**COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA**

**WORKPLAN TO IMPLEMENT**

**JOINT LETTER OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE SECRETARIES OF NATURAL RESOURCES, AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY, AND EDUCATION AND THE VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICTS FOR CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

**INITIATIVE #14**

##### May 2021

Department of Conservation and Recreation

Division of Soil and Water Conservation

600 East Main Street, 24th Floor

Richmond, VA 23219



Virginia’s final Chesapeake Bay Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on August 23, 2019 includes the following commitment number 14:

Enhance Coordination among State Agencies assisting farmers:

Multiple state and local agencies provide technical assistance to farmers employing management practices to improve farm operations and reduce runoff of excess nutrients and sediment. These state agencies include the Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), the Department of Forestry (VDOF), the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS). Farmers also receive assistance from their local Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs). These agencies work collaboratively, but also recognize the opportunity to enhance that collaboration. Through a joint letter of agreement signed November 2020 between the Secretaries of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Forestry, and Education and the Virginia Association of SWCDs (VASWCD), Virginia committed to identify and implement avenues for cross-collaboration that address technical assistance, education and training, research needs, and agriculture incentives.

Each of the actions described in the joint letter of agreement and detailed with timelines, deadlines and benchmarks below will advance the goals of the Chesapeake Bay WIP and the ability of agricultural producers to achieve production needs with assistance through better coordination and delivery of agricultural programs. In addition, a steering committee of agency and partner (DCR, VDOF, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, and VASWCD) staff will meet no less than two times each calendar year to assess progress and propose modifications to the signatories.

**Action Item 1- Training and Programs**

Continue and expand cross training of SWCD staff as described below by state environmental agencies through the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum including updates and information on WIP implementation.

**Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts (VASWCD):**

Agency Lead Contact: Dr. Kendall Tyree, VASWCD Executive Director

VASWCD staff and Leadership team members will attend the annual DCR VA Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program training each spring. We will promote this opportunity with our 47 SWCDs as an opportunity for also cross collaboration with key partner agencies, including but not limited to VDOF, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, in attendance.

VASWCD staff and leadership will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program’s Technical Advisory Committee (and assigned subcommittees).

Invite and encourage collaborative engagement and cross training at VASWCD events including the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District’s (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

Build upon virtual trainings and partner opportunities to continue expanding communication, coordination, and collaboration with partner agencies.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

Additional information related to the Action Item: VASWCD has traditionally requested partner involvement at our VASWCD Annual Meeting in December, and at other training events throughout the year, recognizing the critical importance of partnerships. During COVID-19 the VASWCD has significantly increased virtual training opportunities focused on cross collaborative partner opportunities including holding more recent joint sessions on DEQ Ag BMP Loan Programming, Legacy Planning for Farm & Forest Owners with VCE and DOF, Nutrient Management Planning and Cover Crops with DCR and NRCS. While the VASWCD has hosted these events for SWCD Staff and Directors, all partners have been invited to these virtual trainings to further build on cross collaboration training needs.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, Agriculture Stewardship Act Program Manager

VDACS ASA Program staff will attend training courses in the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum.

We will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program’s Technical Advisory Committee (and assigned subcommittees).

Attend annual VACS trainings and update sessions.

Continue to participate in the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District’s (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

Provide training and materials on the ASA Program at annual SWCD Employee Trainings and other events

Continue to attend monthly local SWCD meetings as needed.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

Necessary additional information related to the Action Item: ASA Program staff has traditionally provided training on the ASA Program at Annual SWCD Employees Association Training at Graves Mountain Lodge and to new District Directors at DCR sponsored trainings.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

The DCR Conservation Planning Certification Training program will continue to invite and include agency partners to provide informational programs about their purpose and efforts and how they contribute to work in the agricultural community and support SWCDs. Current platforms for agency cross training include in-person events, webinars, and recorded program highlights on the COVLC. DCR has partnered with DEQ, DWR, DHR, and VDACS to provide opportunities for the sharing of agency responsibilities and ways to collaborate. DCR will expand invitations to include the other signatories.

These trainings are annual events in support of planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and others.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

VDOF staff will continue to assist in this effort as requested.

VDOF staff will continue to actively participate on the DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost-Share (VACS) Program’s Technical Advisory Committee and appropriate subcommittees.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing.

