruit for maybe a state or a federal agency because they can conceptualize how to enforce it and how to regulate it more efficiently or more timely. I'm not sure if it's ever been discussed as part of the mission of the group, Eric, but if it's cheaper for a farmer long term to invest in healthy soil, healthy water, and healthy air, and they want to leave the farm better than they found it, and they want to leave it better for the future generations, how are we capturing that economic impact so that we can jump our place in line, and so that we're no longer the 5th tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs? We are closer to the foundational level because now this is just good business, and you can justify it regardless of the long-term debt that you're trying to pay off and regardless of the living cost that you're incurring as you grow your family. I think we have some of that data, but I'm not sure that that's where we focus on the selling point, right, because the selling point for us should always be how it relates back to the Bay Model and the Bay Goals. I appreciate that, but in reality, we're a group of professionals, as Paul alluded to, and we all believe this is important and that's why we're working through it. But we have to be realistic with where we live in a farmers list of priorities. Farmers invest in long term assets. They assume intermediate to long term debt. So likewise, I believe they're willing to make investments into their operation, even if the return on investment isn't immediate. But we have to be able to show the return on investment, and I still think economic impact, at times, is the best way to do that. If you're trying to convince somebody to work harder to reduce already slim margins, to outlay resources when they're already struggling to justify the resources they currently use, it's not the work or the effort or the energy that needs to be expended that serves as the biggest hurdle for our farmers. It's the ability to justify that. I think we've got a real opportunity as a group, and there were some other comments that were made about too many cooks in the kitchen. Sometimes I think as a resource network we do a great job. We have as many as 75-100 people in this call sometimes. So, you have extensive access to resources, and everyone on this call could point you in the right direction if you're a farmer of who you need to talk to to learn more about this program and what's going to be the best for you to utilize for your respective operation. But, aside from being a network, do

we have a comprehensive checklist or a to do list to guide a farmer or an operator of where they should start and how they could ease into this process, instead of being, dropped into what can feel like a pool of sharks at times because we are all experts, and we are all pushing our best practices, because we know the results are real. So, do we have that checklist or that that guideline for a farmer? If I bring a brand-new poultry farmer on this call, they're going to take six months to kind of get their bearings and understand what their role within the group is, but then they're also going to spend some time trying to figure out where do they start. Where is the beginning and, more specifically, what does that checklist or that playbook look like? If I'm a new farmer versus an established multi-generational farmer whose predecessors have been engaging in things like no till and environmental buffers, and have great BMPs in place, how much different does that checklist look? To Paul's point, we have a lot of multi-generational farmers, and that might mean that some of the low hanging fruit is gone. So, how do we capture that last 5%? What are the different challenges for a farm owner based on their business life cycle, not just their business model or their specific industry or segment?

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): To Zach's point, conservation and restoration efforts do not always provide economic return. How do we share that message? How do we promote conservation as a value-added product that farmers provide us all? MDA is exploring some of that. Maryland would be happy to share more about exploring some of those topics through development of LEEF, as/if that progresses. In a future meeting.

https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2025/02/11/governor-moore-announces-support-for-chesapeake-bay-legacy-act-to-protect-the-bay-and-uplift-key-maryland-industries/ Or if they do, how do we use that as a tool to further value of implementation? Zach, thanks for raising these great points.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): Maybe not **too** many cooks, but a need to organize our stations.

Kristen Hughes Evans (in chat): Just want to note some regions are handling the "too many cooks" issue well. Collaboration that improves communication and coordination can significantly accelerate TA and FA delivery and bring more farmers into existing state and federal programs. If this is an issue for a lot of folks, it might be helpful to feature partners that have deep experience engaging with multiple stakeholders to expand conservation delivery and outcomes for their farming communities.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):This feedback has come from farmers and cooperators so including their recommendations, what they feel works best, is important. Partners that have incorporated that and can speak to that would be helpful to hear from.

Kristen Hughes Evans (in chat): Agreed. Without good collaboration, coordination and communication, "too many cooks" can cause major confusion and in some cases, set back on-going conservation efforts. It can take years to build a relationship and trust with farmers who are skeptical of participating in conservation programs. Partners who are not working in coordination with existing conservation leaders can seriously interfere with this critical process.

