

**Equine Workgroup
Virginia Farm Bureau
13438 James Madison Highway Orange, Virginia 22960
December 17, 2018 9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M.**

TIME AND PLACE

The first meeting of the Equine Workgroup convened at 9:30am on Monday December 17, 2018 at the Virginia Farm Bureau Office in Orange, Virginia.

ATTENDANCE

Nicholas Greenwell, Fieldcraft Farm	Diana Dodge, Nokomis Farm
Sue Alvis, VA Horse Council	Susan Fanelli, VA Horse Industry Board
David Lamb, Oakland Heights	Stefanie Kitchen, Virginia Farm Bureau
Dr. Bridgett McIntosh, Mars Equestrian	Pat McIlvaine, LSWCD
Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau	Lisa Hyatt, Thomas Jefferson SWCD
Kyle Shreve, Virginia Agribusiness Council	Jim Wallace, Colonial SWCD
Carrie Swanson, VA Cooperative Extension	Steven Meeks, VASWCD
Sharon Conner, Hanover-Caroline SWCD	Amy Johnson, Smithsonian VA Working Landscape
Kris Jarvis, John Marshall SWCD	Leslie Grayson, John Marshall SWCD
Laura Grape, NoVA SWCD	Laura Siggie, VCE
Willie Woode, NoVA SWCD	Robert Shoemaker, DCR
Ricky Rash, Piedmont SWCD	Scarlett Reel, DCR
Jay Yankey, Prince William SWCD	Darryl Glover, DCR
Anne Marie Roberts, R.E. Lee SWCD	Roland Owens, DCR
Anne Coates, Thomas Jefferson SWCD	Christine Watlington, DCR
Jinx Fox, VA Horse Council	Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR
Julie Williamson, Culpeper County Farm Bureau	Denney Turner, DCR
Heather Wheeler, VDACS	

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Ms. Martha Moore welcomed everyone to the first Equine Workgroup meeting. Mr. Darryl Glover began the meeting with introductions and the review of the agenda. Mr. Glover then explained that the Equine Workgroup was formed in order to address unresolved questions regarding equine operations including how best to provide technical and/or financial assistance for horse manure and horse pasture management, especially for small property owners. Equine operations play an important role in assisting Virginia meet its water quality goals by 2025. Virginia has met the mid-point reduction goals but a lot more work needs to be done to meet the 2025 goals. The Equine Workgroup will develop recommendations to advise DCR and the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of the Equine Workgroup is to develop recommendations for technical assistance, as well as qualifications (e.g. horse stocking rates), 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 statutes, 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.

DISCUSSION

Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources and Brad Copenhaver, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry could not attend but they wanted the workgroup to know that the Northam Administration takes the equine issue seriously and are committed to helping find a solution.

The Virginia Association of Soil and Water Districts included a request of \$100,000 for an urban nutrient management specialist at the Department of Conservation and Recreation as a part of their 2019 legislative agenda for General Assembly. A new specialist would support conservation efforts for equines that are currently underway including conducting research and providing educational workshops for equine owners related to pasture management and manure management best management practices. The position would work closely with the Agricultural BMP Technical Advisory Committee and the newly-formed Equine Workgroup to coordinate implementation of recommendations related to best management practices for equine operations. The position would also provide nutrient management plans to equine owners and to large turf operations that would help ensure that necessary nutrient reductions from such operations are achieved to help reach Virginia's Chesapeake Bay and local water quality goals.

SELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON AND SECRETARY

Mr. Ricky Rash made a motion to nominate Kyle Shreve, Virginia Agribusiness Council, as the chairperson for the Equine Workgroup. The motion was seconded by Mr. Steve Meeks. Mr. Shreve introduced himself and began to chair the meeting. The chairperson will schedule and facilitate the workgroup meetings.

Ms. Kris Jarvis volunteered the John Marshall Soil and Water Conservation District to work as a group for the secretary position of the Equine Workgroup. The District will be responsible for preparing meeting agendas, the document summary of each workgroup meeting, and the final recommendations for submittal to DCR.

GROUND RULES

The Equine Workgroup will function independently of the DCR Agricultural Best Management Practice Technical Advisory Group (Ag BMP TAC). It will discuss several issues over the course of the next few months and will develop consensus recommendations for solutions to equine-related water quality challenges. Recommendations are due to DCR by April 30, 2019. DCR will bring the workgroup's recommendations to the Ag BMP TAC when it reconvenes its 2019 series of meetings in late June or early July of 2019. DCR will assign recommendations from the Equine Workgroup to one or more subcommittees of the Ag BMP TAC as applicable.

In order to approve a recommendation, 80% of the voting members present at a meeting must vote in favor of the recommendation.

DCR recommends that the Equine Workgroup consider funding conservation practices on equine operations, through an incentive carve out from the Water Quality Improvement Fund (WQIF) as opposed to the Virginia Natural Resources Commitment Sub-Fund (VNRCF). The VNRCF is exclusively funded for use by the Virginia Agricultural Best Management Practices Cost-Share Program (VACS Program). The WQIF has been used to support a wider variety of nonpoint source initiatives such as silvicultural practices by the Virginia Department of Forestry, and nutrient management plan writing on golf courses.

