

Ag BMP TAC Cover Crop Sub-Committee Meeting

March 7, 2019

USDA Service Center – Orange, VA
325 b North Madison Rd, Orange, VA 22960

Opening The meeting was called to order at 9:39 by Sub-Committee Chair Robert Waring.

Members in Attendance

Robert Waring, Chair, DCR
Spencer Yager, VA SWCD Employees Association
Jim Tate, Hanover-Caroline SWCD
Claire Hilsen, John Marshall SWCD

Glenn Dye, Producer
Amy Walker, DCR
Carl Thiel-Goin, DCR

Members not in Attendance

Chris Atkins, VA Grain Producers Association
Ben Rowe, Vice Chair, VA Farm Bureau
Alston Horn, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Allyson Ponn, Lord Fairfax SWCD

Kristal McKelvey, Tidewater SWCD
Keith Burgess, Monacan SWCD
Nick Moody, DCR

Guest

Ben Northen, DCR-DSWC Intern

Introductions and Housekeeping

Robert Waring opened the meeting and began introductions. The Sub-Committee meeting agenda was provided. Spencer Yager provided a brief history of the Old Silk Mill building.

Approval of the Minutes

Minutes from the January 3rd meeting were reviewed. Minutes were approved 5:0:0.

Review of the final Cover Crop Matrix Items to be sent to the Soil and Water Board

Chair, Robert Waring, briefly reviewed the final Cover Crop Matrix that will be going before the Soil and Water Conservation Board in March.

Update on the WFA-1 Practice

A brief update of the Whole Farm Approach, WFA-1, was provided to the Sub Committee by the Chair. The Sub Committee discussed the potential for adjusting for other regions of the state, to include animal operations with manure components. The question was asked if the WFA-1 could include No-Till, this will be discussed as the WFA-1 program develops. There was also discussion regarding dribble and Y-Drop application of nutrients and potential credit available. No-Till fields thick with residue can make banded application difficult, some producers are switching back to dribble or Y-Drop.

Prioritization of Sub Committee Topics

The Sub Committee began general discussion regarding potentially assigning topics and the breakout of concepts or components.

Fall nutrients on cover crop

The Sub Committee discussed the issues of fall nutrients and growth rates of cover crop in the fall versus the spring. There was discussion on when inspections would be most beneficial. Fall application of nutrients on cover crop to promote fall growth should be considered; if the nutrient application is in the plan and the producer is following the plan, it should be allowable. Producers would work with their planner to determine the need, determine the residual nitrogen, through tests and base the Nitrogen application on the results of the test and nutrient management plan recommendations.

Seeding rate requirements for cover crop

The Sub Committee discussed the need to look at the 2 bushel/acre planting requirement for rye, 1.5 bushel/acre was suggested for a discussion point.

Determine qualifying stand

It was noted that inspection of cover crop may not be consistent throughout the state due to a variety of reasons. This could be addressed through clear guidance and training of new District staff.

Shifting planting dates

The Sub Committee began discussion regarding planting dates. Shifting dates to match the changing frost dates versus leaving the dates as outlined and adding a late date planting option. The Sub Committee members inquired for DCR and Virginia Tech to try and get more accurate regional data to base the 'Standard Planting Dates' off of. With the 'Standard Planting Date' based off of regional data, the early planting date could be 2 weeks prior and the late planting date 2 weeks later. This would require a later inspection date, the Sub Committee discussed December 15th for the inspection date of all cover crops.

SL-8 No Fallow Concept

The Sub Committee continued previous discussions regarding an overhaul of the SL-8 practice from a specialty crop cover to a No Fallow Cover Crop. The No Fallow Cover Crop would be planted 45 days after harvest, which would require year round seed mix options. The Sub Committee discussed the practice be available for vegetables, tobacco, small grain, turf, other specialty crops, and environmental circumstances. In order to consider the concept, the practice would need species groups, planting rates, and payment rates defined. Summer seed suggestions would be needed from Virginia Tech, as well as contacting vegetable, specialty crop, and turf growers to discuss desirable cover crop species. There was a question on whether other practices could be incorporated into a No Fallow Cover Crop, such as the WQ-4 Legume cover crop.

Cover crop mixes – the importance of Rye

There was general discussion regarding cover crop mixes versus pure rye. The Sub Committee recognized that Rye trumps other cover crops, early planted rye receiving the most credit, but there were questions about what ranks out next. Are there mixed cover crops that may rank well? If so match payment rates to Bay Credits available per species or mix.

The Sub Committee reviewed the full matrix to ensure all items noted as still being considered were going to be worked on. The Sub Committee felt that all items would be captured through working on the components outlined during the meeting. The Chair, Robert Waring, noted he would be working with individual committee members and assigning duties to help gather the necessary information to help move forward. The Chair suggested cancelling the April meeting in order to provide time to work on gathering information and to ensure a quorum, the Sub Committee agreed. There was discussion regarding moving future meeting times to 10:00 am to assist those that are traveling the furthest; the Sub Committee agreed to start meetings at 10:00 am.

Public Comment

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

Meeting Adjourned 12:15 pm