VDOF Forest Management staff will conduct a riparian buffer establishment training session for newer employees in the fall/winter of 2021. Invitations will be sent to local partnering agencies for their inclusion.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agent Appointed Directors to local SWCD boards.

Specific examples of partnerships and actions taken are included in the appropriate sections labeled 1(a), 1(b), and 1(c) below.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

DEQ Water Programs and regional staff will continue to attend training courses in the DCR Conservation Planning Certification curriculum and update online training sessions as appropriate.

DEQ Water Programs and regional staff will continue to participate in the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation District’s (VASWCD) Annual Meeting.

Provide training and materials on the DEQ water programs at annual SWCD Employee Trainings and other events.

Continue to attend monthly local SWCD meetings as needed and provide status updates as appropriate.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing and cover items 1 (a), (b) and (c)

**Action Item 1(a)**

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: David Bryan, Agriculture Incentives Manager; Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Ensure invitations are sent to partner agency contacts for the Annual DCR Virginia Agricultural Cost Share (VACS) Program training and update events. In addition to invitations, partners will be provided time on the agenda for any updates or information sharing. This will also include the annual VASWCD meeting through its planning committee to ensure space on the agenda for partner sharing and interaction with meeting attendees.

These trainings are annual events in support of the VACS program work and planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and other staff from federal and state partners.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Regional Foresters, Bryant Bays – Eastern Region, Robbie Talbert – Central Region, Chris Thomsen – Western Region

VDOF staff will continue to attend these annual meetings as available.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing

Efforts will be made to have at least one Regional leadership staff member attend the 2021 meeting to provide VDOF agency and program updates, as requested.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agent Appointed Directors to local SWCD boards.

VCE is a historical sponsor of the VASWCD annual meeting and the VCE Associate Director and multiple Extension agents attend this meeting on an annual basis. VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting as requested by VASWCD. Two VCE Extension agents participate in the DCR Ag BMP Technical Advisory Committee (and subcommittees) as voting members, and the Associate Director attends as a non-voting member as scheduling allows. DCR has invited VCE and other partners to the June 2021 VACS update.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

**Action 1(b)**

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Coordinate with agency contacts to share invitations to water quality programs offered by DCR that will include SWCD staff. In addition DCR will share partner agencies programs with SWCD staff to encourage attendance. Where available contact hours for DCR Certified Conservation Planners will be offered to also encourage participation. DCR will use existing training efforts with partners and add other partner agencies to existing trainings online or in person as well as add additional cross training events as needed to provide sufficient time for learning. DCR staff will also participate and provide training for partner agencies cross training efforts with their staff.

Many trainings are annual events in support of the VACS program work and planner certification and recertification efforts by SWCD staff and other staff from federal and state partners. Additional training that DCR staff will be invited to present at will be at the discretion of partners.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

VDOF staff will continue to partner and attend these meetings as available. Currently, many staff attend local SWCD monthly meetings to ensure technology transfer, landowner needs are met and practices are implemented.

VDOF will continue to provide training in areas of deficiency and in new sciences and techniques as they are developed.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food.

VCE currently engages in collaborations and cross training with SWCD and other partner agency staff in multiple ways. For example, VCE is a sponsor of the VASWCD annual meeting and the VCE Associate Director and multiple Extension agents attend this meeting on an annual basis. VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting as requested by VASWCD. In the past year VCE has also shared internal procedural documents such as the Emergency Action Plan and COVID organizational procedures with the VASWCD Executive Director, demonstrating that this partnership extends beyond conservation programming. VCE, in concert with the Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources and partner agencies, organized and delivered a joint training in January 2021 on the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory Project for VCE and VASWCD employees. The training was also attended by numerous Task Force partners and personnel, to include representatives from DCR, NRCS, and DEQ, among others. VCE Extension foresters delivered a forestland transition educational program to VASWCD staff on October 20, 2020. VCE agents and administrators attend and deliver updates at annual area VASWCD meetings, and deliver an Introduction to VCE presentation at the VASWCD new director and board member orientation, among many other collaborations. Extension agents and VASWCD typically work closely together on numerous projects at the local level. VCE public-facing programs are open to all, and are frequently attended by VASWCD and other partner agency employees. In addition, in November 2020 VCE hosted an agency update session for agricultural producers through the VCE Ag Today program with NRCS, DCR, SWCD, and FSA personnel delivering agency updates. This session was recorded and is posted here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=77XNmezhai8&list=PL7_2QUVzrPXDpYsV2HY11CH8KBrluifyO&index=33> for further viewing. Note that agency updates of this nature are typically offered in person at various VCE conferences and in person meetings throughout the year. The update session took place virtually this year due to the pandemic. VCE extension specialists deliver research-based information in nutrient management, integrated pest management, crop management, and soil health at events throughout the year that are attended by personnel from multiple state and federal conservation agencies as well as private companies and citizens.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These engagement efforts have been—and continue to be—ongoing.

