

**PACD North Central Region Meeting**  
**Clinton County Conservation District, Mill Hall, PA**  
**April 4, 2023**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Region Director Rob Shannon welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

*In attendance:* Matt Long, Lycoming; Bill Kahler, Lycoming; Rob Shannon, Centre/PACD; Jim Coslo, Centre; Todd Deluccia, Cameron; Cathy Yeakel, Bradford; Carrie Richmond, Sullivan; Jason Childs, Potter; Larry Butler, Clinton; Greg Bonsall, Union; Steve Putt, DEP; Rachael Fish, DEP; Mike Roth, SCC; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Erica Tomlinson, Tioga; Nathan Brophy, Northumberland; Mike Hubler, Northumberland; Nancy Corbin, Columbia; Joan McCarty, Columbia; Willie Null, Clearfield; Jason Winey, Snyder; Karen Books, DEP; Amanda Coleman, NRCS; Susie Peters, Clinton; Yuri Plowden, NRCS; Jason Winey, Snyder.

**Set Date for Next Meeting**

The group discussed dates for the next region meeting. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, October 12, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the Clinton County Conservation District.

**Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the October 18, 2022, meeting were provided for review.

*It was moved by Bill Kahler and seconded by Todd Deluccia to approve the minutes of the October 18, 2022, meeting. Motion carried.*

**PACD Business and Report:**

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report:

- *PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference* – The PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference will be held in person July 19-20, 2023, at the Holiday Inn Harrisburg (Hershey Area) in Grantville, PA. Committee meetings will be held virtually before the event. The Chief of NRCS has been invited to speak.
- *Education & Outreach* – PACD made 355 social media posts over the past six months. In addition, PACD offers monthly messaging for districts to share on social media. The posts are based on holidays and observances such as National Water Quality Month, National Farmers Day, and Pollinator Week.
- *Ag Boot Camp and Introduction to Conservation Training* – There are two Basic Boot Camp training sessions planned, one in April and one in May, each with a virtual and in-person component. Level II training will also be held in April. Introduction to Conservation training



was held in November 2022, and will be held again this Fall. Funding for these training courses is provided by DEP and NRCS.

- *Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grants* – The 2022-23 mini-grant round funded 32 projects from twenty-five conservation districts for \$60,000. The 2023-24 mini-grant application period closed in January. Thirty-seven projects were funded from twenty-eight conservation districts for over \$65,000. Funding for the mini-grants comes from DEP through an EPA Section 319 grant.
- *Leadership Development* – Matt Miller has been doing great work and is asking for further leadership development training ideas. A seminar series on Employment Law for Conservation Districts was held at three locations in February with over 80 district directors, managers, and partners attending. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conservation District Video Awards took place in February with Westmoreland taking home the trophy. Matt is currently planning a Spring Leadership Webinar Series in late spring/early summer, the Directors Breakfast in July, and the annual Management Summit and Pre-con in September in State College. Funding for this program is provided by the State Conservation Commission.
- *Clean Water Academy (CWA)* – Nick Yeagy has moved on to another opportunity, and PACD has hired Chris Grimsley to continue managing this program. Over 30,000 total courses have been completed in CWA, including 1,000 to date so far in 2023. He is currently working on training to help educate the regulated community in addition to district training. This program is funded through a grant from DEP.
- *Chapter 102 Technical Training* – Chapter 102 Topic-based Technical Training is upcoming in April. A series of three 1.5-day Verbal Judo training sessions is in progress. Basic Technical Training will take place in Harrisburg May 23-26. This training is funded through a grant from DEP.
- *2023 Virtual Conservation District and PA Agency Ag Meeting* – This event will take place April 3 & 6 and is organized by watershed, with April 3 for the Ohio, Erie, Genesee, and Delaware watersheds and April 6 for the Chesapeake Bay. This event is funded through a grant from DEP.
- *Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting* – Registration is open for this event, which will take place virtually in May and feature topics including low-cost streamflow monitoring and invasive species. Funding for this event comes from DEP through an EPA Section 319 grant.
- *Watershed Specialist Meeting* – This event will be held in-person on October 3-5 in State College. This event will likely alternate between in person and virtual. Funding for this event comes from DEP through an EPA Section 319 grant.
- *PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program* – This program is funded through a Growing Greener grant from DEP and began in September 2022. Since then, 92 applications have been approved covering 18,000 acres and 55 ag plans have been developed and entered into DEP's PracticeKeeper database.
- *Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach* – In the last round, PACD awarded five county conservation districts \$12,645 to work with landowners to prevent pollution in our streams, lakes, and rivers. Projects will take place over the next six months. This program is funded through a Growing Greener grant from DEP.
- *Riparian Buffer Subgrants* – PACD coordinates two riparian buffer subgrant programs funded through grants from DCNR. PACD has about \$18,000 remaining in the first program, which is specifically for multifunctional riparian buffers and requires no match. PACD has

about \$8,000 remaining in the second program, which covers multifunctional and conventional buffers and requires a 50% match.

