

**PACD North Central Region
Video Conference Minutes
March 18, 2021**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh welcomed everyone to the meeting and the meeting came to order at 10:03 a.m. with a quorum present. She noted that Dr. Shannon sent his regrets. He had an unavoidable conflict and was unable to attend.

Participants: Nick Yeagy, PACD; Daryl Miller, Bradford; Larry Butler, Clinton; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Nancy DiFiore, NRCS; Greg Bonsall, Lycoming; Nathan Brophy, PACD Engineering Assistance Program; Karl Brown, SCC; Michael Hubler, Northumberland; Joan McCarty, Columbia; Matt Miller, PACD; Bill Clouser, Clearfield; Ben Paul, Northumberland; Bill Kahler, Lycoming; Cathy Yeakel, Bradford; Carrie Richmond, Sullivan; Eric Nyerges, Union; Shirley Snyder, Northumberland; Todd Deluccia, Cameron; Karen Books, DEP; Judy Becker, Northumberland; Jim Coslo, Centre; Yuri Plowden, NRCS; Jason Winey, Snyder; Jason Childs, Potter; Andy Wodehouse, PACD Engineering Assistance Program; Jaci Kerstetter, DEP; Marcus Kohl, DEP; Molly Burns, PACD.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting will be either virtual or in-person on October 14, 2021. If it is in-person, it will be at the Clinton County Conservation District.

Meeting with DEP Deputy Secretary of Water Programs

The region will meet with Aneca Atkinson on December 13, 2021.

Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were both displayed and provided prior to the meeting.

It was moved by Eric Nyerges and seconded by Jason Childs to approve the minutes of the October 22, 2020, meeting. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report

Brenda Shambaugh provided the following report:

- *Staff changes:* PACD Director of Operations Lisa Jo Suhr retired in February. Our Program Manager, Amy Brown has moved into the Director of Operations position, so please feel free to contact her. Holly Miller, former Sullivan County Conservation District Manager, has joined us as Program Manager. We also have a new administrative assistant, Diane Young, who is helping Amy with bookkeeping in addition to her other duties.



- *Conservation District Week* will be taking place virtually. April 18-24, 2021, which will coincide with Earth Day. Brenda encouraged everyone to participate in some way and shared information on resources available on the PACD website at www.pacd.org.
- *The upcoming budget* will hopefully be a full-year budget. However, it will be a very difficult budget year.
- *Boot Camp* applications are closed. Basic will be held in two parts. The online portion will be held April 12-15, 2021, and the in-person field training will be held August 2-4, 2021. The application period is closed. *Boot Camp Level II* will be held August 23-27, 2021, at the Keystone Conference Center at Fort Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA, and the Holiday Inn Harrisburg. The application period is closed, and 27 students were accepted.
- *Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program*: In February, Pennsylvania's county conservation districts were awarded over \$60,000. With this funding, thirty-nine pollution reduction projects will take place in twenty-eight counties.
- *CREP Mini grant Program*: PACD opened a short round of CREP mini grants to conservation districts with an application deadline of March 19, 2021. Up to \$500 could be used to implement virtual educational and outreach activities that support and extend the work of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).
- *Landowner Guide to Buffer Success* updates are almost complete. PACD will have 2,500 calendar-style guides available for distribution soon.
- *Native Plants and Pollinators Training*: NRCS offered free technical training to Pennsylvania's conservation districts on native plants and pollinators on February 18, 2021.
- *Riparian Buffer Sub-grants*: PACD is continuing to accept sub-grant applications to implement multi-functional riparian buffers. \$388,608.00 is still available and total of 19 grants implementing over 60 acres of buffers are underway.
- *Building for Tomorrow Leadership Development Program* held the Virtual Staff Conference February 8-12, 2021, which had an average session attendance of 111 and concluded with the first annual Conservation District Video Awards. A February Board Leadership webinar series had an average session attendance of 34. The upcoming New Manager Training program will include online and in-person instruction. The Management Summit is scheduled as an in-person event for September 15-16, 2021, at the Wyndham Garden State College, with a follow-up Fall Leadership webinar series for directors and managers in October. Brenda thanked the State Conservation Commission for funding this program.
- *Clean Water Academy*: PACD continues to work closely with DEP to develop Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 eLearning courses for the Clean Water Academy. We have been working to address needs expressed by districts and will continue to do so. Brenda encouraged everyone to share any specific training needs they may have with Nick Yeagy at nyeagy@pacd.org.
- *Chapter 102/105 webinars* are taking place this spring.
- *The PA Invasive Species Council* continues to work with partnering agencies and stakeholders to develop a workable statewide invasive species program. While nothing has been finalized, PACD and several individual conservation districts continue to express the need for a comprehensive program to combat plant, insect, and aquatic invasive species. Several groups are looking to the conservation districts to administer regional programs if given the appropriate funding necessary to cover their costs. Please consider discussing the possibility of your district's participation with your board.
- Brenda gathered feedback from the membership about holding the July PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference in-person or virtually. Response indicated that everyone is eager to go back to in-person meetings but feel that July is too soon for an in-person event.
- Nathan Brophy gave an update on his activities for the Engineering Assistance Program.

