Virginia Agricultural BMP Technical Advisory Committee
Meeting 9:30 AM, August 18, 2016
Approved Summary

Attendance:

Member	**Representing**	**Member**	**Representing**
Emily Horsley	FSA	Tom Turner	CB, SWCD staff
Matt Kowalski	CBF	Amy Walker	DCR (Proxy)
Judy Burtner	VASWCD Area I	Pete Farmer	VASWCD Area IV
Robert Bradford	VASWCD Area II (proxy)	Scott Baker	VCE
Chad Wentz	NRCS	Bobby Long	DCR (Proxy)
Herb Dunford	VASWCD Area III	Charlie Wootton	VACDE
Stephanie Martin	DCR	Art Kirkby	DCR (Proxy)
Todd Groh	DOF	Amanda Pennington	DCR
Ricky Rash	VASWCD Area V	Ben Rowe	VA Grain Prod. Assn.
Jim Wright	VASWCD Area VI (proxy)	Darrell Marshall	VDACS
Chris Barbour	SR, SWCD staff		

Other Participants: Brandon Dillistin, NNSWCD; Emily Nelson, DCR Eng.; Joe Wood, CBF; Bob Waring, DCR; Leslie Ann Hinton, Three Rivers SWCD, Jim Wallace, Colonial SWCD; Carl Thiel-Goin, Tidewater SWCD; Kristal Evens, Tidewater SWCD

- Review & Discussion of TAC Agreements, The existing TAC agreements were distributed and reviewed. It was noted that in the "Guiding Policies" of the TAC the first bullet referenced Gov. Kaine's Ag. Championship, the TAC decided to strike this item as it was out of date.
  The TAC members will consider what Guiding Policies that relate to water quality improvement might be appropriate to insert into this section, this item will be discussed at the next TAC meeting.

- Gary updated the TAC about SWCB action taken relating to the recommended WQ-12 BMP. The TAC recommendation included language that prohibited cost-share funds for cisterns and storage tanks, however the SWCB thought that cisterns and storage tanks should be an eligible component to receive cost-share under this practice. As a result Gary removed TAC recommended Section B. 3. "Water storage tanks or cisterns are not eligible to receive cost-share or Tax Credits." from the specification, after discussions with NRCS it was discovered that the 558 Roof Runoff Structure standard was the only standard that contained cisterns and storage tanks. Since the 558 standard was referenced in the specification cisterns and water storage tanks would be cost-sharable components, so rather than generate new language not recommended by the TAC no new language was added.
  The TAC referred the issue to the Animal Waste subcommittee to discuss if any language changes should be made to the specification.

The draft summary of the February 18, 2016 TAC meeting was reviewed and approved with no changes noted. The approved summary will be posted on the DCR webpage and distributed via all-district e-list serve.

<u>A summary of discussion topics, action items, and significant conclusions are as follows:</u>

Old Business:

- USDA NRCS Report:
  - EQIP, $22,145,202 allocated: 75% obligated currently:
    - 403 contracts for around $16.5 million
  - 81 applications pre-approved for around $5 million that will be contracted in the next month

  RCPP – 2014/2015 awards:
  - DCR proposal focused on livestock exclusion and buffers - $1.45 million allocation
    - 19 contracts for over $500,000
    - 3 pre-approved application for over $77,000
  - DOF proposal for forestry practice implementation - $940,000 allocation
    - 170 contracts for over $926,000
    - 1 pre-approved application for over $13,000
  - NFWF proposal in Harrisonburg for livestock exclusion and manure management $992,000 allocation
    - 8 contracts for over $653,000

  RCPP – 2016 awards:
  - Blue Ridge PRISM – cooperative weed management - $894,000 allocation
  - TNC Upper Clinch-Powel watershed focused on water quality and aquatic habitat

  - NRCS is anticipating having to operate under a continuing resolution in October
  - Conservation Planning Certification; New knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) and trainings are being developed at headquarters for conservation planners; CEU requirements will not change, to maintain CP certification a planner must write at least 2 plans covering at least 200 acres
    - A national checklist for QA/QC review is being developed, Chad will send to Gary for distribution when it is available

- **FSA:**
  - Emily Horsley reported that September and October are historically the busiest enrollment months for FSA programs
  - Statewide ~ 26,000 acres of CRE are enrolled
    - 14.2K CREP acres in CB
    - 12.25 K CREP acres in SR
    - Contract reenrollments count against available drainage basin enrollment caps
  - 2014 Farm Bill nationwide CRP enrollment cap is 24 M acres, down from 32M under previous Farm Bill
  - General CRP signup is underway

