

**Virginia Agricultural BMP Technical Advisory Committee
Cover Crop and Nutrient Management Subcommittee
August 11, 2022
10:00AM-3:00PM
Draft Minutes**

TIME AND PLACE

The Cover Crop and Nutrient Management Subcommittee meeting was held in the Town of Orange Public Works Community Building Room at 235 Warren St., Orange, VA at 10am.

ATTENDANCE

Voting Members Present

Keith Burgess, Monacan SWCD
Amy Walker, DCR
Bryan Johnson, Farm Bureau
Sabrina Vladu, Lord Fairfax SWCD for Allyson Ponn
Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Megan Trice, Shenandoah Valley SWCD
Buck Tharpe, Southside SWCD
Kemper Marable, Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Spencer Yager, Culpeper SWCD
Hubert Bowman, Blue Ridge SWCD
Connor Miller, Virginia Grain Producers Association

Voting Members Not Present

Allyson Ponn, Lord Fairfax SWCD

Non-Voting Members Present

Robert Waring, Chair, DCR
Marissa Roland, DCR
Michael Tabor, Blue Ridge SWCD
Olivia Leatherwood, DCR
Sara Bottenfield, DCR
Robert Shoemaker, DCR
Marie Schirmacher, DCR
Hunter Landis, DCR
Chris Lawrence, NRCS

Opening and Introduction

Mr. Robert Waring introduced himself and asked attendees for introductions. Mr. Waring discussed the flow of the meeting and breaks. All voting and non-voting participants introduced themselves.

Mr. Waring asked the subcommittee to discuss their next meeting date. The subcommittee discussed and planned to meet on September 7, 2022 at 10am in the Town of Orange Public Works Community Building Room. The subcommittee also discussed a potential second meeting on September 29 at the same meeting time and location.

Mr. Waring discussed logistics of the subcommittee and the full Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and presented the Cover Crop and Nutrient Management suggestion matrix and asked the

subcommittee to focus on the three directives from the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board (VSWCB) and item 11C first.

Overview of STBA test/Cover Crop biomass analysis – Robert Shoemaker

Mr. Waring introduces Mr. Robert Shoemaker and the discussion of matrix item 11C. Mr. Shoemaker presented materials relating to the “Comparison of VA N Recommendations to the STBA (Soil Test Biological Activity) Recommendations in Corn – Biomass Cover Crop Analysis for Enhance N Credits”.

The subcommittee discussed using the STBA as a potential new specification. There is concern from the subcommittee there is not enough knowledge to support implementation of this as a practice. The subcommittee motioned to form a smaller group of knowledgeable District staff and partners to work on more details to discuss in the next TAC cycle.

The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 and the item was deferred to the next TAC cycle.

Review of Cover Crop/ Nutrient Management Board directed Matrix items

3C. The subcommittee discussed matrix item 3C as a way to expand cover crop participation by incentivizing leaving straw on land. There is discussion regarding the kind of credit Districts could receive in the Bay Model with this kind of practice. Ms. Amy Walker explained to the group the residue credit would be found via tillage surveys.

There was further discussion from the subcommittee regarding the SL-8B practice and the ability to till while the SL-8H practice does not allow for the ability to till. There was sundry discussion regarding two various practices interact and overlap. The subcommittee determined cover crop rates needed to be adjusted. The subcommittee motioned to keep the \$20/acre standard harvest rate and increase the rate to \$30/acre if straw is left in the SL-8H specification as well as adding the line, “all residue must be left on field and harvest for grain only.” ***The motion passed 10 to 1 and will move forward to the full TAC.***

2C. The subcommittee discussed how percentage rates could help deal with inflation and avoid last minute action on cover crop rates. The subcommittee agreed the invoicing process is not a viable option for cover crops at the District level. ***The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 and item 2C was tabled.***

1C. The subcommittee discussed how costs may vary with geographic locations. Given the similarity to item 2C, the subcommittee agreed flat rates were easier to keep standard and manage. The subcommittee motioned to table 1C and leave payments at a flat rate. ***The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 and item 1C was tabled.***

Lunch – The subcommittee began lunch at 12:00pm and returned at 12:35pm.

