



Chesapeake Bay Program
Science. Restoration. Partnership.

Agriculture Workgroup

April 2025

Agenda

1

**Independent Review of
DEP Remote Sensing
Pilot Project**

2

AgWG Planning Update

3

**New Business,
Announcements &
Updates**

DEP Remote Sensing Pilot – Independent Review

Coordinator update (Jan 2025)

- Upcoming decision item
 - Decisions related to ag BMP verification made at AgWG
 - Introduction → Discussion → Vote
 - Ahead of vote, consider: do you have what you need to make an informed decision?
- Independent review kicked off this week
 - Review from Tetra Tech (staff: Aileen Molloy, Brian Pickard)
 - Final independent review due 4/3 for AgWG consideration ahead of 4/17 meeting
- Project Advisory Committee (PAC)
- Additional updates from Ashley; presentation from Tom

Coordinator update (Mar 2025)

● March Meeting

- Presentation on proposed guidance
 - Model-agnostic approach
 - Supplement to – or “chapter” of – broader remote sensing verification guidance
- Question for workgroup: What additional information do you need, if any, to make an informed decision on the approval of this method?

● April Meeting

- Final materials
- Presentation from independent reviewer on their findings
- Vote (consensus continuum) on approval and adoption of proposed verification method

What to expect this month

- Materials shared on 4/3 for your review ahead of the meeting:
 - Final methodology (guidance)
 - Draft methodology (guidance)
 - Draft methodology (guidance) with changes tracked
 - Tetra Tech review of draft methodology
 - CBPO “review” of draft methodology
 - Key documents cited in proposed methodology (remote sensing, roadside transect survey guidance)
- Today’s steps:
 - Presentation on independent review
 - Response from Pennsylvania
 - Open discussion; Q&A
 - Review of consensus-based decision-making process
 - Vote

Independent Review

- Third-party assessment of proposal led by technical experts in relevant field
- In this case:
 - Does the proposed guidance align with existing partnership guidance for remote sensing-based verification of BMPs?
 - Assessment informs – doesn't dictate – AgWG's vote
- Review of *draft* report due to submission schedule
 - Draft report with changes tracked shows updates made for final report
 - Unlikely that changes made would have resulted in substantially different review
- Bonus: Appendix – Recommendations for Improving 2017 Remote Sensing Guidelines

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Presentation (Independent Review)



Presentation (PA Response)





