

**PACD South East Region Meeting Minutes  
Virtual Conference Minutes  
March 24, 2022**

**Call to Order**

PACD Region Director Piper Sherburne welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 9:30 A.M.

*Virtual participants:*; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Gretchen Schatschneider, Bucks; Chris Strohmaier, Chester; Ed Magargee, Delaware; Kevin Frederick, Lehigh; Holly Kaplan, Lehigh; William Erdman; Lehigh; Jessica Buck, Montgomery; Dion Campbell, Northampton; Ted Veresink, Northampton; Piper Sherburne, PACD SE Region Director, Berks; Kelly Stagen, PACD President, Pike; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Karl Brown, SCC; Charles Hanner, NRCS; Yuri Plowden, NRCS; Karen Books, DEP; Linda Mackey, DEP.

**Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on September 29, 2022 beginning at 9:30 AM, at either Hennings or the 4-H Center of Montgomery County.

**Approval of Minutes**

Piper Sherburne called for a motion to approve the minutes of the last meeting as presented.

*Motion by Ed Magargee and seconded by Ted Veresink to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2021, meeting as presented. Motion carried.*

**PACD Business Report**

Brenda thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and a great meeting yesterday with Deputy Secretary of Water Programs Aneca Atkinson.

Brenda provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Conservation District Week* – Brenda encouraged all districts to participate and to contact their legislators using the templates that were provided
- *Invasive Species* – Brenda announced that the Governor's office has proposed a statewide PRISM Program that would provide funding on a regional level. PACD developed an Op/Ed to solicit support from the public. Piper encouraged everyone to speak with their legislators, as the Program will be heavily reliant on conservation districts. Piper thanked Brenda for her contributions and expressed appreciation for a very active Invasive Species Council. She noted that a "ground up" vs "top down" approach, will be taken, broken out by PACD regions, and they will soon be looking for someone to take the lead. Further discussion will take place at the Fall region meeting



- *U.S. Department of Forestry Grant* – PACD has received a grant for a pilot program in northwest PA that is currently going through the budget process. Amount and date TBD
- *Ag Plan Reimbursement* – PACD was recently awarded a \$500,000 grant through DEP to create a mini-grant program with a 20% for the development of manure management, nutrient management, and Ag E&S plans
- *Clean Water Academy* – Brenda encouraged districts to contact her or Nick Yeagy to request other training opportunities. She announced the winners in the annual contest for most-viewed webinars were Lancaster County Conservation District (District) and Jacob Kennedy (Individual – formerly an intern, now a PACD TAG staff member)
- *Ag Boot Camp* – Basic and Level II trainings are scheduled for April 2022, and Intro to Conservation Planning will be held in Fall of 2022
- *Non-point Source Pollution Prevention* – Brenda announced that there are 60 projects underway, with a total of \$103,000 awarded through this mini-grant program
- *102-105 Technical Training* – Brenda announced that the virtual technical training will take place March 29-31, 2022, with an in-person field component taking place May 3-5, 2022
- *Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting* – Registration is open for the meeting, which will take place virtually May 18-19, 2022. To register, go to <https://conta.cc/35aMsgK>
- *Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series* – Brenda announced that registration will open in August for the webinar series taking place virtually October 5-7, 2022 at no cost to districts
- *Leadership Development* – The Hybrid Staff Conference was held in February with over 200 virtual and in-person attendees. The conference included the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conservation District Video Awards. Director Training workshops were held in-person and virtually in March. Planning is underway for a Spring webinar series. For more information, contact Matt Miller or go to [www.paleadership.org](http://www.paleadership.org)
- *Conservation Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach Program* – The application deadline for the 2022 CREP mini-grant program has been extended to April 8, 2022. Brenda advised that Water Words That Work is currently working on Phase Two of the CREP marketing campaign. The updated Landowner Guide to Buffer Success is available through Holly Miller or at [creppa.org](http://creppa.org)
- *Legislative* – Brenda expressed appreciation to all 66 conservation districts for preparing their 2021 Highlights Pages, which were distributed to PA House and Senate members, PACD partners and the Governor’s office. An Ad Hoc Committee was formed with the goal of developing a comprehensive and realistic plan for legislative outreach and education. Brenda encouraged districts to participate in the monthly PACD Legislative Program and personally meet with House and Senate members. Brenda is monitoring other legislation, as outlined in the report, and previously discussed
- *Three-Year PACD Dues Schedule* – Brenda opened the floor to discussion about the new Dues Schedule. She provided information to explain the rationale for the proposed increases and advised that the Executive Council will vote on the recommended dues schedule in July 2022. It was noted that dues increases are the same amount across all districts and are no longer based on population
- *PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference* – The Joint Annual Conference will be held July 20-21, 2022, in Harrisburg. This will be an in-person event with an option to attend the executive Council meeting virtually

