

**PACD South Central Region Meeting Minutes
Cumberland County Conservation District, Carlisle, PA
March 21, 2023**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Interim South Central Region Director, Sonia Wasco, called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. with a quorum present.

Virtual and In-person Participants: Adam McClain, Adams; Jennifer Lentz Kovacs, Bedford; Carl Goshorn, Cumberland; Eric Naguski, Dauphin; David Stoner, Franklin; Celina Seftas, Huntingdon; Sonia Wasco, Lancaster; Chris Thompson, Lancaster; Katie Doster, Lebanon; Randall Leisure, Lebanon; Jeff Hill, York; Charlie Hanner, NRCS; Denise Coleman NRCS, Tim Peters, NRCS; PACD; Karen Books, DEP; Lauren Shaffer, DEP; Tyler Trostle, DEP; Sally Tengeres, Perry; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Douglas Wolfgang, SCC. .

Region Director Election

There were no volunteers to fill the role of SC region director. Sonia Wasco will continue to serve as interim until a permanent replacement can be nominated.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held virtually and in person on October 17, 2023, at the Cumberland County Conservation District.

Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were provided for review

It was moved by Carl Goshorn and seconded by Randall Leisure to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2022 meeting. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report:

Executive Director, Brenda Shambaugh provided verbal 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 3rd 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 is in Harrisburg May 23-26. 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

- *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 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

Districts shared information on their activities.

- *Adams* (Adam McClain): Plan to have the Commissioners adopt the proclamation for CD Week. Brian Sneeringer received the Distinguished Service Award at the NACD Conference in New Orleans. Congratulations to Brian! Experienced 25 percent staff turnover. As a result, will be dropping the Nutrient Management delegation, but keeping the Chesapeake Bay program. Change due to prioritizing staff, not dissatisfaction with the Act 38 program.
- *Bedford* (Jennifer Lentz Kovacs): Offering Envirothon program in the county elementary, junior, and senior high schools. Meeting with legislators for CD Week. Offering \$5,000 in scholarships for qualified high school and undergraduate students, payable after the successful completion of their first semester of college. No-till drilling equipment is being utilized.

- *Cumberland* Watershed Specialist Lori Glace took the Juniata County Manager position, a loss for Cumberland and a gain for Juniata. Hired a Juniata College grad from Carlisle as a replacement. Have 5 CEG projects at a cost of 1.1 million to install by June 30. Private sector engineering has an overload of work that is holding projects up. Annual Golf tournament has enabled 10 students to receive \$500 scholarships. Hoping to increase to \$1,000 this year.
- *Dauphin* (Eric Naguski) Recently hired an ag tech and a Watershed Specialist. Working on getting ACAP Program documents finalized and creating a cover crop program. Provide \$250 awards at the Capital Science and Engineering competition. The winners will present at the Board Meeting. Inviting legislators to project field visits as part of CD week.
- *Franklin* (Dave Stoner): Winter Ag Meeting was very well received with 65 attendees. EPA's Lee McDonnell, Kelly Shank and Adam Ortiz attended and were available for small group sessions with staff, farmers, and municipalities. EPA is looking to do more grant funding and less enforcement. Visited the Patty Run project with their watershed specialist and created a video to document it. They have a 1,000 acre solar project underway that has a multitude of E&S complaints, and another 1,000 acre solar project being proposed. Have 4 CEG projects to complete by June 30. Engineering capacity is a real concern and may hold up progress on CAP, CEG, and ACAP project implementation. Visiting old Bay projects for BMP verification. Ernie Turner Golf Tournament is June 2. Proceeds will go to scholarships.
- *Huntingdon* (Celina Seftas): Planning an Earth Day STEM event. For CD Week they will be meeting with legislators, legislators will present their Envirothon Awards, and commissioners will deliver proclamation. The board approved an ACAP ranking system and application. Hired an additional technician to fill in gaps in coverage. Implementing projects with riparian buffer funds, and will tour a project with about 60 students.
- *Lancaster* (Sonia Wasco): Revitalizing the nominating organizations and adding associate directors. Approved first ACAP projects for a total of 7 projects. Created an Assistant Manager position and received 94 applications. Hired the current watershed specialist Matt Kofroth to fill the position. Have had a scholarship program for 20 years and usually fund 2-4 applicants per year through funds from an Annual Banquet auction.
- *Lebanon* (Katie Doster): Installed a Super Gauge water monitoring station to capture water quality data as it leaves the county as of March 10. NRCS providing funding for the first two years. Holding a Field Day with legislators and residents to showcase 3 ACAP projects that cost \$800,00 to install. Finalized ACAP ranking sheets. Conducting outreach for a manure injection incentive program funded through ACAP and NFWF. Preparing for a Tire Collection and the Envirothon along with the Tree Sale. Sponsoring a rain barrel painting contest where the barrels will be auctioned at the Tree Sale pick up site, and giving 24 rain barrels away. Plan to hold a legislative event for current and potential candidates in June.
- *Perry* (Sally Tengeres): Approved ACAP delegation and have 4 projects at a cost of \$2 million in progress. Receiving technical assistance support from Dauphin County's Bay engineer. Working with NRCS to get crop practice Job Approval authority and working on internal policy. CAP projects are progressing and funding the Cover Crop Incentive Program at \$131,380 on 3218 acres. Hired an E&S Tech, an Ag Resource Tech, and a full-time office manager to replace part-time administrative assistant, Getting ready for the Tree Sale and the Envirothon. Invited legislators to Envirothon for CD Week.
- *York* (Jeff Hill): Staff changes, watershed specialist moved to the ACOE, and long time (35 years) E&S tech is retiring, hired a watershed technician. Created a Stream Restoration Specialist position to design projects in-house. Considering partnering with college

engineering students to gain some support and they can gain experience. Planning Tree Sale. Legislators will be supporting the Envirothon for CD Week.

PA Department of Environmental Protection 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.
- Tyler introduced himself and provided information on the SC Roundtable on June 5 at the SCRO in the Susquehanna B room or on Teams. Lauren Shaffer introduced herself and asked for roundtable topics or questions for the Q&A portion of the meeting.

PA State Conservation Commission Report

Executive Secretary Douglas Wolfgang 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.

Natural Resource Conservation Service

Denise Coleman and Tim Peters 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 through the National Older Worker Fund 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. Contact Charlie Hanner or Denise Coleman for more information.

Adjournment

*Motion by Sally Tengeres and seconded by Randall Leisure to adjourn the meeting at 12:05 PM.
Motion carried.*