- *Lawn Conversion Program* –PACD was awarded \$100,000 from DCNR to offer a Lawn Conversion Program to conservation districts. Training will be held in June and July. This is a new program, and more information will be forthcoming.
- *Invasive Species* – PACD has been awarded a federal grant from the USDA Forest Service to start a pilot program to work on invasive species, including plants and animals, both aquatic and on land. Districts outside of the northwest region cannot currently receive funding but can participate in meetings. In addition, the Department of Agriculture has announced a new grant program specifically for conservation districts performing work in cooperation with the Department's Spotted Lanternfly Program. Piper Sherburne has been re-appointed by the Governor to the Invasive Species Council and recommends that districts lobby their legislators for statewide funding to combat invasive species.

### **Legislative Update**

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report:

- *Conservation District Week* – Conservation District Week is from April 23 to April 29 this year. Invasive species will be a priority. Districts are encouraged to invite their legislators to events on Thursday and Friday. If that is not possible, districts are encouraged to call or email their legislators during this week to give them an update on the good work they are doing. PACD has templates and other tools available at PACD.org.
- *General Assembly* – The Democrats have a slim majority in the House and the Republicans have a comfortable majority in the Senate. Both parties have chosen their leadership and committee assignments in each chamber.
- *Budget Update* – The Governor's proposed budget maintains increased funding in the DEP and PDA line items. Next, the House and Senate appropriations committees will hold budget hearings and the House and Senate leadership will work with the Governor's office to develop a state budget. Hopefully, the General Assembly will pass the budget by June 30. The PACD Ad Hoc Budget Committee will be meeting to develop a strategy for districts to use as they contact their elected officials. Districts are encouraged to thank their legislators. PACD has a meeting next week with Acting Secretary Negrin. Budget meetings have gone well so far.
- *Salary Survey* – Brenda thanked the districts who provided funding to help defray the cost of the salary survey conducted last year. She asked any districts who have not yet done so to consider contributing. The survey results can be shared with county commissioners to support additional funding for staff.

### **Regional Information Sharing**

Each district highlighted three items to share with the membership.

*Union:* Greg reported on the district's no-till equipment rental program and the anticipated changes as use had decreased. They are wrapping up their tree sale and also distributing trees through Keystone 10 Million Trees with 70 orders received, most of which are for small numbers of trees. The district plans to use available grants to focus on invasive species in woodland/forest settings and auction sites.

*Bradford:* Cathy said they are bringing on four new staff, increasing their total complement to 19. They are also committing funds to projects through the ACAP Program and will be hosting their Earth Day Celebration on April 22, 2023. The celebration will include displays, hands-on activities, and live music.

*Sullivan:* Carrie reported their spring farmer meeting is coming up on April 26. They are planning an Earth Day program for kids. They are reviewing/ranking ACAP applications for funding.

*Cameron:* Todd reported on their ACAP Program and their relatively small ag community within the county. They have seven or eight stream habitat projects planned for the year and two AMD sites, one of which is on Sterling Run. The district is planning to conduct a tree planting and luncheon with their commissioners as part of Conservation District Week.

*Potter:* Jason discussed the district's strategic plan update as well as updates regarding the ACAP Program. The district will be hosting a municipal DGLVR breakfast meeting on April 19. The district held its annual legislative luncheon on March 10 with Senator Dush, Representative Martin Causer, and Congressman Glenn Thompson's aide, Brad Moore, in attendance.

*Lycoming:* Matt reported the county ACAP kickoff meeting was successful, with Secretary Redding and multiple media outlets in attendance. The district will be holding their annual awards banquet with a tribute to former governor Tom Corbett. They will soon be hiring a replacement for their secretary, who is retiring. They have about 130 tree sale orders to fill.

