

AgWG Meeting

March 8, 2012

AgWG

- Meeting Minutes: 2/23/12
 - VA motion, approved
- ChesStat
 - County level data concept
 - Concerns with scale of BMP data at state vs. county levels due to combined BMPs- consider finer scale BMP data for local
 - Starting point of data needs to be at the county level and then aggregated data up to the basin and state levels- not the other way around
 - Include additional quantification of the data to ensure users understand that this represents information reported to the model, state data contact

AgWG

- ChesStat cont.
 - County level scale will represent the smallest scale available at this time, watershed scale is not available at the local level
 - Data is currently draft for this illustrative purpose, will be reviewed before
 - 2010 data is yet being revised for some states at this time
 - Define and explain the differences between years and practices
 - Compare BMP types within a county, include verification information-could be provided in meta-data

AgWG

- NM Panel Update
 - Status of subgroup and interviews
 - Summary of interviews will be available later this month
 - NY suggestion on comparison is on the table for consideration- appreciate the opportunity for participating in the interview process
- CT and CC Panel Update
 - Status of panel membership and interviews- starting next week
 - Question on schedule for additional panels, especially the manure technology- will open new panels as existing ones complete their work

AgWG

- WSI Project
 - Third party assessment
 - With prior information, farm assessment can take 3 hours plus another day for planning
 - When paperwork is not available, farm assessment takes the place of documentation
 - Farmer signs agreement to release their CP and NMP- reduces the time required
 - Volunteers may create a different result than non-voluntary- community leaders can encourage others to join the effort- range of management levels are present in the voluntary group

AgWG

- WSI cont.
 - Baseline being used is based on 2000 TS
 - Current operations are livestock/poultry- cropland fertilizer operations are part of new project in coastal Virginia
 - Refer operators to sources of assistance with implementing BMPs- CD's, NMP planners, NRCS, etc.
 - Not involved with BMP implementation- only assessment and management planning
 - Presentation based on verification process and is not a workgroup endorsement of a particular entity or protocol
 - Inventory tool- 27 pages

AgWG

- Howard Co. Cont.
 - Process was to assist producers, not inspect
 - 10 assessors- use best only
 - Confidential information from inventory- files stay at CD office
 - Results are saving CD staff time in entering data into state Conservation Tracker tool, as well as updating CPs in the office
 - All operations met TN baseline, ½ met TP baseline
 - Identifying 50% new unreported BMPs vs. Upper Chester project with 25%
 - Moving to Baltimore Co.- 3 ES counties and 1 WS county next year
 - Trading requires another verification assessment by another group as well

AgWG

- Howard Co. Verification Project
 - Baseline based on TMDL
 - Assessments take into account CBP BMPs, spec or functional equivalents, date of implementation
 - Matrix of options for assessment process- farm assessment provided the best level of data
 - Farmer assessments- do they understand the questions?
 - Transects will not prove the same level of data, but may have specific uses
 - NASS survey option (e.g. CEAP) provides field level point data- does not allow expansion of data beyond state level due to process

AgWG

- Howard Co. Cont.
 - Aerial option- can be limited to date of images- good method to verify known BMPs
 - Process can identify if county and farms met the TMDL goals- are tradable credits available?
 - Eastern half of county is developed, western portion is rural with agricultural land presentation programs- 335 farms total, 230 preserved
 - County supported- \$80K budgeted 1st year- using half of that
 - CD is lead using private trained verifiers
 - Cost per acre- estimated at \$10/A, actual at \$2/A

AgWG

- Howard Co. Cont.
 - Use of non-CD staff allows transfer of verification to other counties
 - Voluntary- no cost to operator
 - Focus assessment process on BMPs typical for the county- do not typically use all BMPs available in federal/state programs- simpler
 - Assessment divided into production types; e.g. livestock, grain, etc.- simpler
 - Assess management of areas w/ producers- not just BMPs

AgWG

- Howard Co. Cont.
 - Found that single operators farmed multiple could focus survey towards operators vs. land owners to save time
 - 4 hours to assess farm, 4-6 hours to enter data- 1 or more day per farm
 - Ag Census participation- not included as a question on the surveys
 - No Plain sect farmers in area
 - 85-90% response to requests
 - Benefits- good baseline of county needs to direct programs and assistance
 - CD status has risen with project, recognized by farmers
 - Peer pressure with neighbors

AgWG

- Howard Co. Cont.
 - Maryland costs- partnership with counties and direct focus on hotspots first
- USDA Data
 - Process for addressing 1619 privacy requirements
 - Working with 2011 data now and will have process in place for 2012 reported data
 - MD Conservation Tracker is adequate and may not require additional support to prevent double counting
 - VA able to obtain data directly but time consuming to review 8K records
 - PA does not have a 1619 agreement in place and not receiving data directly- eliminate any state data w/ shared federal funding
 - NRCS data may be collecting other data other than federally funded; e.g. county and state practices, technical assistance only, etc.