Open Discussion





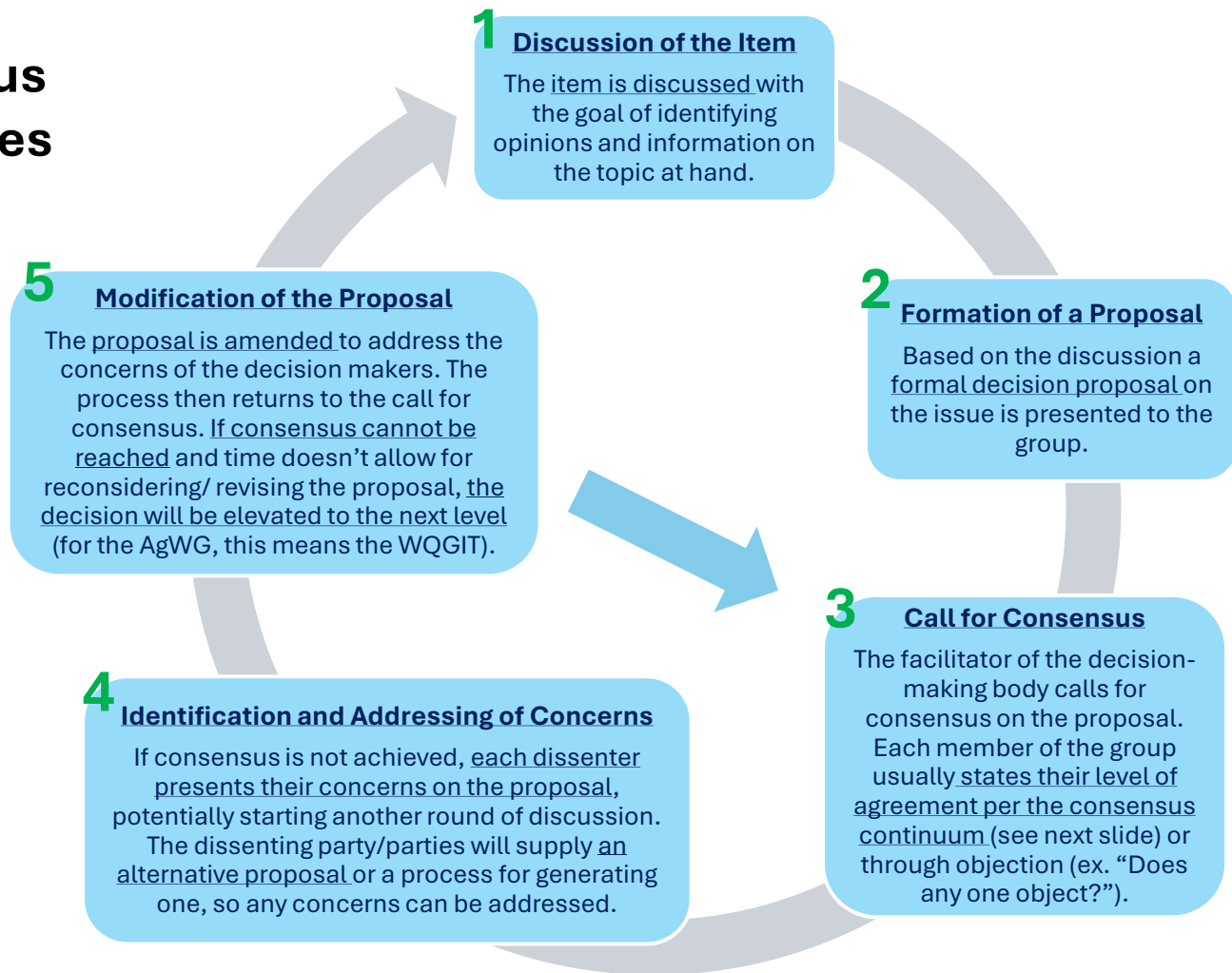
Procedural Recap: Consensus-based Decision-making



Consensus (from CBP governance document)

- [CBP governance document](#), sec. VI (p. 21-24) outlines partnership decision-making process, including key principles:
 - *Inclusive*, of as many members as possible, including new and/or historically underrepresented voices and perspectives by fostering a culture of respect and mutual learning
 - *Participatory*, actively soliciting the input and participation of all
 - *Cooperative*, striving to reach the best decision for the group, rather than the majority
 - *Egalitarian and equitable*, with all afforded equal opportunities for input into the process
 - *Solution-oriented*, emphasizing common agreement over differences and reaching effective decisions using compromise to resolve mutually-exclusive positions

