

**PACD North East Region Meeting Minutes
Schuylkill Conservation District, Pottsville, PA
October 25, 2022**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

North East Region Director Kelly Stagen called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:06 a.m.

Virtual and In-person Participants: Kelly Stagen, PACD Region Director; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Chris Storm, Carbon; Josh Longmore, Luzerne, Tom Herbert, Luzerne, Jack Hanish, Luzerne; Kristina Heaney, Monroe; Michele Long, Pike; Jerry Stiles, Lackawanna; Jamie Knecht, Wayne; Doug Deutsch, Wyoming, Jennifer Ramey, Susquehanna; Jenna St. Clair, Schuylkill; Lorie Reichert, Schuylkill; M. Irvil Kear, NACD; Jaci Kerstetter, DEP; Janet Creegan, DEP; Caitlin Skibiell, DEP; Katie Seymore, DEP; Yuri Plowden, NRCS; Jennifer Matthews, NRCS; Karl Brown, SCC.

Set Date for Next Meeting

Schuylkill County again offered to host the meeting on Thursday, March 30, 2023 in-person and with a virtual option.

Approval of the Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the March 25, 2022 meeting were provided for review.

A motion was made by Jennifer Ramey to approve the meeting minutes of March 25, 2022. Jenna St. Clair seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Election of Region Director

Brenda Shambaugh reported that Tom Herbert with Luzerne is interested in the post of North East Region Director. Tom gave a brief recap of his experience at conservation districts in Virginia and northeastern Pennsylvania.

PACD President Kelly Stagen called for any additional nominees and hearing none called for the motion to appoint Tom Herbert as Region Director.

A motion was made by Josh Longmore to appoint Tom Herbert as North East Region Director. Jerri Stiles seconded the motion. The motion carried.

PACD Business and Report:

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report.

Cambria County Conservation District Motion – Cambria County Conservation District passed a motion for deliberation during the PACD fall region meetings. Five regions have approved the



motion and the North East Region is the final region that must approve the motion. The South West Region recommended that the funding donation be between \$350 and \$500 depending on how many districts are willing to participate in this voluntary program.

“Approve asking PACD to seek approval for each district to provide funding to PACD to hire a consultant to complete a salary comparison study. Completion of such a study would provide valuable data to backup why the funding is needed, going forward. Bob Davis made a motion to approve moving forward with the salary comparison study. Second by Marty Westrick.”

Kelly Stagen called for a motion to approve the Cambria County Conservation District motion.

A motion was made by Jenna St. Clair to approve the Cambria County Conservation District’s motion that each district provide funding to PACD to hire a consultant to complete a salary comparison study. Jack Hanish seconded the motion.

Discussion followed with Tom Herbert asking whether each district would be required to provide funding or whether participation would be voluntary. Brenda stated that the motion from Cambria County was that each district provide voluntary funding for the study. Tom suggested an amendment to the motion to read “provide voluntary funding”.

Jenna St. Clair made a motion to amend the motion on the floor to read, “Approve asking PACD to seek approval for each district to provide voluntary funding to PACD to hire a consultant to complete a salary comparison study.” Jack Hanish seconded the amendment. Kelly Stagen called for a vote on the motion as amended and the motion carried.

Statewide PACD Meetings – Brenda asked for feedback on the 2022 Joint Annual Conference. Kristina Heaney mentioned some drawbacks while attending virtually. Electronic access seemed to be fine but networking and participating was very challenging. Doug Deutsch appreciated the opportunity to attend virtually because he had COVID-19 at the time of the meeting.

The Winter Meeting will be completely virtual with committee meetings scheduled throughout January 2023. Registration is required for each of the committee meetings.

Education and Outreach – PACD has been utilizing social media outlets to emphasize conservation district activities. Shared messages are developed and sent out to districts each month to supplement their own social media posts.

Ag Boot Camp – Basic training was held April 4-8, 2022, at the Keystone Conference Center, Ft. Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA. Level II training was held April 25-29, 2022, also at the Keystone Conference Center. The SCC and NRCS have agreed to hold a second set of boot camps if there are more people who are interested in participating.

Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program – The 2022-23 mini-grant round concluded in May 2022. Eighty-six projects were completed by 49 districts totaling \$146,863. The 2022-2023 mini-grant round opened in January with 33 projects from 25 conservation districts.

Clean Water Academy (CWA) – The Clean Water Academy has had approximately 26,000 course completions with district participation accounting for roughly half of that figure. The CWA team is in the process of creating a training program for the regulated community.

PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program – PACD was awarded a Growing Greener grant of \$500,000 from DEP to offer an Ag Plan Reimbursement Program to conservation districts for 2022-2024. The point of the program is to get as many plans in place as possible including Manure Management (Chapter 91), Nutrient Management (Chapter 83), and Ag E&S (Chapter 102) plans.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach Program Office – PACD is now accepting applications for a new round of CREP mini-grants. The mini-grant deadline is November 18, 2022. PACD also is working with Water Words That Work to continue its CREP Marketing Campaign.

Riparian Buffer Sub-grants – PACD has two riparian buffer programs available. The Multifunctional Riparian Buffer Sub-grant available through DCNR has approximately \$40,000 remaining. The Riparian Buffer Sub-grant for Conservation Districts also available through DCNR is a C2P2 grant. A 50:50 match is required for this program.

Lawn Conversion Grant – PACD will be receiving a \$100,000 C2P2 grant from DCNR to offer lawn conversion training to conservation districts and to distribute funding for projects across Pennsylvania.

Invasive Species – iMapInvasives training was offered to conservation district staff on June 28, 2022 and the training also is offered on the Clean Water Academy. PACD was awarded a grant from USDA Forest Service to offer a PRISM (Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management) Pilot program in Northwestern PA. The grant contract is still pending.

102/105 Technical Training – 102/105 Basic Technical Training will take place on May 23-26, 2023 in Harrisburg, PA. Details for the 2023 training are in development.

Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting – The Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting took place on May 18-19, 2022. Details for this training for the 2023 session are in development.

Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series – The Watershed Specialist Webinar took place October 5-7, 2022 via Zoom and was very successful.

Leadership Development – The 2022 Management Summit was held September 13-15, 2022 at Wyndham State College and was attended by 50 management staff.

Legislative Activity – All districts received the template *Highlights* page where they can highlight projects that took place in 2022. PACD then sends the *Highlights* document out to legislators in early 2023. The template has been changed to focus on thanking legislators for providing additional funding in the PDA and DEP line items for the conservation district fund.

PACD will be developing and distributing a white paper explaining the conservation district history and mission, the potential programs administered by districts, and the necessity of partnering with related agencies. The white paper will be sent to all legislators, the new governor, department secretaries, and all 66 conservation districts.

PACD Engineering Assistance/TAG Program – The PACD Engineering Assistance Program provides statewide engineering and soils technical assistance to entities developing or implementing a watershed assessment, watershed restoration plan, or watershed protection plan. PACD would like feedback on the areas where additional technical assistance from the TAG program may be needed. Several district managers stated that they would utilize the TAG Program more if technical staff were available when needed.

Regional Information Sharing

- *Carbon:* Chris Storm has been having difficulty finding technical staff, but Carbon is now fully staffed. Carbon recently formed an Ag Committee, and they are taking on more ag programs. They are looking forward to participating in the ACAP.
- *Lackawanna:* Jerry Stiles applied for a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation small watershed grant for a project on Roaring Brook where there is a large streambank slip approximately 30 feet high and 1,000 feet long. The grant application was unsuccessful, but Lackawanna is going to pursue other funding sources to implement the project. They purchased a no-till corn planter through the CAP program. Katie Gray was recently hired as the Watershed Specialist. The district is moving its offices next week to South Abington Township.
- *Luzerne:* Josh Longmore mentioned that their PENNVEST project for a manure storage heavy use ag BMP has stalled because bids came in higher than the available funds. Engineers are attempting to amend the specifications in order to re-bid the project. Luzerne had a couple of EWP projects that were funded. Workload is high following the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions.
- *Monroe:* Kristina Heaney stated that Monroe is still having problems with clean fill complaints. Prioritization with DEP has increased, and they are working with the Attorney General's office to pursue criminal charges against one of the trucking companies that has been bringing contaminated material into the county. Monroe's engineers have been providing training statewide for all regions for Chapter 102 NPDES permit review consistency. WNEP-TV did a "Home and Backyard" segment that will be aired this weekend on the Tannersville Cranberry Bog, which is managed by the district.
- *Pike:* Michele Long noted that they recently hired an engineer who is a former local consultant familiar with NPDES permitting. Pike also developed a video series to promote trails in the county. The next video series will be a municipal outreach program to educate municipal officials about the mission of the conservation district. Pike is working with staff to determine what projects should be pursued for funding.
- *Schuylkill:* Jenna St. Clair noted that ag and AMD funding that will be coming available soon ensures that there will be numerous projects ready for implementation in the near future. Jenna stated that Schuylkill dropped the Nutrient Management Delegation. Schuylkill would like to focus on ag BMPs, not regulation. Jenna mentioned that Schuylkill is having difficulty funding staff and retaining certified staff. She is meeting with the County Commissioners to discuss staff retention.

