

Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

March 15th, 2018

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

AgWG Conference Call Minutes

Meeting materials: http://www.chesapeakebay.net/groups/group/agriculture_workgroup

Actions & Decisions:

DECISION: The AgWG approved the updated signatory representatives for MD and WV, and approved Denise Coleman to serve as the alternate representative to Barry Frantz (USDA NRCS).

DECISION: The AgWG approved the revised AgWG Governance Protocol document.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendations report drafted by the Expert Panel Establishment Group regarding livestock and mortality management practices.

ACTION: The AgWG should review the draft interim BMP representation for denitrifying ditch bioreactors and provide any feedback to Loretta Collins. A recommendation on the draft interim BMP will be requested during the April workgroup meeting.

ACTION: CBP staff will work with jurisdictional partners in order to document and address comments relating to the draft producer survey recommendations report. The report will be brought back before the workgroup for additional discussion during the April meeting.

Welcome, introductions, roll-call, review meeting minutes

Workgroup Chairs

- The AgWG approved the minutes from the February meeting.

New Signatory Member Selections

Workgroup Chairs

Newly elected Chair, Jason Keppler, and Vice-Chair, Matt Monroe, introduced new Signatory Member appointments for their respective jurisdictions, allowing them to fully commit to AgWG leadership responsibilities.

Maryland:

Primary-Alisha Mulkey, MDA

Alternate- Adam Lyon, MDA

West Virginia:

Primary- Cindy Shreve, Agriculture Outreach Specialist, WVDA

Alternate – Jerry Ours, Poultry Specialist/Nutrient Management Program Supervisor, WVDA

DECISION: The AgWG approved the updated signatory representatives for MD and WV, and approved Denise Coleman to serve as the alternate representative to Barry Frantz (USDA NRCS).

Finalization of AgWG Governance Protocol

Loretta Collins

Loretta Collins briefed the Workgroup on the revised version of the AgWG governance protocol based on comments from the WQGIT on February 26th.

Discussion:

- Frank Schneider: I don't agree with this change, but if it's in line with the other CBP governance protocols then I won't hold it up.

- Chris Brosch expressed agreement with Frank Schneider's and offered a motion to approve the change.
 - Seconded by Pennsylvania.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the revised AgWG Governance Protocol document.

Livestock and Poultry Mortality Management EPEG

Frank Schneider

Frank Schneider, PA State Conservation Commission, presented and discussed the draft recommendation report developed by the Livestock and Poultry Mortality Expert Panel Establishment Group (EPEG) regarding livestock and poultry mortality management practices at the February 15th Face-to-Face meeting. The AgWG was asked to review the report and submit comments and questions to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net). Upon approval by the Workgroup, a call will be put forth for nominations to the Expert Panel regarding livestock and poultry mortality management practices.

Discussion:

- Virginia motioned to approve the recommendations. Seconded by Maryland.
- Alisha Mulkey: Is there a timeline for this?
 - Loretta Collins: Assuming these recommendations are approved, we'll move forward to put a call out for nominations for panel members to form an expert panel. We could consider this a verbal announcement, and we will distribute an email with a formal call for nominations.
 - Jeremy Hanson: The next steps are to put out an RFP for VT to solicit proposed panel membership, and to make use of VT resources to operate the panel. Draft membership would then be presented back to the AgWG and the WQGIT for approval.

DECISION: The AgWG approved the recommendations report drafted by the Expert Panel Establishment Group regarding livestock and mortality management practices.

Interim BMP Status

Loretta Collins

In response to a request from the AgWG at the February 15th Face-to-Face Meeting, Loretta Collins provided an update on the interim BMP status of Cropland Irrigation and Agricultural Ditch Management.

Discussion:

- Loretta Collins: The Ag Ditch Panel is working to develop a draft report by this summer, and in the meantime they have put together a proposed interim BMP representation for denitrifying ditch bioreactors.
- The AgWG will not be asked to make a recommendation on the draft interim BMP today, but will have a month to review and should provide feedback to Loretta Collins.
- Frank Schenider: So this practice will only be used in planning, but won't count toward Progress or model credit until the panel has finalized their recommendations.
- Alisha Mulkey: Can you say specifically where in CAST we can verify that the irrigation practice has been changed?
 - Loretta Collins: We can coordinate offline, but I need to check with the CAST team here.
 - Chris Brosch: Interim BMPs can be included in NEIEN, but it's for tracking purposes only. So the connection between NEIEN and the model is turned off.

ACTION: The AgWG should review the draft interim BMP representation for denitrifying ditch bioreactors and provide any feedback to Loretta Collins. A recommendation on the draft interim BMP will be requested during the April workgroup meeting.

BMP Verification Standards

M. Dubin, J. Harcum

In response to CBP partnership's interest in developing and implementing alternative approaches for the verification of agricultural BMPs, Mark Dubin, UMD and Jon Harcum, Tetra Tech, presented a draft recommendation report regarding the development of an alternate BMP verification evaluation standard for producer surveys as part of the effort in seeking CBP partnership approval of alternative verification methods for use in the CBP Phase 6 modeling tools. The AgWG was asked to review the document and submit comments to Mark Dubin and Lindsey Gordon, CRC by March 1st.