- FSA is reassessing it policies; if Sec. Ag. determines that CRP is close to its enrollment cap he could stop enrollments

- Review/update of subcommittee membership and chairs for FY 2017, AND assignment of suggestions:
  - Nutrient Management: *Tim Sexton (Chair), Chris Lawrence, Darrell Marshall, Wade Thomason, Jim Tate, Scott Ambler, Gary Moore;*
    Assigned these suggestions to discuss and provide recommendations back to the TAC.
    1. Modify NM-1A language to allow concurrent cost-share of NM-1A and RMP-1.
    2. Cost share assistance for precision nutrient management for tissue testing on specialty crops, especially vegetables.
    7. Add petiole and leaf tissue testing as eligible components of NM-5.
    13. Modify NM-5 language "to promote split applications instead of one variable rate.
    14. Include variable rate lime "as a third nutrient" in NM-5 specification.
    15. Provide cost-share funds for precision soil sampling.
    16. Having two separate practices for precision application of nitrogen and phosphorus.
    17. Cost-share funding should be allowed in the scenario where soil sample results recommend 0 nutrients for certain zones/grids in a field that the soil sample results also have a nutrient recommendation. All sampled field acres should receive application cost-share.
    18. Tiered program for nitrogen management, for example, multiple splits of nitrogen on corn would receive one payment rate, if a grower moved to variable rate application on one or both of the splits the rate would increase.
    19. Further guidance is necessary for producers making their own variable rate applications following precision soil sample prescriptions that were developed by agriculture industry professionals.
    - 2nd (21.) Separate those things that inherently require sub-field management/application from those which do not.
    - 3rd (22.) Bio-solids applications are excluded from the practice. What is the reasoning for this exclusion? I think it also makes sense to break this practice into 2 practices—one for nitrogen and phosphorous. I could see a very simple P practice that includes just 2 requirements—zone based soil sampling of P and variable rate application of P.

The TAC suggested that representatives from the Northern Neck and Three Rivers SWCDs be included in the subcommittee discussions.

  - Stream Protection: *Emily Nelson (Chair), Chad Wentz, Chris Barbour, Robert Bradford, Emily Horsley, J. B. Daniels, Stacy Horton, Tom Turner, Matt Kowloski, Gary Moore*

Assigned this suggestion to discuss and provide recommendations back to the TAC.

3. Cost share assistance for the development of a hardened winter feeding pad. We believe currently it is only considered as part of a SL-6 but if they have already fenced their cattle out it does not apply. **Or** if we could provide cost share for pasture restoration to these winter sacrifice lots. The producers are feeding hay throughout the winter in these sacrifice areas that are becoming a muddy mess with no grass and it becomes a water quality and erosion issue when it rains.

- Cover Crops: *Ben Rowe (Chair), Chris Lawrence, Gary Moore, Jim Tate, Wade Thomason, Brad Jarvis, Brandon Dillistin, Joe Wood*
  Assigned this suggestion to discuss and provide recommendations back to the TAC.

  6. Change language in SL-15A to better define when a payment should be made and change other language.

- Forestry: *Todd Groh (chair), Megen Dalton, Mark Hollberg, Gary Moore, Tom Turner, Matt Kowalski*

- Animal Waste: *Megen Dalton (Chair), Amanda Pennington, Chris Hamilton, Darrell Marshall, Charlie Wootton, Bobby Long, Gary Moore*
  Assigned these suggestions to discuss and provide recommendations back to the TAC.

  WQ-12: Should cisterns and storage tanks be added to authorized to receive cost-share list in B. 2. i.?

  5. Clarify in the WP-4 specification that cost-share for liter storage sheds is only available for operations that generate the liter to be stored, not for operations that receive liter from other operations.

  8. Allow cost-share for liter storage shed for end users.

- Other Actions taken by TAC:
  - **4.** Cost share assistance for summer cover crops. Species to include Pearl Millet, Sorghum, Sudangrass, Buckwheat, Sunflower, Sunnhemp, Cowpea, etc. *the TAC discussed this item, there is no nutrient reduction credits available from CBPO for any of these species. All of the creditable species are included in all of the cover crop practices. No action taken; this item was not forwarded to a subcommittee for discussion.*
  - **9.** Review all engineering practice specifications to assure that the proper NRCS standards are included and up to date**.** ***Referred to the Engineering workgroup to discuss and provide recommendations back to the TAC.***
  - **10.** Revise the Biosecurity Section; ***Referred to new Biosecurity subcommittee composed of Amanda Pennington,*** **Darryl Marshall, Bobby Long, Alica Ketchum and Gary Moore to consider if the biosecurity measures should reflect NRCS standards or VA Veterinarian language.**
  - **11.** Forty-five day minimum notice of upcoming TAC meetings and subcommittee meetings, including agenda items to be sent to all District offices

and Boards. *The TAC discussed this item even though it is outside of the TAC area of technical advice and concluded that the existing notification of TAC meetings on the VA Town Hall website, distribution of the draft summary and approved summaries to all TAC members and via the all district list serve was a reasonable approach to assure that anyone who wanted to review the summaries had access to it. It was stressed that each member of the TAC represents a constituency and that members should make every effort to inform their peers of TAC actions via direct discussion or communications at area meetings. This item was not referred to a subcommittee.*

