Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program Discussion

DEP Agriculture Advisory Board
SCC Nutrient Management Advisory Board
August 26, 2021
Agenda

• Purpose
• Difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 Inspections
• Goals and Expectations
• Next Steps and Questions
• The Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program (CBAIP) has been conducted as part of the Chesapeake Bay Technician Required Output Measures since 2016-2017

• The Phase 2 Pilot Program was released in 2020-2021 and we used lessons learned to inform the new goals and expectations for Conservation districts and DEP Regional Offices

• Five years into the program, some counties are nearing completion of their Phase 1 (Initial) Inspections

• For those counties, DEP will ask them to transition into Phase 2 this upcoming fiscal year as part of their Chesapeake Bay Technician Agreement
• Available Guidance:
  • Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) –
    • The CBAIP Phase 1 SOP
    • The CBAIP Phase 2 SOP (updated from the Phase 2 Pilot)
    • The PracticeKeeper Ag Inspection Module SOP
    • The PracticeKeeper BMP Module SOP (released June 1, 2021)
  • Webinars and Clean Water Academy –
    • Live webinar session with Conservation districts was held on May 25, 2021 to walk through the Phase 2 components and expectations
    • Recorded web-based training to accompany PracticeKeeper SOPs
Initial Inspections

• Verification that a given agricultural operation has an appropriate Agricultural Erosion & Sediment Control Plan (Ag E&S Plan) and/or Manure Management Plan (MMP), as applicable

Phase 2 Inspections

• Verification that a given agricultural operation has properly implemented Best Management Practices (BMPs)
Initial Inspections

• Includes determination of types of agricultural activity performed, size of operation, etc.

• Need to physically view copies of MMP and/or Ag E&S Plan, as applicable, either on-site or via correspondence after inspection, and compare with current operation conditions

Phase 2 Inspections

• Includes inspection of areas of production and fields in order to determine compliance with the BMP implementation schedules and proper functioning of the BMPs

• Need to physically view existing BMPs, either in-person or via photos or teleconference, and compare with plan(s)
Priority Initiative – Agricultural Compliance and BMP Verification

• Focuses on verifying Phase 3 WIP priority BMPs for nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment control

• Goal is to verify that priority practices identified in the Phase 3 WIP are installed, operational, and continue to provide pollution reductions
Initial Inspection SOP

• 90 days for submission of missing or incomplete plan(s), with a maximum of 180 days for extenuating circumstances

Phase 2 Inspection SOP

• 30 days for submission of plan(s) needing updates or manure application records if unavailable during the inspection
• 90 days for proper implementation of temporary BMPs needed until permanent BMPs can be implemented, if applicable
• 270 days for proper implementation of permanent BMPs
Initial Inspections

• 50 inspections

Phase 2 Inspections

• If no Initial Inspections remain:
  • 25 inspections

• If both Initial Inspections and Phase 2 Inspections are conducted:
  • Subtract the number of Initial Inspections conducted from 50; multiply the remaining number by 0.5 to determine the number of Phase 2 Inspections needed
Meeting Inspection Goals

• The inspection workload is intended to complement:
  • Nutrient Management / Manure Management planning activities
  • Ag E&S planning activities
  • BMP design and implementation
Initial Inspections

• 100 inspections

Phase 2 Inspections

• 75 total inspections; this includes Initial Inspections, Phase 2 Inspections, and Follow-Up Inspections
  • At least 15 of this total should be Phase 2 Inspections
• Chesapeake Bay Technician and Chesapeake Bay Engineer Specialist / Assistant Agreement Announcements were provided to Conservation Districts

• The revised scope of work and accompanying forms were due to the DEP Chesapeake Bay Office by July 16, 2021

• We are currently reviewing the amended forms to identify which Conservation districts will transition into Phase 2 in the 2021-2022 fiscal year
Next Steps

• Outreach to Farmers and Agricultural Organizations:
  
  • Met with Ag stakeholders in early June to discuss the BMP reporting framework and notified them, generally, of this transition for certain counties and for DEP Regional Offices
  
  • Presenting to the Agriculture Advisory Board and Nutrient Management Advisory Board
  
  • Considering a press release after we identify which counties will be transitioning to Phase 2 so the information provided in a statewide release could note specific counties (similar to the Phase 2 Pilot press release last year)
Phase 2 Inspections

- Build upon Initial Inspection efforts
- Facilitate expanded BMP verification consistent with WIP and CAP goals
- Are more time-consuming than Initial Inspections
- Follow-up is significantly longer than Initial Inspections
- Workload complements Nutrient and Manure Management planning, Ag E&S planning, BMP design/implementation required output measures
- Goals for conservation districts per fiscal year are half of Initial Inspections for solely Phase 2 Inspections and otherwise prorated
- Next steps include outreach to agricultural industry leaders and the public
Questions
Jill Whitcomb, Director
jiwhitcomb@pa.gov
(717) 783-5205