THOMAS JEFFERSON SWCD EQUINE PROJECT- CARRIE SWANSON, VA. TECH EXTENSION

Thomas Jefferson SWCD has worked with equine operations for many years; they recently received their second grant to provide cost share for equine operations that are too small or do not qualify for the VACS Program. The first grant the District received enabled equine operations to implement BMPs including sacrifice areas, manure composting, and stream exclusion fencing. The District was also able to provide an educational tour of all the operations that received cost share from the grant. The most recently received grant

will enable similar cost-share projects to be implemented and additional educational opportunities. The District is currently taking applications, reviewing sites, creating plans, speaking with individuals willing to host field days and planning another educational tour.

HEALTHY LAND FOR HEALTHY HORSES- LESSONS LEARNED- ROBERT SHOEMAKER, DCR

Mr. Robert Shoemaker gave an overview of the Healthy Land for Healthy Horses (HLHH). In 2017 and 2018, this cooperative effort between DCR, local Soil and Water Districts, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and NRCS conducted one six-week workshop, one farm tour, and three regional one-day field days. The purpose was to promote environmental stewardship, water quality and better horse health. The events targeted small farms with equine.

Some Highlights and Observations Are:

1. There is a definite need for education for basic agronomic and environmental information within the horse community. There has been some interest to use HLHH as a certification program for farms. The program did not address certification.
2. HLHH is an educational brand that others could use. Materials are available for that purpose. Entities that wish to use the material need to keep their program consistent with the original materials and intent of the program.
3. Adequate stocking rate is critical. The stocking rate is the number of animal units per acre. Acres per animal unit for various Virginia soils are listed in the nutrient management standards and criteria. These stocking rates are for 7 to 9 months of grazing and should be used for a rotational grazing system with at least 3 paddocks per group. Stocking rates for continuous grazing systems should be increased 30-40 percent. Do not graze drain fields. A protocol should be developed to determine appropriate stocking rate for cost share practices. These stocking rates will likely be 2 to 3 acres per animal unit of 1000 pounds of animal.
4. Many of the compost facilities built in the past appear to have a low success rate. There are quite possibly lower cost alternatives available.
5. Various county ordinances allow stocking rates that would be inconsistent with the HLHH program.

Conversations were had about potentially putting HLHH online in the form of a “How To” educational podcast. Dr. Bridgett McIntosh mentioned that the workgroup may be able to help with this concept of online training.

EQUINE RELATED SUGGESTIONS SUBMITTED TO AG BMP TAC- CHRISTINE WATLINGTON, DCR

Christine Watlington gave an overview of all the suggestions that were submitted to the Ag BMP TAC that are being referred to the Equine Workgroup.

MATRIX OF EQUINE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2020			
Item #	Ag-BMP	Recommendations	Comments
14A.		Create a specific VACS practice to address manure issues on horse farms.	Frequently sees horse operations that do not store/treat their manure properly which creates a major water quality problem. Create a specific VACS practice to allow cost share for horse sacrifice lots in order to prevent overgrazing on pastureland in an effort to reduce the runoff coming from denuded horse pastures.
22P.		Refine the suite of BMPs and design standards that would be most suitable for equine and urban agriculture operations	Expand the VACS program to include these practices and support these kinds of operations. Support a new funding source to work on water quality issues from these areas. Provide adequate technical assistance funding to SWCDs to track the voluntary implementation of BMPs from these operations.
23P.		Incorporate new practices that address storm water runoff issues in loafing areas and barnyards, particularly where stocking rate is high.	Allowing horse operations to participate in the practice, regardless of consistent agricultural income. Many horse farms have lesson and/or boarding income, but may only sell a horse once every few years. If a water quality issue exists, conservation specialists should have the means to assist landowners in addressing it.
24P.		Open all livestock BMPs to equine boarding and pleasure operations to address pasture and manure management resource concerns. Create and fund new BMPs for equine issues and recognize that horses are a water quality problem.	Horse operations are creating water quality problems and if ignored many counties and districts will not meet the intent of the CB WIP. One thought is to offer less cost share like 50% for the equine practices...
25P.		Expand VACS program participant eligibility	Include landowners with water quality issues regardless of animal species or length of property ownership. District staff working on agricultural lands with horses need to be able to implement practices that address water quality concerns regardless of the nature of the horse ownership (pleasure, rescue, equine business, etc.).

DISCUSSION

There was significant discussion about ways a pilot program could be started. Several members of the workgroup recommended following the process used to establish the Virginia Conservation Assistance Program (VCAP).

The workgroup decided to form a subcommittee of individuals, led by Thomas Jefferson SWCD, which will gather currently existing information regarding definitions of equine, most effective BMPs and the associated standards and specifications, and ideas for pilot programs. Questions were asked about practices that may already receive credit in the Bay model; the subcommittee will work with DCR staff to address this issue. At the next meeting the subcommittee will report on what is working across the country, the most effective BMPs for the equine industry, and recommendations for a pilot program.

Mr. Darryl Glover noted that if funding is needed, DCR could potentially submit a budget request for FY2021.

Mr. Shreve recommended that the workgroup keep the following questions in mind when determining the need for a budget proposal: what is the need; how to address the need; where the funding is coming from; and how much funding is needed.

NEXT MEETING TIME

No next meeting date was set, Mr. Shreve will email all members of the workgroup in the near future for potential dates and locations. Meetings will likely be held during the second half of February, March, and the first half of April.

ADJOURNED 11:15am