

Ag BMP TAC Cover Crop Sub-Committee Meeting

November 1, 2018

VA Farm Bureau

12580 West Creek Parkway, Richmond, VA 23238

Opening: The meeting was called to order at 9:33 by Sub-Committee Chair Robert Waring.

Attendees:

Robert Waring, Chair, DCR	Kristal McKelvey, Tidewater SWCD
Ben Rowe, Vice Chair, VA Farm Bureau	Claire Hilsen, John Marshall SWCD
Joseph Wood, Chesapeake Bay Foundation	Keith Burgess, Monacan SWCD
Spencer Yager, VA SWCD Employees Association	Amy Walker, DCR
Conner Miller, VA Grain Producers Association	Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR
Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline SWCD	Nick Moody, DCR
Allyson Ponn, Lord Fairfax SWCD	

Members not in Attendance:

Glenn Dye, Producer
Wayne Davis, DCR

Introductions and Housekeeping

Robert Waring opened the meeting and began introductions for the proxy members. The Sub-Committee meeting agenda and member roster was provided to all present. Ben Rowe provided additional welcome on behalf of the Virginia Farm Bureau.

Approval of the Minutes

Minutes from the October 4th meeting were distributed and reviewed. Ben Rowe motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Nick Moody. Minutes were approved 8:0:0.

Review of Revised Matrix

Chair, Robert Waring, presented the sub-committee with a revised matrix. The remaining original recommendations were listed first, followed by new recommendations and recommendations forwarded from the Programmatic Sub-Committee. The outcomes for the recommendations sent forward to the full TAC were reviewed.

RUSLE II Discussion

Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline SWCD, began the discussion regarding the RUSLE calculation requirements for various BMP practices. There was general discussion regarding the basic RUSLE components that were already in Tracking, with the exception of the k-factor. A k-factor table could be added to the program, if k-factors were added, the program could run RUSLE in the background. The group discussed the current RUSLE information that is being entered, that it is often just guessing and not very accurate data. The Sub-Committee agreed that to have the Basic RUSLE run within the program would provide more consistency across the state and would be better than the large amount of guessing that now occurs statewide. It was suggested for Roland Owens to meet with the committee during the December meeting to discuss the item. RUSLE 2 was noted as different and not a part of the discussion when adding components to Tracking, however, it was also noted that RUSLE 2 is not necessarily effective or efficient in many cases.

Whole Farm Approach – WFA-1a

Robert Waring, Chair, introduced the Whole Farm Approach (WFA) concept practice and pilot project, handouts were provided. It was noted the current WFA practice is currently structured for row crops only. A similar tiered or bundling concept was submitted to the TAC and is presently before the Programmatic Sub-Committee. The Chair discussed the process that had occurred to date, with the current description sheet having been created in coordination with a District that would potentially be implementing the pilot project. Steps moving forward were briefly mentioned, that the concept would be introduced to the Cover Crop Sub-Committee, then to the Programmatic Sub-Committee on November 7, then to the full TAC on November 15, followed by an introduction of the topic to the Soil and Water Conservation Board.

The Chair solicited any input and suggestions from the committee. The Chair commented that the initial thoughts regarding a whole farm approach began months ago, and were continued as the WIP III process began. The group of Districts now coined 'the fine nine' by James Davis-Martin will be carrying the bulk of reductions that need to be met, with a number of them east of 95 and heavily agronomic. It has become apparent to many that the state needs data. The Chair discussed that as a producer, he realized the only data being counted were the approved contracts. So if cost share wasn't approved, the data wasn't captured.

The Chair began a more thorough review of the conceptual WFA practice. Currently a District Board has agreed to the pilot project with the rates presented, the pilot project description sheets were presented to the committee for review and discussion. There would be \$8.00 / ac for basic core nutrient management, this requires a verified nutrient management plan and following core requirements for Nitrogen and Phosphorus nutrient management. A \$2.00 / ac payment would remain for the TSP for plans. For Nitrogen management it was discussed that there are still producers that put down Nitrogen all at once, there is still a need to incentivize side-dress and split application. Rates were reviewed for split application, side dress, multiple split application, and banded Nitrogen. There was general discussion regarding the cover crops and rates for the conceptual WFA practice. The group then discussed the Phosphorus management option, which is similar to the NM-5P. Machines are now coming with precision application equipment standard. It is hoped to collect more data as practices and equipment become more standard.

