Agriculture Workgroup (AgWG)

February 21, 2019
10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
Meeting Minutes
Meeting Materials

- **Summary of Actions and Decisions:**
- **DECISION:** Approval of meeting minutes from the Jan 17th Conference Call.
- **ACTION:** Submit names of volunteer representatives from each jurisdiction in the AgWG to attend the STAC workshop to Allie Wagner (wagner.alexandra@epa.gov) by COB Thursday, February 28.
- **ACTION:** Send suggestions for additional speakers for the STAC workshop on the topics of management practices to control manure and manure spreading and management practices related to row crop and pesticide use to Scott Phillips (swphilli@usgs.gov).
- **ACTION:** Send feedback on the WIP Data Dashboard to Emily Trentacoste (Trentacoste.emily@epa.gov).
- **ACTION:** Send feedback on the optimization tool to Danny Kaufman (dkaufman@chesapeakebay.net).
- **ACTION:** Matt Monroe will follow-up on future meetings among state contacts engaged in tracking and reporting and federal representatives to further discuss possible pathways and alternative solutions to data-sharing challenges impacting both TMDL progress and BMP verification.

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

- Roll-call of the governance body
- Roll-call of the meeting participants
- **DECISION:** Approval of meeting minutes from the Jan 17th Conference Call.

Workgroup Areas of Focus

Accounting & Reporting | Implementation | Innovation | Data & Modeling | CBP Assignments

A Cooperative Partnership: USDA & USGS (35 min) Dean Hively

Dean Hively, USGS, gave a presentation on the USGS's collaboration with the USDA to aggregate privacy-protected agricultural conservation practice to reportable scales for use by Chesapeake Bay watershed jurisdictions in their annual BMP implementation tracking. In 2010, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and USDA formed a cooperative partnership to analyze the effects of agricultural conservation on sediment, nutrient, and pesticide transport to the Chesapeake Bay. The USDA provides

conservation implementation records for Chesapeake Bay farms to the USGS, with strict limitations on the use of the data to maintain confidentiality of site-specific farm data. The USGS aggregates the data to maintain farmer privacy, and subsequently provides the aggregated datasets to the public to inform conservation decision making processes. As part of that process, the USGS collaborates with the USDA to increase the understanding and quality of the USDA datasets and informs the interpretation of data records by Chesapeake Bay Program partners. The USGS and USDA-NRCS will be renewing the agreement in 2020 and want input from the AgWG on types of future analyses.

Accounting & Reporting

- Loretta Collins: For context, there is a separation between these two data sharing agreements. Jurisdictions get the aggregated data and may have individual agreements (their own 1619 compliant agreement separately). This varies from state-state and county by county. The states must sort this out and report this to the Bay Program through NEIEN. An issue arising from verification is that states may not have access to BMP point data to verify and renew the credit life. Privacy is an issue that is hindering states. The other issue is merging data sets to get quality data that address overlaps in the data. This contributes to the risk of over and under reporting.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: With trend information, recognizing there are non-water quality practices in there, do we have a sense of high priority practices?
    - Dean Hively: This is all in the report. You can download the data and look at specific practices and get the trends.
    - Kristen Saacke-Blunk: I would like clarification on the slides about lifespans.
    - Dean Hively: Some practices have an annual lifespan, for example stream bank fencing may have 10 years. Using the implementation dataset, we can see that certain practices have exceeded the expected lifespan, and they may want to send someone out to verify the practice and renew.
    - Olivia Devereux: There are three ways I've heard lifespan used:
        1. NRCS lifespan, CREP buffer as a contract period.
        2. Bay Program lifespan used as credit duration in the model. For many practices this lifespan is 10 years but varies. For example, cover crop is 1 year.
        3. How long a practice lasts. For example, plant forest buffer and it may last 75 years. We're not talking about that lifespan.
    - Dean Hively: The definition of credit life I used in the report is clearly described in the report.
- Jeremy Daubert: In VA, we have soil and water districts and NRCS, some projects funded by one or the other or both. If they are funded by both are they double counted?
    - Olivia Devereux: These are ones that are cost shared by NRCS or FSA, state cost share is not included here.
    - Jill Whitcomb: We deal with a similar issue, partially cost shared by federal and state dollars. Conservation districts do assistance, but funding comes from federal dollars. The data sorting Loretta alluded to at the beginning is an issue for us to ensure we count everything without double counting. We want to meet Bay Program standards.
- Kristen Saacke-Blunk: Dean mentioned how NRCS is utilizing this data to reconsider how they would move forward with their workplans. Has that happened already? How does NRCS plan to use this information?

