

**Cover Crop/Nutrient Management TAC Subcommittee Meeting**

**Monday September 8, 2025**

**Central High School Educational Complex Auditorium**

**2748 Dogtown Road**

**Goochland, VA 23063**

**10:00 am – 3:00 pm**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Housekeeping – Marie Schirmacher, VA-DCR**

**Review TAC Ground Rules and Definitions**

**Introduction of Members in Attendance**

**Review of Cover Crop/ Nutrient Management Matrix items**

**Address SL-1 related items: 1C, 9C, 13C, 16C, 9Sa**

**Review Remaining Matrix Items as Time Allows**

**Lunch (12:00 pm-1:00 pm)**

**Continue Review of Matrix Items by Subcommittee**

**Review Meeting Discussion, Outcomes and Actions**

**Discuss Future Meeting Dates and Locations**

**Public Comment/Questions**

**Adjourn (by 3:00 pm)**

**MATRIX OF ADVANCED COVER CROP NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025 (CY25) TAC**

Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	TAC Recommendations	DCR Supports	FY2027/2028
1C		Create a CCI-SL-1 spec (refer to parameters set by full TAC in CY24). <i>Deferred in CY24</i>			
2C		Change the 60% stand date from Dec. 15 to Jan. 1. For all VACS cover crop practices: Due to the change in planting dates in recent years, we recommend adjusting the date producers must achieve a good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover, by a minimum of 2 weeks, to match the adjustment made to the cover crop planting dates. It was the recommendation of Frank Long, Virginia Cooperative Extension Agent, to extend the date as far out as February or March to be comparable to our partner agency’s cover crop standards. The meeting attendees discussed the likelihood of such a radical change being made, which is why we are making the suggestion to correlate to the planting date change, as a minimum. This will allow the producers planting cover crops up to the November 30th planting deadline sufficient time to achieve a good stand and good growth to meet the 60% coverage requirement. The specification could read: “A good stand and good growth of vegetative winter cover must be obtained by December 31 to protect the area from nutrient leaching and runoff in the fall and winter. All cover crop plantings must maintain a minimum of 60% cover crop plant material on the enrolled acres through the lifespan of the practice.” <i>Deferred in CY24</i>			
3C		The current Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) includes several important practices for the use of cover crops. The types of cover crop plants are largely based on grains, some legumes, and some brassicas. There is room for improvement. The Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) organization also recommends the use of cover crops, but their recommended list of plants is more extensive than the current Ag BMPs. The enclosed table shows the differences. Also, under SARE’s manual the use of the cover crops is more diverse. The increased plant diversity has several advantages to soil enrichment. A richer diversity of a mix of cover plants reportedly can produce better soil organic matter and deeper root structures. Expand the number of cover crop plans included in the Virginia Ag BMPs based on the SARE manual. <i>Deferred in CY24</i>			

**MATRIX OF ADVANCED COVER CROP NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025 (CY25) TAC**

Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	TAC Recommendations	DCR Supports	FY2027/2028
4C		Edit NM-5N and corresponding WFA-NM to accurately reflect the type of tests used for variable rate N application. The spec currently references soil tests which are not appropriate for determining variable rate application.			
5C		Use seed count rather than bushels for cover crop seeding rates			
6C		Modify cover crop BMP specifications to include cutting and composting of cover crops as an alternative to killing with herbicide (see supporting documentation).			
7C		Establish a BMP for composting of animal and plant organic matter for the subsequent return of the compost organic matter to the soil (see supporting documentation).			
8C		Add tobacco for sidedressing of nitrogen.			
9C		Allow field perimeter fence to be included as an eligible cost for SL-1 fields. Many folks are not willing to convert crops to hay ground- but if they could also graze the field, they are willing to do the SL-1. (See additional supporting documentation)			
10C		For the SL-8B practice, remove the approved rye cultivars list and allow all cereal rye varieties to be eligible for the \$20 bonus. The Bay Model does not distinguish between tetraploid, diploid, or different varieties of cereal rye. If the Bay Model is valuing all cereal rye as the standard for N Effectiveness, why is VACS subdividing rye into different cultivars? o All cereal rye is used as the standard (or reference value) for valuing N uptake for cover crops. Whereas, cereal rye is valued at 1.00 for N effectiveness and all other crops are based off of that value. For example, triticale has N effectiveness value of 0.86. (Source: Recommendations of the 2012-2013 Cover Crop Expert Panel, ADDITION OF NEW SPECIES TO COVER CROP BMP, Addition of New Cover Crop Species with Nitrogen Reduction Efficiencies for Use in Phase, 5.3.2 of the Chesapeake Bay Program Watershed Model.) o Seed sourcing is becoming more difficult, and our District has found that even the seed growers/suppliers are unsure whether their rye is tetraploid “for indeterminate growth”. Additionally, some of the cultivars on the SL-8B list are not tetraploids.			
11C		Consider modifying the seeding rate for radishes in small grain mixtures with radishes in the cover crop specifications. The current minimum seeding rate (6lbs/acre) is too high for a mixture when planting with a seed drill. A minimum rate of two pounds per acre with small grain is suggested for small grain mixtures with radishes.			

**MATRIX OF ADVANCED COVER CROP NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2025 (CY25) TAC**

Item #	Ag. BMP	Suggestion to the TAC	TAC Recommendations	DCR Supports	FY2027/2028
12C		Consider a practice for planting native/pollinator plants on agricultural land consistent with NRCS Practice Code and Standard 327. These plantings may be done on cropland being converted perennial native plants that would address soil, water, and wildlife habitat degradation resource concerns to meet landowner objectives.			
13C		Remove the restriction in the SL-1 that states, "State cost-share and tax credit will be provided only one time per field, while that field is under the same ownership." The SL-1 is a low cost, high benefit practice that should not be restricted. Rotating grass into crops is a standard practice to break weed cycles, improve soil health and there is still an environmental benefit establishing fields back up into grass for a long period of time. A 5-year lifespan is the technical lifespan for Pasture and Hay Planting (NRCS Practice Code and Standard 512) which is referenced in the VACS BMP Manual and Specifications for the SL-1 Practice.			
14C		The producer must sign up prior to April 1 and provide written verification of contracted sidedress application cost, including the PSNT results, to the District within two weeks of the sample analysis. The deadline for signup is currently April 1st and should be pushed back to May 1st for the signup of practices in a current WFA NM contract that was previously approved, this will allow producers to be able to have more flexibility in cost share participation to the suite of practices that are in WFA NM. Some producers will often wait until after April 1st to start planting and the cropping plan could change for them due to factors such as weather, current market conditions, pests/crop rotations and new land acquisitions. I have had multiple producers contact me about adding corn sidedress acres and VR N and P.			
15C		Practices enrolled in precision Ag practices should not need a NMP because they are going beyond what is written in a plan...plan is useless.			
16C		SL-1 should be under the Practices with Two-Program Year completion date carryover section: a. SL-1 has seasonal restriction and is highly influenced by weather for installation and certification the same way that SL-11 and tree plantings are (all of which fall under the 2 PY carryover). b. Language from the carryover section should be removed to be consistent with the spec: (May not be carried over more than two planting seasons, i.e. spring and fall.)			

**MATRIX OF DEFERRED COVER CROP NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Item #</b>	<b>Ag. BMP</b>	<b>Suggestion to the TAC</b>	<b>Reason for Deferring</b>

**MATRIX OF TABLED COVER CROP NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS**

<b>Item #</b>	<b>Ag. BMP</b>	<b>Suggestion to the TAC</b>	<b>Reason for Tabling</b>