

# CCMP Implementation Committee

## Meeting Agenda & Notes



DELAWARE CENTER FOR THE  
**INLAND BAYS**  
Research. Educate. Restore.

DATE & TIME: 18 March, 2020 9:30-11:30AM

LOCATION: CIB Conference Room

39375 Inlet Road Rehoboth Beach, DE 19971

Meeting called by: Chris Bason, Chair

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### AGENDA ITEMS

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| I. Call to order   | C. Bason   |
| II. Meeting agenda review  | C. Bason   |
| III. Approval of December 11th and February 7th meeting minutes  | M. Schmidt |
| IV. STAC Modeling Whitepaper presentation and modeling discussion<br><i>Presentation on whitepaper developed by the STAC Modeling Subcommittee followed by a discussion on nutrient loading modeling in the Inland Bays watershed.</i> | J. Volk    |

*Presentation can be found on the CIB's Committee website.*

*Marianne - STAC Subcommittee formed to gather information on modeling efforts in the Inland Bays and make recommendations for future efforts. A number of STAC meetings have been focused on this effort and the deliverable on this is a short whitepaper that reviews past modeling efforts and reviews some of the other approaches available. At the end it recommends a model for an updated nutrient loading model and fully coupled hydrodynamic/water quality model for the Inland Bays.*

*A model is a simulation or representation of something that allows you to run scenarios and make predictions and compare results with observed data. There are different types - physical models that were used widely in previous decades (shows photo of physical model of Chesapeake Bay). Since the advent of more powerful computing technologies, models are now almost completely mathematical models. We have used three different terms when describing the modeling we need for the Inland Bays. The first is a nutrient loading model and this is the portion of the effort that the CCMP IC will focus on. This is a mathematical model that allows you to input data on LU/LC, wastewater input, and other sources of nutrients to the Inland Bays. It incorporates data on groundwater flow, surface flow, space, time, different BMPs, etc. You use this model to find out how much nutrients are entering the Bays from the stream edge. The other model is a coupled hydrodynamic and water quality model. The hydrodynamic model takes into account the mixing of the nutrients once they enter water, it looks at current, sediment transport, salinity, currents, tides, flows, etc. That can be coupled with a WQ model that consists of higher level processes such as chemical, biological, and geophysical processes that impact the actual concentration of nutrients in the bays. Ultimately we would like to have a coupled model that considers all of these things and can make predictions and run different types of scenarios for managing the bays. We need these models because they provide information on predicting types and placement of practices that allows us managers to make the best management decisions. We can run scenarios to see what implementing this type of BMP at this location will have on the nutrients entering the bays. That allows us to spend our money on managing these nutrient loads most wisely. Models can also guide monitoring efforts and interpret the data we collect. Monitoring is useful but it does not tell*

us everything. These models can help tell us where we need the monitoring stations most critically and what data we need. We can also use the models to better understand processes in the estuary. We can also better understand the connection between nutrient loads and concentration.

Jenn - STAC Whitepaper was reviewed several times and went back and forth between comments and updating the document. The Whitepaper was voted on back in February. One thing we thought it was important to point out is that there are a number of CCMP draft actions that have some kind of connection to a modeling exercise. It was important to point that out so we can see the connection between the need for modeling and the other priorities of the Center and partners. We did a final review and made final edits and then put the paper out for vote. We had to have 15 members or 20% for the vote so we needed to have 15 members vote. The results were that 4 abstained and the rest approved so the final result was approved. The document also talked about next steps so for us the next step is to release a Request for Information which Frank Piroko will be developing. A number of people who participated in this process are connected to modeling and we wanted to know more about what is out there and what are our possibilities. The RFI will review what our options are, what the timeline is, how experienced modelers are, and what the estimated cost is. We would like to release this in April. We will summarize the responses in May and then put together an ad hoc Finance Committee to put together a funding strategy. In June we will review all of this and then discuss at our next July meeting.

We have had conversations with DNRC because they are looking to develop a model similar to the CAST for the Chesapeake and we think we can use this as our nutrient loading model and if we do a couple of add ons it can be used for our HD/WQ model as well.

