

**PACD North East Region Meeting Minutes
DEP Northeast Regional Office, Wilkes-Barre, PA
October 8, 2021**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Chuck Gould, North East Region Director called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:07am

Virtual and In-person Participants: Chuck Gould, PACD NE Region Director & MCCD Board Director; Chris Storm, Carbon; Josh Longmore, Luzerne; Tom Herbert, Luzerne; Chuck Gould, Monroe; Kristina Heaney, Monroe; Barbara Bistras, Monroe; Kelly Stagen, Pike; Michele Long, Pike; Jenna St Clair, Schuylkill; Jamie Knecht, Wayne; Jack Barnett, Wayne; Doug Deutsch, Wyoming; Dakota Welkom, PACD TAG; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Matt Miller, PACD; Karl Brown, SCC; Karen Books, DEP; Nancy DiFiore, NRCS; Jennifer Matthews, NRCS

Region Director Election:

Brenda mentioned that Chuck willing to continue as Region Director,

A motion was made by Kelly Stagen for Chuck Gould to continue as Regional Director. Josh Longmore seconded the motion. Motion carried

Set date for next meeting:

Brenda mentioned there are parking garage issues at the DEP facility, so Schuylkill County is offering to host the meeting, Friday, March 25, 2022, in-person with a virtual option.

Approval of the previous meeting minutes:

The minutes from the April 16, 2021, meeting were provided for review.

A motion was made by Jamie Knecht to approve the meeting minutes of April 16, 2021, as presented. Kelly Stagen seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report:

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report:

- Introduction of Dakota Welkom, PACD TAG employee, working on an I&E for horse operation
- PACD going to electronic deposits, suggests districts submit the form and voided check
- Communication continues with Front Page e-newsletters and listserv, district managers asked to provide directors email addresses so they can be in the loop
- Looking for directors and staff to fill open committee positions with only two meetings a year
- Upcoming leadership development fall webinars open to all district personnel and directors



- Strategic planning grants, deadline for application is November 19, 2021
- Building for tomorrow provided thru SCC partnership leadership committee, Succession Management part one November 3 and part two November 17 from 12-1:30pm
- Successful recent Bootcamp & level two training for 2022 they will be going back to April dates hopefully in person, registration will open in January
- Introduction to conservation planning training will need to provide certificate of vaccination before attendance
- NPS mini grant program has 60 projects underway totaling over \$100,000, new round going out in January 2022. This funding comes from EPA & DEP.
- For Education and outreach, Shannon has created a public service announcement on car maintenance for the fall. She also started a shared messaging program for social media. Monthly messages will be sent from the statewide office.
- There was a new round of mini grants for CREP, \$3000 to be used for education and outreach with an application deadline of November 12, guidelines and app are on their website.
- The successful CREP partner training program, is now posted on the Clean Water Academy.
- Water Works at Work started this past spring, they held focus groups and interviews with farmers, information is being used to put together a marketing plan.
- 600 copies of landowner guide available, if you would like copies contact Holly Miller or you can access it electronically on the CREP website.
- Three QuickBooks trainings can be found on the Clean Water Academy including Basic, Advanced and Payroll.
- Riparian buffer sub-grant program has 22 different grants, \$170,000 still available and extensions are available for those who received the grant but were unable to complete.
- Chapter 102/105 in person training Spring of 2022, all those trainings are on the CWA site. Technical training topics are being worked on. To get CWA access, contact Nick Yeagy.
- Three DEP trainers have been given the go ahead to do in person trainings, if you are interested, please fill out the form, contact Brenda, Nick, or DEP.
- Watershed Specialist training just completed an all virtual training for three ½ days, almost all Watershed Specialists participated, next year training will be in person.
- PACD winter meeting is scheduled to be person January 26 & 27 at the Wyndham, with a virtual option available.
- Late winter, early spring state wide virtual ag meeting should be the end of February.
- Managers asked for an Ad hoc committee made up of 3 Directors and 5 Managers, who asked for a meeting with the Secretary of Agriculture and Secretary of DEP for an entry in the CDFAP line on both budgets.
- PACD is putting together a month by month suggestion for all Districts to contact their legislatures to keep us in the forefront of their mind. Next week there will be a comprehensive plan being released for legislative outreach. Michelle from Pike, appreciate work on that initiative.
- House Bill 591, motion from PACD Legislative committee “PACD opposes House Bill 591 as currently written” was opposed because it was open ended.