## **District Information Sharing**

- Bucks – Recent staff changes include a new Watershed Specialist, a new Ag Technician, and an Administrative Permit Coordinator, as well as two summer interns and a new Board member. Bucks County has a new piece of equipment made available through PALMS: a CD3 trailer (boat washing station) that is being used to educate boatowners. Will be working on a dredge project to continually monitor and determine if water quality can be improved. Planning to put in for Strategic Planning Grant next year
- Chester – Ag team is very busy in both watersheds. Leaning towards NFWF grants vs. applying for another RCPP grant. NPDS very busy with permits. Chester County completed a compensation study last year, which will cost the district an additional \$177,000 for staff compensation. The Board is adamant about staff being paid, but a challenging budget year is expected
- Delaware – The CD Technician will be leaving, and the County is in the process of trying to fill positions. LVR: met spending deadline despite higher bids than anticipated. Due to mini-grant funding through PACD, the district will be holding an MS4 event, with The Center for Watershed Protection presenting
- Lehigh – Largest Envirothon to date to be held largely in person. First SLF Workshop geared toward municipality to be held in April. Filled NOT position is working out well and getting caught up with backlog
- Montgomery – A second stormwater engineer was recently hired, and an accountant will be coming on board in April. Montgomery will be hosting an in-person Envirothon and a new Urban Agriculture Cover Crop workshop, as well as co-hosting a BMP Maintenance Workshop for landscape professionals with Chester, Delaware, and Bucks Conservation Districts. The Board will be evaluating the fee schedule with the budget subcommittee and evaluated ways to improve efficiency. Evaluating and working with partners on NOT issues
- Berks – The annual seedling sale will be expanded to a two-day event, the 2<sup>nd</sup> day being a “Conservation Celebration” geared towards families and youth. Brenda suggested getting legislators involved as much as possible. Berks recently received a sizeable gift, with which the Board decided to purchase a bus to be retrofitted for use as a mobile classroom. It has been deemed the SWAG bus. Finally got PCSM delegated after two years of work. District is currently up to six staff members and is in the process of working with the county on new office space in the Ag Center, with anticipated move-in date in early 2023
- Northampton – Ag Specialist will be working with NRCS on farmland preservation. An aerial cover crop project completed in the fall produced excellent results. Other activities include Walk in the Field, Workshop with local producers, Spotted Lantern Fly tree banding & edge scraping event, Cub Scout pack going to local parks, educational event at a local vineyard through a PACD grant, BMP training video, working with DEP to address sinkhole problems

## **Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report (Handout)**

Karen Books and Linda Mackey provided the following highlights from their report:

- Technical Engineer and Watershed Specialist contracts will be out in the next couple of weeks
- Rounds will be open this spring for Growing Greener and 319 grants
- EPA is doing Region Three Animal Agriculture Assessment

- Information has gone out to 105 districts; districts are encouraged to submit comments through the RA system
- Chapter 102 E-Permit system now includes amendments for earth disturbance
- KEYS Program now allows conservation districts to view 105 permits
- PAG-O1 went live March 1<sup>st</sup>, and training is available on the Clean Water Academy
- The eighth round of meetings on the State Water Plan have been completed, with the 9<sup>th</sup> round taking place in April
- Chesapeake Bay office is working with partners on BMP verification efforts
- Volunteers are needed for the state Envirothon. Volunteers should be able to get free State Police Criminal, Child Abuse and FBI clearances online
- Linda encouraged conservation district staff to complete pre-requisite training prior to Basic Training in May. There will be a field component this year
- Interviews are underway for the SE Regional Office Compliance Specialist position
- Linda thanked all who participate on regional committees

### **State Conservation Commission (SCC) Report (Handout)**

Karl Brown provided the following highlights from his report:

- Financial interest statements are due May 1<sup>st</sup>
- Ninety-two percent of Director appointments are in
- On PRISM & state funding, Karl encouraged all to continue to educate on concept and funding
- Dirt and Gravel Roads – Stream crossing policy, standard and manual are being updated; third round of quality assurance visits are starting
- Conservation Excellence Grants - \$10M has been committed to Districts
- The application process for the REAP Tax Credit has closed, with 347 applications received and \$14M in tax credits requested
- Karl provided a fact sheet on the AgriLink Program for low-interest loans
- On nutrient management – they are reviewing the five-year agreement to bring before the Commission for approval in May and working through the E-Grants system to transition beginning in July
- Eighteen states have had positive tests for the high-pathogen Avian Influenza, and Karl encouraged diligence in biosecurity when visiting farms
- Penn State is conducting an Ag BMP survey
- Discussions continue regarding the formation of a conservation district in Philadelphia

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

Charlie Hanner and Yuri Plowden provided highlights from the PA NRCS Conservation Update for the South East region:

- The NRCS office is now open to the public, mask free, with telework continuing for another month or two
- A few variations in EQUIP: CIC5-year contracts for land management practices; CCI pilot program; EWP; CARP supplementary funds to increase material cost
- Working on watershed program in Bucks County
- Soil survey updating in Delaware County with a field review taking place the week of August 23<sup>rd</sup>. Conservation districts are invited

- Soil Health Stability training will take place in May

Piper Sherburne thanked everyone for their time and input on all discussions.

### **Adjournment**

*It was moved by Ed Magargee and seconded by Chris Strohmaier to adjourn the meeting at 11:49 A.M. Motion carried.*