AgWG

- USDA Data Cont.
 - Requested access to USDA funding information with reported implementation- should receive this
 - Need additional work to crosswalk from USDA data to NEIEN template with experts
 - Grouping similar practice codes could assist with 1619 reporting limitations
 - FSA data does not track by implementation but by contract lifespan- will need to run analysis to create an annual implementation
 - Approaches- new implementation, unexpired practices, expired in last year
 - NEIEN is currently accepting new implemented- should this be modified to include unexpired

AgWG

- USDA Data Cont.
 - Possible to create a 2012 dataset by November 1
- PLS Update
 - Tt resources available
 - State status reports- within the next month should be able to provide consistent data
 - WV presented state data form 1995 and 2010
 - Model should be able to utilize data analysis
 - Develop a common template to share and
 - compare data for consensus
 - Volume concerns- wet vs. dry ton basis for reporting- CBP model uses dry tonnage for transport

AgWG

- NACD
 - Provided update on report- guidance document
 - Preliminary indicates that up to 25% of practices may be unreported- need to compare with CBP models to determine potential double counting
 - Farm-by-farm data is the optimum process if possible- 4 out of 6 states
 - Estimates of up to \$150 to \$200/farm to accomplish
 - Complete basin assessment may not be possible financially- potentially target
 - CEAP-2 survey will be finished this fall, CEAP-3 in another 5 years

AgWG

- NACD Cont.
 - CEAP data points could provide reference and potential use in the CBP models
 - CEAP data is comparable to other data sources such as NASS
 - Could assist in targeting of state efforts
 - Protocols
 - Farm-by-farm
 - Systems approach
 - Trained staff to assess
 - Not all of 160 CPs are required to assess- determine priority CPs

AgWG

- NACD Cont.
 - Protocols
 - Collect functional and non-functional equivalent
 - Test process before implementing on a mass scale
 - Share processes between states to ensure common approaches where possible
 - Process to share experiences between states-could be applied in other watershed across the nation
 - Open for comments and suggestions-evolving
 - Transect survey methods- a place for this method but need to address concerns with newer analysis
 - CEAP method due to scale may not provide the level of detail required

AgWG

- NACD Data Cont.
 - EPA: Can efforts provide sufficient points of data- five years between points is maximum for resource standpoint
 - CEAP-2 doubled points from CEAP-1
 - EPA: Will NACD provide additional information to support the partners towards a verification process at the state and county levels?- Open for comments and suggestions- looking at the long term vs. the short term needs
 - EPA: The requirements of the CBP may prove higher than other national requirements- no question that the Bay will need a higher level of verification
 - The draft materials at the Howard Co. website should be used to assist the partnership to save efforts.

AgWG

- Verification
 - EPA guidance available
 - Management systems as well as structural practices are required to meet TMDL goals- up to 50%
 - Annual practices vs. structural practices- how do we approach and prioritize this?
 - Audit process vs. farmer certified for NM
 - Public sector implementation but private sector verification for cost/staffing needs
 - Initial assessment with 2-4 years reassessment
 - Certification program for verification- could be implemented by states

AgWG

- Verification Cont.
 - Training and certification is needed
 - A goal of a common verification understanding amongst partners
 - Every farm/every practice gold standard- perhaps set a performance standard for types of production systems
 - MD AIR reports could potentially be modified to provide verification coupled with inspections
 - Select representative samples to provide verification of data vs. every farm- not just a check mark that the practice is there
 - The scale of verification for model data does not have to be at the same scale for trading programs
 - Spot checking of baseline- talk with professionals of data collection – 5-15% check

AgWG

- Verification Cont.
 - NT verification requirements are annual- transaction costs funded
 - First baseline assessment is critical and followed by less intense verification- 20-25% of first costs
 - CAFO regulates 3-5% of largest livestock operations which produce 50% of manure is example
 - Petroleum products permit requirements have breakpoints in self vs. professionally certified another example
 - CEAP tillage requires more than one trip to farm- seasonal and crop production variations
 - Need to keep in mind the verification levels for other sectors- should not require more than other sectors are requiring

AgWG

- Verification Cont.
 - May need to bring extension professional to the discussion for training and education of verification staff and the public
 - Targeting practices and management systems that provide the greatest impact- could also target geographically
 - This is not to feed the model, but to better direct our resources!