A motion was made by Kelly Stagen to oppose House Bill 591 as currently written, Kristina Heaney seconded motion. Roll call vote, Chris, Josh, Kristina, Michele, Jenna, Jamie, and Doug all agreed. Motion carried.

- Third party reviewer legislation that aren't done by Conservation Districts passed their individual chamber but hasn't passed second chamber yet. Continuing to monitor status.
- Statewide expedited review program, PACD asked if legislation moves forward it be amended to allow districts already with that program continue their current program.
- Senate Bill 465 funding for BMP program, still in Senate Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 832 BMP program came out of Committee to go to Senate Appropriations Committee. Amount of money for admin expenses was cut in half to 2%
- Senate Bill 545, definition of pollution and House Bill 1842, put together a schematic of what would be a reportable spill and what wouldn't.
- Federal stimulus dollars Senate bill 525 creates a third growing greener program and is heading to the Appropriations Committee.
- Senate Bill 251 Fertilizer, Dept of Ag supporting as currently written. Attempt to softly regulate in person lawn care fertilization usage and changes at the manufacturing level.

Regional Information sharing:

- *Carbon:* Chris, currently going through their audit and prepping the budget for 2022. E&S has been keeping them very busy along with the hurricanes, site inspections, buttoning up sites for winter months. There is a hiccup with their Growing Greener Grant, KME in Nesquehoning, the company went bankrupt so they may not be able to finish the grant since ownership could change in the next few months. Discussions held on contacting that company and working on a grant extension.
- *Luzerne:* Josh, much like what Chris said, busy but nothing significantly unique. E&S activities are probably the busiest he has seen there as Manager in the last 16 years. Hurricane and a very wet season made their mosquito program very busy. Big news, they were very busy working on and finished their county wide action plan for clean water by Sept 30th deadline. The process was very grueling but there was a lot of benefit and helped with strategic planning, they are now entering into implementation phase of the plan.
- *Monroe:* Kristina, second and third what Chris & Josh has said, unprecedented numbers of complaints and submissions. They are almost complete with their strategic plan, just went through goals and objectives, looking forward to wrapping this up. Monroe hired four new staff, trying to get them all on-boarded. They received two grants that we are working through, USDA Farm to School grant, to help teach agriculture in the classroom and cooking classes with local produce. Growing Greener Sand Spring Run project is going out to bid soon.
- *Pike:* Michele, they hired two new staff, one Watershed Specialist and one Administrative Assistant. The reinvigoration of source water collaborative between Pike, Monroe and Wayne is underway along with working with source water plan already established in the county and creating new ones. Meeting scheduled with Emergency Management protocol on spills and scheduled a meeting with Tioga County on their protocol to hopefully duplicate in Pike. They are in the middle of updating their hazard mitigation plan, requesting that source water be added to that plan. Common plan of development fact sheet is still a nightmare, struggling through that. Large PennDOT projects on I-84, all five have been going relatively

well but have had major compliance issues this past year, which has been extremely frustrating. Not receiving any fees and yet spending a significant amount of staff time is hard to explain to the board. Chris from Carbon echoing this is going to be more and more of an issue, they are seeing a big increase in volume of PennDOT projects.

