

**PACD North West Region Meeting  
Tionesta Church of God, Tionesta, PA  
September 27, 2023**

**Welcome and Introductions**

PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:06 AM.

*In person attendance:* Cliff Lane, McKean; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Tom McClure, Erie; Danielle Kalp, PACD; Cassie Daniels, PACD; Jacob Kennedy, PACD; Lisette Lane, Venango; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Mark Kingston, Forest; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Donna Zofcin, Forest; Jeff Werner, NRCS; Ron Lybrook, DEP; Susannah Harris, DEP; Erin Wells, DEP; Ron Lybrook, DEP; Mark Critz, PDA, Mike Roth, SCC, Kirk Caufer, Forest

*Virtual Attendance:* Tracey Crawford, Crawford; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Holly Miller, PACD; Tabby Shah, Clarion; Mary Burris, (Lawrence); Jaci Kerstetter, DEP; Katie Stover, Warren; Mitchell Whiting, Lawrence; Holly Miller, PACD

**Election of Region Director**

Brenda Shambaugh called for names for nominations to region director. Cliff Lane provided he was willing to accept the position again if nominated. No alternate names for nominations were provided. Brenda called for a motion to elect Cliff Lane region director.

*It was moved by Holly Laird and seconded by Donna Zofcin to elect Cliff Lane North West Region Director. Motion approved unanimously.*

**Date of Next Meeting**

The next PACD North West meeting will be hosted by Armstrong Conservation District, provided the facilities are ready, on April 23<sup>rd</sup> at 10 AM.

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

Cliff Lane called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

*It was moved by Tom McClure and seconded by Donna Zofcin to approve the minutes of the meeting on April 12, 2023. Motion approved unanimously.*

**PACD Business and Report**

Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Program

- Brenda introduced Holly Miller from PACD to discuss the Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Program.



- Holly Miller discussed the PRISM program provided by funding from the USDA Forest Service in Northwestern PA. The funding is to provide sub-grants for invasive species education and outreach events and on-ground treatment projects.
- Advisory Committees were formed for the region. Holly reported that eleven (11) counties have participated with four (4) completing education/outreach only and seven (7) with education/outreach and on-ground treatment programs.
- Holly Miller requested feedback from the districts regarding the program. Tom McClure discussed the potential difficulties of meeting the scope of the grant requirements and deliverables while still meeting the goal of treating the invasive species. Tom suggested the ultimate goal of utilizing the procedures learned with this program and implementing them on a regional scale.
- Brenda Shambaugh discussed PACD's goal with this program is to gather the individual County's experiences and take those experiences to the PA legislature to show what could be accomplished. PACD will also put together a strategic plan for more funding in the future. The partners in the grant are proposing a meeting to move forward with grant criteria in the future. PACD does not anticipate attendance at this meeting and asked Districts to provide PACD with updates on whether they choose to attend the proposed meeting in the future.
- Brenda Shambaugh and Holly Miller also discussed potential revisions to the name of the program. Holly Miller proposed the "North West Invasive Species Management Program" or the "North West Invasive Species Management Sub-grant Program" be used in the future since PACD has found the existing name to be misleading.
- Further discussion was held on the programs that were being completed and whether they were species specific or area specific with Sandy Thompson and Tom McClure providing examples of the programs they had implemented.
- Mark Critz added that in the future other assistance and funding may be provided and research is being completed on alternative treatment methods through his program.
- Brenda Shambaugh also provided that an Advisory Committee is not required if the sub-grants are being utilized for education and outreach only and the funding is immediately available. The match for the funding can come from other grants but they cannot be matched federal-to-federal or state-to-state.

#### PACD Legislative Committee Motion

At the last PACD Legislative Committee meeting held June 2023, the following motion was passed and will be considered at each PACD fall region meeting. A final vote on the motion will be held at the January 2024 Executive Council meeting. Brenda Shambaugh noted that the SW region voted to approve the motion with amendments.

