



PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF  
CONSERVATION DISTRICTS, INC.



Mid-Year Report - - Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012

July 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011



# Mid-Year Report

## Fiscal Year 2011 – 2012

July 1, 2011 to December 31, 2011

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### **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND POLICY**

State appropriations and dedicated funding sources for conservation districts have been and will continue to be the highest legislative priorities for PACD. In addition to meeting with Pennsylvania's legislative members, the Association has also represented conservation districts at various state agency meetings regarding a variety of regulations and policy decisions.

#### **Funding and State Budget**

- ✓ Met with numerous House and Senate members and their staff to advocate for additional sustained funding for conservation districts; and
- ✓ Organized a grassroots program for conservation districts to meet with legislators in their home legislative district.

#### **Legislative Activities**

- ✓ Organized and implemented a statewide conservation district advocacy campaign for dedicated funding through the Marcellus Shale Local Impact Fee proposal;
- ✓ Authored editorials of support for dedicated funding for the conservation districts. These editorials were used by Senator Scarnati in his own opinion editorials to support the impact fee;
- ✓ Partnered with numerous groups to actively lobby for a statewide impact fee;
- ✓ Followed the PACD annual legislative program and provided a number of sample letters and press releases to the conservation districts regarding legislative priorities and budget documents;
- ✓ Met with House and Senate members and sent letters on PACD priority issues;
- ✓ Prepared regular legislative updates for the PACD Front Page and website;
- ✓ Attended numerous House and Senate Committee meetings;
- ✓ Sent letters to the federal delegation on various federal issues;
- ✓ Discussed conservation issues with statewide association representatives;
- ✓ Attended Ag Progress Days Government Luncheon;
- ✓ Prepared and distributed press releases on numerous legislative issues;
- ✓ Met with Federal legislators and staff;
- ✓ Supported NACD legislative initiatives by contacting and working with federal legislators; and
- ✓ Worked to secure funding for the Dirt and Gravel Roads Program.

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### **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND POLICY *con't***

#### **Policy**

##### **Consensus Building Initiative**

The PACD Consensus Building Initiative was created to involve the PACD membership in all stages of policy development. Through this initiative PACD created the conservation district Oil & Gas Committee, which developed a draft oil and gas policy for review, edit, and approval by the membership at the fall region meetings. In addition, region meeting attendees worked to develop a set of five top priorities for the association. The final oil and gas policy and top five priorities will be presented for review, edit, and approval by the membership during the PACD Executive Council meeting in January 2012.

##### **Update to the PACD Policy Process**

PACD is updating the PACD policy process to ensure that the association's membership has ample time to review and comment on PACD policies. Final approval of the updates will take place during the PACD Executive Council meeting in January 2012.

##### **Other Key Policy Development Activities**

- ✓ In conjunction with DEP's Deputy Secretary John Hines and Deputy Secretary Kelly Heffner, continued the DEP/PACD Advisory Committee to regularly discuss conservation district issues;
- ✓ PACD Executive Director traveled to 28 districts to discuss PACD policy and gather input from our district partners;
- ✓ Met with the Secretaries of the Department of Agriculture, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Transportation;
- ✓ Met with Governor Corbett's staff;
- ✓ Prepared draft policies for PACD's Conservation and Legislative Committees;
- ✓ Authored correspondence on policy issues to various agency and legislative representatives;
- ✓ Worked with PACD committees to create and implement PACD policy;
- ✓ Participated in meetings on DEP proposed Chapter 102 regulations and the Manure Management Manual;
- ✓ Attended meetings relating to Chesapeake Bay activities;
- ✓ Met with the DCNR Conservation Leadership Roundtable; and
- ✓ Met with the PA Environmental Council.