    - Dean Hively: NRCS has been using information to increase quality of datasets. The goal for the next few years is to provide data products back to USDA, but that has not happened dramatically to date.
    - Barry Frantz: The lifespan slide shows that when we fund practices it's not a one year and done benefit to the Bay, but it's a multiple year investment. This is a good use of Farm Bill conservation funds with practices lasting on the landscape for 10-15 years. We're looking forward to working with USGS to see how we can use this data better in addition to reporting to the Bay Program.
- Jason Keppler: In terms of our verification process starting in 2016, we've looked at over 10,000 practices on the landscape, and about 72% that we verified is still out there functioning. This is a testament to the longevity of many practices that have exceeded their lifespan. I've heard from jurisdictions about the issue of getting credit in the Bay model for practices that exceed their lifespan.

Request for participation: STAC Workshop Update (15 min) Scott Phillips

Scott Phillips, USGS, provided an update on the development of the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) workshop: *Integrating Science and Developing Approaches to Inform Management for Contaminants of Concern in Agricultural and Urban Settings.* The workshop steering committee is requesting that an agricultural representative from each of the jurisdictions attend the workshop, which will be held May 22-23 near Annapolis.

CBP Assignments

- Scott Phillips: There was an interest in better understanding the relationship between sediment, pollution, and toxic contaminants, and perhaps reducing them all at the same time. This is an update from when I talked to you several months ago. We expanded this workshop to include urban settings in addition to agricultural settings. For the agricultural settings, we hope to better understand contaminants from manure generation and row crops. For the urban setting, we hope to better understand PCBs, which are the main cause of fish consumption advisories. We would like to see how practices put in place for nutrient and sediment, can be utilized to have a benefit for toxic contaminant reduction as well. We want states to consider that in the co-benefits section of the Phase III WIPs.
- **ACTION:** Submit names of volunteer representatives from each jurisdiction in the AgWG to attend the STAC workshop to Allie Wagner (wagner.alexandra@epa.gov) by COB Thursday, February 28.
- **ACTION:** Send suggestions for additional speakers for the STAC workshop on the topics of management practices to control manure and manure spreading and management practices related to row crop and pesticide use to Scott Phillips (swphilli@usgs.gov).

Request for Feedback: Data Dashboard (25 min) Emily Trentacoste

Emily Trentacoste, EPA CBPO, facilitated an AgWG discussion and feedback on the beta version of the Watershed Implementation Plan Data Dashboard content and features for refinement and further development: what works, what doesn't, and what could be improved. The Data Dashboard (http://gis.chesapeakebay.net/wip/dashboard/) provides visualized data synthesis and analysis to support Bay partners (local planners, state agencies, watershed groups, etc.) in reaching implementation goals.

Implementation

- Loretta Collins: What stage are we at in the development process of the data dashboard? What is the usability within the workgroups and in the watershed?
    - Emily Trentacoste: It is usable to anyone, and as we gather feedback we may update the dashboard with more information. We are waiting for feedback from workgroups before we do a push out to users.
- Jason Keppler: Is there an opportunity to take the targeting forest buffer map and incorporate that into our own maps that we could have access to?
    - Emily Trentacoste: Our GIS team is building an open data site where all our layers are will be housed. Instead of each data set being available to download in the dashboard, everything would be housed in the same place. All data layers will be available for easy download on the separate open data site.
- Loretta Collins: How much feedback are you getting? From the state perspective, heads are in the sand with getting thorough their WIPs.
    - Emily Trentacoste: We have been getting some feedback from other workgroups, and a lot of feedback from local county level partners. I think there is more interest outside of the Bay Program world, because they didn't know this information was available.
- Scott Phillips: What is your thought on having this look at co-benefits down the road?
    - Emily Trentacoste: Most co-benefits are from the Tetra Tech report on looking at BMPs and other outcomes. There is a table that allows you to look at agricultural practices and see what other goals that BMP also benefits. We are working to include mapping efforts undertaken for co-benefits geographically as well.
- **ACTION:** Send feedback on the WIP Data Dashboard to Emily Trentacoste (Trentacoste.emily@epa.gov).

