

**PACD North Central Region Meeting
Clinton County Conservation District, Mill Hall, PA
March 19, 2024**

Welcome and Introductions

Region Director Rob Shannon welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

In attendance: Ian Abernethy, PACD; Amy Brown, PACD; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Jim Coslo, Centre; Carl DeLuca, DEP; Rachael Fish, DEP; Bill Kahler, Lycoming; Jaci Kerstetter, DEP; Shane Kleiner, DEP; Aaron Kolb, Lycoming; Matt Long, Lycoming; Willie Null, Clearfield; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Rob Shannon, Centre; Erica Tomlinson, Tioga; Andy Wodehouse, PACD; Doug Wolfgang, SCC; Cathy Yeakel, Bradford; Carrie Richmond, Sullivan; Amanda Coleman, NRCS; Greg Bonsall, Union; Todd Deluccia, Cameron; John Blasius, Northumberland.

PACD Business and Report

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided the following report:

- Joint Annual Conference: The Joint Annual Conference will take place July 17-18, 2024, at the Penn Stater. Further information to come.
- What PACD Does for You: This report detailed PACD member services and accomplishments from the past year.
- PACD Ways and Means Committee: The Ways and Means Committee passed a motion to discuss a voluntary \$500 donation from all conservation districts to address a budget shortfall due to a reduction in administrative income from grants. *There was a motion and a second. The motion passed with the majority in favor and one dissent from Northumberland County.*
- Five percent for Growing Greener: The 5% administrative limit on Growing Greener is insufficient to cover rising costs. PACD proposes raising this to at least 10% to cover administrative costs and the remaining 90% towards projects. Denise Coleman from NRCS stated that 10% is already the minimum at the Federal level. *There was a motion and a second. The motion passed with all in favor.*
- House Bill 1275: The following policy was provided for review with no action taken: *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.*
- Gov. Shapiro's Proposed Budget: Meetings will be scheduled to support dedicating funding for Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Fund and to support the proposed funding in the DEP and PDA budget. The PA House and Senate will be holding Appropriations hearings.
- Ch. 102 Technical Training: Announced for May. Contact Molly with questions.
- 319 Grantee Meeting: Announced for May. Contact Molly with questions.
- Virtual Watershed Specialist Meeting: To be held in October. More information to come.



- Social Media and Outreach: District shared messaging goes out at the beginning of every month for districts to share on their social media. This is paid for by PACD dues.
- Ag Boot Camp: Funded by NRCS and SCC. There will be one Basic session, two Level II sessions, and two Conservation Planning Training Sessions.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Mini-Grant Program: This is funded by a grant through DEP and projects are to be completed by May.
- PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program: Originally, \$500,000 was allocated for this program, all of which was committed. With 401 Ag Plans funded, there was still high demand. The SCC approved an additional \$100,000 which helped to commit funding to more projects, but there is still a waiting list.
- CREP Mini Grants: Funds are still available with applications accepted on a rolling basis.
- CREP Banner at PA Farm Show Complex: A 10x10 banner will remain displayed at the PA Farm Show Complex throughout the year promoting CREP. This was paid for by DEP.
- Riparian Buffer Program: Funded by DCNR with a 50/50 match and is still currently running. Contact Holly Miller with questions.
- Lawn Conversion Program: PACD held a webinar in June and an in-person training in July. There is currently \$75k available. Funded by DCNR. Contact Holly Miller with questions.
- Invasive Pest Management: Currently only available in the NW but data will be compiled and shared with the General Assembly to help create a statewide program.
- CPESC Training: Will be held on September 10 at the Clinton County Conservation District. A discounted rate of \$180 will be provided to district staff. The deadline to apply is in August. Contact Holly Miller with questions.
- Certified Planner Training: Funded by NRCS and SCC, all six positions were filled and housed at NRCS offices throughout the state. Report is available with details.
- Clean Water Academy: There are nine hundred courses available with over 37,000 course completions. Contact Chris Grimsley with questions. This is funded by DEP.
- Leadership Development Update: Matt Miller reported that he is putting on programs and training throughout the state, including a New Manager Training and Leadership Summit.

Regional Information Sharing

- Bradford: Holding Earth Day event on April 20 with children's programs. Second Women in Ag event in April. Will have two eel releases in May with eels raised in classrooms. Will be holding a Dirt and Gravel Roads update meeting. Hiring a Conservation Resource Tech.
- Cameron: Acid Mine Drainage program almost complete with one remaining project in the watershed. They are planning a legislative tour of projects for Earth Day.
- Lycoming: Hosted an ag brunch, which successfully brought in a fresh crowd. Hired a new ag technician. Held their largest seedling sale and completely sold out. Construction dates are being established for Act 13 projects. Will be holding legislative breakfast.
- Union: Hosted an Open Door Day for the public to answer questions and discuss possible projects. To address an increase in calls and questions about Spongey Moth, they held a meeting for applicators. Hosted an intern that made a Conservation Jeopardy Presentation for events. Staff will be going to schools for Agricultural Literacy Day to read to students.
- Centre: Hiring a new intern. Staff attended Penn State Career Day. Hired a new administrative assistant. Will be attending commissioners meeting to ask for a proclamation during conservation week.

- Tioga: Winter Ag Meeting was held discussing winter agriculture. Legislative Luncheon will be May 10. They are holding a first come, first served tree sale. Hiring a new staff member.
- Northumberland: Held a Winter Forum offering pesticide credit. Will be hosting educational programs, including a permanent soil pit and watershed education for students. Starting a free scout birdhouse workshop April 25.
- Clearfield: Finalized first major ACAP project. Started a rehabilitation project. Hosted a seedling sale at the Central PA Outdoor Show. Will be presenting at a Boy Scout camp.

PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report:

- Permit Pilot Project: Growing Greener – allocated \$12 Million to Watershed projects and 62 Growing Greener Grants in 2023
- They continue to work in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and were acknowledged with a National Award.
- BMP verification: There will be more modules in practice keeper by July.
- Created a better Manure Manual through the FPR work group.
- Ag Permitting Roundtable was held.
- Nonpoint Source Report coming in Spring.
- DEP Advisory Board Updating in April.
- Holding a virtual meeting for 319 on May 28 and 29
- Growing Greener will be open by the end of April.
- Will be Submitting five-year nonpoint source pollution reduction plan to EPA.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation (NRCS) Service Report:

- PA NRCS retiree Joel Myers won the Leopold Award
- 2022 Census of Agriculture showed PA had the highest number of young farmers.
- RCCP opportunities are incoming with \$1.6 Billion available.
- NRCS was able to allocate all \$15 Billion through the ACT NOW cover crop program.
- IRA bill for Cover Crop Funding will provide \$28 Million total.
- NRCS held an All Hands meeting in February.
- American Farmland Trust recently completed a Conservation Innovation Grant project to help women farmers and landowners advance soil health.

State Conservation Commission Report:

- Recognized PACD for their continuing partnership in keeping conservation moving forward.
- Seeking dedicated funding for ACAP. The SCC will be meeting with Senator Yaw soon.
- New Technical Assistance and Penn State Faculty have been hired.
- New staff have been hired.
- All programs are wrapping up or moving forward.
- Statewide Soil health program was held.
- Sustainable Ag Board Appointed

Motion to Adjourn

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 12:17 PM.