Consensus Procedures

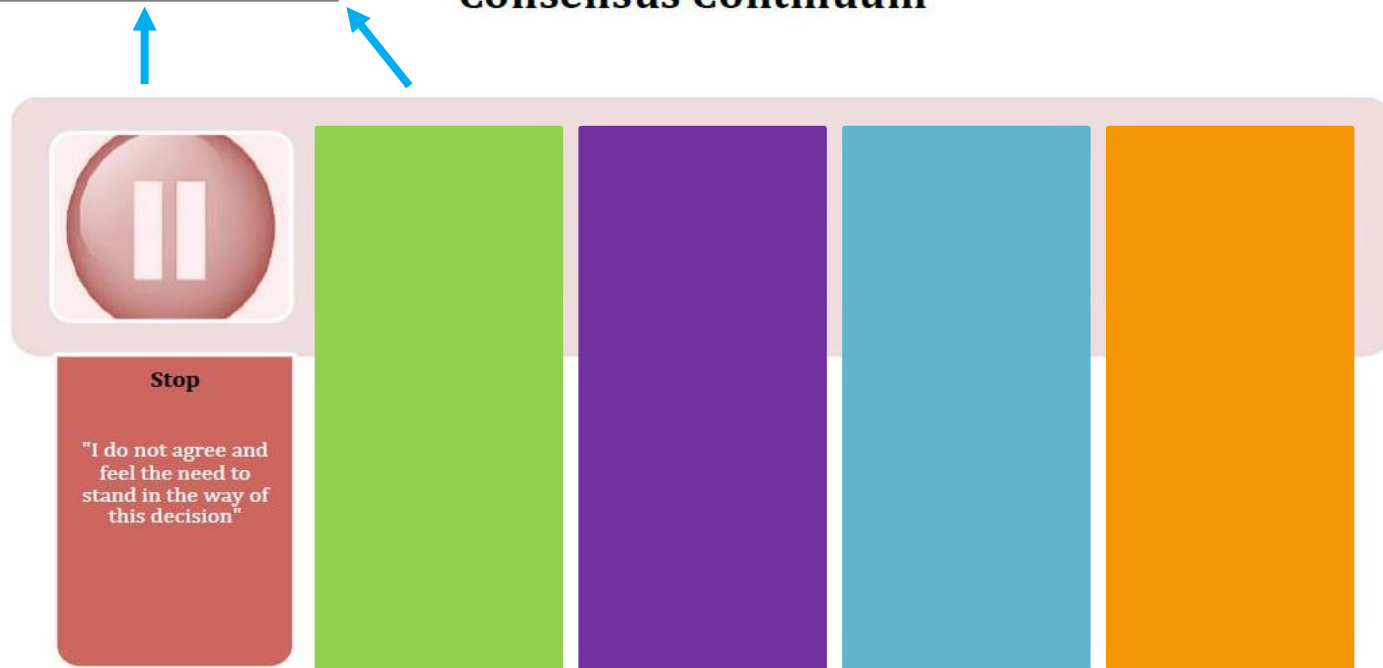


If someone “objects” to a proposal, that equates to a “stop” or “hold” on the continuum. The objector will be asked to explain their position and state an alternative proposal.



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PARTNERING FOR RESULTS

Consensus Continuum



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PARTNERING FOR RESULTS

Consensus Continuum



Vote

“The AgWG approves as proposed the final methodology guidance for remote sensing verification of tillage BMPs.”

AgWG Planning Update

What we've done so far

- We fill our agendas, but our workgroup is lacking clear direction
- Prudent to establish focus as Beyond 2025, Ag Advisory Committee take shape
- Took the following path to get to this point:

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

Today's meeting


- Overview of document used to present AgWG's areas of interest synthesized from workgroup engagement (discussions, one-on-ones, Menti, etc.) as planned for March
 - Document has evolved since March meeting
 - Explain framing, contents
 - Field questions; open discussion
- Timeline/next steps

February meeting

- Summary with all of the ideas we've heard
- Three thematic areas:
 - Implementation & Lessons from the Field
 - Targeting implementation
 - New strategies for getting practices on the ground
 - Crediting & Verification
 - Alternative verification methods (remote sensing)
 - Address key verification challenges
 - Establish adequate crediting for implemented practices (definitions, duration)
 - Add to suite of BMPs receiving credit (EPEG/EP, NRCS practices)
 - Innovation & Emerging Opportunities
 - Pay-for-performance
 - Monitoring
 - Mass balance
 - Sustainable ag, co-benefits

February meeting – thematic areas

● Three thematic areas:

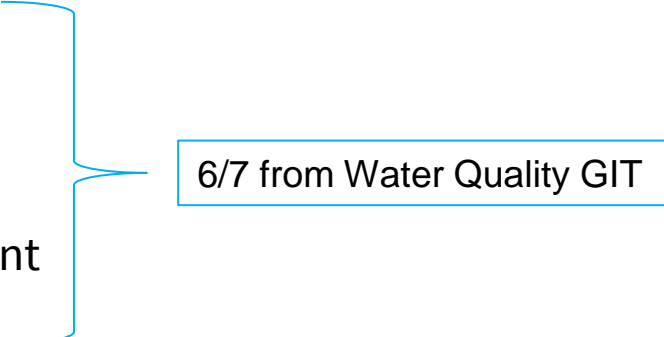
- **Implementation & Lessons from the Field** 
 - Targeting implementation
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- **Crediting & Verification** 
 - Alternative verification methods
 - Address key verification challenges
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- **Innovation & Emerging Opportunities** 
 - Pay-for-performance
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Not
A
Big
Change

