

**PACD North Central Region Meeting  
Clinton County Conservation District, Mill Hall, PA  
October 12, 2023**

**Welcome and Introductions**

Region Director Rob Shannon welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

*In attendance:* Matt Long, Lycoming; Bill Kahler, Lycoming; Rob Shannon, Centre/PACD; Cathy Yeakel, Bradford; Carrie Richmond, Sullivan; Larry Butler, Clinton; Greg Bonsall, Union; Steve Putt, DEP; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Erica Tomlinson, Tioga; Nathan Brophy, Northumberland; Mike Hubler, Northumberland; Willie Null, Clearfield; Jason Winey, Snyder; Karen Books, DEP; Susie Peters, Clinton; Mary Baker, NRCS; Jason Winey, Snyder; Ian Abernathy, PACD; Mike Gill, Clearfield, Bill Clouser, Clearfield; Doug Wolfgang, SCC; Dennis Beck, Cambria.

**Election of Regional Director**

It was moved by Bill Kahler and seconded by Larry Butler that Rob Shannon be elected as the Rob Shannon as the NC PACD region director. Motion carried.

**Set Date for Next Meeting**

The group discussed dates for the next region meeting. The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, March 19, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. at the Clinton County Conservation District.

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

The minutes of the previous NC meeting were provided for review.

*It was moved by Bill Kahler and seconded by Larry Butler to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. Motion carried.*

**PACD Business and Report:**

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report.

*Legislative Committee Motion* – Brenda explained the process of motions for new attendees, and she mentioned that at the last PACD Legislative Committee meeting held in June 2023, A motion was passed and will be considered at each fall PACD Regional meeting. A final vote on the motion will be held at the January 2024 Executive Council meeting. The motion reads:

*PACD recognizes the significant environmental benefit of streambank fencing, in a pasture used for grazing, to restrict livestock access to the stream. PACD supports education and incentives for voluntary installation of streambank fencing as opposed to legislation allowing*



**administrative agencies of the Commonwealth and municipalities to require fencing along a stream.**

Brenda asked for input on the motion and if anyone thought there should be any changes made. She also read an amended motion by the SW region. A discussion was held.

*It was moved by Bill Kahler and seconded by Cathy Yeakel to support the motion presented by the PACD Legislative Committee. Motion carried.*

- DEP Policy on Conservation District Chapters 102/105 – Brenda discussed with everyone the email from DEP Deputy Secretary Bevin Buchheister concerning conservation district responsibilities for the Chapter 102/105 agreements.
- PACD Winter Meeting – Brenda informed everyone the 2024 PACD Winter Meeting will take place virtually. She also mentioned that the PACD Executive Board would like input about whether the membership would prefer the future Winter Meetings to be held in-person or virtually. A discussion was held, and several people expressed that the Winter Meeting should be in person. Several others liked the idea of continuing to hold the Winter meeting virtually. All agreed that the summer meeting should be more of a conference that would move each year to different parts of the state. There was support for having a planning committee to gather more information.
- Legislative Update – Brenda mentioned that the PA House of Representatives and PA Senate returned to Harrisburg. She mentioned the Senate passed two fiscal code bills in August, but Senate amendments to these bills have not been considered in the House. She mentioned House Bill 1300 and that it includes an additional \$150 Million Dollars from the Game Commission Fund for the PA Clean Streams Fund, but that language was taken out of the legislation. She explained the breakdown of the money and how it affects the Dirt, Gravel, and Low-Volume Road program. A discussion ensued, and there was support for the ACAP program to be supported with dedicated funding. There is a link provided for everyone to view the bill as it currently is written.
- Education & Outreach – Brenda mentioned that PACD has been using social media platforms to highlight conservation district activities. She discussed the shared messaging program that districts can use to supplement their social media posts and gave a list of the amounts of messages posted to date.
- Ag Boot Camp – Brenda mentioned that this year there were five weeks of Agricultural Conservation Technical Boot Camp training that took place. She noted that the next training is planned for April and May in 2024. The application period will open in January. She also mentioned an intro to Conservation Planning training is planned for October 31<sup>st</sup> to November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 for people planning on becoming a certified planner. She thanked the NRCS and SCC for their support of the trainings and for including conservation district staff.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-Grant Program– Brenda mentioned that the 2023-2024 Nonpoint Source Pollution mini-grant application period closed in January. There were thirty-seven projects funded from 28 conservation districts for over \$65,000.
- PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program – Brenda mentioned that the PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program has been a great success. She mentioned there is only approx. \$75,000 left of the \$500,000 Growing Greener grant that was awarded. She mentioned that she has reached out to DEP and the SCC to see about more funding.

- Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach Program Office – Brenda mentioned that PACD has approx. \$80,000 still available for CREP mini-grants and is accepting applications for up to \$3,000 to implement educational and outreach activities that support and extend the work of CREP. She mentioned that six projects have been completed this year, totaling approx. \$10,227.
- Riparian Buffer Sub-grants – Brenda mentioned that PACD has two Riparian buffer programs available for conservation districts. The *Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Sub-grant for conservation districts* program sponsored by PENNVEST still has approx. \$18,000 available and must be used by the end of the year. There is no match requirement for this program. A total of 43 grants implementing over 137 acres of buffers have been awarded funding from this program since 2018. *The C2P2 Multi-functional and Conventional Riparian Buffer Program* has been continued due to a C2P2 grant from DCNR awarded to PACD. While multi-functional buffers are preferred, conventional buffers are eligible as well. There is approx. still \$85,000 available and there is a 50/50 match required.
- Lawn Conversion Grant – Brenda announced PACD was awarded a \$100,000 C2P2 grant from DCNR to offer a Lawn Conversion Sub-grant Program for Conservation Districts. The goal of the program is to offer lawn conversion training to conservation districts and distribute funding to lawn conversion projects across PA. She mentioned there was a webinar training held over Zoom on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 and an in-person training held at the Sunset Golf Course in Middletown on July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023.
- Invasive Species – Brenda mentioned that PACD was awarded a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant from the USDA Forest Service to offer a PRISM pilot program in northwestern PA. Brenda mentioned that over the past few months, PACD has been meeting the conservation districts in the NW area and the Governor’s Invasive Species Council to help develop the program and promote it in the NW region. She also mentioned all but 2 of the districts in the NW region are participating and the program is looking for support of a statewide invasive species program.
- Leadership development – Brenda mentioned the 2023 Spring Leadership Webinar Series was held in June with over 180 conservation district personnel attending five webinar sessions. She mentioned that in August, the Strategic Planning Grants program began accepting Letters of Intent for districts that are interested in funding or other support for strategic planning projects in the upcoming year. She also mentioned that a Fall Leadership Webinar Series is planned for November and December with sessions on insurance, financial issues, and website accessibility. Planning has begun for 2024 Regional Staff Workshops as well as Regional Director Workshops.
- Clean Water Academy – Brenda mentioned that the Clean Water Academy is continuing to grow in terms of course offerings, enrollments, completions, and new user registrations. She mentioned that a highly anticipated new Chapter 105 training program on wetland determination is being developed as are several Chapter 102 training programs.
- 102/105 Technical Training – Brenda mentioned that Basic Technical Training will take place in-person in May of 2024. PACD will forward additional information as soon as its available.
- Fall Communication Series – Brenda mentioned that PACD is working with DEP to provide an in-person only fall communications series in State College and offered Verbal Judo on October 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 and The Art and Science of Deception: Detecting Deception and Getting to the Truth on either October 25<sup>th</sup> or October 26<sup>th</sup> 2023.

- Conservation District Watershed Specialist Meeting – Brenda mentioned the Conservation District Watershed Specialist Meeting took place in-person October 3<sup>rd</sup> through October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 in State College, PA. October 3<sup>rd</sup> is a special training for new watershed specialists hired after October 2018.

### **Regional Information Sharing**

Each district highlighted three items to share with the membership.

- *Lycoming*: Dispersed 100,000 saplings and tubes; ACAP Projects are under way and going through ranking.; New admin was hired, and the incumbent will train the replacement.
- *Bradford*: Fully staffed, 18 employees; Working on the West Nile Program in Tioga and Bradford; New E&S employee; Collecting eels and muscles to disperse to schools to raise and then participate in release to help populations in the Susquehanna River; Green Career Day was held for students from Bradford, Sullivan, and Tioga, teaching students about outdoor jobs and opportunities.
- *Sullivan*: The Watershed Specialist left, and they are hiring a Resource Conservation Technician.
- *Clinton*: Will have two openings coming.
- *Centre*: 2<sup>nd</sup> year of cover crop incentive program. Hired Summer intern that did BMP verification, Bank stabilization, rain barrel workshop, and pollinator garden.; Currently Fully staffed; negotiated a two grade pay increase for tech staff.
- *Snyder*: ACAP and BMP work; Finishing up a three-year project.; Education round 2, put on “Walk in the Woods” event; Spongy Moth program w/ DCNR; Outdoor Education program: 200 kids doing different outdoor stations. Welcome more exposure with Envirothon Staff.
- *Tioga*: Two Interns: Ag E&S; watershed specialist project wrapping up.
- *Union*: Putting on another year of their Equipment program, Rentals of drills have gone down but leveled out; Looking into adapting newer technologies into practices, such as drones for pest and crop treatment; Annual Workplans Meeting, Will hatch out plans for the following year and keep everyone on task with job descriptions along with team building; Pushing for more involvement in social media and public interaction.
- *Clearfield*: Watershed: Acid mine drainage work & reimplementing existing systems and pushing for newer ones. Rehabilitated an afflicted stream to being able to be fished again. Two ACAP Projects: Manure Storage will be almost completed in the next month; Working on wrapping up another and utilizing all remaining funding; Hired a new admin assistant; collected food donations for the Food Bank.
- *Northumberland*: Moved into a new office; 2600 trees from 10 Million Trees were planted; Field Day with local schools.

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

Karen Books provided verbal highlights from the DEP written report:

- Karen mentioned that any emails sent to the agency to the local DEP representative should also include a CC to Carl DeLuca and Karen Books as well. She mentioned that new CAFO information has been published in the bulletin on the DEP website. She also mentioned that the Manure Management manual is currently out for comments and people can make their comments online with the EComment tool. Jaci informed the group that will be a Chapter 102 training coming up and also that a Watershed Specialist training will be coming up

during the fall. She also mentioned that Environmental Education grants are now open, and that people must apply through their regional resource representative.

- Steve Putt reported Kep Starks is the new Bio Manager, and they are losing a compliance specialist who is moving to the DEP Central Office.

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

Executive Secretary Doug Wolfgang provided the following report:

- Doug mentioned that sixty-six conservation districts in PA have signed the delegation agreements with 137.2 million dollars in funds committed.
- Doug mentioned that are working with the state to find dedicated funding for the ACAP program.
- He mentioned that they have been working with the Tech. Assistance Center in State College and are hoping to have an engineer in place soon.
- He noted that currently there are 66 conservation districts with signed delegation agreements for the Nutrient Management and Odor Management Planning Program.
- He mentioned that the Staff and Center held the DGLVR conference in Scranton Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> to the 28<sup>th</sup>.

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

Mary Baker 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.

### **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 Bill Kahler to adjourn. Motion passed.*

The meeting was adjourned at 11:47 a.m.