Jules Bruck: In the Fall some folks got together who are doing coastal research and we were asking the questions of what can we do in the community that could converge all of our research interests and set us up for a larger proposal for NSF. We found a grant for NSF that has the potential for funding something like this - Growing Convergence Research Grant. We had written down the question how can an interdisciplinary team work to model hazards and pollution so this sounds really in line with some of what we have a strong interest in pursuing. These NSF grants are great when they are combined with interdisciplinary partners. It could give us \$1.2 million. They were due in February so we are shooting for February 2021.

Jenn: Great, this is something we can include in our funding strategy potentially.

With respect to this group, being able to run scenarios seems really critical. There are connections with both of these models to the actions in the draft Revised CCMP.

Steve Williams provides an update on where DNREC is on their model: This is what we submitted as our "Big Idea Project" and we were calling it the Delaware Assessment Scenario Tool (DAST). Basically we again submitted a very high level proposal which we heard was getting very little traction. So we approached Olivia Devero to get more information on what we were looking at in terms of financing. She didn't like DAST so she started calling it the Delaware Targeting and Planning Tool. The goal is to determine the effect of management actions on water quality where you look at the different types of BMPs that could be applied to the entire state minus the Chesapeake. Olivia said that making a mirror image of CAST wouldn't be the way to go because they have more complexities but this could be a tool used to look at different BMPs and the types of load reductions that yields as it impacts water quality. It is something that would be cloud based and available to practitioners or whoever would like to use it. It would need hosting and annual servicing which would be done by Olivia's team. It would be slightly over \$500,000. This is the challenge. Olivia said it would take 1.5-2 years to create something like this. Olivia said that the DAST/DTPT would require significant add-ons to be usable as our watershed model which

could then feed into the hydrodynamic model. It is a foundation or building block. DNREC wouldn't take ownership of the add-ons but they are open to partnering if we want to co-develop this.

Jenn: Some of the add-ons would be including the time-steps needed for the HD/WQ model as one example. We don't know the cost for these add-ons at this point.

Michelle: There is great partnership potential for developing this model. Asked Steve other than funding what other next steps are there?

Steve: It is funding pretty much.

Michelle: As a reminder, modeling and tracking is one goal that the group prioritized and this certainly fits that bill and would be used to accomplish many of the Committee's goals. Asked Hans and Chris & Aaron if they have an interest in the model development

Hans: We have an interest in this but at the HUC 10 level, so he would like to see more detailed analysis. The way they need to document credits is at the smaller level.

Jenn: Olivia said this model would be done smaller than a HUC scale.

Michelle: NHD+ scale. So perhaps this would be at the level the County needs?

Chris: Another way to define the level that is most practicable is the level at which the TMDLs are calculated. So we have TMDLs for the individual tributaries (Herring Creek, Guinea Creek, etc) and he agrees, it does sound like it would work for most of those water bodies. Asked Hans if there is a potential for the County to be a funder?

Hans: If this would substitute for consulting work then obviously but at this point they are targeting credit generation and documentation associated with those projects and they are at a much smaller scale.

Michelle: Would DDA be interested? thoughts?

Chris Brosch: We have plenty experience applying bmp data for scenarios and the staff and I have a long history so some level of comfort using the tool. Have never found useful in targeting because, not to fault the model, targeting has the most utility not something the dept uses in implementation plans. We run state programs so we have not chosen to target anything other than cover crop planting dates rather than the minutiae of locality of those bmps

Chris: Is it possible that the scale of targeting that to be provided by the model refine how manure relocation is done? Possible that we get decent phosphorus loading data from a certain area to subsidize removal of poultry litter from that watershed.

Chris Brosch: Everybody that applies for cost-share gets paid. Not sure what utility that would have in running the program. I know that Amy S at UDEL is trying to develop a litter matching service which would certainly have some value. For the model that is being described I don't think it is a good match for what you are proposing.

Michelle: Thoughts on how this may be used for any funding sources, EPA perspective on funding a model like this, grant or any other opportunity we may pursue?

