

# Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

## Meeting Minutes

January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2024

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

## Meeting Materials

### Summary of Actions and Decisions

**Decision:** The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the November 2023 AgWG call.

**Action:** Please complete the in-person meeting poll by **COB Friday, February 9th**:

<https://forms.gle/Eevq1zQfNXXSS7866>.

**Action:** SIGNATORY + MID-TERM AT-LARGE ONLY: Please complete the following poll indicating approval or rejection of 2024-2025 at-large members and Vice Chair by **COB Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**:

<https://forms.gle/WT25XGhhcvUdEb9C7>.

**Action:** Jackie and Eric will consult PSC leadership on the questions raised at the January AgWG meeting about the Ag Advisory Committee action team and will return with clarifications at the February AgWG meeting.

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## Meeting Minutes

### Introduction

10:00 **Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes – 5 minutes**

*Jeremy Daubert, AgWG Chair*

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants - *Please enter name and affiliation under "Participants" or in "Chat" box*
- **Decision:** The AgWG approved the [minutes](#) from the November 2023 AgWG call.

10:05 **2024-25 Vice Chair & At-Large Membership – 10 minutes**

*Eric Hughes, AgWG Coordinator*

Eric reviewed the [list of nominees](#) for the open Vice Chair and at-large member positions, and nominees will have the opportunity to introduce themselves to the group (in the interest of time, introductions will be reserved for nominees who have *not* already served a term on the workgroup). He also reviewed the procedure for confirming nominees via Google poll.

**Action:** SIGNATORY + MID-TERM AT-LARGE ONLY: Please complete the following poll indicating approval or rejection of 2024-2025 at-large members and Vice Chair by **COB Friday, January 26<sup>th</sup>**: <https://forms.gle/WT25XGhhcvUdEb9C7>.

### Accounting & Reporting/Data & Modeling

10:15 **Accounting of Agricultural Conservation Practice Implementation: Integrating USDA and PA Practice Keeper Data Sources – 45-minute presentation**

*Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting, Inc.; Mark R. Nardi, USGS*

The USGS team developed geospatial analytical methods to compare Pennsylvania state-collected conservation practice data and NRCS and FSA conservation practice data. The evaluated period from 2006 through 2020 includes Lancaster, York, Juniata, and Franklin counties in Pennsylvania. Mark and Olivia shared the project purpose, methods, and results. They also discussed how this could be applied in other states using similar methods. This pilot project was funded through the Chesapeake Bay Program. See below for discussion.

**11:00 Overview of VA Pilot Project – 10-minute presentation**

*James Martin, VA DCR*

James provided a brief overview of a VADCR/NRCS pilot project. See below for discussion.

**11:10 Q&A – 25 minutes**

**Discussion on Verification Presentations**

*Kate Bresaw (in chat):* Thanks for this great information, Olivia. I just want to clarify that overwriting of the dates only occurs for NM Plans. This is not a characteristic of our other BMP data.

*Kate Bresaw (in chat):* I also wanted to clarify that the data that was submitted for this project is not equivalent to what is submitted to our numeric progress. Known USDA data was included in this project, but this would be pulled before submitting for progress.

*Matt Monroe (in chat):* Cindy Shreve (WVCA) definitely deserves the credit for her hard work on accurately capturing BMPs in WV.

*Kate Bresaw (in chat):* From my understanding, access to the CLU requires a 1619 agreement, which because of our right to know law is not possible for PA.

*Olivia Devereux (in chat):* This is true and the case for all states. It adds a lot of time to planning by the states and is unfortunate.

*Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):* In Maryland, we've encountered the farm and tract identifiers can change over time which makes it hard to connect BMP locations through time as listed in plans. We use the property tax ID to track, which seems to remain more constant as to the location. We also note the F/T as well though.

*Kate Bresaw (in chat):* Thanks Elizabeth - Does Maryland have access to the up-to-date CLU to verify F/T or are you getting that in farmer interview?

*Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):* We have access to CLU and SCDs to confirm with farmers when working with them for planning or programs. I can gather more as to how up to date, etc, and connect with you after the meeting.

*Kate Bresaw (in chat):* That would be great. Thank you! Confirming Maryland does not have a 1619, correct?

*Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):* We do for CREP.

*Christopher Thompson (in chat):* Olivia used a BMP life span of 10 years, but some practices need to be reverified annually (i.e.: Conservation Plans) in order for them to count in the Bay Model. This creates a never ending cycle for Pennsylvania where we don't get credit for of functioning BMP that fall out of the model.

