Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

January 19th, 2017

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Joint AgWG and WTWG Conference Call Summary

Meeting materials: http://www.chesapeakebay.net/calendar/event/24774

Actions & Decisions:

Decision: The AgWG and WTWG agreed to postpone making a recommendation on the technical appendix of the Cover Crops panel until their meeting on Thursday January 26th.

Action: The CBP Modeling Team will provide additional, detailed information on the cover crops efficiency values to the workgroup. This information will be distributed via email and posted online with the full, final Cover Crops Panel report.

Decision: The AgWG officially closed out the work of the following completed Phase 6 BMP Expert Panels: Conservation Tillage, Manure Incorporation and Injection, and Animal Waste Management Systems.

Action: The AgWG Chair, Co-Chair, Coordinator, and staffer will meet with the leadership of the WQGIT in order to coordinate and address issues related to Phase 6 and the Mid-Point Assessment that have the potential to affect both groups. If AgWG members have specific issues or questions they would like addressed, they should contact Mark Dubin (mdubin@chesapeakebay.net).

Action: The AgWG staff will work to develop a tentative timeline for holding a working session with farm groups, integrators, and producers on topics related to the Mid-Point Assessment, TMDL, and BMP verification.

Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes Workgroup Chairs

- Minutes from the December 19th meeting were approved.
- Call for nominations for 1-year AgWG at-large membership positions. All nominations are due to Lindsey Gordon (Gordon.lindsey@epa.gov) and Mark Dubin (mdubin@chesapeakebay.net), with resume or CV, **by January 31st**. Please note that current 1-year term members are eligible for re-nomination.

Status of Phase 6 Panel Recommendations Mark Dubin

Mark updated the workgroup on the status of the completed Phase 6 BMP Expert Panel Recommendation Reports, and ongoing Phase 6 Expert Panels.

- In December, the Animal Waste Management Systems, Cover Crops, Manure Incorporation/Injection, and Conservation Tillage expert panel final reports were approved by the AgWG, WTWG, and WQGIT. The livestock characterization reports (including swine, turkey, and layers) were also approved by the AgWG in December for representation in the Phase 6 modeling tools.
- Tim Sexton suggested composing a formal thank you letter for the expert panel chairs and members.

Cover Crops Panel Technical Appendix (Appendix A) Jeff Sweeney

Jeff presented two proposals for the reporting of Cover Crops BMPS in the Phase 6 NEIEN system, to be included as the technical appendix (Appendix A) of the partnership approved Panel's final report. One option (A) presented is similar to previous panel report technical appendices, and the second option (B) is a simplified version for reportable Cover Crop BMPs.

- Tim Sexton noted that he did not anticipate the state of Virginia reporting cover crops to the level of specificity and detail afforded by the current version of the panel's technical appendix.
- Bill Keeling expressed concern about not having seen a full table of cover crops efficiency values, and noted that minor differences between efficiencies (on the order of 1-2%) are likely insignificant. He said he has trouble understanding the way commodity cover crops are being simulated in regards to planting date. He could not support the current panel appendix and efficiency values without having reviewed the full spread of efficiency values.
- Ed Kee recommended that the decision be delayed for one week while the AgWG has an opportunity to review the associated materials and efficiency values.
- Chris Brosch: An alternative to reduce the number of cover crops options could conflict with the outcomes of the research that informed the panel report. There is still some utility in terms of communication to maintain the specificity captured in Option A.
- Bill Keeling expressed support for combining the efficiency values, but maintained his request for additional time to review the full spread of cover crop combinations and efficiencies.
- Ken Staver noted that the modeling team had a representative on the Cover Crops Panel who did not provide input during the process regarding condensing the efficiency values, and expressed discomfort in this issue being raised at such a late point in the panel's timeline. He also argued against singling out the Cover Crops panel for potentially recommending insignificant differences in their work, as this is a common practice with other BMP expert panels.
- Greg Albrecht requested the CBP Modeling Team provide cover crop efficiency values separated out by jurisdiction for supplement their review.
- Bill Keeling noted he is not questioning the science behind the panel recommendations, but rather the efficacy of offering a multitude of efficiency values.

Decision: The AgWG and WTWG agreed to postpone making a recommendation on the technical appendix of the Cover Crops panel until their meeting on Thursday January 26th.

Action: The CBP Modeling Team will provide additional, detailed information on the cover crops efficiency values to the workgroup. This information will be distributed via email and posted online with the full, final Cover Crops Panel report.

Close out Phase 6 AgWG BMP Expert Panels Workgroup Chairs

The workgroup chairs asked the AgWG to officially close out the work of the completed Phase 6 BMP Expert Panels, including Conservation Tillage, Manure Incorporation and Injection, and Animal Waste Management Systems.

- Motion from Tim Sexton, seconded by Chris Brosch.

Decision: The AgWG officially closed out the work of the following completed Phase 6 BMP Expert Panels: Conservation Tillage, Manure Incorporation and Injection, and Animal Waste Management Systems.

Statistical Confidence for alternate BMP verification methods Mark Dubin

Following discussions from the AgWG's December 15th meeting, Mark discussed a proposal to establish a workgroup standard for statistical confidence of agricultural BMPs that are submitted through alternative BMP verification methods. This proposal will be made available to the AgWG in the earlier part of the week of January 26th. The AgWG will be asked to make a formal recommendation on setting these standards during a proposed January 23rd interim meeting.

