

**PACD North West Region Meeting  
Video Conference  
April 22, 2020**

**Welcome**

PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:05 a.m.

*In attendance:* Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Cliff Lane, McKean; Matt Miller, PACD; Tracey Crawford, Crawford; Kerry Fetter, McKean; Jeff Werner, NRCS; Danielle Kalp, PACD; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Fred Fiscus, DEP; Shaun Wessell, Jefferson; Heather Wilcox, Warren; John Green, DEP NWRO; Lori Boughton, DEP NWRO; Donna Zofcin, Forest; Eugene Metcalf, Clarion; Kristopher Abell, PISC; Randi Tyler, PACD; Jo Ann McCready, Lawrence; Don Koontz, Mercer; Molly Burns, PACD; Tom McClure, Erie; Kate Wehler, Elk; Karl Brown, SCC; Karen Books, DEP; Jay Russell, Mercer.

**Date of Next Meeting**

The next PACD North West meeting will be hosted by Venango County Conservation District on September 25, 2020,

**Date of Meeting with Aneca Atkinson**

Brenda Shambaugh explained that DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Programs Aneca Atkinson is interested in meeting with each region to encourage and improve communication. The group determined that the North West Region would meet with Deputy Secretary Atkinson on October 21, 2020, at the Jefferson County Conservation District.

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

Cliff Lane called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

*It was moved by Kate Wehler and seconded by Don Koontz to approve the minutes of the October 30, 2019, meeting. Motion carried.*

**Bylaws Change to Move Armstrong to North West Region**

Brenda Shambaugh explained that the Armstrong County Conservation District would like to move from the PACD South West region to the North West region, so they are in the same region for both PACD and DEP. This will require a change to the PACD Bylaws.

*It was moved by Donna Zofcin and seconded by Kate Wehler to support a PACD Bylaws change to move Armstrong County Conservation District to the North West Region. Motion carried.*



Brenda asked to hold discussion on the invasive species funding policy until after the presentation from the PA Invasive Species Council, as the presentation will provide information pertinent to the motion.

### **PACD Report**

Brenda provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Clean Water Academy* – PACD’s Nick Yeagy is working hard to add new learning to the Clean Water Academy on an on-going basis. Brenda asked for members to contact her if there are specific NPDES training topics.
- *Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants* – Funding is available, and we continue to accept applications.
- *Leadership Development Program* – Brenda provided an update on Matt Miller’s program activities, including the regional director training sessions, which drew a total of 145 attendees. Matt Miller reported that the Records Retention for Conservation Districts webinar has been postponed indefinitely but will be rescheduled at some point in the future. He is planning a June employment law webinar series with Adam Long from McNeese, Wallace and Nurick, which will include information relevant to experiences with COVID-19, including work from home policies, furloughs, etc. Brenda also noted that the program is coordinating a presentation on effective boards during the Directors Breakfast in July.
- *Ag Boot Camp* – The in-class portion of the Basic session was completed via webinar April 6-9, 2020, and the field portion will take place September 9-11, 2020, at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center. Level II is scheduled to take place August 31-September 4, 2020, also at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center.
- *102/105 Technical Training* – Basic will likely take place in August, and Topic-based will take place September 16-18, 2020. Both will be held at the Wyndham Garden State College.
- *Fluvial Geomorphology Training* – This has been postponed until November 17-18, 2020.
- *Chesapeake Bay Education Office* – This office, which was hosted by PACD for over 20 years, has been discontinued by DEP due to funding cuts by EPA. As a result, PACD has discontinued the Clean Water Farm Award, the Manure Management Mini-grant Program, and hosting County Implementation Plans on our website. The 2020 Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation District and PA Agency Staff Meeting did take place through a different DEP grant. We are currently unsure about future meetings.
- *PACD Awards* – Brenda encouraged districts to consider nominating someone for a PACD award. Applications are due by April 30.
- Brenda reported that conservation district week will take place the week of May 3-9, 2020, and encouraged everyone to take advantage of the template letters and materials on the PACD website at [www.pacd.org](http://www.pacd.org) to reach out to their legislators in lieu of meeting with them in person. This is especially important due to the strain COVID-19 will put on the budget.
- *NACD/NRCS Technical Assistance Grants* – These grants were recently announced. Brenda asked for applications be submitted to her by May 22, 2020, so they can be ranked and submitted to NACD by June 1, 2020. Please let her know if your district plans to apply.
- *HB 1822* – Has passed the House and will move on to the Senate for consideration. PACD was not able to get a clear answer on whether districts will receive reimbursements if this bill is passed. The managers will be discussing this during their video conference this afternoon.

### **Presentation from the PA Invasive Species Council (PISC)**

Kristopher Abell, PISC Coordinator, provided a presentation on behalf of the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council. The presentation provided information about PISC, an overview of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA), how these might be coordinated in Pennsylvania, and examples of other, similar, coordinated activities.

