



HARRY R. HUGHES CENTER FOR
AGRO-ECOLOGY, INC.

Board of Directors

President

Edwin R. Fry

Vice President

Steve Black

Secretary

Erroll A. Mattox

Treasurer

John R. Valliant

Craig Beyroudy

Christopher Black

William W. Bowerman

Russell B. Brinsfield

Robert T. Butz

The Hon. Addie Eckardt

Jay Falstad

Fran Flanigan

The Hon. James Gilchrist

Brett Grohsgal

Isabel Hardesty

Verna Harrison

Ed Heikes

Trey Hill

Terron Hillsman

Steven Jones

Andrew McLean

Donald C. Outen

Alison Prost

Ernie Shea

Keith Wills

Lucy Wright

President Emeriti

The Hon. Harry R. Hughes

Members Emeriti

K. King Burnett

Ajax Eastman

Nina Rodale Houghton

Robert M. Hutchison

Executive Director

Suzanne E. Dorsey



UNIVERSITY
OF MARYLAND
Wye Research and
Education Center
P.O. Box 169
Queenstown, MD
21658-0169

Ph: 410-827-8056
Fax: 410-827-9039
agresearch.umd.edu/agroecol

TO: THE HONORABLE LAWRENCE J. HOGAN, JR, GOVERNOR

AND: THE HONORABLE BEN H. GRUMBLES, SECRETARY, MDE;
HONORABLE JOSEPH BARTENFELDER, SECRETARY, MDA;
HONORABLE MARK J. BELTON, SECRETARY, DNR;
HONORABLE ROBERT S. MCCORD, SECRETARY, MDP; DR.
PETER GOODWIN; DR. CRAIG BEYROUTY; HONORABLE R.
MICHAEL GILL, SECRETARY OF COMMERCE; HONORABLE
ELLINGTON CHURCHILL, JR., SECRETARY OF GENERAL
SERVICES; HONORABLE KENNETH C. HOLT, SECRETARY
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT; HONORABLE
PETE K. RAHN, SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION;
HONORABLE DR. KAREN B. SALMON, SUPERINTENDENT OF
SCHOOLS

FROM: DR. SUZANNE E. DORSEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
HARRY R. HUGHES CENTER FOR AGRO-ECOLOGY

DATE: DECEMBER 17, 2018

RE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SIX REGIONAL
WATERSHED IMPLEMENTATION PLAN WORKSHOPS

BACKGROUND:

The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology (Hughes Center) in conjunction with the Maryland Departments of Agriculture and the Environment, held workshops to support the state's Watershed Implementation Planning (WIP) efforts, with support from the Town Creek Foundation. The Hughes Center facilitated six regional workshops to support strong relationships between agencies and implementers as well as to hear regional input from all 23 counties and Baltimore City. Important contributions were made by representatives from Maryland Forest Service, Maryland Department of Planning, and Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Each workshop focused on state and local partnerships through presentations from the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) and Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA). The presentations focused on updates from the stormwater, wastewater and agricultural sectors.

In response to the desire for more localized attention, the workshops featured a new county breakout session where each county was able to network, ask questions to the presenters and collaborate to address eight guiding questions. These questions covered opportunities for collaboration, cost-sharing, barriers to nutrient reduction goals, and any recommendations participants had to improve the path to 2025.

This year the Center observed a perspective shift in local implementers. Partners are no longer only focused on planning for implementation, they are now focused on implementation and maintenance. Decision makers can reasonably expect to hear more about funding needs for Best Management Practice (BMP) maintenance in the coming years.

*The Harry R. Hughes Center for Agro-Ecology, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization
under the guidelines of the Internal Revenue Service.*

Recommendations:

1) Expert Infrastructure

When asked what was hindering the implementation and maintenance of nutrient reduction practices, every county and every sector in the state had a similar mantra — funding, time and staffing. A lack of adequate technical assistance was a clear barrier to maximizing nutrient reduction potential. This is especially of concern in non-MS4 jurisdictions.

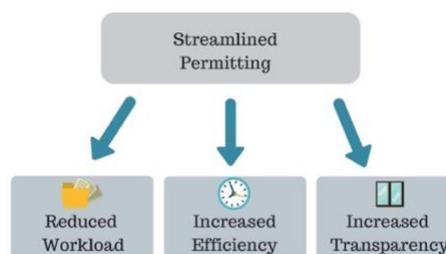
Consider expanding Watershed Restoration Specialists and Soil Conservation District staff to boost BMP implementation. These experts provide boots-on-the-ground technical assistance essential to the success of the WIP.