*Olivia Devereux (in chat):* Yes, my example was 10 years, which is the primary model credit duration for structural BMPs. In that slide, I used the actual credit duration. Some are 3 or 5 years. Some have no credit duration and need to be reported annually, like cover crops and tillage.

**Jim Riddell:** The government budget has a million in it for DCR verification and then half a million for cooperative extension to be involved in the future. Can you comment on what that means to VA and the input for BMP projects that are not being reported necessarily?

**James Martin:** In VA, we're fortunate because we have significant funding for our state cost-share program, which is about 140 million this year and will likely increase in July for the next year. The million dollars is funding that we use to verify our state installed practices. We pay our partner SWCD to reinspect all of our structural practices from our cost share program 1-2 years prior to their contract or credit durations. That will give us a few more years of that verification work. The 0.5 million in the gov budget is for our work with cooperative extension through VT which will be less about verification and more about capturing data for non-cost shared practices that are voluntarily installed. We tried to do that previously through a farmer survey but didn't have a good response rate from producers for that either. The necessary data to report these practices are cumbersome as there are lots of different metrics.

**Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):** How is the crosswalk of fencing being handled - are other states differentiating between riparian exclusion fencing (model credited) and interior pasture fencing (NRCS 382)? To clarify, all 382 is fencing not just interior.

**Kate Bresaw:** We track them separately. I don't think we are able to report NRCS practices fencing for that reason. We are reporting exclusion fencing separately.

**James Martin:** It's similar for VA. We capture data specifying the extent of streamside fencing and differentiate that from cross fencing or boundary fencing. NRCS doesn't make that distinction. Similarly, I don't think 382 NRCS fencing practices are currently reported.

**Eric Hughes:** What do jurisdictions think about these projects?

**Kate Bresaw:** The USGS data sharing project is being integrated into some of the proposals that are being brought forward by the Fed Crediting Task Force. This is something that PA has significant reservations about based on how the pilot went. We could potentially support it as an interim solution until we figure out statistical extrapolation of our practices, but we would need to understand and add some efficiency to the jurisdictional responsibility to track and report in order to get this data where it needs to be to provide it to them. Need to work on workflows. Also we didn't look at reverification of these BMPs, only the overlap. PA will never be able to get a 1619 agreement. Need USDA to take responsibility for the reverification part.

**Mark Nardi (in chat):** Kate - thanks for your comments. They provided a lot of insight.

**James Martin:** I agree with Kate. Not sure we'll get to the point where we get site-specific NRCS data that is accessible and reportable to the Bay Program. It will probably be aggregate data. I think that's working, but even if we find a successful and easy way to make this work through the verification pilot, we will still be verifying specific individual practices, which will ultimately need to be reported to CAST in an aggregate form. That will still be a hurdle.

**Olivia Devereux:** We could try to move away from verifying specific individual practices or counting every BMP everywhere. Do people think we could focus more on meeting conservation needs? Has that ever been discussed? Are there issues with going in that direction?

**Elizabeth Hoffman:** Do you have an idea of how we would quantify that?

**Olivia Devereux:** I don't know the details. But for example, if you're reducing erosion on a farm in the Eastern Shore, you might cater your BMP to whatever would be most effective for that environment. You would say you're meeting the conservation need of erosion control by X% and there would be different practices that would be used in one location versus another. So we would focus on mitigating erosion by a certain percentage, rather than counting the number of practices implemented. Recommendations by technical staff are very farm specific, so that would play a part. I don't have the details worked out, just throwing the idea out there.

**Mark Dubin:** Could be similar to the Soil Water Conservation Plan BMP, which tracks acres under the plan that focuses on performance. And there are a number of BMPs or conservation practices tied up within that plan, so that could be an example of something similar to what Olivia was describing.

**Olivia Devereux:** Yes, that's a good example that looks at performance.

**James Martin (in chat):** Look forward to seeing the results from the EPA-USDA Task Force related to NRCS/FSA data reporting and verification.

**Jim Riddell (in chat):** James, thanks for all you do and always willing to share your extensive knowledge! ! You are most appreciated in VA.

### Discussion on [Coordinator Update](#) Slides

**James Martin:** I thought the PSC already agreed to the ag advisory committee and the action team would just be determining what that group will look like?

**Elizabeth Hoffman (in chat):** We understood they are determining the structure, etc, as well James.

**Kaylyn Gootman (in chat):** I think it was the support to form a group to look into the formation of the Advisory Committee. Very confusing though.