Discussion:

- Tim Sexton: Motion to be approved.
 - Seconded by Kristen Saacke Blunk.
- Jill Whitcomb: Does this guidance over-ride the original report, or is it an addition to the original report?
 - Mark Dubin: This does not change AgWG decisions that were made about the Penn State survey. This would provide guidance for users interested in developing producer surveys.
 - Jill Whitcomb: So this is in addition to the original report, and if we were to go back and do a survey like we did with Penn State in the same exact way, we wouldn't have to come back for approval, and we wouldn't have to do different statistical analysis.
- Alisha Mulkey: Is it defined somewhere what a producer survey constitutes?
 - Jon Harcum: I don't know if we have a definition per se, but it would basically be an instrument where you don't necessarily have a lot of guidance of being able to control interpretation of the person filling it out. In terms of the definition of a producer survey, we don't have a specific place.
 - Bill Angstadt: If you refer back to the report and documentation from October 2014 on strengthening verification and BMP implementation, there are specific definitions. This falls under a farm inventory, and is a self-certified inventory survey. This would not modify the other protocols under the "farm inventory" category.
- Jill Whitcomb: I would like this noted that Mark explained this would not over-ride the guidance for existing surveys.
 - Alisha Mulkey: I don't think that's what happened – I think you would be subject to additional guidance.
 - Mark Dubin: This would not modify the 2017 decision from the AgWG. So if the AgWG wants to use this information to go back and re-consider the 2017 decision, then that's a separate step.
 - Steve Dressing: The Penn State survey found that there was no systematic under- or over-reporting with regard to acres or feet. They used the statistical approach to adjust for over-reporting for one BMP, and for other BMPs they took reported values and didn't apply a statistics method to that. What we've presented here would make the Penn State approach still appropriate. Penn State could re-do their survey, and that would fit within the confines of this recommendation.
- Denise Coleman: Can you talk to me about how this impacts the remote sensing protocol?
 - Steve Dressing: This is just relevant to producer surveys; not to remote sensing.

- Bill Angstadt: I would like to see this report reference back to the 2014 verification framework, and specifically cite Point 13 of the farm inventory, so there's clarity that this just applies to a single component of verification.
- Chris Brosch: In terms of the technical side of this report, DE has no objections. I am concerned that we took on this project in a way that seems to have alienated one of our state partners, which is something we should try not to do. I am struck by the need for this report which seems to put the cart before the horse. Part of me feels like this report will not be particularly useful until some other partner has a proposal out there. Is there another jurisdiction working on a survey that this would apply to?
 - Alisha Mulkey: MD is not pursuing a survey like this.
 - Jill Whitcomb: In PA, we're looking to do another survey in the future, almost identical to the Penn State survey that was done a few years ago. That's where I'm voicing concern, but the way the response to comments reads is all past tense. I just want to ensure that if we were to do this survey again moving forward, we would not be subject to using the recommendations in this new technical guidance, but that we could use the original guidance that came out in 2017.
 - Mark Dubin: Maybe we can add something in the comment/response to address this question. I can work offline with Jill to create that specific language.
- Loretta Collins: My question would be, with respect to all concerns put forward, if we're talking about adapting something in the responses in the document, that's moving us away from approving the report at this time.
 - Alisha Mulkey: Is there an opportunity to do edits with those of us who have comments, and then to see a revised report at a future meeting where we can seek consensus.
 - Mark Dubin: Our current Tetra tech contract ends soon, but what we could do is request additional written comments, and we can develop a response to put into a new appendix document. We can send it back out to the workgroup, and if there are no additional comments by the end of the month, we can ask for approval in April.
 - Chris Brosch: I don't see the importance of this report for future projects; my tendency is to cut bait but that's not the motion on the floor.

ACTION: CBP staff will work with jurisdictional partners in order to document and address comments relating to the draft producer survey recommendations report. The report will be brought back before the workgroup for additional discussion during the April meeting.

Discussion of AgWG 2018 Focus

At-Large Membership

The Phase 6.0 Watershed Model is finalized and the AgWG is now charged with broadening its focus to include more topics related to BMP implementation in an effort to realize the goals outlined in jurisdictional 2-year Milestones and WIPs. With this shift the AgWG aims to reinvigorate participation of At-Large members in AgWG meetings. This time was set aside for the At-Large Membership to express their ideas for Workgroup consideration moving forward.

Discussion:

- Frank Coale: I think we've learned a lot from focusing on the model, and we've identified several areas where the data is not up to snuff – this opens an opportunity for us to discuss approaches for collecting and developing alternative data sets to use in the future. Those processes are going to be slow and time-consuming, so this is a good window for us to start working on those.
- Gary Felton: I'm still thinking about how we're making sure the WIPs are going to do what they're intended to do, and don't have unintended consequences. So, evaluating how our WIPs are developed, and making sure what we get out of them is what we've intended.