While multiple state agencies provide staff that engages effectively with local governments and regional partners, local staff can lack the basic understanding of goals and resources available from the state and/or the private sector. A technical assistant who lives and works in the same region can boost the efficiency of nutrient reduction tools. Trust is an important component of successful implementation.

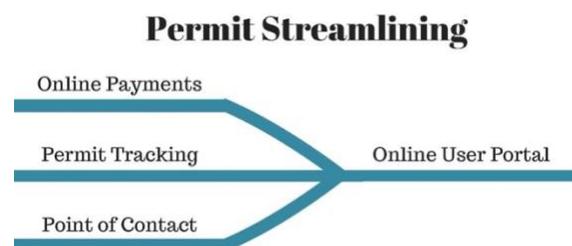
2) Streamlined Permits

The permitting process was cited as a common barrier among constituents. Inefficiency in permitting can prevent or delay local governments, businesses and private citizens from successful implementation of Best Management Practices. Complexity in the process threatens to overwhelm local government and NGO staff. Barriers to implementation include slow response times, confusing guidelines, and too many permits.



Streamlining permits will reduce the workload of agency staff, while simultaneously increasing nutrient reduction.

Removing procedural barriers will help improve response times, simplify guidelines and reduce stakeholder frustration with the process. The recent efforts at MDE to bundle federal and state permits were identified as highly beneficial.



There are strategies to be learned from other states, such as an online user portal. By having one user profile that populates all permit applications, data entry and input mistakes are reduced. An online portal allows for easy tracking and a single source of data to the agency responsible for processing the permit. The feature could be used by agencies to further bundle applications when multiple permits are required.

Some states have found it useful to create guidance tools such as common applicant mistakes, tips and timesavers to improve application quality.

Issues Raised

There were several key areas of concern described below. The specific questions and comments on these issues are attached as Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

Technical Assistance: The most common concern among stakeholders was the lack of technical assistance for implementing BMPs. This can be addressed by allocating funds to expand the Maryland Sea Grant Extension Watershed Specialists and the county level Soil Conservation District staff.

Streamline Permitting: Inefficient permitting can delay and prevent BMP implementation. These inefficiencies stem from the number of permits, unclear guidelines, and slow response times.

Private Entities: A new issue raised during this round of workshops is clarity in the role of private landowners, citizens, and businesses in reducing nutrient loads. Implementers are looking for opportunities to further engage private entities in nutrient management. Ideas included implementing utility fees or providing tax incentives for private citizens engaged in nutrient reduction. Examples of private entities to target include HOAs, commercially owned infiltration ponds, and failing septic systems on private property. The agricultural sector identified pursuing implementation of conservation practices on leased agricultural lands as a focus area.

Cross-Sector Cooperation: Every region expressed a desire to expand collaboration with local cross-sector partners. Implementers often lacked information and understanding of how to engage in mutually beneficial partnerships. These cross-sector efforts are most likely to yield innovative approaches. Three key areas were highlighted for cooperation:

Water Quality Trading	Education Outreach	Local & Regional Partnerships
Developed water quality trading markets will allow sectors to collaborate and innovate to reach reduction goals.	Stakeholders want more information for themselves, the general public, school children, HOAs and developers. Facilitate cross-sector cooperation in disseminating educational materials.	Foster partnerships between local governments and organizations to reach innovative solutions to nutrient reduction challenges. One recommendation is combining Phase I and Phase II MS4 districts in WIP discussions.

Credit Allocation and BMP Concerns: There continues to be confusion about how credits are administered. Frequently misunderstood topics are: emerging practices such as solar fields, the Conowingo Dam and aquaculture. Concerns exist around both credit allocations in water quality trading and the need to ensure that nutrient reduction goals continue to be met while addressing co-benefits like social justice and private property values.

Future Planning: Greg Busch, Deputy Manager, Integrated Water Planning Program, MDE observed that 2025 is just another milestone, not an endpoint. Stakeholders were focused on reaching goals in an uncertain future. Aligning for growth, the impact of climate change and policy change, foretell an uncertain future with WIP goals that change. Whereas some participants focused on the need to meet shrinking nutrient loads, others were concerned about how planning and infrastructure might struggle to keep up with ambitious goals. As the WIP progresses, maintenance of BMPs has become an emerging issue. There is a desire for guidance and funding for maintenance in the future. Regional meetings, webinars, one-on-one county level meetings were all tools that partners identified as helpful to ensure they understand what is coming and how best to plan in our shared strategy for improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay.

Note: The Hughes Center recognizes the contributions of Danielle Naundorf, 2018 Russ Brinsfield Intern, in the development of this document.