- 1st bullet (20) Replacing endophyte infected tall fescue in pastures could be looked at as a method to reduce time spent by livestock in surface water without the cost of fencing and alternative water development. *The TAC discussed and determined that this suggestion did not provided an assured water quality improvement to justify the expenditure of taxpayer funds. The TAC thought this might be an interesting research study. This item was not referred to a subcommittee.*
- 4th bullet (23.) For pasture-based system BMPs (~~especially WP-4s, but~~ to potentially include SL-6, SL-7, SL-9) participants should be required to first follow a recommended stocking rate. For example, the SL-6A specifies no greater than 2 animal units per acre. This is logical, and should be required of any operation before receiving cost-share. It should specify stocking rate per the existing acres of pasture (not overall acres in the operation). *The TAC discussed this suggestion and determined that although the TAC liked the suggestion that Districts and DCR did not have enough resources to enforce this approach. This item was not referred to a subcommittee.*
- 5th bullet (24) Add FR-3 to the list of exceptions to Priority Consideration #1. Page II-6). Functioning Riparian Forest Buffers are one of the best BMPs that exist to maintain and improve stream water quality. These are of such ecological importance that Districts should consider making them the highest priority practice for allocation of funds. *The TAC thought this would be a good idea but was outside of the TACs technical advisory role. Gary Moore will suggest this to his supervisors as an administrative change noting that it has been supported by the TAC. This item was not referred to a subcommittee.*

- **Agency Updates**
  - **DOF:**
    - New organizational changes in effect, Ed Zimmer is the new Chief of Operations for Fire and Emergency Response, Forest Resource Management, Water Quality Branches, and the 3 forestry regions in the state. The new organizational chart is on the DOF webpage at: http://www.dof.virginia.gov/resources/aboutus/VDOF-Org-Chart.pdf

- **VDACS:**
  - Lance Yates (formerly of Holston River SWCD) has been hired as the new Ag. Stewardship Coordinator in the Wytheville office.
  - Ag. Stewardship annual report will be released soon.
  - VDACS are currently working through the bugs in the new Ag. Stewardship module of the Ag. BMP Tracking Program.

- **VASWCD:**
  - Area V representatives met with Darryl Glover and suggested that Districts within an Areas should share basic cost.

- **VA Grain Producers Assn.:**
  - Governor McAuliffe presented $62M check representing funding for Ag BMPs to Mr. Clyde Chrisman (Director of DCR) during the Ag. Expo.

- **Virginia Association of Conservation District Employee's (VACDE):**
  - Training for District Staff will held at Graves Mountain Lodge August 23 through 25 during the Association's annual meeting.

- **DCR:** (Amanda Pennington)
  - Emily Nelson (formerly of Thomas Jefferson SWCD) has been hired as an engineering field review technician.
  - There will be an engineering session 8/24/2016 at the Graves Mt. Lodge meeting and an Engineering blitz in the afternoon
  - The next Engineering workgroup meeting is scheduled for Sept. 19, 2016 in the DOF cafeteria.
  - There will be a training on: How to Design a pressure watering system on Oct. 5, 2016 in Abington, VA.

  DCR (Stephanie Martin) Mr. Carl Thiel-Goin (formerly of Tidewater SWCD) has been hired as the DCR Conservation Planning Trainer
  - Four regional Conflict of Interest Act (COIA) / Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and VA state procurement procedures trainings have been delivered since July 21, 2016.

- **Chesapeake Bay Foundation:**
  - The 2016 DCR RCPP grant eligibility has expanded; there will be a training about who is eligible and how to make the program work on Oct. 20, 2016 at DOF.

Concerns from the Floor:

Q: Are Hay un-rollers eligible for the Tax Credit for Purchase of Precision Agricultural Equipment?

A: NO, a review of page IV - 17 shows that hay un-rollers are not included in the 6 categories of precision Agricultural equipment identified as eligible.

Next meeting Thursday November 29, 2016 9:30 AM at the DOF training room