Farmer data examples were provided to the group, there was general discussion regarding the producer information, data collection, and funding. For the Pilot project, there has been discussion of CEF ranking versus everyone gets a percentage of the District's Cost Share funding. Pre-signup could provide an estimate on the amount of funding needed, first for the pilot, and then in the future for the contractual 3 year period. Reviewing the farmer data sheet the group discussed the comparison of data captured for the cover crop funding only and the data captured for the WFA conceptual practice.

The group returned to discussion regarding implementation of the pilot project at the District level. That the WFA concept practice would be promoted in the secondary considerations as a priority for the District. It was also noted that producers could not double-dip for practices with the District and NRCS, particularly with regards to cover crop practices.

Joseph Wood, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, noted it would be helpful to get a per pound efficiency for the Whole Farm Approach and various common individual practices. Then comparing the per pound efficiency of the WFA versus the efficiency of the current VACS practices. It was also noted that there could be unforeseen consequences, such as reduction in Cost Share due to the increase in BMP's noted on the ground.

General discussion also evolved regarding data entry and how this would be dealt with in an efficient manner as well as programmatic issues that were related to a previous 3 year contractual practice. The group discussed funding, and how funding of VACS and the allocation process needs to change.

The topic shifted back to verification of the nutrient management plan component. It was noted that the Nutrient Management Sub-Committee is working on a verification form to help with the administrative portion of the verification requirement.

In general the Cover Crop Sub-committee was in favor of the whole farm approach acknowledging there were several items that would still need to be addressed, such as data entry.

Review of Cover Crop Matrix recommendations

Chair, Robert Waring, reviewed the process for proceeding with the matrix of recommendations. Recommendations would be forwarded to the TAC as Tabled with no further Action, Recommended, or Amended.

Review of the recommendations was led by the Chair, by matrix item #

- 2C.** **2C and 22C** were considered similar recommendations. The recommendations were read. Previously the Sub-Committee had been advised that the Peanut District had submitted one of the similar recommendations. Allyson Ponn had followed up with Peanut District and found that they were not the submitting District. The recommendations are for long-term to permanent land conversion. **Sub-Committee voted 8:0:1 to Table and forward 2C and 22C to the Programmatic Sub-Committee.**
- 3C.** Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding limited acreages and the needs associated with turf. Sub-committee reviewed the standard and acknowledged that no set single planting date would be beneficial for specialty crops as well as turf. Sub-Committee questioned how the credits would be captured for the Bay Model. Seed types for summer planting were also noted as being needed, information on seed types would be sought prior to the next meeting. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table the item until further information could be reviewed by the committee.
- 23C.** Recommendation was read. Review of previous discussion on gearing the SL-8 towards a no-fallow or Protective Cover type of practice. The group noted the need for the summer seeding tables. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to table for further discussion.
- 4C.** Recommendation was read. Chair discussed that he had brought the item to the attention of the Nutrient Management Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee noted that the SL-8 is a low utilized practice because it generally does not get funded, again noting the SL-8 was not in the listed priority practices. The current SL-8 does not require a nutrient management plan and does not receive model credit. The Sub-Committee discussed waiting until further information was received regarding nutrient management before taking any action.
- 5C.** Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee discussed a portion of this recommendation was addressed by extending the later kill down date, but that the early

kill down date had not been addressed. There was general discussion regarding producers in some areas of the state wanting to kill down the cover crop prior to March 15 in order to plant crops earlier. The Chair shared his discussion with staff from Virginia Tech and DEQ regarding planting dates and that information is available regarding changes in growing days. The sub-committee discussed the early kill down dates, noting the later date has been extended into June, but that moving the early kill down dates statewide to earlier than March 15 would have consequences. There was general discussion among all members regarding allowing Districts to utilize the Bay Model language and adjust planting dates based on more local conditions. Districts could look at their more local weather data in regards to area specific average frost dates. The Sub-Committee noted more information was needed and took no action on the early kill down date.

During the discussion of the planting dates, an omission was noted within the SL-8B specification #12. The 'Cities of Chesapeake & VA Beach' were omitted from the kill down language. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to recommend to the TAC the following Amendments to SL-8B**

AMEND – SL-8B – B. Policies and Specifications #12. The cover crop must be killed using mechanical or chemical means or by grazing no earlier than March 15th and no later than ~~May 15 June 1 (previous recommendation)~~; **for the Coastal Plain, Piedmont, and Mountain and Valley.**

- 9C.** Recommendation was read. The Sub-Committee discussed the very small number of producers that may hit the cap for the SL-8H. There was general discussion regarding tax credits on cover crops and the variability in rates across the state. It was noted there is not currently a practice cap for the SL-8B. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table the item with no further action.**
- 10C.** Recommendation was read. A published study will be provided to the Sub-Committee for review prior to the next meeting. No action taken.
- 12C.** Recommendation was read. A published study will be provided to the Sub-Committee for review prior to the next meeting. No action taken.