**Jackie Pickford (in chat):** We can clarify with PSC leadership and get back to the group. I will include it in the recap.

**Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat):** Would the proposed Ag Adv Comm have the standing/support that SAC, LGAC, and STAC have?

**Jackie Pickford (in chat):** @Kristen Saacke Blunk that is something that the Action Team will be looking into.

**Marel King, CBC (in chat):** From Actions/Decisions recap of December PSC meeting: ***“Decision: The partners agreed to establish an action team to develop recommendations on whether to establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee. Final recommendations should be ready for PSC consideration in time for the June PSC meeting. The partners also agreed to the action team charging document.”***

**Kristen Saacke Blunk (in chat):** Given the art of work that LGAC has done re: AG-communications with local governments - I sure wish LGAC had a rep on this Action team. Great to see SAC and STAC there - but honestly - LGAC has a huge stake in this too. Art of work.... range of work...

**Eric Hughes:** This is not a finalized list of members. But we can try to raise that concern to those involved in the Action Team.

**Kaylyn Gootman (in chat):** Just confirmed with Lucinda Power that the PSC approval was to form a group (i.e., Action Team) to look into the formation of an Ag Advisory Committee.

**Greg Albrecht (in chat):** Apologies....back to the Ag Advisory Committee....are the jurisdictional partners listed on the Ag AC slide those who will help form the committee or to serve on the committee?

**Eric Hughes:** The slide shown is who will serve on the Action Team, not the committee itself.

## Wrap-up

### 11:35 **New Business, Announcements & Updates – 20 minutes**

- **New! Update on Beyond 2025 and Clean Water Small Group**
  - Clean Water Small Group presented at the [January 22 WQGIT meeting](#).
  - All workgroup members are encouraged to attend the following listening sessions to provide feedback on Beyond 2025 and draft recommendations:

- **New!** Clean Water [Listening Session](#): Thursday, Feb 1<sup>st</sup> from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM.
    - Clean Water Small Group [Draft Recommendations](#)
  - **New!** People [Listening Session](#): Monday, Feb 5<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 – 2:00 PM.
  - **New!** Healthy Watersheds [Listening Session](#): Wednesday, Feb 7<sup>th</sup> from 2:00 – 3:30 PM.
  - **New!** Climate [Listening Session](#): Thursday, Feb 22<sup>nd</sup> from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM.
- **New! U.S. Geological Survey fact sheet about Chesapeake agricultural water quality: [Your land, your water—Using research to guide conservation practices on local farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed \(usgs.gov\)](#).**
  - This fact sheet summarizes some important topics about water-quality conditions and drivers in Chesapeake agricultural settings. USGS used feedback from local farmers, NRCS staff, and SWCDs to make sure that the text and visuals in the document would be relevant to farmers and local resource managers.
- **Agriculture Advisory Committee:**
  - Review of [PSC decision](#) to create an [action team](#) to develop recommendations on whether to establish an Agricultural Advisory Committee. This was a response to [a letter](#) sent to the EPA Regional Administrator from the State Agricultural Secretaries in July 2023.
  - **Update!** Jackie and Eric will consult PSC leadership on the questions raised at the January AgWG meeting about the Ag Advisory Committee action team and will return with clarifications at the February AgWG meeting.
- **New! Chesapeake Bay Program Webinar on TMDL Indicator, Feb 6<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 – 1:00 PM.**
  - The Bay TMDL indicator combines monitored and modeled data to estimate the progress of nitrogen and phosphorus pollution reductions in response to implemented best management practices.
  - [Registration](#) is required.
- **New! [Farm Succession Workshop](#) on Tuesday, January 23 @ 9:30 am – 2:30 pm. York County.**
  - Professionals in the ag industry will be providing valuable information to farm business owners who want to ensure the farm is transitioned to the next generation. This event will be hosted both in-person and online.
- **New! [Southeast PA Grazing Conference](#) on Thursday & Friday, February 15 & 16. Lancaster County.**
  - Join us at the 31st Annual Southeast PA Grazing Conference, featuring speakers interested in promoting grass and sharing how to capitalize on its myriad advantages.
- **New! National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Request for Proposals**
  - **Small Watershed Grants (SWG) Program**
    - More information can be found on [NFWF's SWG website](#).
    - Proposals due April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2024.
  - **Chesapeake Watershed Investments for Landscape Defense (WILD) Program**
    - More information can be found on [NFWF's WILD website](#)
    - Proposals due April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024.
- **Agricultural Modeling Team**
  - Tom Butler, Coordinator of the AMT, provided a brief update on the group's latest activities.
- **AgWG Leadership Change**
  - This will be Jeremy's final meeting as Chair of the AgWG; February will be Kathy's first meeting as Chair.