*Clinton:* Larry mentioned their legislative breakfast and reported that the district made the final payment for their building. They will be leasing space to PennState Extension. Susie noted they have hired a part-time administrative assistant and will be holding interviews for two new ag techs. They will also be hosting an academic event on April 20.

*Centre:* Jim reported their district has transitioned into the lead role for their county CAP. They are looking at developing a cover crop program in the near future and are hiring a summer intern to assist with BMP verification. They plan to have their county commissioners proclaim the week of April 23 Conservation District Week.

*Tioga:* Erica mentioned they will be hosting their legislative luncheon and Envirothon during the first week of May. In addition, they are working through their first round of ACAP applications as well as a number of DGLVR projects. They are also hiring two summer interns to help with a variety of district activities and projects.

*Snyder:* Jason reported that their watershed specialist has transitioned into the role of ACAP coordinator, and they will be hiring for the watershed specialist position. The district hosted an ag breakfast with Representative Rowe. Jason thanked districts who have staff participating in the PA Envirothon, either on the board or as volunteers, and noted the Envirothon still needs station testing volunteers.

*Columbia:* Nancy reported on a number of outreach events hosted by the district, including: their farmers breakfast; DGLVR training; their water series *Good Water Good Fish*; the Women in Ag conference; a series of water workshops including trout day; and their Ag Banquet. In addition, they have received ACAP applications and awarded projects. They will have a proclamation for Conservation District Week, in addition to daily Facebook posts showcasing district work.

*Northumberland:* Nate reported the district hosted a winter meeting and they have bids out for buffer projects. He also reported on construction of their new office space and plans to hold a legislative event.

*Clearfield:* Willie reported on the district's tree sale and upcoming Envirothon. The district hired a new Ag Tech in January, and they plan to tackle seven or eight projects through the ACAP program.

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

Karen Books provided verbal highlights from the DEP written report:

- *Administrative changes* – There is a new Governor, a new Secretary, and a new Deputy Secretary for Programs. Ramez Ziadeh is Deputy Secretary for Field Operations. Lisa Daniels is acting Deputy Secretary for Water Programs.
- *Cover Crop Initiative Program* – A webinar is being held April 5.
- *PCSM Manual Update* – The public comment period is open until April 28. Comments can be submitted to DEP's conservation district resource account.
- *Staffing updates* – Krystal Bloom is the new Chapter 102 Section Chief. Rachael Fish was introduced as the new North Central Field Representative.

Steve Putt reported Jared Dressler, who had been serving as interim, is the new DEP North Central Region Director. He also reported that the Waterways and Wetlands Program will soon be filling a supervisory biologist position.

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

Mike Roth provided highlights from his written report:

- *ACAP* – ACAP has been a huge focus and 63 delegation agreements have been signed. The next round of ACAP funding is going out in July. They are working to help get more engineers hired at districts statewide, and to ensure all ACAP funds are spent.
- *Apprenticeship Program* – SCC is looking to establish an apprenticeship program for high school students interested in a career in conservation.
- *Budget* – The Governor's proposed budget includes \$6 Million for nutrient management and \$28 million for Dirt & Gravel Roads. A Chesapeake Bay task force is being established to analyze practices in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Soil Health is a big focus pursuant to the Sustainable Agriculture Act of 2001, supporting a change from conventional-till to no-till.

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

Amanda Coleman and Yuri Plowden provided verbal highlights from NRCS's written report:

- *Funding* – NRCS has received Inflation Reduction Act funding. EQIP funding will double next year to be \$25-26 million and will double again in 2025. Watershed grants are available to address legacy sediment and mushroom compost issues.

- *Philadelphia Office* – NRCS is opening an office in Philadelphia in June. It will house a soil scientist and district conservationist and will study heavy metals detection.
- *Retirement Cadre* – NRCS has created a Retirement Cadre program aimed at retired individuals over 55 years old, former NRCS and PSU Extension employees, to offer on the job training on site inspections, I&Es, spot checks and other practices. The program is funded through the National Older Worker Fund. Contact Charlie Hanner or Denise Coleman for more information.

### **Additional Comments**

Rob Shannon mentioned a career day that was held at Penn State. Cathy Yeakel noted the next North Central Managers Meeting will be held on June 23, 2023 at Pier 87 at 11:00 a.m.

### **Adjournment**

*It was moved by Cathy Yeakel and seconded by Larry Butler to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:40 a.m.