Break for Lunch (1 hour)

- 15C.** Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding similarity of item 15C and 16C. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 16C.** Recommendation was read. Chair and others discussed Virginia Tech studies and maps regarding growing degree days. Chair discussed a previous phone conversation with Mr. Wade Thomason, Virginia Tech. During the phone conversation it was noted Mr. Thomason had discussed the trend of extended growing degree days and support of extending planting dates for cover crops, but would not recommend moving the

planting dates for legumes. The Sub-Committee agreed. There was general discussion regarding how moving the planting dates is complicated by growing degree days available later in the growing season. When looking at planting dates, need to ensure there are adequate growing degrees available late in the growing season. The group also discussed the dates in the SL-8B specification, that the early and standard planting dates for the Cities of Chesapeake and VA Beach had already been adjusted to accommodate for the extended growing season, that the Coastal Plain and Eastern Shore would match the planting dates. **The Sub-Committee voted 8:1:0 to Amend the SL-8B and the SL-8H planting dates by 2 weeks for the Coastal Plain (including the Eastern Shore), Piedmont, and Mountain and Valley; and to extend the inspection date to December 15.**

Amend - SL-8B.

B. Policies and Specifications #5

5. A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by December ~~1~~ **15** to protect the area from nutrient leaching and runoff in the fall and winter, ~~with the exception of the cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach that have late November planting dates.~~ All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres through the lifespan of the practice.

Policies and Specifications #10. Seeding of all seed types must be planted by the dates listed below:

Area	Early Planting Date	Standard Planting Date
Cities of Chesapeake and Va Beach	November 10	November 30
Coastal Plain (including Eastern Shore)	October 25 November 10	November 15 November 30
Piedmont	October 10 October 25	November 1 November 15
Mountain Valley	October 5 October 20	October 25 November 10

Amend – SL-8H.

B. Policies and Specifications #7.

7. A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by December ~~1~~ **15** to protect the area from nutrient leaching and runoff in the fall and winter, ~~with the exception of the cities of Chesapeake and Virginia Beach that have late November planting dates.~~ All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres through the lifespan of the practice.

Policies and Specifications #12. Seeding of all seed types must be planted by the dates listed below:

Area	Planting Date
Cities of Chesapeake and Va Beach	November 10
Coastal Plain (including Eastern Shore)	October 25 November 10
Piedmont	October 10 October 25
Mountain Valley	October 5 October 20

- 17C. Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding previous comments on dates in Bay Model. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 18C. Recommendation was read. The recommendation was considered related to motion previously passed. There was general discussion regarding the availability of a late plating date in the Model however the practice dates had been moved in a previous motion. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action**
- 19C. Recommendation was read. The recommendation was considered related to previous item. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 25C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table for further consideration and discussion
- 27C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table for further consideration and discussion.
- 31C. Recommendation was read. General discussion, not objectionable but administrative process may be a hindrance. Members noted looking for benefits of vegetative stand not necessarily planting method. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table for further consideration and discussion.
- 32C. Recommendation was read. Practice generally meant for dairies for harvest, the producers need the growth and nutrient uptake of the cover crop. Previous action moved planting date. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 33C. Recommendation was read. Group is waiting for study to review. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table for further consideration and discussion.
- 34C. Recommendation was read. The recommendation was considered related to previous item 16C. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 35C. Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding dates, the model and programmatic needs for cover crops. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**

- 36C.** Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding additional information or study needs. Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table for further consideration and discussion.
- 37C.** Recommendation was read. General discussion regarding benefits of 0-29% residue. **Sub-Committee voted 9:0:0 to Table with no further action.**

Items 55P, 56P and 58 P - Due to the complexity of tax credits and equipment rates, the Chair suggested he would follow up with Mr. Darryl Glover, Chair, of the Programmatic Committee to determine the values they are looking for the Cover Crop Sub-Committee to provide.

Public Comment

The Public Comment period was opened, there being no public comment, the public comment period was closed.

Meeting Adjourned 2:30 pm