Ruth Cassilly: In response to both of the comments from the poultry industry, I did want to bring up the Environmental Integrity Project report that was put out in 2021 on the poultry industry and ways to improve the poultry industry so that it actually is working towards clean water quality in areas where we could have improvement. The statistic from 2013 to 2019 for the net change in the number of chickens on Maryland's Eastern Shore is that it has increased by 23 million birds. So, we've got a nine percent increase over that time period, but the number of farms only increased by five, and that's kind of going with that industry standard of we're getting bigger and bigger in terms of each farm size, not the number of farmers, but big farms. We're also increasing the size of poultry operations that are within 400 feet of a house owned by neighbors and, living

close to those poultry farms, I know you all know has some very big health concerns for those people and water quality. They suggested that planting vegetated buffers consisting of rows of trees and shrubs between the poultry houses and the neighbours is one way to disperse the emissions and reduce impacts and also cut deposition to water ways. But, despite the benefits of those practices, a majority of poultry operations do not use them and, overall, only 204 of 529, or 39% of the operations in Maryland, had some kind of vegetated buffer, and only 68 of the 174 with nearby neighbors had buffers. If we're going to have this conversation, which I support and am all for, I'm wondering and hoping that the poultry industry is also willing to talk about some of those things that are there and that are well documented and maybe talk about ways that we can improve that. We're talking about low hanging fruit, but it doesn't seem by those statistics that we've picked up the low hanging fruit. So, I did want to just make that comment and hope that going forward, we won't lose sight of the things that are still there and that still need to be dealt with and that agencies are having a hard time dealing with legislatively and otherwise.

Eric Hughes: I know Zach and Paul are both going to want to respond to that, and I just wanted to say one thing quickly: I think these are the discussions that we need to have, and this is the place for them to be had. As long as the tone is respectful, I support it.

Zach Evans: When we look at our footprint as an industry, and I think Ruth mentioned Maryland numbers, it's important to remember that business doesn't necessarily recognize those state lines like agencies or regulatory departments. So, as an industry, when we look at the total number of birds on Delmarva in the same time frame, there's not a nine percent increase in production. It's almost a one to one in terms of the number of birds. Now if you look at the weight of product introduced in the market from those birds, you'll realize some gains in efficiency, and that's through nutrition, and that's through genetics. So, we're getting more out of every chicken, and we're using less feed to do it. We're using less water to do it. So, I think that's hard to look at those numbers in a vacuum just in Maryland because you have to recognize that when three houses go out of production in Maryland, Delaware may pick up that capacity because the same number of birds are still going to be processed in that respective facility, and we do have 5 integrators. So, there is some real switching amongst companies. I live a half a mile from Delaware. I live 17 miles from Virginia, and I am in Maryland. So, if I had a farm operation here, and I could get land at a more affordable price point in Accomack County, I might look to expand in Accomack County, and I may take houses out of production or put houses into production. It's important to recognize that capacity at the processing level has not increased in that corresponding time frame. We've actually reduced the number of birds that we process on Delmarva. So, anecdotally, I hear you that it looks like there's growth in Maryland. But as a region, which is how we operate, there's actually been a reduction in back-end number of birds being processed. We're just seeing more poundage because of efficiency gains. The other thing I wanted to say was the vegetative buffers are a great program, and I'd be curious to know because you have some of that capacity that shifted to Delaware, and you're seeing substantial growth in Sussex County, Delaware, even more so than Caroline County or Dorchester in Maryland. There is a significant investment in the buffers in the regions that are seeing the quickest growth, because your point about farms being built in closer to proximity to neighbors, typically the farms predate the houses, and that's not always the case. But more often than not, a property that's zoned agricultural has been producing food for longer than the house that was built next door. So, we recognize those challenges, and I know that Mountaire as a company, we spend a lot of our own money, and it's not cost share funded. It's not run through DCA. We actually invest over $1,000,000 a year in vegetative buffers on Delmarva. So, I'm also wondering if we're not doing a great job as a privately owned company reporting into some of those mechanisms which would allow us to better capture that data. That's probably on us, to be

honest, because I don't know that our live operations team shares any of that data externally. But I know that we plant 75 vegetative buffers a quarter, and so those kinds of things maybe just present an opportunity to better share that information.