Framing our work – back to the beginning

- Sec. 117 of Clean Water Act: Chesapeake Bay Program is “the program directed by the Chesapeake Executive Council *in accordance with the Chesapeake Bay Agreement*”
 - CBP Governance document: Bay Program advances “Bay protection and restoration *through the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement signed in 2014*”
 - CBP – and therefore its groups – exist to help achieve what is included in the Watershed Agreement: the 10 goals and 31 outcomes
- What is the purpose of a Bay Program workgroup?
 - Function not defined in CBP governance
 - GITs are “intended to focus and drive implementation to achieve very explicit progress and results within the scope of their goal area”
 - GITs may “create and commission workgroups for specific actions under the purview of their GIT as needed” (p. 14)

Framing our work – outcomes

- AgWG scope and purpose are great, but tie to the Watershed Agreement only *implied*
 - For other workgroups, this tie is *explicit*: they are “outcome leads”
- The only workgroups under a GIT without an assigned Watershed Agreement outcome:
 - Invasive Catfish
 - Federal Facilities
 - Urban Stormwater
 - Milestones
 - Watershed Technical
 - Wastewater Treatment
 - **Agriculture**

6/7 from Water Quality GIT

So, you're saying the AgWG needs an outcome?

- Not exactly.
- The AgWG “has” an outcome: as we’ve discussed recently, *part of* the 2025 WIP outcome
- Many other workgroups lead their own outcome(s); the WQGIT leads “ours”
 - These workgroups are responsible for developing their own 2-year workplans, participating in the Strategy Review System (SRS) process, reporting to the Management Board, etc.
 - We can participate as the WQGIT goes through this process for the outcome we support, but this creates a disconnect between how we work and how the majority of other partnership groups work

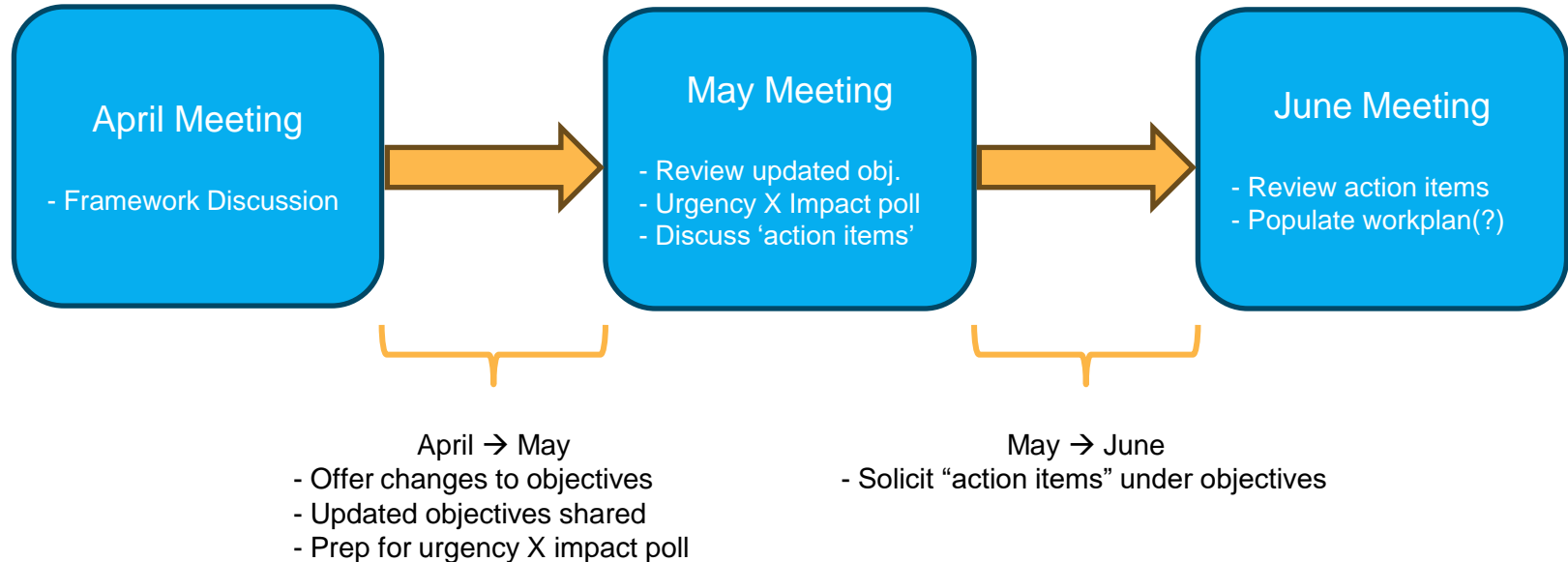
What's the point?

