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Budget Impasse Hinders Conservation District Activities

(Harrisburg, PA) – Pennsylvania’s 66 Conservation Districts, promoting the protection, improvement and wise use of the Commonwealth’s natural resources, are feeling the pinch of local funding reductions and the state budget impasse. The absence of a state budget coupled with the threat of significant financial cutbacks on the state and county levels concern conservation districts who are wondering how they will continue to provide local citizens with vital conservation programs.

All 66 conservation districts have been troubled from the lack of a state budget. The Columbia County Conservation District is no exception. Partially because the conservation district has not received any state allocations for delegated state programs since June 30, 2009, the conservation district may have to reduce its work week and staff hours even though everything is being done to avoid these reductions. “As with the other conservation districts across the Commonwealth, we have developed a strong reputation with the public of offering services, providing technical advice, environmental education and protection of our natural resources,” stated Maryruth Wagner, Columbia County Conservation District Manager. Wagner continued, “We will strive to offer the programs the state funded, but if funding is cut, we will not be able to continue at the current level. With no budget, it will be a struggle to make it to the end of the calendar year.”

JoAnn McCready, Lawrence County Conservation District agreed. Lawrence County is looking at a \$1.5 million deficit. McCready fears the conservation district will suffer a reduced allocation from the county as well as significant state cuts. A state budget impasse has compounded the issue with the threat of no state payments for this quarter’s activities. “Nothing has been said about if, when, and to what extent, we will get reimbursed for the time we are working on state programs without a budget allocation,”



McCready stated. “Additionally, if we have to reduce hours due to the budget stalemate, we will have a difficult time responding in a timely manner.”

Irvil Kear, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District President and Schuylkill County Conservation District Director stated, “For over 60 years the state’s 66 conservation districts have served as leaders, addressing local natural resource concerns at the county level.” She concluded, “It is undisputed that conservation districts provide much needed services to Commonwealth citizens to help them identify and resolve critical natural resource concerns. Funding reductions and the lack of a state budget are severely hindering conservation district activities.”

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PACD, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization representing Pennsylvania's 66 conservation districts. For more information about PACD visit www.pacd.org.

