

**PACD North West Region Meeting Minutes
Jefferson County Conservation District, Brookville, PA
September 30, 2021**

Welcome and Introductions

PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

In-person attendance: Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Cliff Lane, McKean; Cassie Daniels, PACD; Danielle Kalp, PACD; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Shaun Wessell, Jefferson; Tom McClure, Erie; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Donna Zofcin, Forest; Dave Rupert, Armstrong; Christine Hughes, Jefferson.

Virtual Attendance: Jeff Werner, NRCS; John Green, DEP NWRO; Lori Boughton, DEP; Amy Bouman, DEP; Frank Snyder, SCC; Ian Harrell, Butler; Kate Wehler, Elk; Jo Ann McCready, Lawrence; Kelly Stagen, PACD President.

Region Director Election

Brenda Shambaugh suggested re-election of Cliff Lane as Region Director. Cliff Lane agreed to accept the position if re-elected. Brenda called for a motion for re-election of Cliff Lane as Region Director.

It was moved by Donna Zofcin and seconded by Tom McClure to re-elect Cliff Lane as Region Director. Motion carried.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be hosted by Forest County Conservation District at the Tionesta Church of God on April 27, 2022, contingent upon approval from the church board.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

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

It was moved by Shaun Wessell and seconded by Holly Laird to approve the minutes of the virtual meeting on April 8, 2021. Motion carried.

PACD Report

- Brenda announced PACD will be direct depositing all funding distributions in the future. A canceled check and completed direct deposit form should be sent to Diane Young at dyoung@pacd.org as soon as possible. District PACD due checks will be able to be transmitted this way in the future as well.



- *TAG Update* – Danielle Kalp and Cassie Daniels discussed their current projects and the effect Covid has on construction season of 2021.
- Brenda Shambaugh provided verbal highlights from her written report:
- *Communication*: PACD would request any Board Directors emails be sent to PACD if they would like to be included in the PACD newsletter email list.
- *PACD Committee Openings*: There are several open seats available for the PACD committees. The openings on Brenda’s report were discussed. It was noted the time commitment is minimal. Brenda asked that all managers consider talking to their Board members about serving on the committee.
- *Leadership Development*: Registration is open for the 2021 Fall Leadership webinar series and is open to all district personnel and directors.
- *Agricultural Conservation Technical “Boot Camp” Training*: Training was completed in August. Application for the next round opens in January. Anyone with interest in completing the training can contact Shannon Wenger at PACD. The Intro to Conservation Planning will be held in October.
- *Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program*: Sixty programs are underway with a total of \$103,000 awarded. Look for a new grant announcement in January 2022.
- *Education and Outreach*: PACD has been active on social media. Districts with a social media presence should feel free to use the PACD social media content on their own profiles.
- *Conservation Enhancement Program*: A CREP Partner Training Webinar Series was offered to all staff involved in the program. Recordings of the training are available on the Clean Water Academy to anyone who would like to view it.
- *QuickBooks Training*: QuickBooks Training was offered to the districts. The training is available on the Clean Water Academy.
- *Riparian Buffer Sub-grants*: PACD is continuing to accept sub-grant applications. An extension for the funding has been requested from the DCNR.
- *Clean Water Academy*: PACD continues to work closely with DEP to provide virtual training. Districts are encouraged to utilize these resources.
- *Chapter 102/105 Training*: In person basic technical training is planned for Spring 2022.
- *2021 Conservation District Watershed Specialist Conference*: The conference will be held in October and will be virtual this year. If anyone wants to participate, please contact Molly Burns of PACD as soon as possible.
- *PACD/SCC Winter Meeting*: The 2022 PACD/SCC Winter Meeting is set to take place on January 26-27th. It is anticipated an in-person and virtual option will be offered.
- *Statewide Ag Meeting*: There will be a virtual Statewide Ag meeting in February 2022.
- *Legislative Activity*:
- PACD has formed an AD Hoc committee to develop statewide budget strategy. The committee will be proposing a 20% increase to Conservation District funds. Lori Boughton asked for further clarification on which line items this would affect which Brenda provided. PACD will also be providing the governor’s office with a “heads-up” this increase request will be coming.
- A new plan is being developed to provide year-long activity with the legislatures. This plan will include a request for a quick monthly activity from each district which will be an attempt to keep the districts at the front of legislatures minds.

- *SB 591* – The Legislative Committee has decided to oppose the bill as currently written due to the language being too open ended and insufficient. The Southwest Region voted in favor unanimously to support the Legislative Committee’s opposition of this bill. A motion was called to” support the opposition of HB 591 as currently written.” It was moved by Donna Zofcin and seconded by Kate Wehler. Discussion was requested by Tom McClure who asked if there has been any action on the bill thus far. Brenda discussed the process of the legislative process on the bill. It was also discussed the actions that PACD have taken regarding the bill including letter and email correspondence. Brenda will send an email to legislature again discussing PACD’s concerns. Following discussion motion carried.
- *SB 525* – Discussed this was one time funding which is funded through federal sources but distributed as State funding. It was discussed this was stimulus funding.
- *SB 832* – Discussed this is also one time funding through stimulus money which provides funding for BMPs on the ground. One negative to the bill is that administrative fees were decreased from 4% to 2% in the language.