Regional Information Sharing

Bradford: Cathy Yeakel reported they are going to have their seedling sale during Conservation District Week April 22-24. They have bags for the first 100 customers that include information about organizations that would have participated in their Earth Day event, had they been able to hold it, as well as seedling starters and other outdoor activities. They will have social media posts and will run something in their weekly newspaper column. They have received some Growing Greener grants and are working on their county stream initiative. Their commissioners also gave them \$200,000 to put towards stream restoration. They are hiring a forester, partially funded by an Upper Susquehanna Coalition grant. They received funding from some of their sponsors to purchase an underwater drone, which will be used to record underwater video for education for children and adults.

Cameron – Todd Deluccia reported they are gearing up for construction season. They have three AMD projects to bid out this summer, eight or nine streambank stabilization fish habitat enhancement projects, and three or four ag BMP projects. He is working with Jason from Potter to put together a luncheon and legislative tour, probably this summer. Cameron was recently added to the spotted lanternfly quarantine.

Centre – Jim Coslo reported that Centre County offices are still closed, and staff are still working remotely. They have not been given a definitive date on when they will go back. They get updates in two-to-four week increments. They are busy with WIP and CAP implementation. They are a tier two county and are entering their implementation phase. They hired HRG to coordinate. The SCC has released some additional Conservation Excellence Grant funding for tier two, so they are looking forward to implementing additional BMPs with that funding. They are exploring the possibility of adding a summer intern position.

Clinton – Larry Butler reported they are in transition, with Mary Ann retiring at the end of December. Wade Jodun is the new manager and Scott Koser is the assistant manager. They are working on tree sales and are sold out of quite a few trees. They have a rain barrel workshop scheduled soon. They are working on their 75th anniversary celebrations. They have two staff who are just coming on. Their resource conservationist was hired, and they received approval for an ag resource conservationist.

Columbia – Joan McCarty reported that Nancy Corbin sends her regrets but was unable to attend. The office is currently moving and conducting interviews for two new people. They are working on their CAP and will be holding a shareholder meeting at the beginning of April. Their watershed specialist, Brittney Hartzell, is planning a live-stake workshop in April. Kocher Park will be hosting the project WET/WOW with DCNR. The plant sale is in progress and is going very well. They have three schools participating in the virtual Envirothon.

Lycoming - Greg Bonsall reported they are excited about their partnership with the Chesapeake Conservancy, which they are hoping will result in the delisting of a stream in the Pine Run Watershed. They received \$292,000 in Growing Greener funds for ag BMPs, which will keep them busy. Their tree sale is tremendously successful, and they are sold out of almost everything. People have reconnected to nature during the pandemic, and we should take advantage.

Northumberland – Judy Becker reported they are currently going through the CAP development process. They are partnered with Lycoming, who is using their planning department, while Northumberland has contracted with HRG. They are having their kickoff meeting Tuesday, March 23. They received a Growing Greener grant for ag BMPs, which they really appreciate. They also have a virtual rain barrel workshop planned and she thanked Columbia’s watershed specialist Brittney Hartzell for helping their watershed specialist to organize that. They have two teams to participate in their virtual high school Envirothon. They are working on DGLVR projects. They are holding a stakeholder update meeting with NRCS about the National Water Quality Initiative in the Warrior Run watershed. Their E&S technician retired after ten years and they have a new E&S technician on-board since the end of November. They have been inundated with permits. Their new watershed specialist started in February. Judy will be leaving at the end of July and applications for district manager are open until the end of April.

Potter – Jason Childs reported they will be doing their tree sales during conservation district week and have sold out of many species. They are having their annual crops and planting pesticide meeting next week. They usually have over 100 in attendance, so they are holding a hybrid meeting with 25 in person and the rest will join via zoom with the help of Penn State Extension. They plan to hold a municipal DGLVR breakfast meeting with the municipalities. They have a rain barrel workshop scheduled for this summer and are hoping to hire on an intern to help with CAP development and perhaps some aquatic organism surveys.

Sullivan – Carrie Richmond reported they are selling out of many items on their seedling sale. They are holding a bridge-building contest with their DGLVR education funds. They are accepting DGLVR applications and are doing several site visits for streambank erosion.

Union: Eric Nyerges reported they are in the middle of their CAP process. They just held a forum to get feedback from farmers. They are hiring an ACT/Environmental Educator. They are back in the Bay program, so they have a new Bay technician on board. Their tree sale is also in process. They are looking to have some interns from Susquehanna University.

Brenda reminded everyone who received a Growing Greener grant and wants to use the Engineering Assistance Program to please let program staff know as soon as possible. Andy Wodehouse noted he just completed an I&E for a project for Montour.

PA State Conservation Commission

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided highlights from his written report:

- He thanked districts for their flexibility and adaptability over the past year.
- He encouraged everyone to consider incorporating virtual access to district board meetings to provide access to those who cannot normally attend.
- As of yesterday, all but four districts have submitted nominations for district directors. He thanked district staff and boards for their work on that.
- All directors and many staff need to submit a statement of financial interest, and these are due no later than May 1.
- They have wrapped up their third round of Quality Assurance Quality Control visits for the Dirt, Gravel, Low Volume Road Program. He reminded everyone that April 16 is the deadline to meet program spending requirements. The 2020 annual summary report is online at the Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies website.