**Action 1(c)**

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contacts: Blair Gordon, Soil and Water Conservation District Liaison

Coordinate with agency contacts to identify representatives for appointment to each district that should be contacted and invited to local SWCD meetings. Use established procedures to insure membership and attendance to meetings is consistent with requirements and agreements.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Ongoing

These commitments will follow the established multi-year appointment system already in place.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Senior Area Foresters (SAF).

VDOF staff will continue to partner and attend these meetings as available. Currently, many VDOF staff attend local SWCD monthly meetings to ensure technology transfer, landowner needs are met and practices are implemented.

Requirements to ensure VDOF representation at the SWCD meetings exist within SAF Employee Work Profiles.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director of Economy, Community, and Food; District Directors, and; Extension agents serving as Appointed Directors on local SWCD boards.

Virginia Cooperative Extension agents serve as Appointed Directors on local SWCD boards. VCE and VASWCD completed the Extension Appointed Directors appointment/reappointment process in fall of 2020 via an established multi-year appointment procedure already in place. The appointments were approved at the December 16, 2020 Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board Meeting. Currently all local SWCD boards have Extension agent Appointed Directors.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Extension Appointed Director terms expire on January 1, 2025. Vacancies that arise in the interim will be addressed as they occur.

**Action Item 2 – Employee Responsibilities**

Adjust relevant agency staff Employee Work Profiles (EWP) and position descriptions to include responsibilities related to cross-agency training, coordination, and farmer and landowner outreach.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS)**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

The Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) of the three existing ASA Program staff will be amended to include cross-agency trainings, coordination, and farmer and landowner outreach responsibilities. The EWP for a new ASA Coordinator position to be filled in July 2021 will also be written to include these responsibilities.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Changes to the EWPs will occur by October 31, 2021.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)**

Agency Lead Contact:Darryl M. Glover, Division Director, Soil and Water Conservation (DCR-DSWC)

Relevant DCR-DSWC employees will have their Employee Work Profiles and positions descriptions updated to reflect new responsibilities related to accomplishing WIP goals. This will include working with Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Program (VSU-SFOP) and other outreach efforts to enhance awareness of DCR managed programs to underserved landowners and operators.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These updates occurred in fall 2020 and further updates will take place every year and be reflected in the new EWPs annually.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Regional Foresters, Bryant Bays – Eastern Region, Robbie Talbert – Central Region, Chris Thomsen – Western Region

Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) will be adjusted to place emphasis on cross-agency training and capitalize on outreach opportunities within VDOF Work Areas.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These updates will occur in the fall 2021 EWP cycle.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Lonnie Johnson, Associate Director for Field Operations and Administration; District Directors, and; VT CALS Human Resources.

Actions Taken: Virginia Cooperative Extension agent position descriptions currently include language and expectations regarding collaborations with partner organizations and educational outreach. No further action needed.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This is an ongoing effort.

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

The Employee Work Profiles (EWPs) of the relevant water program staff will be amended to include participation in DCR’s conservation planning certification curriculum and other stakeholder activities. Other DEQ staff will be engaged as necessary.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Changes to the EWPs will occur by October 31, 2021.

**Action 2(a)**

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contact: Darryl M. Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation

Future grants and contracts between DCR and SWCDs and VASWCD will contain language to enhance cross-training responsibilities to reflect a greater partnership between partners on an annual basis. Language will include expected outcomes from the grants and contracts.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Updates to annual grants and contracts will take place beginning FY2022 and be reflected in the new grant awards and contracts going forward.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

Inclusion of language within the VDOF Policy and Procedures 7-2 “Rural Financial Assistance Programs” that emphasizes the importance and benefits of cross training and identify opportunities to share implementation goals.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This language inclusion effort will be completed in 2021.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Extension specialists and Extension agents.