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### **REPRESENTATION**

PACD members and staff represented the conservation districts on various state committees and advisory groups, including:

- ✓ Statewide Water Resources Planning Committee and Regional Committees;
- ✓ Chesapeake Bay Advisory Committee;
- ✓ Chesapeake Bay (basin-wide) Education Workgroup activities;
- ✓ EPA Webinars and meetings;
- ✓ Department of Education's Environmental Education Advisory Council;
- ✓ DEP's E&S workgroup and Agricultural Advisory Board;
- ✓ PA State Council of Farm Organizations;
- ✓ NRCS State Technical Committee and Strategy meeting;
- ✓ SCC meetings and conference calls;
- ✓ SCC Conservation District Managers' Advisory Committee and 102/105 Advisory Committee meetings and conference calls;
- ✓ National Association of Conservation Districts;
- ✓ Conservation Partnership meetings;
- ✓ PA Envirothon;
- ✓ PA Transportation Coalition;
- ✓ BMP Milestones Meeting;
- ✓ NPDES Workgroup Meetings;
- ✓ Conservation Leadership Roundtable; and
- ✓ Quarterly meetings with DEP Deputy Secretary John Hines and Deputy Secretary Kelly Heffner.

### **PACD MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

PACD coordinates a number of meetings and events to benefit the association and it's membership.

#### **PACD/SCC Winter Meeting**

PACD is currently coordinating the 2012 PACD/SCC Winter Meeting, which will be held January 18-19, 2012 at the Ramada Conference Center in State College, PA. The program includes SCC and PACD activities, a Conservation Partnership Forum, and presentations on ethics, Facebook as an outreach tool, lessons learned when county funding fails, and more.

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### **PACD MEETINGS AND EVENTS *con't***

#### **PACD Region Meetings**

PACD held six region meetings during the fall of 2011. These meetings provided members with the opportunity to work toward consensus on important issues, such as PACD priorities and oil and gas policy. In addition, members received updates on state issues and discussed both state and regional issues. Planning for spring region meetings is already underway.

#### **2011 PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference**

The 64th PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference was held July 11-12, 2011 in State College, PA. The conference highlighted the top environmental issues and challenges facing the commonwealth, including the exploration for oil and natural gas. The two-day conference included panel discussions relating to the development of Marcellus Shale, the state's 2011-2012 fiscal year budget, and transportation issues. In addition, it provided an opportunity for participants to attend a leadership development session on public budgeting and to meet with and ask questions of PACD's new executive director, Robert B. Maiden.

#### **2012 PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference**

Planning is underway for the 65th PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference. The conference will take place July 9-11, 2012 at the Hilton Scranton & Conference Center in Scranton, PA, and will include an optional tour of Marcellus Shale activities.

#### **PACD Executive Board Meetings**

The PACD Executive Board participated in monthly conference calls to oversee the operations of PACD between Executive Council meetings.

#### **PACD Capitol Day**

PACD may hold its annual Capitol Day in Harrisburg in the spring. Details will be provided at the end of February.

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### EDUCATION

PACD received two grants for its educational activities. Funding for the Pennsylvania Non-Point Source Education Office was provided by a grant from DEP's 319 Program; the Chesapeake Bay Education Office was funded through a grant from DEP's Chesapeake Bay Program. Through these grants, PACD delivered products and services that support conservation district educational activities.

#### **2011 Watershed Specialist Annual Meeting/Training**

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual statewide meeting of Conservation District Watershed Specialists was held October 11-12, 2011 in State College, PA. Fifty-eight watershed specialists attended this year's meeting. Presentations that received particularly high ratings included Benefits and Realities of Dam Removal in PA, Update on Marcellus Shale Water Issues, A Tour of the Microbial World in Freshwater Ecosystems, Wireless Sensor Networks for Watershed Assessment, and Best Practices for Effective Watershed Rehabilitation.

#### **2012 Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation District and PA Agency Staff Meeting**

Planning is well underway for the annual Chesapeake Bay Program Staff Meeting to be held on January 5, 2012 at Bucknell University. This location was popular with participants last year as it is centrally located. Participants will receive timely and relevant updates on issues affecting the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. A highlight of this year's program will be Snapshot of Innovative Partnerships, during which Lebanon and Dauphin Counties will share successful partnerships in their counties.

#### **Educational Resources**

PACD developed and maintained a variety of publications, audio-visual aids, and other educational resources, including the Education portion of the PACD website, to further conservation district educational efforts related to reducing NPS pollution and the concept that "We All Live Downstream."

#### **Educational Mini-Grant Program**

PACD is currently administering the NPS Pollution Prevention Educational Mini-grant Program for the NPS Education Office. No new funding was received for the Meaningful Watershed Education Experience Program grant, however, three projects are still in progress from the 2010-11 round.