### **Motion on Invasive Species Policy**

The group discussed the motion and it was stressed that each district will be able to decide if they want to participate.

*It was moved by Don Koontz and seconded by Kerry Fetter to support the following motion:*

*PACD encourages the PA Department of Agriculture and related agencies to develop a delegated agreement with conservation districts to provide funding and authority to battle invasive species.*

*Motion carried.*

### **State Conservation Commission (SCC) Report**

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following report:

- Karl thanked everyone for participating.
- He thanked districts for sharing their Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans with Karen Books. The SCC is trying to help districts with questions as they work through this process.
- He reviewed a COVID Guidance Update document, which provided an overview of guidance and resources available to conservation districts through SCC, PACD, and other agency staff.
- He reviewed a draft document defining the new Conservation District Advisory Committee. The first meeting was held, and there are two vacancies for representatives.
- He discussed the Draft Conservation District Drone Policy.

### **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report**

Lori Boughton reported that the region has been in close contact with all the districts. They are having weekly meetings and are putting together remote training for the districts. Sandy Thompson thanked DEP for their efforts.

Fred Fiscus provided the following report:

- He reviewed the Fiscal Year Budgeting Spreadsheet for conservation district staff, which was approved by the commission in March and will take effect on July 1, 2020. This spreadsheet will help demonstrate the ability of districts to leverage state and county dollars, confirm that districts are properly matching CDFAP funding for certain positions, and help the SCC and DEP gather regularly requested information. Several districts have piloted the spreadsheet and had no major issues. To help offset the additional reporting requirement, districts no longer need to submit the CDFAP year-end Financial Statement.
- Karen Books reported on behalf of the Conservation District Financial Management Workgroup the SCC has established. The workgroup will oversee the development of an accounting and administrative procedures manual containing a standard chart of accounts and/or a comprehensive financial management system. They are seeking proposals from consultants to help.

- Summer Kunkel is the new Acting Director for the DEP Office of Water Resources Planning.
- Fred also shared that he will be retiring on April 24, 2020.

### **USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report**

Jeff Werner provided highlights from the NRCS Conservation Update for the Northwest Region:

- NRCS has begun the process of assigning Ecological Sciences Job Approval Authority (ESJAA), which is similar to NRCS engineering job approval. They are starting with NRCS employees and will then move on to partners who have certified planners.
- The field offices are staffed with one employee. Other staff are teleworking but are available to continue doing field visits and conservation planning while maintaining social distancing.
- They are available to provide guidance regarding mortality and milk disposal/land application.

### **Regional Discussion**

*Forest* – Donna Zofcin reported they are well and safe and have no further report at this time.

*Erie* – Tom McClure reported they have been working to gain remote access to their electronic files. The board and staff decided to continue their seedling sale on a pick-up basis this Friday. They are working with the Erie Department of Health and following their guidance.

*Warren* – Heather Wilcox thanked their regional DEP office for their support. The district is working day by day to keep up with everything as best as they can in the current environment.

*Elk* – Kate Wehler wished everyone a happy Earth Day. She reported they created an Earth Day video on recycling in cooperation with their local recycling center, which recycled 3.2 million pounds of material last year. They are also developing a plan for conservation district week and plan to post something every day during that week. She also provided positive feedback on the regional training provided by the Northwest region. Lori Boughton with DEP noted they were able to record the training and she would be happy to share if people are interested.

*Mercer* – Jay Russell reported they are working through things and trying to keep operations moving with the current restrictions. He also thanked the DEP regional office for their help.

*McKean* – Sandy Thompson reported they have developed their operation plan. She goes in two or three times per week. They are doing as much program work as possible. Staff are working remotely and each staff-person is submitting a work plan weekly. They have been able to take part in lots of conference calls, Zoom meetings, and trainings, and have been working to keep the board up to date. They plan to use the handout from the March Leadership Development director training to provide training for their directors and associate directors who were unable to attend. They also plan to reach out to their legislators during conservation district week and working on a McKean County proclamation with their county commissioners.

*Jefferson* – Shaun Wessell reported he is reporting to the office every day. Staff have been able to issue permits and meet timelines. Field work is not active but may pick up in the next couple

of weeks. The district has been active on Facebook with quizzes, contests, and videos. He echoed the positive comments on the DEP regional training and congratulated Fred on his retirement.

*Crawford* – Tracey Crawford reported the district has been using this opportunity to improve their ability to work electronically and look for ways to be more efficient in future.

Brenda Shambaugh thanked Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller for helping to make these region meetings run so smoothly. She thanked Danielle Kalp and Randi Tyler from the Engineering Assistance Program for sitting in on the meeting and encouraged districts to contact them with any engineering needs.

Brenda also noted this is Fred Fiscus' last PACD region meeting and wished him a wonderful retirement. Fred said he has enjoyed his time working with districts, has made many friends and plans to stay in touch.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.