

Equine Workgroup  
Virginia Cooperative Extension – Madison County Office  
2 South Main St. Madison VA, 22727  
March 12, 2019            10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

### **TIME AND PLACE**

The second meeting of the Equine Workgroup was convened at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2019 at the Virginia Cooperative Extension office in Madison, VA.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Kyle Shreve, Virginia Agribusiness Council, Chair – Presiding	Scarlett Reel, DCR
Kris Jarvis, John Marshall SWCD, Recording Secretary	Roland Owens, DCR
Jinx Fox, JMSWCD and VA Horse Council	Amanda Pennington, DCR
Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau	Robert Shoemaker, DCR
David Lamb, Virginia Horse Council	David Bryan, DCR
Sue Alvis, Virginia Horse Council	Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR
Susan Fanelli, Virginia Horse Industry Board	Katie Frazier, FCV
Stefanie Kitchen, Virginia Farm Bureau	Ben Rhoades, Northern VA SWCD
Pat McIlvaine, Loudoun SWCD	Madison Moavere, CFC Farm&Home
Steven Meeks, VASWCD	Willie Woode, Northern VA SWCD
Carrie Swanson, Virginia Cooperative Extension	Robin Mellen, VTA & VPBA
Anne Coates, Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Brad Copenhaver, Deputy Sec of Ag
Lisa Hyatt, Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Ricky Rash, Piedmont SWCD
Jay Yankey, Prince William SWCD	Laura Grape, Northern VA SWCD
Sharon Conner, Hanover-Caroline SWCD	Alan Spivey - VFGC
Monte Lewis - JMSWCD	

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

Kyle Shreve called the meeting to order at 10:30 a.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Kyle Shreve read the charge to the group as follows: “The purpose of the Equine Workgroup is to develop recommendations for technical assistance, as well as qualifications, specifications, payment caps, payment rates, etc. for the implementation of horse manure management, horse pasture management, and other conservation practices on properties and or/operations that do not meet the definitions of agriculture under the statues, regulations, and/or policies of agencies of the Commonwealth of Virginia, either due to their small size and/or lack of income generated by those operations.

### **REVIEW OF TIMELINE**

Kyle Shreve described the basic process the workgroup would use to develop the recommendations. This body is technically a sub-committee of the VA Agricultural Cost Share Program TAC (Technical Advisory Committee). He indicated that ideally recommendations would be developed by the end of April so they could be considered by the full TAC in June. An affirmative vote of 80% of the voting members of the Equine Workgroup will be required to move something forward. Kyle Shreve indicated that he expected to hold one to two more meetings prior to the end of April and that there would be

one vote per organization, and that no further (voting) membership of Equine Workgroup would be accepted after this meeting, although citizen input can still be taken.

### **OVERVIEW OF CURRENT VACS PROGRAM**

Roland Owens of DCR introduced David Bryan, the new VACS program manager. Roland stated that through VACS program reporting procedures information and data is funneled to the Bay program and VA legislature. He provided a brief overview of how VACS works using a stream exclusion practice as an example. Roland explained how practice specifications, cost share funding percentages and tax credit information was contained in the VACS manual and that the program runs on the state fiscal year. He discussed how TAC makes both technical and policy related recommendations to the state SWCD Board. He went on to explain the basic cost share funding cycle and the development of priority sub-watersheds. For FY 20 beginning July approximately 70% of the cost share funding will be directed to Chesapeake Bay basin and 30% to the remaining areas of the state. Most Districts take continuous sign up for VACS, but use a ranking system. Districts define secondary considerations and use the CEF which includes HUC, soils and number of animal units among other criteria to prioritize practices. He explained the verification process and what data was collected on each practice such as length of stream bank protected and buffer size. He described the DEQ TMDL (319) program and said that recreation horse owners may be included in that program if the TMDL technical report includes equine operations as a source of the impairment. TMDL program data that's reported to DEQ is aggregated, and the Bay model only gets sub-watershed based data, not specific location information about practices. Martha Moore asked what information is shared through TMDL 319 funding. Kris Jarvis stated that Districts that receive 319 do report payments (to entities) through financial reports but do not include personal information other than watershed location.