Scott Heidel (in chat): Biochar is an innovative option to handle industrial level poultry litter, just need to fit it in the model because we are already using it in PA but not getting credit for it which leads to frustration

Paul Bredwell: Zach said that production is not up. These plants are regulated on the amount of birds that can go through that plant on a daily basis. You just cannot go to the line and turn the line speed up. They're regulated at the line speed, so to Zach's point, while it may appear that production is up, it is not up. You talked about only five new farms. That may be true. There might be five new farms, but some of the houses may have been torn down, larger barns may have been built, which could lead to some of that that additional birds. But, again, if you go back to the production rates that can occur in these processing facilities, you're not going to see a huge, if any, production rate increase unless you build another plant on the Delmarva Peninsula, and one has not been built [in a while], and I think one has recently shut down, if I am correct.

Zach Evans: Yeah, it's been over 20 years since we've built a new production facility. Because we are limited in back-end capacity, we can't process any more birds tomorrow than we were yesterday, because of those limitations, when you do see new farms being constructed, that's a good thing. That means that we're taking offline inefficient and outdated technology. So, when you see a new farm coming up, and you see that new capacity, I just want to convey to everybody that we're not processing any more chickens because we can't. So, what that means is we just took 10 old chicken houses who didn't have heavy use pads, and definitely not have vegetative buffers, and were not designed with a storm or sediment erosion control plan, we took those farms offline and now what the community is getting is the highest and best standard. When we build in Maryland and Delaware, it truly is the highest and best standard in the country and, Paul, I'm just proud of what we do here regionally, so I'm not being dismissive of anyone else's efforts. I just know because we're held to a high standard, when you see a new chicken house being built, that's replacing old, outdated, inefficient technology, and that typically means it's a gain for us in terms of trying to reach our environmental goals.

Ruth Cassilly: Thank you, both. I do value being able to have this conversation with you all and get your perspective. One thing I did want to mention is that the size of the broilers has also increased by 23%, so we're raising larger birds, which imports more grain and results in more manure for the farmer to handle. The second thing I wanted to say is that the buffer statistics were done through satellite imagery, so it wasn't reported statistics. It was done using imagery just to clarify that. I'll stop there, and I'm looking forward to future conversations

Eric Hughes: Paul and Zach, plenty of nuance to this discussion, and if there are responses to that final point, I encourage you to make those in the chat. If there's anything that you want to share, and if conversation continues there, that's great. Diversity of agriculture in the Bay watershed- this is one part of our complex system, and we're very privileged to have representatives of several corners of industry on our group, and we certainly look forward to working with you all. I think, across the board, what we've heard is that there are opportunities for improvement, not assigning that to just any one group, and not saying it's just you or it's just us, but in how we engage with the landowners and the farmers. Zach, the framing that you've described, and Paul the crediting that you've described, and then the point that Ruth has made, across the board there's opportunity to improve. I think that's something that we can as a group collectively take a look at. So, really looking forward to doing that with you all, and I appreciate your participation here.

Amanda Barber (in chat): What Districts do well in NY is work with farmers to understand the obstacles and develop programs, tools, etc to overcome them.
Zach Evans (in chat): Thank you for the great discussion, Ruth. You are absolutely correct in that broiler size has increased nearly 20%. I know that context is important so just to add to the conversation, during that corresponding time frame feed conversation rates across many parts of the industry have improved by as much as 30%. Meaning we can grow a bird pound for pound today with 30% less feed than we did before, based on a better understanding of nutrition and breed genetics. The overall impact hopefully means that while we are growing a bigger bird and able to feed more people. We are doing so while minimizing the increase in grain, while also reducing water and energy use.
Ruth Cassilly (in chat): Appreciate your perspective and the information Zach, looking forward to continued conversations.