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### **EDUCATION *con't***

#### **Manure Management Mini-Grant Program**

PACD developed a Manure Management Mini-grant Program for the districts as part of the association's Chesapeake Bay Education Office activities. The guidelines, application, agreement, final report template and announcement have been developed and the districts are currently applying for up to \$1,000 each in this non-competitive program.

#### **Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Informational Meetings**

DEP contracted with PACD to plan eight regional informational meetings for various local stakeholders, including conservation districts and local government representatives. These meetings provided the opportunity for local groups to interact with DEP and EPA during the development of Phase II of the WIP. PACD duties included facility arrangements, reservations, and general administrative responsibilities.

### **OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS**

PACD coordinated a number of outreach and public relations efforts. These efforts aim to support the goals and activities of the association's membership and to increase public awareness of the valuable contributions of local conservation districts.

#### **Press Conferences**

PACD worked with conservation districts in the south east region to create two press conferences focused on obtaining dedicated funding for our membership. These events garnered media and legislative attention and excellent turnout from our member districts.

#### **Press Releases**

PACD prepared and distributed releases on a variety of topics including:

- ✓ Testimonials - these success stories about conservation districts implementing conservation were posted on the PACD website, hand delivered to legislators and post cards were mailed to each legislator's district office;
- ✓ PACD Executive Board election;
- ✓ PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference and PACD Award recipients;
- ✓ Poster Contest winners;
- ✓ The accomplishments of the newly created PENNVEST position;
- ✓ Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Farm Award winners;
- ✓ PACD's participation in Ag Progress Days; and
- ✓ Various legislative issues.

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### OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS *con't*

#### **Pennsylvania Farm Show Booth**

Conservation districts will staff an educational booth at the 2012 Pennsylvania Farm Show, January 7-14, 2012. The goal is to connect Farm Show visitors from across the state to their local conservation district and provide them with information about district services. Seed packets will be provided by Covanta Energy, and will include a link to the *Find Your Conservation District* page of the PACD website to help connect the public to the great work of their local conservation district.

#### **Website**

PACD maintains a comprehensive website for its members and other interested individuals. The website allows visitors to comment on posts on the homepage. The homepage helps readers share, save, bookmark, and email the posts using any service, such as Facebook, Twitter, Delicious, Digg, and over 100 more social bookmarking and sharing sites. The website is a resource of valuable information on the following:

- ✓ Bylaws and Policies
- ✓ Calendar of Events
- ✓ Educational Resources
- ✓ Employment Opportunities
- ✓ Grant Information
- ✓ Legislative Updates
- ✓ Ways to Support PACD
- ✓ News
- ✓ Programs and Services

#### **Listserves**

PACD maintains listserves as a service to its members. The listserves provide directors and staff the ability to communicate with each other electronically and allow PACD to easily send messages and announcements to its conservation district members. Approximately 370 PACD members participate on one or more listserves.

#### **Front Page**

PACD distributed the *PACD Front Page*, a weekly electronic communication to PACD members and other interested individuals. Approximately 520 people receive the *PACD Front Page* each week.

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### **OUTREACH AND PUBLIC RELATIONS *con't***

#### **Monthly Report**

PACD distributes a monthly report to conservation district managers and directors via the PACD listserves. Managers are asked to provide copies of the report to board members during their monthly meetings. This is another way for our members to stay informed about PACD activities.

#### **PACD Awards Program**

PACD recognizes outstanding conservationists through its Annual Awards Program. In 2011, the Ann Rudd Saxman Conservation District Director Excellence Award was awarded to Carl Undercofler with Clearfield County Conservation District. The Conservation District Employee Excellence Award was awarded to Sandy Thompson with McKean County Conservation District. The Legislator Recognition Award was awarded to Pennsylvania State Senator Joseph B. Scarnati and State Representative Kate Harper. The President's Award was awarded to the PACD Executive Board, including Andrew Gilchrist, Montgomery; Jack Tressler, Somerset; Robert Robinson, Wyoming; Samuel Worley, Franklin; Patricia Sueck, York; Preston Boop, Union; Linda Cioppa, Pike; Don Koontz, Mercer; Blaine Smith, Blair; Harold Kulp, Chester; Robert Ritchey, Cambria; Kenneth Meck, Lancaster; and Donald Bashore, Juniata.

