

**PACD South West Region Meeting Minutes
Westmoreland Conservation District, Greensburg, PA
September 21, 2021**

Call to Order

PACD Region Director Emil Bove welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:00 A.M. He asked that everyone around the room and on the call introduce themselves and mention the agency they represented.

Virtual and in-person participants: Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Chuck Duritsa, Westmoreland; John Dryzal, Cambria; Ray Gorman, Cambria; Todd Thornburg, Washington; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Karl Brown, SCC; Emil Bove, Westmoreland; Doug Beri, Indiana; Phil Wilson, PACD; Heather Manzo, Allegheny; Erin Copeland, Allegheny; Ron Rohall, Westmoreland; Mike Price, Beaver; Greg Philips, Westmoreland; Jeff Werner, NRCS; Mark Critz, PDA; Dana Drake, DEP; Aileen Evan, DEP; Kelly Stagen, Pike/PACD President; Jill Whitcomb, DEP; Karen Books, DEP; Jeff Pflug, Beaver.

Election of Region Director

It was moved by Jeff Pflug and seconded by Todd Thornburg to elect Mike Price with Beaver County Conservation District as PACD South West Region Director. Vote was unanimous in favor of electing Mike Price.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held April 21, 2022, at 10:00 AM, at the Westmoreland district office.

Approval of Minutes

Mike Price called for amendments to the minutes. None were presented.

Motion by Emil Bove and seconded by Heather Manzo to approve the minutes of the March 30, 2021, meeting as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

PACD Business Report

Brenda provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Roundtable Meeting* – Brenda announced an opportunity to meet with Deputy Secretary of Water Programs Aneca Atkinson will be upcoming at 9:00 AM on October 13th.
- *Staff Changes* – Brenda announced that Phil Gardner retired after over 20 years of service and will be replaced by another full-time person. Hiring process will begin in October.
- *Monday Weekly Newsletter* – Brenda announced that if there were any people not receiving the PACD Weekly Newsletter and would like to be added to receive it to contact PACD.



- *Leadership Development* – For anyone wanting more information about the Strategic Planning Grant, contact Matt Miller at PACD.
- *Ag Boot Camp* – Looking to go back to fully in-person training in the spring.
- *Non-point Source Grants* – Brenda announced that there were over 60 grants awarded in the Non-Point Source Prevention Mini Program.
- *Education & Outreach* – Brenda announced a PACD PSA was sent to districts on the benefits of vehicle maintenance for the environment and the PACD social media has been very active.
- *CREP Outreach* – Brenda announced PACD will post recommendations and work has begun for CREP education and outreach.
- *QuickBooks Training* – Brenda announced that PACD put together a QuickBooks training that was free for members and instructed basic, advanced, and payroll levels of training. Over 200 people participated.
- *Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants* – Still approx. \$170,000 left, a total of 22 grants have been completed. Brenda announced that PACD has applied for a cost share Riparian Buffer grant.
- *Chapter 102/105 Training* – Training is scheduled to be held in Spring 2022. PACD is looking to work with DEP as well as NRCS on the Clean Water Academy training.
- *Watershed Specialist Webinar* – Set to be held on October 5th – 7th 2021.
- *PACD Winter Meeting* – PACD will be holding its annual winter meeting in-person on January 26th to January 27th at the Wyndham in State College, PA. This meeting will be held jointly with the SCC.
- *Statewide Ag Meeting* – A virtual meeting in February 2022 is currently being planned.
- *Legislative Activity* – Starting July 1, 2022, a campaign will be put together to help districts gain more funding. Funding hasn't been increased since 2004. PACD has put together an Ad-Hoc committee to plan for the campaign. They have met this week and will be using 4 conservation districts as templates. The committee will be having month-by-month projects if conservation districts want to be involved. The committee has sent an email to the PA Secretary of Agriculture and DEP giving preliminary budget priorities.
- *Ag Conservation Assistance*- If passed by the PA General Assembly, funding will come from Federal Stimulus money.
- *Growing Greener*- (SB 525) Funding will be a 1-time Federal Stimulus money payment.
- *Small Projects*- (HB 591) PACD at an earlier date voted to oppose HB 591 as it is currently written. The committee felt uncomfortable voting in favor due to lack of information.

Motion to oppose HB 591 as currently written was made by Doug Beri. Seconded by Emil Bove. Motion passed unanimously.

District Information Sharing

- *Allegheny* – Heather Manzo noted that their staff has grown back to pre-pandemic levels. A new Assistant Director has been hired (Erin Copeland), and they are currently working on Board of Directors nominations.
- *Washington* – Todd Thornburg reported they have recently moved into a new building and that it was struck by lightning. Their Ag Technician recently held a no-till demonstration at Ag Days. The district has seen an up-tick in new housing developments and 102 permits. The Watershed Technician is currently in training. The district has hired a new DGLVR Technician. Todd noted that staff turnover continues to be an ongoing issue. The district is looking to hire 2 people for permitting positions Primary 105 and Secondary 102.