- Paul Bredwell: I'd like to support Frank's comments – this is a good pause to give us time to review datasets, and since this might be a slow process it's good to start now.
- Jeff Hill: I come at this workgroup as a boots-on-the-ground guy, and I would like to see the workgroup getting back out into the field a bit more. Not necessarily touring big operations, but looking at the average farming community. We should see how our decisions impact them, and see what they bring to the table.
- Kristen Saacke Blunk: I echo Jeff's comments; when I look at the scope and purpose of the AgWG, it should foster discussions with the real-world farming community. We need to meet farmers where they are in their conservation path. I like the idea of getting out to meet the producers - and really looking at what they can tell us about what's working for them, why - and what innovations they're seeing as most promising. I appreciate the work the USWG is doing – they've held up what's innovative in terms of what municipalities are doing. We, as a workgroup, should look to producers to see what they say is innovative and promising.
- Ken Staver: I echo Frank and Paul's comments too. I think we get hung up on consistency; we keep doing things the same way because that's how we've always done it. There's been a lot of technology changes in the last 30 years, but if we can move away from proxy data and move to the real thing, then that would be ideal. We should also be able to go out to a farm, anywhere in the watershed, and tell them what things they need to do to meet reduction goals. I don't think we can do that very well right now, but that's what I'd like to see.
- Peter Hughes: I want to support what Jeff Hill said – I think we're all agreed on getting boots-on-the-ground, but I think it's important for this group to understand the hardships of average farmers. We need to hear from farms teetering on the edge, and explore ways to improve their environmental ethic without causing additional hardship. Most of the issues here in PA are in regards to those smaller operations and those teaching moments.
- David Graybill: Farmers are always talking about economics – if you can't make the farm pay, it doesn't really matter. I'm wondering if this group has looked at any discovery farms (Missouri/Mississippi watersheds). Ken Staver also mentioned local watersheds, and I think that's the path we need to go down.
- Barry Frantz: I support Frank's comments as well. On the NRCS side, we do a lot of work with farmers that doesn't get into the Bay model. I'd also like to talk about innovative practices, but we need to remember routine practices. Regarding targeting, NRCS is working on targeting at the farm level.
- Denise Coleman: With information we're using from ARS and the cartography shop, we're getting to the point where we can bring more precision in mapping for targeting.
- Bill Angstadt: I'd like us to also consider verification. The 2018 annual progress reporting cycle is the first one where documentation of verification for reporting BMPs in NEIEN must exist, I think there's a lot of opportunities with states to talk about gaps.
- Barry Frantz: Is there a 10-year lifespan for practices in the model after which they need to be re-verified? Maybe that's something we should keep in the back of our mind.
 - Jason Keppler: There's an established schedule of credit duration for each of the BMPs in the model. Most are 10 years.
- Marel King: I support the comments of the at-large members, and I think we should also think about how our work and our practices relate to other sectors, like stormwater, wastewater, etc.
 - Kristen Saacke Blunk: I think that also fits in the context of the co-benefits discussions happening in other groups. NRCS does represent this to a great degree, but the amount of interest of other GITs on how to better link the co-benefits for their programs with ag

practices is really high. It would be great to fully see the way that information is being utilized.

- Chris Brosch: DE is particularly interested in looking at co-benefits information related to climate change and how we can potentially mitigate some of those effects, and we'd also like to see more information on toxic contaminants and how they link with ag practices.

Next meeting: Thursday, April 19th, 2018: Conference Call

Participants:

Jason Keppler	MDA
Matt Monroe	WV DA
Loretta Collins	UMD
Lindsey Gordon	CRC
Clint Gill	DDA
Chris Brosch	DDA
Alisha Mulkey	MDA
Adam Lyon	MDA
Chris Yearick	NY
Frank Schneider	PA SCC
Jill Whitcomb	PA DEP
Cindy Shreve	WV DA
Jerry Ours	WV DA
Tim Sexton	VA DCR
Marel King	CBC
Kelly Shenk	USGS
Peter Hughes	Red Barn Consulting
Kelly O'Neill	CBF
Frank Coale	UMD
Gary Felton	UMD
Paul Bredwell	US Poultry & Egg
Jeremy Daubert	VT
Jeff Hill	LCCD
Kristen Saacke-Blunk	Headwaters LLC
Ken Staver	UMD
Jennifer Shuler	Bell & Evans Poultry
David Graybill	Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Barry Frantz	USDA
Denise Coleman	USDA
Jeremy Hanson	VT
Joel Blanco	EPA
Greg Sandi	MDE
Mark Nardi	USGS
Victor Clark	DE

Mark Dubin	UMD
Jon Harcum	Tetra tech
Steve Dressing	Tetra tech
Bill Angstadt	Angstadt Consulting

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