

Key Issues for Consideration by the Regulatory Advisory Panel

Overarching Guidelines

Must be protective of water quality

Must be simple so it doesn't deter operators from participating

Must be technically achievable

Must take into consideration the economic impact to the agricultural landowner or operator

1. Who is qualified to write resource management plans (RMPs) and complete the on-farm assessments? Is there a process for being certified or qualified?
2. What is an on-farm assessment? What does "farm" mean (does it mean the whole operation, or could it be a tract or field)? Does the assessment involve a farm visit? An interview with the operator? Is there an assessment tool such as a spreadsheet or web-based system?
3. Are plan approval or review procedures necessary? Is the writer held responsible for the RMP, rather than the operators (similar to nutrient management plan writers)?
4. How long does the operator have to implement the RMP? Is a phasing in of the RMP allowed depending on the number of practices that need to be implemented and their cost?
5. What is the lifespan of an RMP? How is that lifespan impacted by new or revised TMDLs or a finding under the Agriculture Stewardship Act that the operation is creating or will create pollution? How are changes in ownership handled or a significant change in the farm operation? If federal or state permit requirements change, what happens to the RMP?
6. What requires a RMP to be renewed or re-developed?
7. How are the BMPs currently on the farm and those that are implemented through the RMP get reported? Who are the BMPs reported to? Is this included in the Voluntary AG BMP database? Do practices have to meet standards to be reported on?
8. How is compliance with a TMDL or watershed implementation plan determined? Another tool? Or is this a component of the assessment tool?
9. What are the agricultural practice components of an RMP? Are there "baseline" practices that all operations must include such as nutrient management?
10. How do RMPs work with permitted sites? If a portion of a farm is permitted (such as an animal feeding operation), how does the RMP work for the rest of the farm? How does biosolid application requirements interact with the RMPs?
11. How is compliance with RMPs assured? Audits? What happens if the operator is not in compliance with the RMP?
12. What is the cost of the RMP? Is there an incentive to have an RMP for the cost-share program (if an operator has an RMP is more cost-share funding available)?