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership organization. It is common practice to include agency partners on grant applications as co-Principal Investigators, manage grants together, hire jointly funded positions, and so forth. For example, DCR and VCE currently enjoy one such significant partnership in nutrient management subject matter, and the VCE-Buckingham County Office and Peter Francisco Soil and Water Conservation District share a jointly funded program assistant. On multiple occasions grants obtained by Extension agents have been routed through the local SWCD office as fiscal agent.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: This is an ongoing effort.

**Action Item 3 – Agency Training and Workshop**

Establish cross training among state agencies who interact directly with farmers and landowners to better prepare all staff, regardless of agency, to make referrals in the field to programs housed within another agency. Hold an inter-agency workshop for each agency to present on their agricultural related programs, which may occur through an existing event. Ensure state agencies are well versed in programs offered by local SWCDs.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

ASA Program staff will participate in an annual inter-agency workshop to present information to educate partner agencies on the roles of the ASA Program and its partnership with local SWCDs in addressing complaints of water pollution from agricultural activities.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Annually

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR will work with partner agencies to schedule an annual inter-agency staff training. These interagency trainings will be conducted through a series of webinars, in person meetings, or recorded training residing in COVLC. Each DCR program that works with agricultural clients will provide an introductory presentation to enable partner staff to understand the basics of each program and be able to identify contacts to their clients for additional support through DCR and SWCDs.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Inter-agency training will be enhanced in 2021 with additional opportunities. DCR will work with partners to establish annual timelines for training.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator

Create a yearly task/item that will be reflected on annual VASWCD meeting agenda that focuses specifically on forestry practices.

Engage local Extension agents and SWCD staff to ensure a comprehensive approach to training occurs annually on a local work area approach.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These collaborative efforts are ongoing.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension specialists, and; Extension agents.

VCE currently engages in collaborations and cross training with SWCD and other partner agency staff in multiple ways. For example, VCE delivers content presentations at the VASWCD annual meeting, annual area meetings, and new director and board member orientation. In the past year VCE has also shared internal procedural documents such as the Emergency Action Plan and COVID organizational procedures with the VASWCD Executive Director, demonstrating that this partnership extends beyond conservation programming. VCE, in concert with the Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources and partner agencies, organized and delivered a joint training in March 2021 on the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory Project for VCE and VASWCD employees. The training was also attended by numerous Task Force partners and personnel, to include representatives from DCR, NRCS, and DEQ, among others. VCE Extension foresters delivered a forestland transition educational program to VASWCD staff on October 20, 2020. In addition, in November 2020 VCE hosted an agency update session for agricultural producers through the VCE Ag Today program with NRCS, DCR, SWCD, and FSA personnel delivering agency updates. VCE and DEQ developed a new partnership related to the DEQ Ag BMP Loan program whereby effective April 1 DEQ is referring producers to Extension agents if they need help with completing paperwork and submitting it in the system. DEQ offered training to Extension agents in March 2021 as part of this process. DCR will be training Extension agents to equip them for follow-up site visits for the Virginia Voluntary Agricultural Best Management Practices Inventory project. VCE extension specialists deliver research-based information in nutrient management, integrated pest management, crop management, and soil health at events throughout the year that are attended by personnel from multiple state and federal conservation agencies as well as private companies and citizens.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These partnership efforts are ongoing.

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watershed and Local Government Assistance Programs

DEQ will invite partner agencies to present information about their programs during division meetings, as part of periodic DEQ talks or as stand-alone webinars. These events will be conducted through a series of webinars, in person meetings, or recorded training residing in COVLC. Each DEQ program that works with agricultural clients will provide an introductory presentation upon request to enable partner staff to understand the basics of each program and be able to identify contacts to their clients for additional support.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Inter-agency activities will be enhanced in 2021 with additional opportunities. DEQ will work with partner agencies to establish annual timelines for informational events.