Continued Discussion

Mr. Waring asked voting participants to submit matrix items they were most concerned with in order to begin discussions.

24C. Mr. Waring opened discussions with an item of interest from the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). There is a new trend of foliar feeding nitrogen on corn and the question of it being a split application.

The issue presented for discussion is applying a small amount of nitrogen to the plant and calling it a split. Mr. Waring posed to the subcommittee what amount of nitrogen is considered a split. After discussion, the subcommittee motioned 20 pounds of nitrogen is the minimum amount to qualify as a

split and the statement, “a minimum of 20 lbs/acre is to be applied to be considered a subsequent application” to the NM-5N specification. ***The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 and will move forward to the full TAC.***

After compiling responses from subcommittee members, the remaining matrix items were ranked in order to be discussed.

5C. The subcommittee discussed considering an increase for the payment rate of the NM-7 practice. The subcommittee further clarified the NM-7 specification was created to fill a niche for cover crops and does not receive credit. There was discussion that an increase in the rate could create more interest and enroll more acres. The subcommittee motioned to increase the payment rate to \$35/acre. ***The motion to increase the NM-7 payment rate to \$35/acre passed unanimously 11 to 0 and will move forward to the full TAC.***

6C. The subcommittee discussed a lack of clarity between specifications regarding ‘seeding certification’. The subcommittee motioned to change language in the SL-8 specifications from, “seeding certification” to “the planting must be certified no later than”. ***The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 and will move forward to the full TAC.***

13C. The subcommittee opposed the idea of flat rate due to the variability of costs in SL-1 practices. The subcommittee motioned to table. ***The motion to table matrix item 13C passes unanimously 11 to 0.***

14C. The subcommittee discussed how previous discussions have continued to be deferred. There was discussion that lime and variable lime, while important, do not have direct water quality benefits. The Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) program is a water quality program. Mr. Chris Lawrence clarified the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) program for variable rate application is a three-year program created where the incentive is to implement nutrient management planning with enhanced techniques. The program does not include a one-off payment for lime.

The subcommittee did not feel there was a good place to fit lime into currently. The subcommittee suggested adding it to a suite of practices, such as the Whole Farm Approach (WFA) as a stacking incentive for variable rate lime. Ms. Amy Walker will present a payment rate for the subcommittee to discuss at the September 7 meeting. ***The subcommittee took no action and will further review item 14C at the September 7 meeting.***

7C. The subcommittee discussed and determined the signup date needs to remain in order to ensure time for approval and budget planning. The subcommittee motioned to table item 7C. ***The motion passed 10 to 1 and the item was tabled.***

8C. The subcommittee discussed cover crop practices to be the first step in soil health. There was discussion that cover crop should be built upon instead of continuing to be paid. Veteran District staff discussed issues with tracking which fields were enrolled and ultimately was impossible to manage on the administrative end. There was discussion about a soil health bundle of practices, but the subcommittee agreed the focus of the VACS program was water quality. The subcommittee motioned to table item 8C. ***The motion passed 10 to 1 and item 8C was tabled.***

9C. The subcommittee discussed the similarity between matrix item 8C and 9C. Veteran District staff reiterated the issues with tracking which fields were enrolled. The subcommittee motioned to table matrix item 9C. ***The motion passed unanimously 11 to 0 to table item 9C.***

Public comment/questions—No public comment or questions. Next meeting is scheduled for September 7.

Mr. Waring announces this is his last cycle as the CCNM SC Chair. Mrs. Marie Schirmacher will be taking over. Mr. Waring turned the floor over to Mrs. Schirmacher to introduce herself to the subcommittee.

Chris Lawrence discussed some technical gaps he noticed across the VACS program. Mr. Lawrence expressed interest in seeing newer techniques integrated into the VACS program.

Adjourn—2:45pm