- Mark noted that USDA NRCS and PA DEP hope to implement the recommendations from the AgWG in order to submit data from their remote sensing pilot project that meets the statistical standards as determined by the workgroup. Tetra Tech is working to develop a suite of recommendations on these statistical thresholds to present in front of the AgWG next Thursday.
- Chris Brosch: The AgWG recommendation back to the USDA NRCS pilot project was essentially that they needed to increase their sample size in order to enhance the statistical confidence.
- Alisha Mulkey: Just to be clear, the draft report will be presented during next week's meeting? Or will you be asking for a decision?
    - Dubin: Our intent is to provide a copy of the report early next week, and we would like to ask for a decision at the next meeting. That would allow NRCS to complete additional fieldwork and meet the timelines required by the Partnership for submitting that dataset.
- Bill Angstadt: I don't understand the urgency here – are they trying to submit this for Phase 6 calibration?
    - Dubin: Correct.
    - Angstadt: I thought that deadline passed on December 31st, and I don't like the idea of coming back so quickly with these options and asking the AgWG to make recommendations on how the USDA NRCS project will occur. I support having a small group encouraging USDA to present their proposals for how to conduct the study.
    - Mark Dubin: This is actually a project out of the small communications group between PA DEP, NRCS, EPA, and others. They have helped to craft this timeline and project proposal, and asked and recommended that the AgWG make these recommendations.
- Tim Sexton: I'm in favor of developing these standards for any type of project like this, but there's different approaches to achieve this between different practices.
    - Mark Dubin: We'd like to set thresholds for sample size and statistical confidence, but it will be up for individual projects to determine how best to meet those thresholds.

Discussion of AgWG meeting schedule for January and February Mark Dubin

Mark discussed a proposed change in meeting dates for the AgWG during the January and February timeframe.

- Bill Angstadt asked how the review of the final Phase 6 model, and understanding of the interconnectedness between different components of that model, will fit within the AgWG's rolling timeline.
    - Ed Kee: I would like to see regular updates from the Modeling Team to see how our data and recommendations is applied and factored into the model.
- Bill Angstadt: My concern is that we're being asked at the WQGIT to make decisions that have never been brought before the AgWG that are potentially relevant to the AgWG. For example, the draft Phase III WIP expectations were presented to the WQGIT, and a lot of comments came up about having agriculture represented in that discussion and development.
- Mark Dubin: During the January 26th meeting, the AgWG is being asked to discuss the representation of agricultural practices on federal property, and that was an issue initially raised to the WQGIT. Matt Johnston will also be providing updates on how the livestock characterization report data will be incorporated into Scenario Builder. So we have been working to address agricultural-related issues that are before the WQGIT.
- Bill Angstadt: I still think we need more transparency in terms of meshing the decisions between these two groups. Regarding the E3 scenarios, we also need to have a discussion of No Action baselines in addition to E3s.
- Ed Kee recommended meeting with James Davis-Martin (WQGIT chair) in order to discuss the concerns of the AgWG, and organizing the AgWG meeting calendar in order to fully address Phase 6-related issues that have impacts both on the WQGIT and AgWG.
- Bill Angstadt: I would recommend we have a working session in 2017 that brings together farm groups, integrators, and producers to have another discussion on the MPA, TMDL, and BMP verification.

Action: The AgWG Chair, Co-Chair, Coordinator, and staffer will meet with the leadership of the WQGIT in order to coordinate and address issues related to Phase 6 and the Mid-Point Assessment that have the potential to affect both groups. If AgWG members have specific issues or questions they would like addressed, they should contact Mark Dubin (mdubin@chesapeakebay.net).

Action: The AgWG staff will work to develop a tentative timeline for holding a working session with farm groups, integrators, and producers on topics related to the Mid-Point Assessment, TMDL, and BMP verification.

Wrap-Up/Review of Action and Decision Items/Announcements Workgroup Chairs, M. Dubin, L. Gordon

- Mark Dubin asked for AgWG support to submit a STAC workshop proposal, with assistance from jurisdictional and LGU representatives, on how to develop universal recommendations or standards for considering manure nutrient analysis and testing.
    - The AgWG was supportive of this effort.

Next meeting: Thursday, January 26th 10:00 – 2:00 Face-to-Face Meeting
USGS Baltimore Office, UMBC Business Park

Participants:

Ed Kee	DDA
Mark Dubin	UMD
Lindsey Gordon	CRC
Chris Brosch	DDA
Alisha Mulkey	MDA
Greg Albrecht	NYSDEC
Matt Monroe	WV DEP
Dave Montali	WV DEP
Tim Sexton	VA DCR
Marel King	CBC
Bill Angstadt	Angstadt Consulting
Frank Coale	UMD
Ken Staver	UMD
Tim Garcia	USDA
Paul Bredwell	US Poultry and Egg Association
Frank Schneider	PA State Conservation Commission
Jill Whitcomb	PA DEP
Greg Sandi	MDE
Robin Pellicano	MDE
Brittany Sturgis	DNREC
Lori Brown	DNREC
Emily Dekar	USC
Bill Keeling	VA DEQ
Alana Hartman	WV DEP
Sarah Latessa	NYSDEC
Joe Montenegro	PA Farm Bureau
Jeremy Hanson	VT