**Action Item 4 – Conservation Cabinet**

The Secretary of Natural Resources should continue to host meetings with the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, Secretary of Education, DCR, VDACS, VCE, DEQ, VDOF through the Conservation Cabinet, or if the Conservation Cabinet ceases to exist, then shall host meetings as often as deemed necessary with relevant agency heads to ensure senior management awareness and involvement in assisting farmers and achieving our WIP goals.

**Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources**

Agency Lead Contact: Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay

The Office will schedule an annual meeting of the three Cabinet Secretaries, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, and state agencies engaged in this initiative to discuss progress and review challenges to enhanced collaboration. This meeting may coincide with a meeting of the Conservation Cabinet.

Timeline, deadline, or benchmark: Annually.

**Action Item 5 – VCE Programs**

Virginia Cooperative Extension will incorporate information regarding state and federal agency agriculture and forestry conservation programs and training opportunities, including new employee training programs with a focus on equipping VCE agents to be able to inform farmers of where they can get help for specific environmental or other challenges they observe on farms they visit.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Dan Goerlich, Associate Director, Economy, Community, and Food; Extension agents, and; new agent mentors.

VCE utilizes a multi-faceted employee onboarding process that includes introducing new Extension agents to agency partners in the localities. Through this process new agents are able to make connections and become conversant in partner agency programmatic offerings that facilitates client referrals. Extension agents are encouraged by administrators and agent mentors to collaborate with partner agencies on the development and delivery of educational programs.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These engagement efforts have been—and continue to be—ongoing.

**Action Item 6 – Cost-Share Program Feedback**

Continue to utilize work groups already in place to facilitate appropriate conversations regarding increased collaboration, cost-share and program delivery including the Chesapeake Bay WIP Interagency Team. Based on this ongoing discussion, solicit views of the members of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Advisory Group to bring together a feedback loop about successes, failures and adaptations needed. Add Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) to the Chesapeake Bay Interagency Team.

**Office of the Secretary of Natural Resources**

Agency Lead Contact: Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay

The Office has added VCE to the Chesapeake Bay WIP Interagency team that continues to meet monthly. The team will at least annually include an update on this WIP #14 initiative as well as the VACS and ASA programs. This WIP #14 initiative will be included on the agenda for a meeting of the Chesapeake Bay Stakeholders Advisory Group (SAG) to solicit additional recommendations for enhanced collaboration from the SAG members.

Timeline, deadline, or benchmark: Annually.

**Action Item 7 – Enhanced Outreach**

Conduct an interagency review of outreach materials to ensure consistency between agencies and creation of new materials to help landowners compare and contract various programs. Ensure materials highlight the benefits to farmers implementing VACS program best management practices. Build a “one stop shop” on the web that links to all relevant state and federal programs and is connected to training opportunities.

**Virginia Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts**

Agency Lead Contact: Dr. Kendall Tyree, VASWCD Executive Director

VASWCD will review Association materials previously developed to assist SWCDs. Updates will be made where necessary to focus on enhanced outreach and partnership opportunities as well as reference to a “one stop shop” on the web.

Coordinate with other implementing agencies to review outreach materials, create new outreach opportunities and materials for landowners to help them compare and contrast various programs. Provide the space for this material to be shared with SWCDs thru the newly established marketing committee toolkit and other training opportunities.

Provide input to developing the web-based “one stop shop” for state and federal conservation programs and training opportunities.

Provide a web presence on [www.vaswcd.org](http://www.vaswcd.org) that shares and where appropriate links to the agreed upon one stop shop or other enhanced outreach materials.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VASWCD Marketing Committee will provide input and discussion by fall 2021 regarding any outreach material needs at the SWCD level. Ongoing conversation and input will be provided to implementing agencies regarding web presence needs.

Necessary additional information related to Action Item: The VASWCD has created a marketing toolkit for SWCDs that remains an evolving document and updates will be addressed as part of the annual plan of work. WIP-14 goals will dovetail with continued ongoing marketing committee outreach efforts underway.

**Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services**

Agency Lead Contact: Darrell Marshall, ASA Program Manager

ASA Program staff will coordinate with other implementing agencies to review outreach materials, create new outreach opportunities and materials for landowners to help them compare and contrast various programs, and provide input to developing the web-based “one stop shop” for state and federal conservation programs and training opportunities.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: ASA Program outreach materials will be reviewed and updated by January 1, 2022.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Agency Lead Contacts:Darryl M. Glover, Division Director, Soil and Water Conservation (DCR-DSWC) and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR has begun the process of updating the division website, including a new webpage in FY21 for Farmers of Color. New updated media materials, possibly including some in Spanish, will allow DCR to better work with partners to provide information to landowners and farmers that highlight each of DCR’s and partners’ programs as well as training opportunities. Discussions with partners will include determining the best way to provide and share information in a clear and assessable manner for the benefit of all potential clients.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: The outreach project will begin in early FY22.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Public Information Program Manager in conjunction with Forest Management Program Manager.

Conduct an internal audit regarding outreach materials that focus on various programs to include the DCR VACS program and VDOF cost share programs as well as grant programs annually.

Coordinate with responsible agency partners the results of findings of internal audit and make edits as necessary.

Create link to the “one stop shop” on the VDOF website.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These audits and revisions will be conducted annually.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: Natural Resources Program Team co-chairs Adam Downing and Scott Barrett.

VCE will complete a review of current educational outreach materials, identify gaps, and seek opportunities to partner with collaborating agencies to address identified gaps. VCE will assist with the “one stop shop” concept by providing links to applicable publications currently available through the VCE public website.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VCE publications in this discipline will be reviewed and summarized by January 1, 2022.

**Action Item 8 – Update DEQ Information**

Update the information included on the “Our Rivers, Our Bay: Virginia’s Path to Clean Water” webpage housed currently on DEQ’s website and notify relevant agencies and SWCDs. Currently, DCR, VDOF and VDACS have a link to the DEQ page. Offer links and associated logos and artwork to VCE and the VASWCD for inclusion on their websites.

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality**

Agency Lead Contacts: James Martin, Chesapeake Bay Coordinator and Megan Sommers Bascone, Chesapeake Bay Planning Coordinator

DEQ completed a website revision in FY 2021. Information related to the Chesapeake Bay Phase III WIP is now located at the following link: <https://www.deq.virginia.gov/water/chesapeake-bay/phase-iii-wip>.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DEQ Chesapeake Bay TMDL web pages will be updated when relevant new information is available.

**Action Item 9 – VCE Capacity**

Work to increase the capacity of VCE. Currently, VCE has numerous Extension agent vacancies. Identify the regions that VCE is unable to reach, and work to ensure VCE has the capacity to fill these vacancies and others that might occur, thus providing support in those regions.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contacts: VCE Administration; VT CALS HR.

Virginia Cooperative Extension received consideration in the 2020/21 Virginia General Assembly budget that will enable the agency to fill approximately eight agent positions identified through an internal prioritization process, as well as several Extension specialist positions. Support for technology improvements and equipment at Agricultural Research and Extension Centers was also included. Several of these agent positions will likely be in the Chesapeake Bay watershed region, enhancing Extension’s capacity to carry out educational programming in concert with partner agencies that positively impacts water quality. In addition, several Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) agent positions within Bay watershed localities have been filled through a voluntary internal transfer process. Sustained support will enable Extension to continue to address core capacity needs and in turn impact Virginia citizen’s environmental, economic, and social well-being.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: On-going.

**Action Item 10 – Underserved Farming and Forestry Communities**

Evaluate the reach of the (DCR Agricultural BMP) Cost Share Program and other support for farmers and forest landowners to determine underserved farming communities. Develop methods to reach underserved communities that may benefit from the information and assistance agencies provide.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Action 10: Underserved Farming and Forestry Communities

Agency Lead Contacts: Darryl M. Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR has begun the process of seeking underserved farmers. In FY21 DCR identified agricultural, engineering, and community organizations with connections to underserved communities. The FY22 state budget includes $250,000 for DCR to partner with Virginia State University’s Small Farm Outreach Program and VASWCD on a two-year outreach project intended to provide direct outreach to farmers of color and small farm operations in order to better inform them of the availability of state and federal financial and technical assistance. DCR will also introduce a new option in FY22, the Small Herd Initiative, in selected areas of the Chesapeake Bay watershed, as part of the state agricultural BMP cost share program to incentivize small animal operations to implement livestock stream exclusion.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: The outreach project will begin in early FY22.

