

# **Agricultural Technical Assistance Directive**

*Discussion of Next Steps*

*May 16th, 2019*

	Directive Commitment
1	<p><b><u>Technical Assistance (TA)</u></b>            Strive to provide stable and sufficient technical assistance in order to help farmers implement the conservation practices necessary to meet Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals.</p>

Summarized Feedback from States:

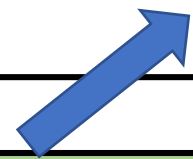
***Identifying Gaps:***

- Gaps addressed in (Watershed Implementation Plan) WIP development and during 2-yr milestones
- Support for aggregated analysis of identified gaps across states to identify common needs and opportunities within watershed. **(WHO would do this?)**

***Addressing Gaps:***

- Increase farmer collaboration with SWCDs, TSPs, NRCS, and Extension
- Increased and stabilized funding
- Align EPA and NRCS priorities in CBW

***Next Steps?***



**Action:** Potential AgWG contribution of synthesis/aggregation of common needs across watershed before WIP III finalization (deadline August 9) for reasonable assurance of implementation.

	Directive Commitment
2	<p><b><u>Technical Assistance</u></b>  Diversify and expand the network of public, private and nonprofit providers of technical and financial assistance to ensure that on-farm support is available to meet the agricultural sector load reductions.</p>

Summarized Feedback  
from States:

**Increase and stabilize funding**

**Focused training on ag engineering practices and principles**

- NGOs with specialized staff (e.g., Stroud, CBF, Nature Conservancy, Farmland Trusts)
- Existing structure within civil and environmental engineering firms

**NRCS TSP**

- Streamline training or alternatives?

**Service Providers:**

- Quality Assurance

**Funding Support:**

EPA-319 and CBIG  
USDA – Contribution Agreements  
NFWF –SWG and INSR

***Next Steps?***

**Action:** Send additional comments on the training of TSPs to be considered in conversation with NRCS to Allie Wagner or Loretta Collins by Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>\*

**Action:** Continue conversation about training technicians in the field.

*\*No additional comments received*

## Directive Commitment

3

### Technical Assistance

Expand technical assistance capacity through the use of cooperative agreements and other tools that combine federal, state, local and private resources to target priority agricultural resource concerns.

### Summarized Feedback from States:

#### **Federal Agency Partner Roles:**

- EPA facilitate development of proposal with federal partners regarding better alignment with state data needs
  - Bring to AgWG for review.
- Align NRCS priorities more closely with state priorities.
- Tracking & Reporting: USGS and NRCS obtain jurisdictional comment for improving the existing agreement and methods to improve double counting protections.
- Improving equity:
  - Ex: NRCS SWAT require 100% work on NRCS priorities for only 50% funding.

**Fed-Fed and Fed-State agreements:**  
EPA should be arbiter

## *Next Steps?*

**Action:** May need to initiate conversations at a higher level. This piggybacks on the previous action item to convene a group to discuss tracking, reporting, and verification.\*

*\*See CAC [May 18<sup>th</sup> letter](#) regarding BMP verification*

	Directive Commitment
4	<p><b><u>Technical Assistance</u></b>            Enhance and coordinate critical agricultural conservation programs to ensure they offer the flexibility and capacity needed to incentivize farmers to install practices, including riparian forest buffers, to help meet the goals of the Bay TMDL.</p>

Summarized Feedback from States:

**WIP III:** Extensive state-wide outreach and listening sessions

**How are other states providing assistance?**

- What has been effective?
- What are lessons learned?

**Efficient use of funding:**

- Focus on practices to maximum nutrient and sediment reductions

**Flexibility:** Commitment from USDA to be responsive to state requests for flexibility.

## Next Steps?

**Action:** Continue conversation and communication in the AgWG related to state strategies for providing assistance.

**Action:** Potentially draft and send a letter to FSA from the AgWG encouraging CREP to reopen. \*

**Action:** Allie Wagner, Loretta Collins, and Sally Claggett will work together to develop the numerical effect of the CREP halt. \*\*

\*See draft letter: [Current Moratorium of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program](#)

\*\*May 15<sup>th</sup> [announcement](#) regarding CRP/CREP programs

	Directive Commitment
5	<b><u>Workforce Development</u></b> Enhance the job climate for government technical assistance professionals by exploring how to make training and certification more streamlined and accessible, along with the development of two-year certification programs, innovative training forums and education loan assistance programs.

Summarized Feedback  
from States:

**Several States have initiatives in progress**

- Synthesis by AgWG?

**Putting Training to Use:**

- Certified professionals need to be linked to farmer needing/requiring assistance

**Land Grant Universities need support**

- CBP and partners rely on their work
- Requires funding

## ***Next Steps?***

**Action:** Continue conversation and invite states\* to talk to the AgWG about what they are currently initiating to provide technical training for the growing job market.

\*June meeting: Discussion of Virginia's initiative to improve and streamline training for ag service professionals.

	Directive Commitment	Action Lead (assigned by MB)
6	<p><b><u>Evaluation</u></b>            Report on progress made toward this directive at the <b>September, 5th 2019 Chesapeake Executive Council (CEC) meeting.</b></p>	Management Board

Summarized Feedback  
from States:

**General Comments:**

- AVOID REDUNDANCY (In light of Phase 3 WIP development and implementation)
- More commitment from EPA/CBPO staff

***Next Steps?***

- AgWG June Face-to-Face meeting:  
 Draft and seek approval of written response to tasks delegated to the AgWG by the MB.
- July Management Board:  
 AgWG presents written response to MB.
- Sept 5<sup>th</sup> CEC annual meeting.