- Thank you to Jeremy and all members - returning and outgoing - for your participation!
- **CBPO Leadership Change**
  - Martha Shimkin (EPA) has been selected as CBPO's Director, and Lee McDonnell (EPA) will be serving temporarily as Acting Deputy Director.
- **In-Person Meeting Poll**
  - Would you be interested in an in-person AgWG meeting later this year? We will be sharing a poll with members to determine interest/availability and solicit ideas.
  - **Action:** Please complete the in-person meeting poll by Friday, February 9th: <https://forms.gle/Eevq1zQfNXXSS7866>.

11:55 **Review of Action and Decision Items – 5 minutes**

12:00 **Adjourn**

**Next Meeting: Thursday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2024: 10AM-12PM, Call-in Zoom**

### **Participants**

Jackie Pickford, CRC	Kate Bresaw, PA DEP
Jeremy Daubert, VT	Seth Mullins VA DCR
Kathy Braiser, PSU	Nicole Christ, MDE
Eric Hughes, EPA-CBPO	Carlington Wallace, ICPRB
Dave Graybill, Farm Bureau	Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP
Dylan Burgevin - MDE	Matt Monroe, WV Dept of Agriculture
Kelly Shenk, EPA	Mark Nardi USGS, MD-DE-DC WSC
Nick Hepfl, HRG	Kristen Saacke Blunk, Headwaters LLC
Emily Dekar, Upper Susquehanna Coalition	(contracted NFWF Field Liaison)
Paul Bredwell - U.S. Poultry & Egg Assoc.	Ruth Cassilly, UMD CBP
Jim Riddell, VA Cattlemen's Assoc.	Jenna Schueler, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Greg Albrecht (NYS AGM)	Helen Golimowski, Devereux Consulting
Cindy Shreve - WVCA	Matt Kowalski- CBF
PFB GovCom	Zach Evans, Mountaire Farms
Matt Monroe, WV	James Martin, VA DCR
Mark Dubin, UME/CBPO	R.O. Britt / Smithfield Foods
Alex Echols	Ken Staver, UMD Wye REC
Marel King, CBC	Auston Smith, EPA-CBPO
Clint Gill, DE	Sara Ramotnik, Clean Water Coalition
Ashley Hullinger, PA DEP	Hunter Landis VA -DCR
Tyler Trostle, PA DEP	Dean Hively, USGS, DC
HoffmanEA	Chris Bradshaw, NRCS
Scott Heidel, PA DEP	Leann Schmidt
Tom Butler, EPA	Christopher Thompson
Dylan Burgevin, MDE	Timothy Rosen, ShoreRivers
Jeff Sweeney, EPA	Caitlin Bolton
Kristen Wolf, PA DEP	Kaylyn Gootman, EPA CBPO
Nicole Christ, MDE	Caitlin Grady, GWU
Olivia Devereux, Devereux Consulting	Matt Royer, PSU
Scott Heidel, PA DEP	Sherri Degraphenreed, USDA
Alex Echols, Campbell Foundation	Suzanne Trevena, EPA R3

**\*\*Common Acronyms**

AgWG- [Agriculture Workgroup](#)  
AMT- [Agricultural Modeling Team](#) (Phase 7)  
BMP - Best Management Practices  
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  
CLU - Common Land Unit (boundary data)  
CREP - Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program  
DCR - [VA] Department of Conservation and Recreation  
EPA- [United States] Environmental Protection Agency  
FSA – Farm Service Agency  
LGAC - Local Government Advisory Committee  
NRCS – Natural Resources Conservation Service  
NM - Nutrient Management  
PSC – [Principals’ Advisory Committee](#)  
PSU- Penn State University  
SAC - Stakeholder Advisory Committee  
STAC - Science and Technical Advisory Committee  
SWCP - Soil Water Conservation Plans  
SWCD - Soil Water Conservation District  
WQGIT- [Water Quality Goal Implementation Team](#)  
UMD- University of Maryland  
UMCES – University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science  
USDA – United States Department of Agriculture  
USGS - United States Geological Survey  
VA DCR - Virginia Department of Conservation & Recreation  
VT - Virginia Tech