Updates on CAST Optimization Tool (25 min) Daniel Kaufman

Daniel Kaufman, CRC, provided an overview of the ongoing development of an optimization tool for scenarios run in the Chesapeake Assessment Scenario Tool (CAST). The optimization tool will facilitate identification of more cost-effective approaches reaching nutrient and sediment load reduction goals for CBP partners at state and local levels. The major developmental steps anticipated for finalizing the tool will be discussed, including its first beta release in early 2019.

Implementation

- Ken Staver: CREP money is available to pay the landowner for practices, but the landowner makes decisions based on their cost. If you're talking about getting more practices on the land, optimization is great, but it has to get to the decision maker level for cost.
    - Olivia Devereux: That's important. The cost in CAST is the default and does include public and private cost. You could use this tool and only put in the farmer's cost and you would get results you're looking for. You'd have to know those costs and create a specific cost profile that Danny's tool could work from.
- Barry Frantz: Those were annual costs?
    - Olivia Devereux: Yes, they are annualized.
    - Barry Frantz: For a multi-year practice it's annualized out and an owner could put in their own cost estimate for practices with a 10-year lifespan?

    - Oliva Devereux: Yes, they are annualized because there are variations of lifespans. This makes decision making on an even annualized basis no matter the lifespan.
- Jason Keppler: Are there constraints of a possible BMP implementation level in a particular county? It's unlikely all 100,000 acres would be eligible for cover crop enrollment. Is that considered in this model?
    - Danny Kaufman: It's not part of the system yet, it's intended to be flexible and provide a way to add those constraints. The model itself is a bare bones way of representing CAST. We have some constraints that are the most basic, such as total acres in the county. We have built in the framework for those more detailed constraints in the model in the future. The intention is to keep a clean interface and allow for more constraints in the future.
- Ken Staver: If you want more implementation, the people who had the option to take advantage of the cost sharing haven't signed up. It's those people that we need to get on board. We have to think about these hard to deal with obstacles and the reality of the situation.
    - Danny Kaufman: The optimization engine will not figure out the intricacies of the costs, or model human behavior. Maybe this optimization engine will help clarify some of those issues by shifting the discussion to which practices are the most efficient.
- **ACTION:** Send feedback on the optimization tool to Danny Kaufman (dkaufman@chesapeakebay.net).

New Business & Announcements

- Terms are ending for 6 of the 12 at-large governance positions in the AgWG. All are welcome to send nominations to Loretta Collins (lcollins@chesapeakebay.net) cc: Allie Wagner (wagner.alexandra@epa.gov). **The deadline for submission of nominations is COB Friday, February 22nd.**
- USDA to Host 2018 Farm Bill Implementation Listening Session: Feb 26: www.farmers.gov/farmbill
- Register for the Cropland Irrigation meeting/webinar in Delaware on February 26th. Details and registration link can be found on the CBP calendar, along with the full report.
- All feedback on the Cropland Irrigation BMP Expert Panel Report is requested by **COB March 12** to Jeremy Hanson (jchanson@vt.edu).
- Tim Sexton: On March 10, Seth Mullins will be replacing Bobby Long for VA and will attend face-to-face meeting in March.
- Jason Keppler: Is there value for us to sit down and discuss challenges with the verification protocols? If folks are interested in chatting collectively, maybe we can bring folks in from USDA or USGS and give people an opportunity to discuss.
    - Matt Monroe: For WV, it's a huge issue and we'd like to sit down with other states to discuss challenges and get together with USDA and the Bay Program to discuss how to meet the verification protocols. I'm trying to learn more regarding development of new time frames, and how we can deal with losing credit from the model. I'd like to set up a conference call with jurisdictions to discuss, if others are interested, and report back to the AgWG from the state perspective.
    - Jill Whitcomb: I agree with that. We'd like to sit down and try to figure this out. It's an issue for us as well. About 80% of everything we reported until this year has come from

NRCS. Having those fall out of the model has been an issue as we plan for Phase III WIPs. PA is interested in meeting.

- **ACTION:** Matt Monroe will follow-up on future meetings among state contacts engaged in tracking and reporting and federal representatives to further discuss possible pathways and alternative solutions to data-sharing challenges impacting both TMDL progress and BMP verification.

Next meeting: Thursday, March 21st from 10 AM - 3PM
U.S. EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office
Joe Macknis Memorial Conference Room (Fish Shack)
410 Severn Avenue, Annapolis, Maryland 21403.