- *Schuylkill*: Jenna, they are hosting an event at their county park this Sunday. They are also wrapping up a large floodplain restoration project they are very excited about, this is remediation of what was called the devils hole, a huge pile of coal waste piled into the stream and has now been removed and they are doing a wetland creation and floodplain remediation. They completed the Chesapeake Bay tasks as well, it was very helpful in a lot of ways, but it exposed some un-pleasantries as well. There is work to be done to account for and to capture the data. The conclusion is there are not enough trained technicians and engineers to handle these projects since there is a lot of turn over in their county NRCS office.
- *Wayne*: Jamie, the Nutrient Management Growing Greener grant is making good progress and they are getting landowners contacted, also working on PEMA hazard mitigation plan. This month they lost their Forest Specialist, she got job as the EE Director at Keystone College, so they will be advertising to fill this position.
- *Wyoming*: Doug, they are working on a large storage facility with planning and engineering partnerships with Growing Greener and NRCS. It is a very valuable and re-energized operator. Atlantic pipe line project closing out, cooperation throughout. Their Ag Conservation Field Day was, cancelled due to Covid concerns, since they are considered high spread county. They have purchased a new building which will be a permanent home for the conservation district.

Partner Reports

- *SCC*: Karl, written report was provided. They recently hired a Dirt & Gravel person to help with that program. SCC staff is back in a hybrid model for 5 days in office and 5 days out, best method of contact is via phone or by email. The District Director appointments process is going on. He is encouraging districts to continue with a virtual option to all meetings. Just a reminder, the Sunshine Law bill enacted changes as of 8/31 by posting meeting agendas 24 hours prior at your site and to your website. Agenda must be specific to actions being taken and copies to be provided of the agenda to all in person attendees. Karl provided overview of Bill 554. The Nutrient Management Agreement is in the last year of the 5-year
- looking at the delegation agreements to be approved and have in place by next July. Dirt & Gravel Road program workgroup looking at stream crossings, some are complicated and expensive, Districts are asking for guidance and a more comprehensive manual, hopefully that will be reviewed and approved in 2022. AgriLink Investments, low interest loan program with 5 ½ million in loans below market rate. Chesapeake Resilient Farms Initiative, bring 737million to the Chesapeake Bay states over 10 years through NRCS. Awards were given out at Ag Progress Days to Nancy DiFiore, for Leadership Training Excellence.
- *DEP*: Karen, added to Karl's report on the Sunshine Act, she encourages all Districts to go to the Office of Open Records site to attend webinars on the Sunshine Act and the new agenda requirements. DEP's written report was submitted. DEP grant funding updates to section 319 grants, Growing Greener Grant awards this winter, grant agreements have mostly been completed. Chesapeake and engineer agreements are still being worked on. You are unable to submit your Chesapeake Bay Technician or Engineer reporting into Greenport until those have been finalized and entered on their end. DEP encourages districts to maintain

Attachment B forms in CWA, and continuously keep those updated. There has been a webinar posted to CWA on Exceptional Value Wetlands which was presented in July. DEP is still trying to fill Conservation District Field Rep positions and are working with HR getting the job postings ready. They also just recently started the process of getting approval to fill Karen's old position dealing with CDDFAP, manager/tech reporting, etc. this posting should happen soon as well. Karen mentioned that the last few 4th quarter watershed reimbursements are being processed and if you have not received your new signed contract, hold off submitting until you get the signed agreement with the new number.

- *NRCS*: Nancy, the front page of our report usually covers a success story, this one was the Wayne County high tunnel project. Bootcamp 2 training was in person and the Introduction to Conservation training will be in person but there will be a virtual option. They did a soil survey refresh update and added 11 new interpretations to the soil survey. They had a very successful contracting year with 634 contracts for just under 30 million dollars protecting 103,000 acres of land. NRCS is investing 50 million for racial justice and equity money to historically underserved groups. They are continuously hiring and back filling positions. An executive order came out mandating vaccinations for all federal and their affiliates by the Nov 22nd, deadline. Discussion was held that any contractor and tag team individual will be asked to provide proof of vaccination along with if you are housed in a District office or meet with NRCS on a regular basis but there are still some unanswered questions, but updates will be provided as they are received.

Chuck thanked everyone for all their hard work and look forward to seeing you all March 25, meeting adjourned 12:07pm