

**PACD Conservation Committee
Video Conference
January 6, 2023**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairman Josh Longmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:08 a.m.

Committee members in attendance: Josh Longmore, Luzerne; John Akers, Bedford; Doug Goodlander, York; Daryl Miller, Bradford; Piper Sherburne, Berks; Jim Coslo, Centre; Carl Goshorn, Cumberland; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Matthew Long, Lycoming; Dan Miloser, Chester; David Stoner, Franklin

Guests in attendance: Adam Ortiz, EPA; Amanda Coleman, NRCS; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Caitlin Skibiell, DEP; Chris Grimsley, PACD; Chris Snyder, Juniata; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Donna Fisher, Blair; Doug Wolfgang, SCC; Erica Tomlinson, Tioga; Jamie Knecht, Wayne; Janet Creegan, DEP; Jeff Hill, York; John Dryzal, Cambria; Kelly Shenk, EPA; Kelly Stagen, Pike; Kristen Wolf, DEP; Lillian Theophanis, Susquehanna; Mark Hamilton, Tioga; MeeCee Baker, Versant Strategies; Molly Burns, PACD; Nancy Corbin, Columbia; Shannon Wehinger, PACD; Susan Gallagher, Carbon

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on July 6, 2022, were provided for review.

It was moved by Piper Sherburne and seconded by John Akers to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on July 6, 2022, as presented. Motion carried.

Governor Elect Transition Team Environmental/Agriculture Platform

MeeCee Baker, CEO of Versant Strategies and Chair of the Environment and Energy Advisory Committee of Governor-Elect Josh Shapiro's Transition Team, spoke to the committee.

- Priorities include addressing short funding. There is a knowledge drain due to retirements in state agencies, and it's difficult to hire new talent with low starting salaries.
- Coordination between agencies, such as DCNR, PUC, DEP, and PDA is also a priority. These organizations need to work together on many issues.
- Two key tasks are a) how do we lower energy costs for consumers, and b) how do we cap all the abandoned wells.
- She solicited one-page "Shapiro Shark Tank" submissions with creative ideas.
- The economic development lead is former senator Matt Smith. Pitt Chancellor Patrick Gallagher is leading education. They are all sharing ideas and have open lines of communication.



- She shared some background on Policy Secretary Akbar Hossain and how fortunate Pennsylvania is to have him in this role.

EPA Chesapeake Bay Report and EPA Inspections

EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz spoke to the committee:

- He thanked the districts for what they are doing and shared how much EPA enjoys working with the conservation districts. They are the critical link between the overarching laws and visions and the on-the-ground projects and local relationships.
- EPA is celebrating the ACAP funding as a legislative victory to get BMPs on the ground.
- The Inflation Reduction Act is offering other funding opportunities. They are working on the best ways to get that funding out for implementation.
- Their priorities are place-based, and specific to what is happening on the ground.
- Pennsylvania is one of three geographic focuses. They are interested in water quality, but also other natural resources, since water, land, and air health are interrelated.
- EPA is still in an enhanced enforcement posture in Pennsylvania. They are still completing inspections across all discharges, including—but not limited to—agriculture. They are visiting MS4s, industrial producers, and other quarters. They strongly believe that addressing pollution is everyone’s responsibility. They have taken actions but are primarily interested in working with these communities to protect the environment, taking action when necessary.
- EPA is a regulatory and enforcement agency but is increasingly a grant provider and funding source. Enforcement is less than five percent of their budget and less than ten or twelve percent of their staff.
- They are working creatively to get funds to underserved communities in rural and urban areas. They are hoping districts can help do this in a meaningful way.
- EPA wants to take advantage of science and data and address higher-priority watersheds and waterways. They want to use monitoring and other data to better focus practices where they can best move the needle on water quality.
- The Chesapeake Bay seems to drive the science and expectation, but all watersheds are important. EPA is aware of concerns that not all practices are counted. They are establishing a workgroup to determine the best way to credit those practices, incorporating ideas from Penn State Extension and others. They may need district help to encourage and implement successful ideas.
- They are also aware there are some problematic data sources for CAST, the model they are using to focus resources.
- Kelly Shenk thanked the districts and state agencies for their cooperation in completing the PA Animal Ag Program Assessment Report. So much has happened since it was last completed in 2015. She provided a link to the report: <https://www.epa.gov/chesapeake-bay-tmdl/epas-assessments-animal-agriculture-programs-chesapeake-bay-watershed>
- Administrator Ortiz said they know pay and staffing is always an issue and he continues to support salary increases for staff and technicians. They may look to do workload analyses to help support higher pay for staff to keep them on in the long-term.
- Brenda thanked them for helping to secure the funding increase in the state budget. The additional funds can go towards conservation district operations and help with staff retention.

Chairman Josh Longmore opened up the floor for discussion.

- EPA was urged to provide clarity on priority areas for funding as early as possible, so districts can plan for and promote upcoming opportunities.
- District participation was offered, either for workgroups or as informal advisors.
- It was noted that most of the funding sources focus on implementation and modeling, but education, outreach, and coordination are also critical and need to be incorporated in some of these funding programs.
- The need to keep current with new practices and determine how to credit them appropriately in the models was also noted.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:07 a.m.