

Ag BMP TAC Cover Crop Sub-Committee Meeting

December 6, 2018

Va Farm Bureau

12580 West Creek Parkway, Richmond, VA 23238

Opening: The meeting was called to order at 9:36 by Sub-Committee Chair Robert Waring.

Members in Attendance:

Robert Waring, Chair, DCR

Claire Hilsen, John Marshall SWCD

Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Keith Burgess, Monacan SWCD

Spencer Yager, VA SWCD Employees Association

Wayne Davis, DCR

Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline SWCD

Amy Walker, DCR

Allyson Ponn, Lord Fairfax SWCD

Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR

Kristal McKelvey, Tidewater SWCD

Members not in Attendance:

Ben Rowe, Vice Chair, VA Farm Bureau

Glenn Dye, Producer

Chris Atkins, VA Grain Producers Association

Nick Moody, DCR

Guest:

Roland Owens, DCR

Introductions and Housekeeping

Robert Waring opened the meeting and began introductions. The Sub-Committee meeting agenda was provided.

Approval of the Minutes

Minutes from the November 1st meeting were distributed and reviewed. Minutes were approved 6:0:0.

RUSLE II Discussion

Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline SWCD, began the discussion regarding the Revised Universal Soil Loss Equation (RUSLE) calculation requirements for various BMP practices. There was general discussion regarding the lack of consistency across the state and the large amount of single value soil loss data entry that now occurs. It was noted that many components of the old USLE already exist or are entered into Tracking with the exception of the k-factors. Roland Owens, Conservation Programs Data Manager – DCR, commented that the specifications do not require RUSLE II but do require soil loss estimates. The Conservation Efficiency Factor (CEF) does need more specific values entered for soil loss to be effective, versus a single value entered District-wide; the CEF factors rely heavily on the soil loss values. Roland noted that with the Nutrient Management Planning Module the k-factors have been included.

There was general discussion among members and Roland Owens regarding slope data. The slope data for slope length is currently very rough based on available data in the Tracking program. General numbers based on a rough slope scale would still be more consistent than the data currently being entered. The distance to stream could be used; but this may run off the field boundary, such as a field with very wide buffers.

Having a soil loss equation run in the background may require digitizing every individual field. Slope length would be determined with the rough elevation data currently in the system. Values could be manually adjusted by District Staff and the ability to run the RUSLE II would still be available to determine soil loss.

The Sub-Committee discussed advancing the recommendation to have the soil loss equation run within the Tracking program. Acknowledging that there is a data entry issue statewide. The recommendation would be to build the old USLE calculation into the Tracking program while allowing district staff the ability to run the RUSLE II and enter the data if they so choose. This recommendation would need language changed to allow for a soil loss equation not restricted to the presently approved NRCS equation. Roland Owens mentioned this recommendation from the Sub-Committee could be added to the list of changes for the Tracking Program that will be coming from this cycle of the TAC. Roland Owens noted that the data layers and the tools exist within Tracking but that a calculator would need to be built.

There was additional discussion regarding running a soil loss equation in the background and the potential need to run it field by field. For contracts with an instance that includes multiple fields, District staff should be able to pull the predominant soils and choose a typical field for the instance with an average slope length and average slope %. In cases of multiple fields, District staff would enter the value; as the Tracking program would not be able to choose the typical field within the instance. The program could run the soil loss equation in the background if there was only one field.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee voted 7:0:0 to approve the following recommendation to the TAC:

Simplify and provide consistent language throughout the Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) BMP Manual for soil loss, to read 'Soil loss rates must be computed for all applications for use in establishing priority considerations' (Language from the SL-8); and

Propose a modification to the Agricultural BMP Tracking Program to incorporate a soil loss calculator based on the USLE.

Review Planting Dates

Robert Waring, Chair, began discussion regarding the previous motion from the November sub-committee meeting regarding shift of planting dates. Additional discussions with Wade Thomason have led to the potential to reduce the move to 7-10 days. There was general discussion regarding the dates, versus a concept based on performance. The sub-committee noted the need for future discussion on opening up the planting dates altogether and paying for performance versus a date seed was put in the ground.

The sub-committee discussed the EPA classifications of early, standard, and late plantings, and how this aligned with the VACS program and the changes in the frost and planting dates previously discussed. Committee members discussed the regional frost dates and how this would align with the classifications used by the EPA. It was noted that the EPA needs to approve a formula to determine frost dates, that perhaps DCR could utilize one of the EPA's contractors for climate data to assist with creating a procedure.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee voted 6:1:0 to leave the previous motion for 14 days in place to present to the TAC.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee voted 7:0:0 to approve the following recommendation to the TAC:

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee requests DCR to determine a scientific, repeatable process to determine regional frost dates every three to five years.

Fall Application of Nutrients on Cover Crop

There was a brief discussion regarding fall applications of nutrients on cover crops. A study was provided to the sub-committee members regarding a past project by Virginia Tech Extension. The sub-committee will review the information and discuss at a future meeting, noting currently the Bay Model is only accepting fall application of manure on cover crops for credit.

Summer Cover Crop

Discussion of summer cover crops was led by Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline. There was general discussion regarding the wide variety of species available for planting in the summer or as non-conventional fall cover crops.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee will continue to look at the standards and specifications of the cover practices in order to potentially simplify the program and process. The sub-committee will continue to work on this to create a specification to address the matrix items, which would include specialty crops and turf.

Programmatic Tax Credit Items

Programmatic Tax Credit Items were forwarded from the Programmatic sub-committee, items 55P, 56P, 58P. There was general discussion regarding rates and the feasibility of getting rates and caps that would be appropriate for the program, this included discussion regarding equipment rates, tax credits, and the processes. The sub-committee discussed the need for additional partners and staff from finance be involved.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee voted 7:0:0 to approve the following recommendation to the TAC:

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee recommends the Equipment Tax Credit items be handled by a Soil and Water Board sub-committee to work with multiple agencies and partners, including finance personnel.

The Cover Crop Sub-Committee will review the potential for standard rates for Ag BMP Tax Credits during the next TAC Cycle.

Break for Lunch (1 hour)

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; the Chair noted that previous recommendations from the November Sub-Committee meeting would be presented at the December TAC meeting.

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

2C. 2C and 22C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.

- 3C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 23C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 4C. Recommendation was read. Chair discussed that he had brought the item to the attention of the Nutrient Management Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee discussed waiting until further information was received regarding nutrient management before taking any action.
- 5C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 9C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 10C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 12C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 15C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 16C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 17C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 18C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 19C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 25C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 27C. Recommendation was read. The recommendation was considered related to the recently approved pilot project. **Sub-Committee voted 7:0:0 to Table with no further action.**
- 31C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 32C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 33C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 34C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 35C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.
- 36C. Recommendation was read. Sub-Committee will continue discussion during the next TAC cycle.
- 37C. Sub-Committee recommendation from November meeting.

There was general discussion among the sub-committee members regarding the remaining items and the future process and TAC cycle.

The Sub-Committee voted 7:0:0 to continue to schedule a meeting monthly on the first Thursday of each month, locations to be determined.

Public Comment

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

Meeting Adjourned 1:30 pm