Jeff Hill- York County Conservation District

Jeff Hill: Paul and Zach pretty much had my notes verbatim, so I just threw them out here off camera. From my perspective, I was asked to be on the resource improvement Work Group/Task Force back in 2013. It was my first involvement with anything related to the AgWG, and from there then I jumped on as I think probably one of the first full Conservation District employees to the AgWG, and I was immediately shocked at how I felt overwhelmed in an environment that I had worked with, the farming community and conservation at the local level, for almost 10 years. I talked to everybody who was in charge and Mark Dubin, and I was like "I'm over my head", "this is not my deal", because it was based so much at the academic level where there's so much of these tests being done, a lot of the stuff working back and forth with the states to try and develop new programs, and a lot of good came out of that. Kind of like what Paul touched on, the Poultry Litter study, I remember that being huge. They did some swine manure studies with Smithfield back in the day, the resource improvements that we did, cover crop nitrogen, fertilizer. There's a lot of big-ticket items that we worked on and got a lot of good input at a high level, which then did come back useful to the farming community. But, as I spent more time with this group and became more aware of what was going on and understanding things, I did voice my concerns a little bit more, and you're hearing it now. We lost touch with who we work with on a day in and day out basis. We do say that we work with the farming community, or we work in the ag industry, but can we truly say we can go out and talk to a farmer today, this afternoon, about BMP implementation or about conservation and have that conversation with him today? At the conservation district level, we spend our time in the field working with those individuals on a daily basis, and that was the one message that I wanted to bring back to the AgWG since I've been on. Yes, there is important information that was talked about that is germane to the model, and to regulations, and everything else across the watershed and the U.S., but it has to start at that local level. You have to have the engagement and the involvement from that farming community or from the agricultural sector. As this work group has moved, and we've gotten more comfortable on some of the research and work that's been done and kind of transitioned, we have engaged more of the farming community. We have Dave Graybill on and some of the other ones that have joined over the years that have been instrumental to those conversations and getting their viewpoint. It's not a counterpoint/point type thing, but it's like you guys are sitting around talking about some of the stuff, but did you ever think that my manure spreading equipment just can't run at .5 miles per hour? It just doesn't happen, and we need to remember that those are the ones that bring that real world information back to us, that we can then help and move things along. If it doesn't work out, they're not going to do it. As much as we want to try and push buffers, and streambank

fencing, and all of the three great BMPs that get us the most amount of bang for the buck in the model, if you go to your local county and talk to your farming community and you say " here's what we'd like you to do", and it doesn't fit what their model is or what their business plan is, it's dead in the water, and you have just wasted all of that time trying to push a narrative that is just not functional on those properties. As Eric and I've talked here over the past couple months, my involvement in the AgWG here with my new job has kind of slid a little bit as I've slid over here into York, but it is key that we maintain those conversations and increase those conversations as we move forward, because that is where I truly see the direction of the AgWG. We have shifted, and I think that's great. I was very afraid that the AgWG was so hung up on the model and everything that went into the model that we were losing touch of really what was going on at the local level. I'm glad to see that pendulum swing is swinging back a little bit, and I want to get it to a point where we can all sit down and have these conversations, and be heard, and be working through better options and better ideas for the farming community that we have. It's going to take some time, and it's probably going to take some hard conversations. Some of the best presentations and most well received presentations were when we had farmers come on and talk about their farming. "I run a 500 acre farm out in western Pennsylvania. Here's what I do. Here's what has worked for me. Here's things that I have taken from Pennsylvania, and I've been able to incorporate". It gives us good feedback on the work that we're doing as well. So, it's not an easy spot where we sit. I totally agree with everybody here as we try and work through it. I fully support what they've said here this morning, and like I said earlier, that conversation on trying to get some stuff lined up across state lines and some input there is huge. That's the great part of the AgWG that we come to, because we cover a large area that encompasses a lot of agriculture.

Eric Hughes: Thanks, Jeff. I just wanted to reinforce that we cover a lot of ground, cover a lot of ag, in the watershed. I think our membership is representative of that. We have 21 voting members, and when it comes down to make decisions, that's 21 people that have to be on the same page, but 21 people who represent a diversity of perspectives and standpoints. So, these conversations are the one that need to happen. I really appreciate everyone weighing in.