*Kelly: Not that I am aware of that is specific to modeling. We will keep our ears open if something presents itself*

*Chris: Follow up for EPA and wondering is it possible 319 funds to be used for this work?*

*Cathy: I think that is something you would have to talk in cooperation with DNREC about.*

*Steve: I might be able to steal that one - I have used 319 money as one who competes for it. All about on the ground projects. That grant wouldn't even fund the monitoring of projects on the ground pre or post.*

*Chris Brosh: I can echo that. We were offered some multi purpose grant funds that we had to point to existing EPA program. We wanted to do an irrigation monitoring program with the 319 and Philly said no.*

*Jenn - I have had the same experience as well.*

*Chris: bounce back to Hans. Thoughts on WIAC possibly in the future might be able to support these types of efforts?*

*Hans: We are still wrestling with the idea of even funding monitoring. Might entertain a 3 year window of monitoring. So I don't think we are just modeling without having a future project in the pipeline. If you did it as project development it is a different story. Right now it doesn't fit in the WIAC funding model.*

*Chris: Assuming bills do pass and clean water plan for the state begins to get developed, hopefully in a short order to move that money - that could be something to be included in the plan to advise those funds.*

*Hans: Yes. But I am saying that it is certainly one of the items that have been brought up by non profits.*

*Michelle: Couple of next steps- we need thinking about funding sources, should all keep an ear out for grants, think creatively about how to fund this model. If it is going to take a year, year and a half to develop once we do have funding, that makes it more important that we continually think about how to get this funded so we can get to work on this. Another step is to continue discussing add-ons to be included in the DAST work so it can be used by all of us and act as a nutrient model as we see it and feed into the hydrodynamic and water quality model. This is something we will continue to talk about and strategize in terms of funding. Does anyone have questions or final thoughts? Next agenda item- Continue discussing another focus area that we identified- BMPs focused on stream networks and we talked about this at the last meeting in Feb - another Zoom meeting.*

*Clarification- what we mean by this is to implement BMPS focused on stream networks- is to intentionally implement BMPs in smaller areas that flow towards particular stream segments. We discussed in February that there is a planning exercise needed to identify what areas we need to focus on for BMP implementation. These projects could be a few different practices: stream restoration, wetland restoration, planting riparian or grass buffers, tax ditch management/ restoration. However, one thing we haven't done is come up with a concrete goal. I would like to have a discussion on what our goal is and how we are going to measure success and how we will reach that goal.*

*Goal is to make sure that what we set is measurable and achievable and we should continue thinking in terms of between now and the end of this year. Michelle proposes that between now and the end of the*

*year we have identified 3 potential projects and have them scoped out meaning a concept design developed. The practice/project could vary.*

*A concept design is like a mini-grant proposal. It contains a basic description of the project, estimated cost, estimated nutrient reduction once implemented, has landowner buy-in meaning you have talked with the landowner and the project meets what they envision and what we envision to meet our goals, and includes a map/ sketch of what the project will look like.*

*Second part of the goal is 3 projects identified and scoped and one project initiated by the end of this year.*

*So the performance measure for this activity is proposed as the following: By the end of this year, 3 projects will be identified and conceptually designed. One of these projects will be initiated.*

*Kelly: Have you done any legwork on site selection yet? That will determine how feasible the goal is.*

*Michelle: Yes, we talked a little bit at the last couple meetings about the Rapid Assessment Project Plan that we are working on. Rob who is with the USACE is our new project leader with ArmyCorps for this effort. We did receive a SWMPG for this project and are working with the USACE in addition to that grant. Right now we are working with the Corps to get the agreement in place and what the deliverables are, but site prioritization will be a part of that project, so that will help this goal.*

*Does anyone else have initial thoughts on the number of projects scoped? Good number? Too high? Low?*

*Bryan: I'm ok with that number. For my clarification, what is going to count towards these projects BMP wise? Stream network, ditch networks running into stream beds? What can I keep an eye on to see if this will be a feasible site?*

*Michelle: Any site that feeds into a stream is what we are talking about. Bryan, how you could contribute to this with the rapid assessment plan is looking at the RC&D project list and seeing which projects are in the inland bays that we could scope out and potentially implement. Certainly those projects would count as a BMP in this regard. This is tricky because it is broad in BMPs that we could be talking about. Anything that reduces nutrients entering a stream which would ultimately enter the bays.*