**Virginia Cooperative Extension**

Agency Lead Contact: Virginia State University Extension specialists and VSU Small Farm Outreach Program.

A critical partner in the Virginia Cooperative Extension system, Virginia State University has strong relationships with—and significant experience reaching—limited resource, small, and minority farmers. Through their existing relationships and collaborative partnerships, VSU Extension specialists and Small Farm Outreach Program administrators and technicians are well-positioned to assist DCR with growing connections among these important and underserved audiences. VCE will also support DCR in this initiative through our extensive network of unit offices.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: VCE efforts to reach limited resource, small, and minority farmers are ongoing. Support to enhance DCR capacity in this area will follow the timeline established by DCR.

**Virginia Department of Forestry**

Agency Lead Contact: Dean Cumbia, Forest Management Director, and Todd Groh, Forest Management Program Coordinator, Bryant Bays – Eastern Regional Forester and Robbie Talbert – Central Regional Forester

The VDOF is currently working closely with the Black Family Land Trust and the Virginia State University Small Farm Outreach Agents to provide outreach and assistance to underserved forestry communities with planning and implementation of forest management practices. The VDOF will use these existing efforts to promote other agency’s programs and services.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: These outreach efforts are ongoing.

**Action Item 11 – Agricultural Assessments**

Explore how agricultural assessments developed under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act can be better incorporated into broader conservation plans developed under the auspices of DCR. Develop a plan to ensure collaboration and update the plan annually.

**Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ)**

Agency Lead Contact: Justin Williams, Director, Office of Watersheds and Local Government Assistance Programs

DEQ will explore how agricultural assessments developed under the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act can be better incorporated into broader conservation plans developed under the DCR VACS Program. Develop a plan to ensure collaboration between the agencies.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: Interagency Coordination discussion and discussion with stakeholders on implementation and considerations for better incorporation of CPBA assessments by August 15, 2021. Proposal for incorporation drafted and feedback solicited from stakeholders including considerations for annual updates by November 15, 2021.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Lead Agency Contact: Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR has been in discussions with DEQ since 2016 on ways to update the Agricultural Assessment process and documents. With the development of the DCR Conservation Planning program and enhancements to the planning module DCR is committed to working with DEQ so that conservation plans created by SWCD staff or others will meet the requirements for assessments and corrective plans. This process will reduce duplicative work and assist clients through a simpler and streamlined process.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR began the process in 2016 as part of the creation of the Conservation Planning program and in working with DEQ for a resolution in 2021.

**Action Item 12 – Recognition and Reporting**

**Action 12(a)**

Establish a recognition program for agency, VCE, and SWCD staff that show excellence or innovation to promoting the goal contained in commitment 14 of the WIP.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

DCR can use its existing agency and division recognition programs to develop a WIP Task #14 award. These include categories for awards, a nomination process, a review process, determination of what awards will be (e.g. certificates, etc.), and the timing and manor of announcing awards. The focus will be to highlight significant efforts to advance WIP 14 action items by employees of the partners to this agreement.

Lead Agency Contacts: Darryl M. Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR will work with partners to this agreement in FY22 to develop a process for annual recognition.

**Action 12(b)**

Provide annual reports on the implementation of these actions to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Virginia Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Secretary of Natural Resources, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, the Secretary of Education, Conservation Cabinet, and other entities.

**Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**

Lead Agency Contacts: Darryl M. Glover, Director, Division of Soil and Water Conservation and Carl Thiel-Goin, Conservation Planning and Training Coordinator

DCR will work with partners to compile and develop annual reports on all twelve actions related to the WIP 14 initiative. Discussions with partners will focus on needed information, timelines, and report layout to show the efforts and progress towards WIP 14 initiative. The reports will then be presented to the Virginia Soil and Water Conservation Board, the Virginia Association of Conservation Districts, the Virginia Association of Conservation District Employees, Secretary of Natural Resources, Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry, and the Secretary of Education and provided to the full Conservation Cabinet and others entities identified through the work of meeting the goal.

Timelines, deadlines, or benchmarks: DCR will work with partners 2021 to develop a process and schedule of reporting to meet this annual requirement. Initial presentations to those listed above will occur in the fall of 2021.