- *Beaver* – Jeff Pflug reported that their Chapter 102 delegation is currently on a probationary period. Jeff mentioned that Georgia Miller has retired, and they are looking to hire a full time person to replace her. The district is going to be launching a Mobile Information Center for the public. The district has recently completed a QA/QC audit.
- *Indiana* – Doug Beri reported the conservation district has recently moved into a new building, and a lightning strike disabled all electronic equipment in the building. The district is currently in the middle of their strategic plan and should be finished in early October. The district is currently wrapping up DGLVR projects and recently finished 2 stream crossings.
- *Cambria* – John Dryzal reported that they will be holding their legislative breakfast on October 8th. He also reported the district set up a booth at the Cambria County Fair and brought in outside agencies for public information. Some agencies brought in snakes and bugs. Other agencies and people that were involved were the emergency CART team, people holding drone demonstrations, Farm Bureau, and St. Francis University. The district completed several stream projects during the summer, and John thanked Jeff Werner of NRCS for setting up Ag Learn software for their Ag, Technician.
- *Westmoreland* – Greg Philips reported they are working on an AMD project on Tinkers Run that discharges approx. 5000 GPM. This project is identified in the strategic plan as a high priority. Bob Hedin Environmental group has done a study on the discharge and has identified a place to treat the water in Fayette County. The district is currently looking at how to purchase the property. Another large discharge near Latrobe is being worked on that discharges approx. 3000 GPM. Greg also mentioned that the district was working on a fundraising campaign including programmatic funds with a possibility of a revolving fund for ongoing projects recently. The district is also working on an award reception for many people including John Starr who turned a former coal refuse into a functioning farm. The district is also working on the Act 167 Stormwater Management ordinance with a 6 to 8 part video series for homeowners on how to improve stormwater management.

State Conservation Commission (SCC) Report (Handout)

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following report:

- Karl noted that the SCC recently hired Sherri Law for the DGLVR program. Sherri comes from Huntingdon County Conservation District.
- Karl mentioned they are still working a hybrid office schedule for their staff
- Karl talked about the Conservation District Director appointment process that is underway
- He recommended that conservation districts offer ways for board members, agencies, and the public to participate in meetings through conference calls or video conference.
- He discussed the amendments to the Sunshine Law (SB 554)
- He gave an update for the Nutrient Management/Manure Management Delegation Agreement Workgroup
- He discussed the formation of the Regulatory Revision Process
- He gave information on the DGLVR Program Stream Crossing Document Development & Review.
- He talked about the REAP tax credit program application period that opened August 2.
- He discussed the Agricultural Linked Investment (Agrilink) Program
- He discussed the Conservation Excellence Grant Program Allocations
- He gave information on the SCC 2020-2021 Awards announcement

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report (Handout)

Karen Books & Jill Whitcomb provided information on the following topics:

- They will be announcing the 319 Grant recipients soon.
- Growing Greener Grant program – plans on announcing the awards over the winter.
- Watershed Specialist grant agreements
- Chesapeake Bay Technician and Engineer Agreements review
- PACD Growing Greener CREP Grant
- PACD Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative Grant
- The Clean Water Academy (CWA) – maintaining Attachment B forms in the CWA
- Exceptional Value Wetlands Webinar
- PA's Phase 3 Watershed implementation plan newsletter for the Chesapeake Bay watershed
- Pilot and Tier 2 counties continue to prepare Milestone and annual reports. The Tier 3 and 4 counties are in the final stretch of CAP Development.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report (Handout)

Denise Coleman & Jeff Werner provided the following report:

- Jeff discussed the Early Successional Habitat studies and findings
- They gave information about Ag. Boot Camp II held in-person in August
- They gave an update on the Soil Survey Refresh and the new information will be available in Web Soil Survey in October.
- They gave an update on FY 2021 Farm Bill Programs status.
- They announced that NRCS is investing \$50 Million in New Cooperative Agreements for Racial Justice and Equity.
- They gave an update on the LiDAR data for Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

Mark Critz reported that they will be closing the Urban Ag. grant on October 15. He discussed some of the areas under quarantine for the Spotted Lanternfly and announced they will be promoting the Mental Health Stress Program focusing on getting more Ag. workers and producers into the program.

Other Discussion

Ron Rohall mentioned NACD will be opening grants for Urban Ag, projects around November 1. Doug Beri discussed the issues with AMLER funding and that it must now be handled in-house. It is becoming very difficult for districts to access the money. Brenda Shambaugh thanked everyone for their time and input on all discussions. Mike Price thanked everyone for electing him as PACD South West region director and having confidence in him to do the job.

Adjournment

It was moved by Chuck Duritsa and seconded by Doug Beri to adjourn the meeting at 12:10 P.M. Motion approved unanimously.