*Chris: Good question. There can be confusion around terminology. Our watershed, the network of waterways that are important doesn't just include natural streams, it includes the extension of that network through ditches, it all functions the same way with water and pollutants. Anywhere we are working in the water way network. I had a thought about the goal. I think it is an ambitious goal but I think it is doable. The most challenging part is to get a project initiated. I'm not sure exactly what that means - in terms of what project we can get initiated by the end of the year I think it would have to be something simple like a buffer planting. I like how this goal is ambitious because it would force us to hustle and work together to find a site to use and try to put some funding towards it. There are a lot of interesting funding sources that are becoming available. The Governor wants something like 1 mil. trees. planted and there is some money in the proposed budget to do that. Thoughts?*

*Steve: Not tied to funding at all (tree planting)*

*Aaron: The forestry/ dept of ag might be involved.*

*Kasey: Follow up on the last point. Is the tree planting initiative tied to the state buffer mission or above and beyond?*

*Chris: Can you tell me more about the state buffer initiative?*

*Kasey: It is something that has been targeted and tagged back into our goal that ties back with the Bay and I don't recall the whole number but there should be annual goals that we are looking at to make sure that by the time we get to our next quarterly mark, we are closer to the goal than we were initially. We had some work that has been done prior to, but now we are looking more at going in and establishing more of the actual buffer areas and it has become a challenge. So we have had ongoing conversations with our tax ditch managers, working with our conservation district partnership and making sure that we have an opportunity to see if we can expand out some of these areas. So what we have looked at in some of our preliminary discussions is could we potentially have one side of the tax ditch open and one side would be a buffer, as well as now making sure that it doesn't have to be a tree, it could be a vegetative buffer. It is a little bit harder because we don't have those set aside acres like some of our neighboring states. I didn't know if this was tied into that initiative or is this something different.*

*Chris: My understanding is it would be above and beyond, at least in conception. And then its application would tie in with organizations that are already working on the goals. So we are going to plant one million trees says the governor, and then it is up to us as to how do we get these in the ground. Kasey how do you see buffer initiative or program helping us to operationally meet our goals that we are talking about today?*

*Kasey: I would love to say that we are making a significant impact and moving in that direction, but I know that we are still engaging in conversation for the feasibility of the goal that has been provided to the state and making sure that we are trying to close that gap as much as possible. One thing I would share on that is that we should engage Mike Valentine and his team and how they can help us have a broader and more focused conversation because he would immediately know how much of our other activities are being engaged in the forestry area- versus harder ones trying to take cropland and putting it in buffer whether it is vegetative or tree combination. So maybe that is the starting point is to have a more focused conversation with Mike and his team.*

*Chris: Is Mike with NRCS?*

*Kasey: Mike is with DDA*

*Chris: So the buffer initiative, is there funding behind it? Where does that initiative originate?*

*Kasey: That is a great question. What we have been doing is partnering with sister agencies (FSA) for now we have been trying to use a combination of what we have done with CRP where now we can do our buffers, tree planting, etc, to really make sure now we can hopefully get to this goal in a rapid succession. We are still seeing some deeper dives because again what we saw in the early onset of this*

goal in 2013 maybe in those early years where we had rapid numbers that were coming in. After that we have had a slow down and we are still looking at the best way to do this. It is not that our producers don't see value in it but at the same time they know that every acre counts. And right now that is a harder sell when you are taking acres out of production and putting that into a buffer. We are continuing to have these conversations whether it is through soil health, active production vs. not and making sure to minimize loss vs gain and now coming in and seeing if they are just adamantly opposed to the tree portion of the buffer then have a vegetative buffer. We are trying to give as many flexibilities but we have been doing that more through continuous CRP.

Michelle: Following up on what Chris said on the feasibility of having one project initiated, perhaps right now we should focus on scoping at least 3 projects rather than scoping 3 projects and having one initiated. Would that make the group comfortable and does everything think that is more achievable?

Bryan: I think the 3 scoped out projects is feasible and I can do some leg work on my end and see what will fit into this project scope on landowner contact that we already have and see what phase things are in that would fit in to the inland bays. The question I have is what are we considering initiated? Are we talking full implementation, groundwork, planting? I know that timing of the year plays into different aspects of the project.