### **CONSERVATION DISTRICT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES**

PACD coordinated several new and existing training opportunities for conservation district staff.

#### **Introduction to Conservation Planning**

PACD is planning a three day Introduction to Conservation Planning course to target entry-level employees from Pennsylvania organizations that deliver conservation planning technical assistance, including but not limited to NRCS, SCC, conservation districts, farmland preservation entities, non-profits, and private consultants. The training course will be held February 27-29 in Grantville, PA.

#### **Agricultural Conservation Technical "Boot Camp" Training**

PACD is continuing preparations for Level I and Level II agricultural conservation training (ACT) sessions in April for agricultural conservation technicians, NRCS employees, nutrient management technicians, Chesapeake Bay technicians, and watershed coordinators. The two training sessions will take place at Fort Indiantown Gap in Annville, PA.

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### **CONSERVATION DISTRICT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES *con't***

#### **Erosion & Sedimentation (E&S) Technical Training**

PACD is coordinating a second year of E&S Technical Training for technicians with various levels of experience to take place in 2012 at Fort Indiantown Gap in Anville, PA.

#### **Manure Management Manual Training**

PACD is coordinating six regional trainings on the Manure Management Manual to take place around the state in December 2011 and January 2012. The focus of these meetings is to train DEP, NRCS, conservation district, and Penn State Extension employees. PACD duties included facility and meal arrangements, reservations, and general administrative responsibilities.

### **PENNVEST APPLICATION DEVELOPER POSITION**

The PENNVEST NPS Program Application Developer position was created to assist conservation districts and other eligible parties interested in applying for non-point source projects through PENNVEST. This position has had numerous successes, meeting with conservation districts all over the state to improve the number of applicants and troubleshoot issues with applications.

### **ENGINEERING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The PACD Engineering Assistance Program has provided engineering and soils assistance since 2001. The program is funded through grants received from Pennsylvania's Growing Greener Program and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. PACD employs two professional Conservation Engineers and five Conservation Technicians that provide engineering services to conservation districts, RC&Ds, watershed organizations, and other eligible entities.

### **NUTRIENT TRADING PROJECT**

The nutrient trading project allowed PACD to assist conservation districts with nutrient trading activities. Grant funds were provided to PACD through DEP's Growing Greener Program and the Chesapeake Bay Commission. PACD worked with a number of conservation districts and developed tools for those conservation districts to implement their local trading programs.

#### **Nutrient Trading Activities**

Continued to participate in on-going discussions and meetings as stakeholders refine the state's nutrient trading program, including successful mock and live nutrient trading auctions; and represented conservation districts on the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy Steering Committee, and on several workgroups, including the Agriculture Workgroup and the Trading Workgroup.

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### **NUTRIENT TRADING PROJECT *con't***

#### **Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts (MASCD) Project**

PACD partnered with the MASCD on a project that: provides information to farmers regarding environmental trading opportunities; determines a farmer's eligibility in the existing Pennsylvania trading program; and gathers feedback using a survey.

### **MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

PACD provided management services to state and federal agencies and one other non-profit organization. These services and contracts helped provide additional revenue to support PACD overhead and staff, including:

#### **Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP)**

PACD administered the state portion of the Pennsylvania CREP program on behalf of PA Department of Environmental Protection. PACD processed contracts, made cost-share payments to producers and drafted the state's annual CREP report. During the first half of the fiscal year, PACD obligated \$589,494 for cost share. Grant funds were provided through DEP's Growing Greener I and Growing Greener II grant programs.

#### **Forest Stewardship Program**

PACD finalized the last of the Forest Stewardship grants in December of 2011.

#### **Plan Development Incentives Program (PDIP)**

PACD Administered the PDIP cost-share program to provide producer cost-share payments for the development of nutrient management plans on behalf of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission. This program has been put on hold. The remaining grant funds provided through DEP and the Department of Agriculture's Nutrient Management Fund are being held awaiting instruction.

#### **Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators (PAEE) Bookkeeping Services**

PACD continues to provide bookkeeping services for the PAEE on a contractual basis. PACD has provided these services to PAEE for more than twelve years.