Jinx Fox asked if we could fund equine practices through VACS since the system was already in place. Kyle explained that several people were concerned about the chances a horse farm practice would have of being funded if included in the VACS ranking system. Kris Jarvis stated that would likely vary depending upon the equine population of said District and suggested running scenarios to see whether that was a legitimate concern across the board. Sharon Connor stated that certain horse operations can be competitive in the VACS system. Carrie Swanson brought up the VACS eligibility definition was not uniformly interpreted. Kris Jarvis stated that the frequency of the word "product" in the definition was often prohibitive. Several people brought up questions and problems related to eligibility, and Katie Frazier read a definition from the tax code of VA in which precedent had been set to include equine operations shown to have an environmental impact on the Chesapeake Bay. Woody asked for chance to successfully implement a cost share program based on the needs of his District. Alan Spivey mentioned the frequency of volunteer practices and other low cost options available to protect water quality. Susan Finelli raised a concern that by clarifying the definition for equine operations, the group was inadvertently separating out the industry. Katie Frazier and Kyle Shreve commented that by correctly clarifying the definition and scope of the operation, the group would allow each operation to address water quality issues with the proper scale necessary.

Kyle Shreve stated that the discussion on these and other issues would continue after the final presentation on the agenda, and that there was a possibility of making recommendations to alter the VACS definition to include clarification of word "product," as well as developing practices that fit small scale operations.

### **EQUINE RELATED PROGRAMS FROM THE VACS MANUAL**

Anne Coates reported that she created a catalog of potential BMPs either from VACS manual or similar programs from other states. Amanda Pennington brought up the different engineering needs of hobby horse vs. large commercial operation. Anne explained that she worked with Roland Owens to identify the most common practices that receive the largest amount of credit in the Bay Model, that were the “The Biggest Bang for the Buck” practices. Examples included stream exclusion, vegetative buffers, and loafing lot management.

### **EQUINE RELATED SUGGESTIONS TO AG BMP TAC**

A discussion was held regarding the Carrie Swanson’s suggestion that equine operations were not universally accepted as being eligible in the VACS program. A motion was made by Jay Yankey and properly seconded by Carrie Swanson that a recommendation to clarify the existing operation definition to ensure commercial equine operations qualify, and further a workgroup should be formed to find such a definition. The motion passed unanimously. An active discussion ensued where consensus was not reached on the level of detail that the suggestions needed to include or specifically which established program would serve as a model.

Sharon Conner suggested that in addition to the tax code, the federal (NRCS) eligibility also be examined. Several individuals also supported review the CEF and how it’s being determined. The eligibility sub-committee will be chaired by Martha Moore, who recorded the contact information of everyone who wanted to work on this topic.

Steve Meeks moved to establish a sub-committee to develop recommendations for the basic structure of an equine pilot program to serve individuals and operations that are unlikely to ever qualify for VACS due to their recreational nature or size of the operation. Jay Yankey seconded and the motion carried. A multi-faceted discussion followed about how Districts would handle horse practices that did not rank out in VACS, and several individuals asked if they should then go into the recreational/pleasure use horse program if one was put in place. Laura Grape stated that cost effectiveness regarding nitrogen removal should be considered, and Ricky Rash advised keeping it simple for purposes of explaining the program to state legislature or other funders.

A discussion followed about the possibility of using a similar structure as VCAP, an urban and residential stormwater program that offers a menu of practices. Amanda Pennington will chair the pilot program sub-committee, and the list of those who volunteered to serve were provided to her. Kyle Shreve tasked each sub-committee with trying to meet by mid-April so that the sub-committees could give their reports at the next full meeting. Kyle then asked if anyone that was not a member of the workgroup wished to give public comment. No members of the public wished to give feedback.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.