Michelle: Maybe defining what initiated means will help. It certainly could be that we have applied for a grant as a high level or basic first step, or it could be we applied for a grant and received a grant. What we could do is shoot for scoping 3 projects and having grant funds identified for at least 1 or really we should have an idea of grant funding for all or but at least a plan for applying for funding for at least one. That is still a little vague but as an example say we have one wetland restoration project scoped and we know that the 319 program funds that kind of work. We also know that the next call for 319 is this fall or winter. And so we have a plan in place for applying for that grant and we know who the partners are going to be in applying for that grant and match source is identified and the project is primed to move forward on that application. That could be considered initiated. Does anyone else have any thoughts on what initiated may mean? Going back to a specific goal, should we make a decision on the goal being 3 projects scoped by end of the year? If we end up having something initiated we could count that towards success but I think something that is achievable and measurable and specific is important.

All: Agree on goal.

Michelle: Bryan, at the next meeting could you have a little bit more info on RC&D projects and any that are in the inland bays that we could look at and what you said earlier looking at producers you know and projects in inland bays that could count towards this. Is that something you can commit to?

Bryan: Just to clarify, I have limited access to RC&D. Can confirm on projects. If something comes up I usually reach out to DNREC and see whether it is on their list or radar. Dave Baird and Jim Elliot are in more contact with DNREC to pull projects from RC&D to see what they can implement. I can check with Jim to see what RC&D list and start there. On the ag conservation side - we have smaller funding pools

where we have different pots of money that may fall into this and may not run through our bigger cost-share program here through NRCS or USDA that we could pick up as well. I have a few in mind. I just need to determine more if it will suit what we are looking to do here. I have a few that are looking at converting crops to pollinator meadow habitat. That typically has a 5 year lifespan to get that land out of production and these particular ones are full-field implementation, not just buffer, but they do border ditches and run into tax ditch and such. I don't know if that is something that the group is going to decide is part of this goal? I know there is a conversation on tree planting, this would not suit that but it is a land-use change and permanent change and cover.

Michelle: I think that would count. And in terms of the rapid assessment project plan, that will be a five year implementation plan so that we have projects to implement each year. So whether or not its going to be implemented or not in 5 years that counts.

Bryan: These would be implemented prior to that but when I mention the five year that is the project guideline, once the practice is installed they will continue to maintain it for 5 years. Agree, where we would want to plan that out over time for multiple projects.

Michelle: Does anyone else have thoughts on the goal or projects we can start looking at to meet this?

Jayme: I just wanted to make a comment, it sounds like the RAPP project would be in direct competition with CRP and CREP programs which are 10-15 year contracts. That might be something to think about. Your funding may or may not be more than what our CREP/CRP program offers.

Michelle: The way I think that the CREP program could fit in is that we could implement any project with any funding source. We don't want to take Farmers away from their CREP program. This would look at potentially other projects that might not be funded by CREP or EQIP but we might come into contact with a landowner who may be interested in doing a project and may fit into CREP or EQIP. We would work with you all and you all would have to develop that project and they would go into the CREP program. From our perspective, if we are identifying priority areas and there is a farmer or landowner who is not engaged in the CREP program or EQIP, perhaps we could help with outreach to that landowner and see if they are interested in signing up for your programs.

Jayme: Not necessarily saying it could be competitive with a negative aspect just that our contract may be a bit longer or offer more money but now that you are saying we would be partnering, that makes more sense.

Michelle: So the next steps are to continue working with USACE on the RAPP and get that squared up - conservation district is a partner as well. We will keep everyone apprised on the status of that. Bryan has committed to a couple of tasks. And at this point we want to think about projects. Once the agreement with the army corps we can start working more so on the RAPP but for now we can start thinking about projects, locations, and type.

*Chris: Do we have a timeline for when you think we will have both funding sources from the corps and the surface water planning matching grant lined up so we can start working on the rapid assessment plan?*

*Michelle: We do have the surface water planning grant funds right now, and we are working with the Corps to finalize our scope and then come up with the agreement.*

*Rob Deems: I'm unclear if the RAPP proposal is part of a larger watershed planning initiative that is already in place?*

*Michelle: The RAPP is our project planning initiative. To give you a little bit of background- our committee did a goal setting exercise in December and one goal identified is to focus BMP implementation on stream networks. We have been talking about how to achieve that and a prioritization exercise is needed. So within the RAPP we can work on achieving the goal through the prioritization and planning exercise.*

*Rob: So this won't be integrated later on into a larger model for an overall reduction in the bays?*