- *Susquehanna*: Jennifer Ramey mentioned that Susquehanna has been experiencing a lot of E&S complaints and they were able to hire another E&S Technician to help handle the workload. Susquehanna held a legislative bus tour, a contractor and logger workshop and their 75th open house during September. Jennifer noted that they are preparing for their seedling sale, and they conducted Envirothon training for 146 students.
- *Wayne*: Jamie Knecht mentioned that Wayne's main focus is on agricultural advancements. Wayne was the recipient of a Nutrient Management Plan Reimbursement Program grant with partners Lackawanna County, Monroe County, Pike County and NRCS. They have been able to contract with 28 landowners and continue to accept landowners to the program. The district is looking at purchasing a new no-till drill. There is a group called The Wayne Tomorrow Initiative put on by the county commissioners, an agricultural specific task force that is promoting agricultural development. Wayne is building an agricultural innovation center that will house their food pantry, demonstration gardens and pastures, and a light processing facility for people to rent a space and make a value-added product that can be sold at market. Jamie noted that Wayne CD also has decided to drop the Nutrient Management Delegation Agreement.
- *Wyoming*: Doug Deutsch stated that Wyoming held its Ag Days in person, and they were very successful. Wyoming CD continues to do agriculture projects despite price overruns. Plans are underway for their annual banquet on November 10 at Stonehedge Golf Course. E&S programs are very busy.

Partner Reports

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS): Yuri Plowden reported that they had a wonderful Ag Progress Days. NRCS will be awarding approximately \$17.8M for two locally led conservation projects through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program in the northeast region is funding a planning study for 4 dams in the Lackawaxen tributary watershed in Wayne County, a plan commencing for 5 dams in the Little Schuylkill River watershed in Schuylkill County, the Greene-Dreher PA 439 Kintz Creek Dam in Pike County, and a planning study to address flooding in the Martins Creek watershed in Wyoming County. There was a statewide review of the Land Capability Class of all soil map units that had a capability class of 2 or 3 but were labeled as not prime farmland. This was done at the request of the PDA and there were changes to about 48 map units. The ACAP money is going to nearly double EQIP funding.

Jennifer Matthews reported that District Conservationists should be reaching out to conservation districts soon to talk about the ACAP money and how NRCS and CDs can partner together.

PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP): Jaci Kerstetter reported that there is a new Chapter 102 inspection report available in the Clean Water Academy and the eLibrary. The Quarterly Activity Report in Greenport is slightly changed with a line now added to report PAG-01 activities. The PAG-12 is in draft format with public comment being accepted. The Office of Water Programs, formerly known as the Chesapeake Bay Office, has been reorganized. The newly reorganized office will be known as the Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management and divided into two divisions: the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Restoration

Division and the Nonpoint Source Management Division. Regional Watershed Managers will be reporting to the bureau. The DEP Compacts and Commissions Office also has been reorganized. Shane Kleiner has been named the Environmental Group Manager for the Watershed Support Section and Scott Heidel has been named the Environmental Group Manager for the Chesapeake Bay Partnership Section.

DEP Field Rep Janet Creegan mentioned that there have been some changes in positions at DEP NERO with Carl DeLuca now in Clean Water and Bob Jevin now Acting for Waterways and Wetlands. Janet said that if you are unsure who to speak to at NERO, check with your DEP Field Rep. Caitlin Skibieli reiterated what Janet said.

PA State Conservation Commission (SCC): Karl Brown mentioned that director nominations are open, and SCC must receive them in December. Avian flu is spreading more widely across Pennsylvania with this particular strain being tied more closely to waterfowl. Karl will be retiring soon, and Doug Wolfgang has been named as his successor. Justin Challenger will be moving into the Program Manager position and Mike Roth will be the assistant to the new Executive Director.

Karl reviewed the new PA Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program that was included in the meeting packet.

Report from NACD

NACD Treasurer M. Irvil Kear discussed the National Association's project to gather the history of conservation districts. She also mentioned that there will be a review of NACD's by-laws at its Annual Meeting on February 11-15, 2023 in New Orleans.

A motion was made by Jenna St. Clair to adjourn the meeting. Kelly Stagen seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 12:37 p.m.