

**PACD Conservation Committee  
Red Lion Hotel, Harrisburg, PA  
July 12, 2017**

**Welcome and Roll Call**

Chairman Adam Cotchen called the meeting to order at 11:15 am with a quorum present.

*Committee members in attendance:* Adam Cotchen, Indiana; Dr. Robert Shannon, Centre; Piper Sherburne, Berks; Jack Dehoff, York; Kelly McLaughlin, Allegheny; Mark Davidson, Lycoming; Dan Dunmire, Mifflin; Carl Goshorn, Cumberland; Bill Kahler, Lycoming.

*Guests in attendance:* Susan Marquart, NRCS; Gwendolyn Crews, NRCS; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Richard Weinstein, Berks; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Gretchen Schatschneider, Bucks; Lance Bowes, Venango; Sally Corrigan, Pike; Meade Meyers, Somerset; Mari Meyers, Somerset; Mark Kimmel, York; Larry Butler, Clinton; Michael Hubler, Dauphin; Adam Schellhammer, Monroe; John Akers, Bedford; Tom Croner, Somerset; Dave Stoner, Franklin; Josh Longmore, Luzerne.

**Minutes of the January 24, 2017 Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting on January 24, 2017, were provided for review.

*It was moved by Piper Sherburne and seconded by Jack Dehoff to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on January 24, 2017, as presented. Motion carried.*

**Changes for Certified Planners**

Gwendolyn Crews from NRCS presented an overview of the changes in national planning policy, including new designation levels, associated prerequisites, and timeline.

- This was a joint effort requested by, and developed in combination with, the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), the National Association of Conservation District Employees, and other partners.
- The goal is to provide a better and more consistent planning process across the country and to underscore the importance and credibility of certified planning.
- Currently, there are 89 partner employees working with NRCS as a planner in some capacity. Of these, 52 are district employees. Of these, 25 are fully certified conservation planners and the remaining 27 are apprentice planners.
- There are four planner designations: apprentice conservation planner (apprentice), certified conservation planner (certified), master certified conservation planner (master) and technical specialist planner (technical specialist). NRCS will be working to ensure that all of the training requirements are available in Pennsylvania. Many are offered through AgLearn, which is web-based. The timeline for certification is three years. With very few exceptions, training does not expire.



- NRCS will not require that district employees become planners unless there is an existing agreement though they will certainly work with districts.

### **Budget and General Legislative Update**

Brenda reported that the state budget was passed and became law without the Governor's signature. However, there is no implementation legislation. The House has adjourned and returned to their home districts. The Senate is still in Harrisburg. Conservation district lines were restored, which is a huge success. This comes as a result of PACD and conservation district efforts to restore that funding.

PACD will be focusing on providing a strong legislative program to help the conservation districts build or maintain relationships with legislators. About half of the legislators are new within the past five years, and we need to educate them about the value of conservation districts.

### **90 Day Limit for Written Decision for Ag Nutrient Management Plans**

Brenda provided a memorandum from Representative Zimmerman, who would like to propose a 90 day limit for written decision on ag nutrient management plans.

Brenda explained that Rep. Zimmerman is proposing this legislation because he and other legislators are hearing from constituents that nutrient management plans are not being approved in a timely fashion. Brenda provided this legislation to the managers for comment, and they are concerned that this will not solve the problem, and will instead result in either insufficient plans or even longer delays.

The committee discussed this proposal and expressed similar concerns to those of the PACD Legislative Committee and the managers, namely that this legislation may result in either insufficient plans or even longer delays. They also noted that the reviewer may not be responsible for delays. The landowner and planner also have to fulfil their responsibilities in a timely manner. In addition, planners in Pennsylvania are overwhelmed with the need for plans.

Brenda provided a proposed policy:

*PACD opposes legislation to shorten the permit review period for Erosion and Sedimentation Nutrient Management and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) plan reviews and permit approval.*

It was moved by Carl Goshorn and seconded by Rob Shannon to approve the proposed policy to oppose legislation to shorten the permit review period for plan reviews and permit approval. Motion carried.

### **Update on Legislation of Interest to Districts**

Brenda provided the following update on legislation of interest to conservation districts:

- Growing Greener III legislation has been introduced in the Senate, but not in the House. This legislation has not moved, and is not anticipated to move in the near future due to Pennsylvania's budget shortfalls.

- Legislation related to PACD's water use fee policy has been introduced, but has not gone anywhere at this point.
- There have been a number of proposals that would add a severance tax to the impact fee. However, these are not seeing much movement, either.
- Representative Dush has introduced a proposal (House Bill 297) to categorize dirt, gravel, and low-volume road maintenance projects as maintenance work under the Prevailing Wage Act, thus exempting DGLVR projects from prevailing wage.
- Brenda will keep the membership apprised if legislation on any of these topics moves ahead.

### **New Issues Discussion**

The committee had no additional items or issues to bring to the fall region meetings.

### **Adjournment**

*It was moved by Dan Dunmire and seconded by Jack Dehoff to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03 pm.