

**PACD Conservation Committee  
Videoconference Minutes  
June 29, 2023**

**Welcome and Roll Call**

Chairman Josh Longmore called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:01 a.m.

*Committee members in attendance:* John Akers, Bedford; Bill Clouser, Clearfield; Douglas Goodlander, York; Daryl Miller, Bradford; Piper Sherburne, Berks; Carl Goshorn, Cumberland; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Josh Longmore, Luzerne; Dan Miloser, Chester; David Stoner, Franklin

*Guests and staff:* Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Molly Burns, PACD; Holly Miller, PACD; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting on January 6, 2023, were provided for review.

*It was moved by Piper Sherburne and seconded by Dave Stoner to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on January 6, 2023. Motion carried.*

**PACD Sub-grant Program Update**

PACD Program Manager Holly Miller provided a summary of subgrants available through PACD. She noted there is a list of subgrant programs available on the PACD website through the Education Tab under Apply for a grant.

- PACD sub-grant programs include CREP E&O, Ag Plan Reimbursement, Lawn Conversion, and the PRISM Pilot Program (for north west counties).
- CREP Mini-Grants (funded by DEP): Has a \$3,000 maximum per mini-grant with over \$80,000 currently available. The current round is open on a rolling basis with final reports due December 1, 2023.
- Ag Plan Reimbursement Program (funded by DEP): Program requires a 20% match. Maximum reimbursement per plan is \$1,500 or 80% of the plan cost, whichever is lower. Maximum reimbursement per farmer is \$6,000 (if eligible for more than one plan). PACD has funded 223 plans covering almost 31,000 acres. Eligible plans are Manure Management Plans, Ag E&S Plans, Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans, NRCS 590 plans, and Conservation Plans used in place of Ag E&S Plans (if they meet the state requirements outlined in Chapter 102). Administrative expenses are reimbursable up to 20% of the plan reimbursement.
- Riparian Forest Buffer Programs (funded by DCNR):



- The 2019 grant runs through December 2023 with about \$18,000 remaining. Only multifunctional buffers are eligible, and no match is required.
- The 2021 grant runs through December 2024 with about \$85,000 available. Multifunctional and conventional buffers are eligible. A 50:50 match is required.
- Lawn Conversion Program (funded by DCNR): For conversion of maintained lawn to upland forests or native meadow. PACD held a webinar on June 20, 2023, and an in-person training on July 11. About \$85,000 is available and a 50:50 match is required.
- Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Program: Pilot program is only available for the North West districts: Erie, Warren, McKean, Crawford, Mercer, Venango, Forest, Elk, Lawrence, Butler, Clarion, Jefferson, and Armstrong. We have \$40,000 for education and outreach projects and \$149,000 for Invasive Species Management Projects.

### **Report on Meeting with Governor's Office and DEP**

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported on a recent meeting with Transformation Officer Ben Kirshner with the Governor's Office:

- PACD met with Transformation Officer Ben Kirshner.
- PACD briefed Mr. Kirshner on conservation districts.
- They discussed permitting timeframes, noting districts get permits out fairly quickly once they receive a complete application, but incomplete applications slow the process.
- They discussed differences between Chapters 102 and 105, particularly as they relate to the districts, as well as the nutrient management program and district delegations.
- PACD is eager to be part of the solution to permitting problems and we ask to be an active participant in developing changes to the permitting process.

Brenda also reported on a recent meeting with DEP Secretary Richard Negrin:

- The group was able to meet with several DEP staff before Secretary Negrin arrived.
- Lancaster Manager Chris Thompson discussed the district mission, explaining the role of conservation district boards, and that the local board sets district priorities.
- They discussed common goals between DEP and conservation districts and emphasized that conservation districts are distinct entities that partner with DEP, rather than an arm of the Department.
- They noted that districts can help DEP and show support for their programs with legislators moving forward, particularly those that correspond with district priorities and mission, which focus on voluntary compliance.
- Luzerne CD manager, Josh Longmore, reviewed the transition paper developed by PACD.
- Cambria Manager John Dryzal talked about partnership opportunities and our desire to work more closely with DEP on program development, particularly for programs districts will be implementing. If we can be involved from the beginning, these programs will work more smoothly and efficiently.
- Adams Manager Adam McClain also spoke about how districts can work more closely with DEP.

### **PACD Certified Planner Program**

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported on a new program to hire six regional certified plan writers:

- There is a significant need for additional technical assistance to implement the ACAP program and other on-the-ground projects and PACD is working with USDA NRCS and the SCC to provide additional assistance and funding through a Certified Planner Program.
- The program is set up similarly to the Engineering Assistance Program (also known as the TAG program).
- NRCS and the SCC have pledged \$1 Million (\$500,000 each) to fund a program to hire six regional certified plan-writers. If we cannot find six certified planners, we will hire individuals who can help develop plans to be approved by certified planners.
- Program employees will work out of NRCS field offices and districts can contact them directly for assistance.
- As with the TAG program, the cost of plan development is covered by the program.
- We are currently waiting for the paperwork, which is in process, and hope to have staff in place by January 1, 2024.

### **Legislative Update**

Executive Brenda Shambaugh provided a brief legislative update:

- SB 350 – Third party review legislation – This legislation has passed the Senate and is in the House. PACD opposes this legislation and sent a letter to the House State Government Committee explaining our opposition.
- SB 286 – Redefines pollution – PACD opposes this legislation and sent a letter of opposition to the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee.

Comment on third-party review: The slowdown in permit processing cannot be solved by handing permit reviews to the private sector. Private engineers are submitting incomplete permit applications because they already have more work than they can handle.

### **Adjournment**

*It was moved by Doug Goodlander and seconded by Carl Goshorn to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.*

The meeting was adjourned at 10:58 a.m.