*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.*

*A motion was made by Tom McClure to approve the motion as written. Donna Zofcin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.*

Brenda provided highlights from her written report:

- DEP Policy on Conservation District Chapters 102/105 – Conservation Districts recently received an email from DEP Deputy Secretary Bevin Buchheister concerning conservation district responsibilities for Chapter 102/105. Brenda discussed Districts should contact DEP with any further questions regarding the memo and clarification policy.
- 2024 PACD Winter Meeting – The 2024 PACD Meeting will take place virtually. Brenda and Cliff Lane asked for input from the districts on whether PACD should continue to hold the Winter Meetings virtually. It was discussed that hybrid meetings are expensive for PACD to hold and difficulties with attendance, weather, and cost. The NW Region expressed their acceptance of continuing to hold Winter Meetings as virtual only.
- Legislative Update – Brenda discussed possible legislation for HB 1300 which would provide additional funding for PA Clean Streams Fund and subsequently, District programs. The funding would be taken from game commission funds. PACD supports dedicated funding for PA Clean Streams.
- Education and Outreach – Brenda discussed PACD’s efforts for public education and outreach using social medial platforms and PACD’s shared messaging program successes.
- Ag Boot Camp Training – Brenda discussed the successes of the Ag Boot Camp Training and thanked NRCS and SCC for their continued support of these training courses and including conservation district staff.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program – Brenda discussed the mini-grant application that Shannon Wehinger is assisting with administering.
- PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program – Brenda discussed the Growing Greener grant to offer an Ag Plan Reimbursement Program to districts. So far, 342 ag plans have been approved for reimbursement. There is \$100,000 left in the program and Brenda urged districts to get any plan requests in as soon as possible since PACD is not sure how long it will be available or if more funding will become available in the future.
- CREP Outreach Program Office – Brenda discussed the CREP mini-grant program. Interested districts should contact Holly Miller at PACD.
- Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants – Brenda discussed the two riparian buffer programs available to conservation districts. The PENNVEST Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Program has no match requirement and must be used by the end of this year. The DCNR C2P2 Multi-functional and Conventional Riparian Buffer Program requires a 50-50 match. There is still time remaining on this grant. Districts should contact Holly Miller with any questions.
- Lawn Conversion Program – Brenda discussed the DCNR lawn conversion program which included in-person and virtual training for lawn conversion training to conservation district staff. Brenda recommended districts attend or view the training before applying for a sub-grant. Districts can contact Holly Miller with questions.
- Leadership Development – Brenda discussed the successes of the leadership development efforts completed this year. Districts can contact Matt Miller for district team workshops.
- Clean Water Academy – Brenda discussed the continually growing Clean Water Academy course offerings and the growing usage of the program. In 2023, 5,588 courses have been completed. Any ideas for topics to include on the Academy should be directed to Chris Grimsley at PACD. Chris works in partnership with DEP to provide complete courses.
- Chapter 102 Technical Training – Brenda discussed the training that was held this year for Chapter 102 training for districts. One more series of training may be provided next May. An in-person series is planned for the Fall. Please contact Molly Burns for more information.

- Fall Communication Series – Brenda discussed the upcoming Verbal Judo and The Art and Science of Deception courses coming up in October. The courses may assist the district in conversing with the public to have productive interactions.
- Conservation District Watershed Specialist Meeting – Brenda discussed the upcoming Watershed Specialist Meeting in State College.
- PACD TAG Updates – Danielle Kalp discussed the ongoing construction projects this year and attendance at training held with district watershed specialists and PACD provided by a collaboration of OSM, DEP, WPCAMR, EPCAMR, and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. Cassie Daniels discussed her return to work from a leave of absence and ACAP projects on-going. Jacob Kennedy discussed on-going construction projects with ACAP and EQIP funded projects and anticipates beginning Inventory and Evaluations again this Fall.