*Chris: I would say that it would. It certainly supports and is an element of the overall comprehensive conservation and management plan for the estuary. Our intention is that this rapid plan is what we need because we are out of implementation projects and we need to quickly line up some projects to keep implementation moving. We have done some other plans and what we find is that we go through the project pretty quickly. So this is the quick hustle and then the thinking is that we would do a larger plan that might keep us moving on a wider variety of implementation projects maybe on the 10 year time scale.*

*Rob: The reason I am asking this is it plays into how we can look at this under the PAS program. I'm trying to see if there is more of a larger watershed plan or is this more technical? This is starting to sound more technical.*

*Chris: I would agree. We have strategic plans in place for our watershed and they could use some refinement. But what we need are on the ground plans that provide the detail to get the projects on the ground.*

*Rob: I have to shoot a task up the line but this has definitely been helpful.*

*Michelle: So in terms of a timeline for funding - Rob do you have thoughts on when we will be able to get an agreement signed?*

*Rob: That is what we have to figure out. We have to put the scope together on how we write this up. If this is larger and we are going to write this up as a watershed planning initiative, then it is going to take*

*a while. I don't see it implemented this year. If we do the technical method for the scoping the sites, maybe on the ground work, we can probably get some of that done within the year.*

V. Implement BMPs focused on stream networks

All

*Continued discussion on the goal identified by the Implementation Committee.*

*Michelle: Follow-up with Rob to keep moving forward. Next item on the agenda is to talk about the Sussex county land conservation work group. This ties back to another goal that the group identified which is preserving open space. We have been working on forming a Sussex County Land Conservation Workgroup, composed of several members of this committee as well as some others. Kate Hackett with Delaware Wildlands and we are looking to do outreach to a few others such as DNS and Nanticoke Conservancy. This committee is not going to solely focus on the Inland Bays because we see value in land conservation in Sussex County as a whole so we have some other partners that are outside the watershed. Right now we are working on setting a meeting date. The group is going to work on developing land conservation strategies for a few critical areas that we identify - one will likely be the Piney Neck area, and another may be near the Great Cyprus swamp. Call for folks to participate in the workgroup. Virtual first meeting.*

*Bryan: I'm interested in joining the work group.*

*Chris: Elena Stewart with DNREC does the Open Space purchasing for DNREC mostly through Parks but sometimes for Fish and Wildlife. She is committed to being a part of that process. We have gotten a really good start there and we are currently building partnerships with three properties within the watershed for protection and things are moving fast. It is really positive.*

VI. Sussex County Land Conservation Workgroup

All

IV. Maryland HB 687

All

*Michelle: Next item is information sharing. Maryland has a House Bill 687 which will focus more of the Maryland agricultural cost share on longer term BMP practices such as forest buffers, wetland restoration, and other practices in addition to the annual practices such as cover crop. The fact sheet says that Maryland CREP funds ran dry for stream buffers so this bill would reserve cost share for preexisting resource concerns, making more money available for long term practice that ultimately reduce more nutrients and sediment reaching the bay. Perhaps this is something that Delaware should consider? Our committee could work in the next legislative session to start taking action.*

*Chris: To summarize what I've heard - A lot of cost share funds in MD were going towards startup costs of a new poultry operation, so paying for concrete pads outside of a new poultry house as an example. And some of the thinking was that that was good but how long we are going to subsidize this practice which is really a startup cost for a new business and that should be put into the loan for a new business or existing business to get a farm going. If we really need to be focusing on these natural systems- like*

Sussex county- we should be directing those cost-share funds to those actions that are most effective in reducing nutrients. Any comments?

Bryan: We do a lot of work with poultry farms and manure sheds, pads, that sort of thing. And that conversation has been had from time to time in terms of retrofitting an older farm rather than outfitting a new operation. But for clarity sake, the district really dialed back. We used to cost-share a lot on that sort of thing and we still do the planning for that obviously but that funding now comes through NRCS and the EQIP programs so I feel I may need to pass to Kasey or someone from NRCS.

Kasey: Chris are we looking at re-prioritizing the funding or potential funding? Is that what the ask is?

Chris: Yes that is in essence what this bill is doing. And of course this is a proposed bill in MD right now and would pertain to their state funding for cost share. That is the driver there is that they realized they needed to focus the funding on where it was most needed and not on new operations. This is an information sharing for response/ reactions to is this something that Delaware should think about and is this an issue with DE cost share funds? Is this something that we might want to consider replicating here in DE?