- They have appointed/reappointed several representatives to the Conservation District Advisory Committee.
- They adopted the Conservation *District Drone Utilization* policy on January 19, 2021.
- They are working on a policy on *Restrictions on the Appointment of Former Conservation District Employees and Other County, State and Federal Employees as Conservation District Directors*. If you have been employed by a district, you cannot be appointed as a director for the first three years after your separation from the district. There is the opportunity to request a case-by-case exception from the Commission.
- He provided details about the Conservation Excellence Grant (CEG) Program, which is administered by the Commission to implement Agricultural BMPs. It is active in Lancaster (\$1.75 million), York (\$1.25 million), Cumberland (\$1.154 million), Franklin (\$1.154 million), Bedford (\$750,000), and Centre (\$750,000).

PA Department of Environmental Protection

Water Program Specialist Karen Books provided highlights from her written report.

- The 2021 Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting is coming up May 19-20, 2021. This will be for district staff and other entities involved in 319 projects.
- EPA Region 3 Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management – Quality Assurance Program Plans (QAPP) Training will be taking place on April 13. Registration deadline is April 6.
- The 2021 Virtual Conservation District and PA Agency Ag Meeting was held March 16-17. It was very successful, with 185 participants on Tuesday and at least 150 on Wednesday. Information will be on the Clean Water Academy soon.
- 2021 Agricultural Energy Use Workshops began on March 18 and will continue Thursdays for the next few months.
- Individual permit applications will be accepted via ePermitting as of April 21, 2021. E&S permit applications will be accepted as of July 28.
- Everyone will need a Keystone login to import their Greenport account into the new Greenport. Karen will send out additional information.
- The Ag Plan Reimbursement Program will end April 1, 2021. They are not currently planning to renew the program. The deadline to register a plan for this program is April 1. All plans must be registered by this date.
- Karen noted it is good to hear that everyone is working on their CAP plans and encouraged anyone who needs additional assistance to contact their CAP coordinator at DEP.
- Karen thanked Judy for all her hard work over the years and wished her well.

Northcentral Regional Director Marcus Kohl provided the following report:

- The regional office will keep in touch about remote work and field work.
- He thanked everyone for their participation in the CAP process.
- He thanked the districts for their partnership.
- He thanked Judy for her work over the years and wished her well.

Conservation District Field Representative Jaci Kerstetter provided the following report:

- She thanked everyone for their work on the countywide action plans and recognized it takes a significant amount of time.
- She is working to put together a conference call or use some other way to facilitate communication between CAP planning participants.

- The Governor has a strong interest in litter clean-up, so if anyone knows of a litter clean-up, please share that information and she will share it with their communications specialist to help publicize the event.
- Jaci also wished Judy well and thanked her for her work.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Nancy DiFiore, Assistant State Conservationist for Operations for Northeast Pennsylvania, thanked the districts for their work and provided the following highlights from the written report:

- NRCS is continuing to work through the pandemic challenges. Offices are still in lockdown with one person in the office at a time. However, telework continues and field visits continue, including engineering I&Es and planners out in the field. Thirteen people have been hired in the area in the last six months, and there are still three openings.
- Their handout highlighted a Northumberland Conservation District and NRCS event in the Warrior Run Watershed, which is part of the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI).
- They are seeking applications for the Leopold Conservation Award by August 5.
- Statewide Farm Bill Programs Status for FY2020: *AMA 2018* had 25 contracts for a total of \$348,882; *EQIP2018* had 456 contracts for a total of 22,576,802; *RCPP-EQIP 2014* had 28 contracts for 1,931,830; and *CSP and CSP GCI* had 168 contracts for a total of \$6,242,715. Overall, there were a total of 677 contracts for \$31,100,232 on 104,441 acres.
- They were able to acquire 99.93 acres for the Wetland Reserve Easement Program. That program has been in full-loan mode since 1996. It is continuous sign-up.
- They have a signup for the Healthy Forest Reserve program, with \$300,000 available this year to protect and preserve Indiana Bat habitat. The counties involved would be Centre, Clinton, Mifflin, and Snyder. Applications are due by April 30.
- They are currently working through ecological sciences job approval authority certifications.

State Soil Scientist Yuri Plowden provided the following report:

- Keith Shadle is their new resource soil scientist in Bloomsburg and will be taking over soils and land use Envirothon duties.
- They also have a new soil scientist, Chris Seitz, in Mill Hall.
- NRCS wants to hold a basic or advanced interagency wetlands[training this year, possibly in late summer. They generally work with Frank Pleva from Army Corps, and often DEP. The course provides technical training for NRCS staff and partners to identify wetlands. They may hold classroom training online with an in-person field portion.

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

A written report was provided.

Adjournment

It was moved by Cathy Yeakel and seconded by Mike Hubler to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.