Regional Information Sharing

- *Armstrong* – Holly Laird discussed their ongoing construction projects. Holly was appointed the new district manager as Dave Rupert is nearing retirement. The district will have a Fall Tour on October 22, 2021.
- *Butler* – Ian Harrell discussed they have various 102 projects ongoing. The district hired a new Agriculture/Nutrient Management Specialist. The district is looking into a new rental program in which they will purchase Ag equipment and then provide rentals to local farmers.
- *Elk* – Kate Wehler reported that they lost their watershed specialist but have hired a new employee to fill the position. The district also lost their E&S technician and will be hiring to fill that position. She discussed the construction projects and the negative effect Covid had on the construction this year.
- *Erie* – Tom McClure provided updates on their ongoing construction projects. They will be hosting a Green Ways and Trails summit this year and started a spotted lantern fly committee to plan for future invasive species control.
- *Forest* – Donna Zofcin provided updates on their ongoing construction projects including two dirt and gravel road projects.
- *Jefferson* – Shaun Wessell reported the district held a 75th anniversary banquet. The district was able to hire a seasonal technician over the summer. Upcoming events in Fall include workshops, a lunch and learn with municipalities, and an E&S Contractor workshop.
- *Lawrence* – Jo Ann McCready reported on the introduction of solar farms to the area. The district is trying to discourage use of active quality farmland for the solar farms. Jo Ann discussed their ongoing projects including an Ag BMP project and dirt and gravel roads projects. The district is also busy with NPDES permits for limestone removal.
- *McKean* – Sandy Thompson discussed the districts ongoing construction projects including Ag and AMD projects. Construction was affected by rising material prices. The district will be holding a tour on October 21st of their AMD projects. Attendance will be limited to mostly legislative representatives due to parking restrictions. The district is also working on a program to treat invasive plant species, in particular Goats Rue.
- Sandy Thompson and Brenda Shambaugh also discussed a funding program through the US Forest Service to provide education of Invasive Species. Sandy learned of the program and

requested PACD be the applicant which led to a \$210,000 grant application for forest restoration.

PA State Conservation Commission Report

Frank Snyder provided verbal highlights from the SCC written report:

- The SCC welcomes Sherri Law to a new position in the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Maintenance Program.
- The SCC is now in a hybrid work schedule of in-office and telework.
- A webinar was held in September with conservation district managers and county chief clerks to review the district director appointment process which is underway.
- The SCC requests that districts continue to offer virtual conferences as they begin to hold in person meetings again so that agencies with in-person meeting restrictions can continue to attend.
- The SCC urges conservation districts and all Pennsylvania public agencies to be aware of and familiarize themselves with the Sunshine Law Amendments. Districts should be aware that a meeting agenda must be posted 24 hours in advance of a public meeting. Districts should not act on any official business that was not included in the agenda except under certain circumstances.
- A workgroup of state staff and conservation district staff was formalized to review and update the Required Output Measures and perform a program workload analysis for Nutrient Management and Manure Management. It is anticipated the funding will be distributed based on 6 different factors. Districts are encouraged to review those factors and provide comment.
- The Commission recently authorized staff to begin looking at potential regulatory revisions for several program areas.
- The DGLVR Program has seen an increase in stream crossing installations in recent years so, the Commission is working on additional policy and technical guidance for these projects.
- The REAP program was discussed. Secretary Russell Redding recently announced an additional \$13 million in tax credits through this program.
- The AgriLink Program is expected to be launched in mid-October.
- The Conservation Excellence Grant Program Allocations were made at the Commissions July meeting.
- The SCC 2021-2021 Awards recipients were announced at the Commissions July meeting. The recipients are listed on the SCC report.

DEP Partnership Report

John Green provided verbal highlights to the report as follows:

- There is a DEP initiative to provide revisions to the Manure Management Manual which will accommodate small operations. The revisions will go to the Ag Advisory Board in December for review.
- The DEP Grant Programs were discussed. Section 319 should be announced soon, and the Growing Greener Grant Program is anticipated to be announced this winter.
- The Clean Water Academy was discussed. Districts are reminded to maintain their district staff employment status using the forms on the Clean Water Academy.

- The Exceptional Value Wetlands Training was added to the Clean Water Academy from the training held in July. The webinar is not intended to provide instruction to making final EV wetland existing use determinations.
- Lori Boughton added that there would be some staff changes to DEP. They recently hired Amy Bowman and John in Compliance and Enforcement will be leaving.

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Report

Jeff Werner provided verbal highlights of his written report as follows:

- There are currently many vacancies and newly hired positions in the field office. If any of the districts are having trouble with communications with NRCS, please feel free to contact Jeff Werner.
- Jeff discussed the heavy use area project highlighted on his report and the benefits to these projects.
- Boot Camp was completed and was a success with virtual and in-person training this year.
- The Annual Soil Survey Data Refresh took place in September 2021. New interpretations were added.
- The 2021 Farm Bill Programs, Easement Programs, and RCPP statuses were presented.
- NRCS is investing up to \$50 million to support historically underserved farmers and ranchers.
- The LiDAR data for Pennsylvania has been successfully completed.

Activities Conclude

The meeting was adjourned at 12:01 PM.