

**PACD Legislative Committee Minutes
Zoom Meeting
July 9, 2020**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairwoman Donna Fisher called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. with a quorum present.

Committee Members in Attendance: Doug Beri, Indiana; Donna Fisher, Blair; Kelly Stagen, Pike; Chris Strohmaier, Chester; Chuck Duritsa, Westmoreland; Chuck Gould, Monroe; Mark Hamilton, Tioga; Michele Long, Pike; Chris Thompson, Lancaster; Dennis Beck, Cambria.

Guests in Attendance: Joan McCarty, Columbia; Josh Longmore, Luzerne; Judy Becker, Northumberland; Adam McClain, Adams; Linda Mackey, DEP; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Shannon Wehinger, PACD; Molly Burns, PACD.

Minutes of the January 22, 2020 Minutes

The minutes of the January 22, 2020 meeting were provided for review.

It was moved by Chris Strohmaier and seconded by Kelly Stagen to approve the minutes of the January 22, 2020 meeting as presented. Motion carried.

General Legislative Update

PA State Budget

Brenda Shambaugh reported that the PA General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, a partial state budget which will expire on November 30, 2020. However, the General Assembly does not know what the state revenue will be until after the tax filing deadline of July 15, 2020, and does not know how much the state economy will recover from COVID-19. As a result, most lines were level funded, including the Conservation District Lines in both the PDA and DEP budgets. Since the state must have a balanced budget and expenditures will far outweigh the revenue, it is anticipated that severe budget cuts could be made when the General Assembly completes the fiscal year budget.

Brenda noted that the CDFAP and other restricted funds are again under scrutiny as a potential source of funding to make up any shortfall. It was asked if the SCC can distribute the funds upfront. Brenda encouraged the membership to raise that question to the SCC.

HB 509/SB 252

HB 509, the third party reviewer legislation, passed the House and is in the Senate. The Senate version of the bill, SB 252, was passed by the Senate Intergovernmental Operations Committee and has moved on to the Senate Calendar for consideration. If the Senate moves forward with



either bill, PACD will do what we can to ensure that the conservation districts are included as third-party reviewers.

Legislation Related to COVID-19

There are several pieces of legislation related to various industries and the procedures for continuing operations during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these are now moot because the Governor has declared all PA Counties in the Green Phase of his reopening plan. However, the General Assembly passed a resolution to cancel the Governor's Emergency Declaration. General Assembly resolutions do not have to be signed by the Governor, and the General Assembly declared the resolution in effect and the Emergency Declaration ended. The Governor disputed this claim. The PA Supreme Court has considered the question and determined that the Emergency Declaration remains in effect. The legislature will now likely consider legislation to countermand the Declaration. However, the Governor would need to sign any such legislation, so it is unlikely to be enacted.

Invasive Species Council Funding

The PA Invasive Species Council (PISC) is looking to the PA General Assembly to fund Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA) and a rapid response action plan like the one in New York. At the July 23, 2020 meeting, the PACD Executive Council will vote on a motion asking PDA to develop a delegated agreement with conservation districts to provide funding and authority to battle invasive species. PISC would like to conduct an economic impact study to gather information on the economic impact of both invasive species. This study would be provided to PA legislators as PISC requests funding for a statewide Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM).

HB 1822

During the severe COVID-19 restrictions, a piece of legislation passed the House that would have frozen any new contract funding from the Conservation District Fund and other funds. PACD asked the House and the Senate to consider an amendment that would delete the Conservation District Fund entirely from the legislation, specifically stating that conservation districts are a key government entity in the reopening process. PACD opposed HB 1822 unless it was amended to delete the Conservation District Fund from the legislation. This legislation was stopped in the Senate.

HB 1106

This legislation would require a 30 day timeframe for permit approval if the application is administratively complete. It would also provide a dispute process for disagreements between DEP and the applicant. If the department fails to adhere to the timeline, the application would be deemed approved.

CARES Act Funding

It was noted that there is money available under the CARES Act for expenses related to COVID-19. There may be more than one funding stream and the funding available may depend on a district's status—whether the district is a county department or is associated with a 501(c)3, for example. Several districts noted they are tracking expenses related to COVID-19, some at the request of their county. Chester County was able to request and receive funding already under an

earlier deadline. It was asked if PACD can help districts determine the requirements for the available funding. It was also noted that this may be a moving target, as the requirements are updated or amended.

Outreach to Local Media and the Community

Brenda Shambaugh led a discussion about outreach to local media and the community, particularly as PACD continues to promote the districts during the upcoming budget process. She noted there have been many creative outreach efforts during the past few months, including virtual educational sessions, workshops, and videos. Representative Struzzi from Indiana County created a video about the district, which the legislator then promoted. This was a win-win, as it provided an outreach and promotional opportunity for the legislator and for the district. Brenda noted the native plant Public Service Announcement is another opportunity for district outreach, and that PACD plans to create more PSAs between now and November. To take full advantage of your advocacy program, PACD recommends a three-pronged approach that includes outreach from PACD, the conservation district, and individual directors/associate directors.

Adjourn

It was moved by Chris Strohmaier and seconded by Kelly Stagen to adjourn the meeting at 11:01 a.m. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:01 a.m.