Ken Staver- UMD Wye Research and Education Center

Ken Staver: I'm from the Wye Research and Education Center. We were trying to get you all over there in September, but it didn't work out. That's the Wye River in the background. It's a sub estuary of Chesapeake Bay. We have agriculture. The whole Eastern Shore is adjacent to waters of the Chesapeake Bay. So, what we do here in our farming, it's obvious that the effects of anything leaving our fields is going into waters of the Bay. Just to give you some perspective, the dot there is the is the Wye Research Center. We have a lot of waterfront residences. As you get to the right in this photo, the interior of Delmarva is fairly low relief, coastal plain soils. The forests are along the stream corridors, but most of the well-drained soils have been cleared for agriculture, and there's land that's been in production for centuries, many centuries. This was settled early, so very long history of crop production here. I'm thinking coastal plain of Maryland is 5% of the watershed. I actually grew up on a Hill Farm in Pennsylvania. These are my parents. They're in the Pennsylvania Livestock Hall of Fame. My early life was all about Hill Country livestock, not coastal plain cropland. So, I guess I'm trying to give myself a little bit of relevance to a lot of you folks in the watershed that didn't come to the Eastern Shore. Even further north for the New York folks, this is the Teaching and Research Center at Cornell. I actually lived there when I was in college in the late 70s. So dairy, beef, sheep as well. So, my life has been up and down the Susquehanna drainage basin. Actually, my in laws are all in Chenango County, New York. So, the Chesapeake Watershed, I've seen the whole thing from the Eastern Shore all the way up to the to the end of it for 40 years.

What we do here at the Wye research and Education Center, this is one of our monitoring sites. We've been measuring 24/7 365 since 1984 on some fields where we're doing all these practices that we're trying to figure out what they do to nutrient transport. This breaks down to how do we make a difference? How do we change these loads? I think for those of us in the business, it's a foregone conclusion that if it doesn't work for a farmer, it's just not going to happen. That's why we have the cost share programs we have, because we understand that market forces are not going to have farmers taking land out of production for buffers or having planting cover crops that have a long-term return. So, that's a given for us. We have to work that out. Just for an example, here's no till corn, grass waterway, we have cover crops residue there, two inches of rain in a 1/2 an hour. We have the sediment situation. A lot of the states have been successful. We've made great advances in erosion control, and we can do a really good job on erosion control with the tools we have in the toolbox. We have groundwater work and soil sampling. So, this is how our comments are informed from the research community. It's just measuring things, and these systems are complicated. Of course, we're just measuring in one little location, but we have the whole Bay watershed to deal with. Stream sampling, this is a sight on the upper Choptank. If you don't see anything in the stream, and you're seeing it at the edge of the field, then you know you sort of don't understand what's going on. There's a part of the picture you have to dig a little deeper on. So, this has just been a 40-year effort of trying to sort out these systems- what drives these nutrient losses and what can we do to change them? I think this is where the where the AgWG actually started. This was a report, and I was involved in this effort, and this was submitted to the Nonpoint Source Subcommittee, which I think was a precursor to the AgWG, and this was looking at the effect of repairing buffers on Chesapeake Bay watershed. This is about developing coefficients that we could use in the accounting system to say, ok, if we do this practice, what difference does it make in nutrient loads? This was one of the early AgWG efforts, even though it was the non-point source subcommittee at the time. [Assessing the Impact of Changes in Management Practices on Nutrient Transport from Coastal Plain Agricultural Systems] is a report that we did work for. Again, this is non-point source subcommittee, NPS #3 report. At that time, it was structured a little differently, but there was actually funding that came out of the Bay program that supported trying to figure out the communication part of these are the practices on the land, how do they change nutrient practices? This was in 1995, it had 10 years of data in it. So, this actually was covered the '85-'95 period. So, there's a lot of history here, and what I consider the AgWG in terms of being the translator from the practices in the field to the accounting system at the watershed scale. I always thought that was sort of our role. So, a lot of these other things about implementation, I guess we've morphed a little bit. Maybe a lot of this work has been done, the technical part of it, but, still, you have to know what the difference the practices make if you're going to have a system that works out on paper. So, that's a lot of work that the AgWG has done. Then the cover crops reports, we've done a lot of cover crop work. Maryland's used cover crops a lot for meeting our nitrogen reduction goals. Yes, we have a lot of options because there are a lot of options, and how well they control nitrate losses varies with those practices- planting dates, the type of cover crop, how it's planted. You can sort of do a grand average, but if you want to target and you want to incentivize the best practices, you have to have a system where you give more credit for some practices than others. Could it be simplified? It could, but you can start complicated and simplify from there with your implementation system if you want to. I think it's better off having the information there to start with. Again, back to what I do, that's a picture from my home place. I have about 250 acres of cash grain on my home operation. I get to do the practices and see how they work and see what they cost me and see what the state pays me. So,