Kasey: I would say that it is always important that we go in and assess and reassess how the funds have been allocated and are we truly getting it to where we have the most significant impact on the resource base as well as those most vulnerable producers. I see it as a two part conversation: one where we are working within state partnership or cost share funds/ program or now going back in as a federal partnership where we can assess the overall efficiency of the program. We usually do that on an annual basis working with our local work group. We completed those meetings a few weeks ago. And what we are looking at in those meetings is bringing in our Conservation District partners and bringing in local farmers and growers. They actually sit down and help us assess the overall priorities from prior years and that we are looking in FY21 (Oct 1- Sept 30th). Additionally what we do then is to see if there were missed opportunities where things were underfunded or not prioritized so we can come back in and see what was now missed. Ultimately those recommendations come up to myself and our State Tech Advisors Committee where now we make those final recommendations and decisions. Right now we are slated to have that meeting on April 7th. ( Michelle in invite. ) So we do an annual review process so on the State side they are doing something similar. I would say that it is a prudent discussion but it ties into a deeper dive. Working with Sec. Scuse and Sec. Garvin, we are looking at the funding that we have in the state cost share program we are showing there are some opportunities and that is why Sec. Scuse has really worked hard to go ahead and get that additional \$2.9 million in for cover crop but we know that there is a need above and beyond what is in the cover crop program. So NRCS has been able to go in and try and leverage funding with help from Conservation District and the State. We have done some of that but again I see there is opportunities where we could go in and add additional prioritization. Poultry is leading economy - so we want to make sure livestock producers, vegetable growers, irrigators, etc. are truly being captured. So we have gone in and tried to do a fair disbursement of the funding in the state but I think this more ties to the state cost share program. I think it is a good idea, and a good conversation, and it ties back into a larger conversation that Jen Nelson and I have been doing through

*the districts to see if we can have a statewide plan to show how we are going to address resource concern and where those funding opportunities would be, whether it is at the local, state, or federal level.*

*Chris: It sounds like there is already a working planning process in place and it is clearly defined. When you do your annual planning process do you have a short plan or report or recommendations that are written down or decided on or acted on? What are the products of those planning processes?*

*Kasey: We look at sending out guidance to our 3 Districts and saying here is what we have seen in the last 12 months. In addition to that we put down specific questions that we want to target and task to the local workgroups and making sure that we have not missed any of those opportunities. The push back and concern is that we are looking at the federal programs which are highly competitive and you have to be ranked and competed. Whereas within the State, you may have it where there is a general signup and then the funding is available until it is not. We can have people waiting for federal funding through EQIP indefinitely. Because again they are looking at not only state priority but national priority. So for us the national priority is Chesapeake Bay. That part takes a large % of funding. So that is where we have tried to go in to make sure we remediate that and make sure that the local resource concerns have been elevated and will balance out and make sure Ches. Bay can't take 70% of the funding. So we are trying to have an equitable split and we have seen that that has worked pretty well, but again we know there still is not sufficient funding but we simply move forward and do the very best that we can. That is one of the processes and what we do and all of this is posted online. What we are doing is making sense and helping address what we prescribed as a partnership as a vulnerable concern.*

*Chris: So my purpose of bringing this to the attention of the group is not to say that we should be like MD but that we should have a conversation. But that was really helpful and certainly Maryland has different drivers and do things a different way than we do in DE. One thing I admire about DE is our processes and how we all work together.*

*Kasey: The one thing I will share is that I do love MD's MACs program and it allows them to go in and take a lot of the low hanging fruit. But the difference there is that it is tied to a state tax so that is immediately where we have a pause. We know that that is above our authority and the likelihood of that being passed, well it would be a challenge. But Sec. Scuse was able to secure additional funding for cover crops because we know it is a huge goal for us and a BMP that we use. It is a combination of yes we know that it works but then at the same time we have been working over the last 5-6 years on educating our producers to have it where now it is more of an inter-grain type action or activity. So that \$2.9m on top of \$1.5m was coming in through DNREC and then what NRCS looks at is balancing that so we can have a healthy pool of funding for producers.*

VI. Open All

VII. Schedule Next Meeting All

VIII. Adjourn