- Leading the effort on an outcome defines a group's responsibility and aligns its work with core responsibility of the Bay Program
- We suggest advancing the ideas captured in Feb's thematic bins, *framed in a way that more closely aligns with what is currently the 2025 WIP outcome*

Anatomy of the document

- Cover page
 - Background
 - Purpose
 - Request
- “Pillars”
 - Implementation
 - Crediting and Verification
- “Objectives”
- “Actions”

Timeline



Key questions

- In what areas can and should we provide value to the partnership?
- What goals should be associated with each focus area that you deem important?
 - How can we build/gather the knowledge and expertise needed to support these goals?
 - What discussions would you like to see us have or decisions would you like to see us make to advance toward achieving these goals?
- What is missing/what would you change? Did we accurately capture our discussions from the past several months?



Questions?



New Business, Announcements & Updates

Agricultural Advisory Committee Update

- Kickoff meeting held 3/27
 - Meeting materials (agenda, presentations, supporting docs) found [here](#)
 - Introducing AAC to Chesapeake Bay Program; reviewing bylaws, charge, etc.
- Next steps
 - Leadership, meetings
 - Identifying areas of interest for future agendas

Beyond 2025 Update – 2025 WIP Outcome

- Management Board decided to “update” 2025 WIP outcome at March 27th meeting
 - Outcome lead (WQGIT) was asked to provide draft “updated” outcome language to be considered by the MB at 5/7-5/8 meeting
 - WQGIT shared form (which includes helpful background/context) to gather feedback on what will be submitted

Beyond 2025 Update – 2025 WIP Outcome

- Current outcome language:
 - By 2025, have all practices and controls installed to achieve the Bay’s dissolved oxygen, water clarity/submerged aquatic vegetation and chlorophyll a standards as articulated in the Chesapeake Bay TMDL document.
- Proposed update: “Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Outcome”
 - The CBP partnership will have practices and controls installed to achieve the Bay’s dissolved oxygen, water clarity/submerged aquatic vegetation, and chlorophyll-a water quality standards. By no later than the end of 2030, the CBP partnership will update this outcome with a longer-term restoration date. The updated outcome will be informed by science-based information that includes using updated CBP partnership tools such as the Phase 7 model, planning targets, and available strategies developed by the jurisdictions and Conowingo to achieve the water quality targets for nutrients and sediment and also address any potential growth in loads and changing environmental conditions.
 - Through 2030, the partnership will continue to accelerate progress toward achieving water quality standards by installing practices and controls that implement the Phase III WIPs and the two-year milestone commitments. The partnership will demonstrate net reductions in nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment through annual progress reporting and monitoring data.

Beyond 2025 Update – Soil Health Outcome

- 2/6 – Initial notice shared for proposing new outcomes
 - “Individuals and Workgroups should take proposals through the established approval process of their respective GIT or MB representative before that lead GIT or MB member brings the proposal for a new outcome to the MB”
 - Guidance and template for proposing new outcomes “will be shared at a later date”
- 2/25 – AgWG/WQGIT leadership **received** soil health outcome proposal
- 2/26 – AgWG/WQGIT **shared** proposal and next steps with members et al.
- 3/13 – Detailed guidance (framework, review template) for new outcome proposals shared with proposing GIT/MB members
- [3/20](#) – Outcome proposal presented to the AgWG
- [3/24](#) – Outcome proposal presented to WQGIT
- [3/27](#) – Outcome proposal introduced to MB
- [4/10](#) – MB vote

Beyond 2025 Update – Soil Health Outcome

- Management Board's 4/10 decision: refer soil health outcome “back to GIT”
 - This outcome will no longer be considered by the MB for the current update to the Watershed Agreement
- Next step
 - Determine best way for the partnership (and AgWG specifically) to approach soil health?
 - Topic of interest for AgWG in 2025/26?
 - Cross-partnership/-workgroup/-GIT team?

Anything else?

- Send to Caroline Kleis (Kleis.Caroline@epa.gov) for inclusion in “Recap” email

Thank you!

Any questions?

You can contact me at Hughes.Eric@epa.gov



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