I have had the good fortune of being able to do it at the research level and also at the practical level, which I think is helpful in these conversations.

The questions- these are the two points about the ag stakeholder perspectives. The AgWG now seems to be like the catch all for all these things, and I don't think the AgWG originally was. We weren't about implementation. There's lots of things we didn't cover, and we're covering everything that sort of gets put on our table right now. We're trying to but, originally, we were focused on coming up with these values for different production systems and conservation practices so you could have an accounting system. For instance, early on, we had nutrient management in Maryland, and it was just by acre the way it was set up. You got certain credit for N reduction for nutrient management on an acre, and you had an N reduction credit for nutrition management on soybeans, which you didn't put any nitrogen on anyway. So, it's sort of nonsensical to have an N reduction credit for a nitrogen based nutrient management plan on soybean acres. So, those kinds of things have to be worked out if it's going to make sense, and if you're going to convey it to a farmer, it's going to make sense to them. Baselines were always a problem. If you're going to say, “we're going to do this”, well, what were you doing before you did that? If you develop a nutrient management plan that doesn't change how much fertilizer somebody's applying, it doesn't change anything, it doesn't matter whether you have a plan or not. So, the question is, what's the baseline? So that's always been the challenge, and that's where we really needed stakeholder input. That's something I can talk about from 30 years ago- this question of what are we changing? That is really hard to build those datasets of what difference are we making with our practices? It's really important on research projects because what happens is, in the AgWG, a lot of what we've done in our expert panels is we bring in research findings, but you have to figure out whether or not the research was relevant. So, if a researcher planted a cover crop on the 1st of August and said, oh, how effective this cover crop is, well, we can't plant cover crops the 1st of August. So, you have to sort of throw that research out. But that's something done in the expert panel phase, not so much in the ongoing AgWG discussion. I guess we always need stakeholder input, but more so at some places than the others. The ag nutrient flows and stocks, so that's applications, yields, and soil P levels. They remain a data challenge, and they've been a data challenge for the whole time, and the fertilizer thing is looming out there for us to deal with. That looks to be the 800,000-pound elephant. But those nutrient flows, we still don't have that, and that's something we really need from the stakeholders. I don't know if stakeholders is the right term there, but from the ag side of things, we need to know how these nutrients are moving around. In terms of going the other way about communication, I think we have to think about the mechanics of nutrient transport. I would agree, sometimes we get up to these high-level discussions, and we aren't thinking about what we do in a field to reduce the nutrient losses. Soil erosion is obvious. It's intuitive. You can show a farmer. You can see how practices work, and we've done very well on that. Dissolved nutrients- nitrate and groundwater, dissolved phosphorus are less obvious, more complicated, and it's a major part of our losses. We need education, communication, and trust back and forth between the research community and the ag folks, the stakeholders, and the farmers, but we're sort of in the middle of that in the AgWG, and then I think we need to be able to downscale. This is also in the communication piece. I know the watershed model is not a field scale model, but we have to be able to scale it down. So, we take it out to a field, to the management unit. I consider the management unit the field, the crop, and the farm. What do you do on this field to reduce the nutrient losses? If you do A, B, and C, how much do they go down? You have to be able to talk to a farmer, because the management unit is where the stuff all happens.

Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): Appreciate your input, Ken. Always valuable. To continue the metaphor - agreed, we want to be able to cook with all the 'flavors' of cover crops. Sometimes we need that level of detail to target and plan and understand impact. If we've done a lot of the "easy", what's left is the nuanced.