### **Regional Information Sharing**

- Forest – Donna Zofcin discussed half of the districts ACAP funding has been allocated. The district is working to allocate the remaining funding and is in the process of advertising for a district assistant position.
- Venango- Lisette Lane discussed the receipt of over \$1,000,000 of ACAP applications. The district chose one project based on ranking that will use all of the ACAP funding received by the district. They also have the Fisherman’s Cove project starting next week which is a large streambank stabilization. They also have various other projects under construction.
- Armstrong – Holly Laird discussed the completion of the new District building in September. The district is advertising for a new Ag Tech. They also have various ACAP projects and a streambank project under construction.
- Erie – Tom McClure discussed the districts on-going projects with the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. There are various ACAP projects underway and additional farm visits for applications to ACAP. The district is also working on a project at Headwaters Park to create a pocket park next to the office. The district will be helping with the Children’s Waterfest next week. They are hiring a new administrative assistant and are in the process of finalizing the budget for next year.
- McKean – Sandy Thompson discussed the district has completed various educational programs including the Envirothon which includes forestry, wildlife, and soil focus this year. The district held a DSA road maintenance workshop and a live grading demonstration. McKean partnered with Porter County to combat invasive species and are partnering with NRCS on a cover crop demonstration. They will be reassessing one of their watersheds through the AML bill funding. Three streambank stabilization projects were completed with gas well funds. There are multiple ACAP projects being completed. The district is also reassessing their insurance coverage.
- Crawford – Tracey Crawford discussed the 34 nutrient management plan reviews they have completed this year. They have various ACAP projects completed and in construction. The district is also looking for a dirt and gravel road technician.
- Lawrence – Mary Burris discussed the district has allocated \$1.2 million of ACAP funding to five projects. Three of the projects are funded through ACAP and EQIP. The district just hired a new dirt and gravel road technician. Lawrence County received funding from the Norfolk Southern train derailment settlement. The conservation district received a portion of that funding and is using it for a mini-grant program for conservation projects.

## **Partner Reports**

- SCC – Michael Roth introduced himself and discussed his new position as a liaison for Ag innovation and his research into innovative and different technologies for conservation/ag projects. He highlighted several points from the SCC report. He noted if legislation goes through, there will be an additional \$120 million for ACAP. He also discussed the REAP program changes coming for the 23/24 FY.
- PDA – Malcolm Critz discussed potential sustainability energy funding upcoming.
- DEP – Erin Wells discussed the changes to staff in the North West Regional office including the retirement of Lori Boughman. Ron Lybrook is now the acting Environmental Program Manager. She also discussed the memo attached to the meeting minutes. There is a new Environmental Justice position stationed in Meadville. The Department is updating their Environmental Justice policy and welcomes any feedback.
- DEP – Ron Lybrook introduced himself as the new acting Environmental Program Manager. There is a new engineering position that is being filled in the North West Region office.
- DEP – Susannah Harris discussed Growing Greener decisions are expected December/January. There will be an introductory wetland training session held. DEP is working on a training packet for onboarding positions. There are also Regional Collaborative Meetings coming up.
- DEP – Jaci Kerstetter discussed the provided partner report. She noted the staff is working on an online budget spreadsheet. When it is available, they anticipate helping with training on the spreadsheet. The administrative assistance financial statement will be available on Monday.
- NRCS – Jeff Werner discussed the provided partner report. He also noted that NRCS is working to fully staff all of their offices in the region with 18 vacancies at present, with changes daily. He asked the districts to contact him if there are any communication difficulties with their offices. NRCS just opened their first urban farming office and Jeff discussed the programs NRCS is developing geared towards urban farming. He expressed appreciation for the projects completed with ACAP funding partnerships. The soil maps were re-surveyed for coal impacted areas to better define soil types. Increased boot camp trainings were offered this year and will continue to be offered. Boot camp and partnerships that Pennsylvania appreciates that other states do not have were discussed.
- NRCS – Denise Coleman discussed the certified planner program. She also discussed the possibility of a government shut down this weekend and the effect it would have on NRCS and PACD employees. NRCS installed \$44 million in practices this year. Future funding will continue to focus on forestry and engineering practices. Chief Terry Cosby will be touring Pennsylvania this month and stopping in several locations in PA.

It was announced that Sandy Thompson received the District Manager Award and Cliff Lane received the District Director Award at the Northeast Region NACD Meeting.

## **Adjournment**

Cliff Lane called for a motion to adjourn.

*Motion to adjourn was made by Tom McClure and seconded by Donna Zofcin. The meeting adjourned at 12:16 PM.*