

**PACD Conservation Committee
Videoconference Minutes
June 20, 2024**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chair Josh Longmore called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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

Others in attendance: Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Christopher Thompson, Lancaster; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Eric Oliver, Green Forests Work; John Dryzal, Cambria; Molly Burns, PACD; Shannon Wehinger, PACD; Tara Mlodzienski, Pike

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on January 5, 2024, were provided for review. It was noted those in attendance at the January meeting need to be added to the minutes.

It was moved by Dave Stoner and seconded by Bill Clouser to approve the minutes as amended. Motion carried.

Report on E&S Requirements for Reforestation Projects on Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Sites

Eric Oliver with the Green Forests Work provided the following report:

- They are a nonprofit affiliated with the University of Kentucky. They are also affiliated with the office of surface mining and can apply for grants that the federal government and other organizations may not be able to.
- Eric is the Pennsylvania representative and works out of State College. He worked with DEP's abandoned and active mine programs prior to working with Green Forests Work.
- They have done a great deal of research on best practices for reforestation, including drainage issues, invasive control, and grass crowding out trees. Compaction due to reclamation is probably the most detrimental to establishing reforestation post-reclamation.
- Legacy mine lands are often seriously compacted with grass plantings. The companies are likely released from bond, as the bond can be released without reforestation.
- They often work with legacy mine lands where the bond has been released and reclamation has been completed but reforestation opportunities exist.
- They use lighter equipment to reduce compaction and deep tillage prior to planting season (around April 1 depending on frost). They usually finish by the end of May. They often mow invasives with as little earth disturbance as possible.



- Due to increased funding available they are now undertaking projects as large as 100-150 acres. They are expecting to receive up to \$3 million in grants this year.
- This program has been active in some states since the 1990's.
- Here in Pennsylvania, they were categorized as a silviculture operation with an exemption up to twenty-five acres, which could be aggregated if there was a physical break between areas.
- Since then, there have been many changes in administration and staff and new guidance has been put in place.
- Non-aggregate areas are now required to be separated by a quarter of a mile. They are trying to navigate that guidance and have been meeting with the clean water staff at DEP.
- They reclaim various kinds of sites, but most of their funding comes from the coal industry, and those funds must be used to reclaim coal sites. The techniques are similar for all sites.
- He asked districts to please recommend project areas for reclamation.
- They are hoping to hear back about their funding mid-summer.
- Some projects will be larger, over twenty-five acres, and some will be smaller. Abandoned mine land projects are usually issued an NPDES permit. However, some legacy projects do not have a permit in place. He noted they usually implement a forest buffer of over three hundred feet.
- They are trying to have everything addressed in one document and hope to have a FAQ soon.
- He invited any questions and noted that individuals are welcome to reach out.

PACD Program Update

Brenda provided an update on PACD program activities over the past six months, including Chapter 102 Basic Technical Training, two sessions of Boot Camp Level I, two sessions of Boot Camp Level II, a spring session of Conservation Planning with a second coming up in the fall, the Ag Plan Reimbursement Program, and more.

Future Ideas for PACD Conservation Initiatives

PACD is working through income issues, and our partners asked us to meet with them to develop new ideas for projects and programs. The meeting took place a week or two ago and Brenda shared the ideas with the committee and asked for any additional ideas.

- PACD plans to work with the SCC on two RCPP grant applications, one for soil health and forest restoration and one assisting farmers with BMP opportunities. PACD would be administering some education and outreach on soil health (forest restoration) and for the dairy farmers who are interested in installing BMPs on their farm.
- PACD is reapplying for the CREP cost-share and education and outreach and has requested a six-month extension to maintain continuous coverage through December.
- PACD will be working with NRCS to provide funding to districts who rent, lease, or provide equipment to landowners. District transportation and maintenance costs are often not covered.
- We are looking into whether districts can use remote sensing, particularly with BMPs.
- The SCC and NRCS have suggestions for potential private foundation funding. We are going to reach out to see what opportunities might be available.
- We are reaching out to potential partners on networking opportunities. It was suggested that PACD seek funding to combat invasive species. Brenda provided an update on the PACD

pilot program and expressed optimism that a larger program may be possible after the pilot is complete.

- It was suggested to expand the TAG program to benefit PACD and the districts.

Adjourn

It was moved by Dan Miloser and seconded by Dave Stoner to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.