12:00 – 12:30 – Wrap-up and Closing Remarks

Eric summarized the morning's discussions and shared next steps in the planning process. The group was asked to consider the following questions: Of the ideas the AgWG has considered since October, which will we ultimately endorse as a group? How will our selection of topics of interest guide our work for 2025-26? There was time for discussion before adjourning.

Discussion:

Kathy Brasier (in chat): List your takeaways here, especially topics/issues that highlight ways in which we can work collectively - across jurisdictions - to share successes and address challenges.
Amanda Barber (in chat): Takeaways: We are dealing with similar challenges and working together to solve them is important. We need support and cooperation from federal and state partners to overcome some challenges
Marel King (in chat): Takeaways: Opportunities to improve and support tracking and verification of practices.
Jeremy Daubert (in chat): Reasons why farmers won't take cost share: 1. pride/ doesn't want to take government money 2. prior poor experience with the process 3. Benefits, not well established. 4. general distrust of government 5. misunderstandings
Hunter Landis (in chat): Takeaway: How do we support collection/utilization of industry data: animal numbers (waste generated), crop yields, fertilizer applied?
Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat): Agreed, and at a watershed scale. We go further together. If one state explores this alone, still need it to be applicable for all in order to use in the model.
Marel King (in chat): Takeaways: As topics are explored, include time on the agenda for producer experience/input.
Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat): Eric and Kathy - well done. Good mtg.
Amanda Barber (in chat): We should have more of these dialogues and presentations! Thank you!
Scott Heidel (in chat): Great meeting today! Thank you and very well done
Patrick Thompson (in chat): Ag Industry involvement should be expanded to the full commodity supply chain - this is where value is recognized and is the source of ag producer compensation/incentives.

Action: Eric Hughes, AgWG Coordinator, will use the successes, challenges, and feedback outlined by the state and ag stakeholder panelists to inform the list of topics of interest for the AgWG to pursue over the next two years. This list will be distributed to the group upon its completion and discussed at a subsequent meeting.

Next Meeting: **Thursday, March 20th, 2025: 10:00AM-12:00PM (Virtual)**

Participants:

Kathy Brasier, PSU
Caitlin Grady, GWU
Eric Hughes, EPA
Caroline Kleis, CRC

Tom Butler, EPA
Amanda Barber, NY Cortland County SWCD
Hunter Landis, VA DCR
Emily Dekar, USC
Matt Monroe, WVDA
Brady Seeley, PA SCC
Brandon Reeves, VA Cattleman Association
Tyler Trostle, PA DEP
Cassie Davis, NYSDEC
Hannah Sanders, EPA
Rosita Musgrove, DOEE
Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting/CBPO
Nick Hepfl, HRG
Ruth Cassilly, UMD/CBPO
Mark Dubin, UMD/CBPO
Zach Evans, Mountaire Farms
Jenna Schueler, CBF
Sushanth Gupta, MWCOG
Scott Heidel, PA DEP
Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
Kate Bresaw, PA DEP
Elizabeth Hoffman, MDA
Ken Staver, UMD Wye REC
Jeremy Daubert, VT
Patrick Thompson, Energy Works
Grant Gulibon, PA Farm Bureau
Marel King, CBC
Seth Mullins, VA DCR
Kristen Hughes Evans, Sustainable Chesapeake
Jeff Hill, York County Conservation District
Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC
Bailey Robertory, UMCES/DNR
Kendrick Flowers, NRCS
Jeremy Hanson, CRC
Emily Heller, EPA
Suzanne Trevena, EPA
Kathy Boomer, Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research
Katie Brownson, USFS
Leah Martino, EPA
Erin Sonnenburg, CRC

Acronym List

AgWG- Agriculture Workgroup
AMT- Agricultural Modeling Team (Phase 7)
BMP – Best Management Practice
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
MLRI – Modeled Load Reduction Indicator
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service
NFWF – National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
ORISE – Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education
PADEP – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
PSC – Principals' Advisory Committee (CBP)
PSU- Penn State University
SWCD – Soil and Water Conservation Districts
WQGIT- Water Quality Goal Implementation Team
UMD - University of Maryland
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture
USGS – United States Geological Survey
USFS – United States Forestry Service