

PACD North West Region Meeting
Armstrong Conservation District Office, Kittanning, PA
April 23, 2024

Welcome and Introductions

PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM.

In person attendees: Cliff Lane, McKean; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Dennis Beck, PACD; Doug Wolfgang, SCC; Dana Flowers, Penn State Extension; Josh Ferraro, PACD; Cassie Daniels, PACD; Danielle Kalp, PACD; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Dennis Hawley, Armstrong; Jennifer Jack, Armstrong; Maria Sorce, Armstrong; Mikayla Bucci, Armstrong; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Donna Zofcin, Forest; Jeff Werner, NRCS; Mary Burris, Lawrence; Freddy Smith, Lawrence; Jillian Court, Lawrence; Jeannie Shay, Lawrence; Mitchell Whiting, Lawrence; Carl DeLuca, DEP; Karen Books, SCC; Jay Russell, Mercer; Don Koontz, Mercer; Ian Harrell, Butler; Shaun Wessell, Jefferson; Trudy Alexander, Clarion; Kate Wehler, Elk

Virtual attendees: Tom McClure, Erie; Lisette Lane, Venango; Susannah Harris, DEP; Jaci Kerstetter, DEP; Sonia Wasco, PACD

Date of Next Meeting

The next PACD North West meeting will be hosted by TBD (possibly Elk County), on Thursday, September 12, 2024, 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 Holly Laird and seconded by Trudy Alexander to approve the minutes of the meeting on September 27, 2023. Motion approved unanimously.

PACD Business and Report

General Updates

Brenda introduced Josh Ferraro, Danielle Kalp, and Cassie Daniels from the PACD Engineering Assistance (TAG) Program. She also discussed the PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference in State College, which will be new and improved with workshops and site visits.

PACD Ways and Means Committee Motion

At the PACD Ways and Means Committee meeting, the following motion was passed and will be considered at each PACD Spring region meeting.



The PACD Ways and Means Committee moved to recommend discussion for the potential of requesting a \$500 donation from the conservation districts to PACD as a short-term solution to the financial shortfalls currently existing.

Donna Zofcin made a motion to approve the motion as written. Ian Harrell seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

PACD Legislative Committee Motions

At the PACD Legislative Committee meeting, the following motions were passed and will be considered at each PACD Spring region meeting.

- *The Growing Greener Plus Grants Program offered by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) funds projects aimed at reducing nonpoint source water pollution through local, watershed-based planning, restoration, and protection efforts. The PACD Legislative Committee supports legislation to increase the administrative expense limitation for the Growing Greener program to a minimum of 10% to better cover administrative expenses.*

Mary Burris made a motion to approve the motion as written. Donna Zofcin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

- *PACD recognizes the significant environmental benefit of riparian buffers along surface bodies of water. PACD supports education and incentives for voluntary installation of riparian buffers as opposed to legislation allowing administrative agencies of the Commonwealth and municipalities to require buffers along any body of water more restrictive than current law and regulation.*

Mary Burris made a motion to approve the motion as written. Donna Zofcin seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

Legislative Report

Brenda provided highlights from her written report:

- State Budget – Governor Shapiro presented his draft budget to the General Assembly in February. The proposed budget maintains the Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) amounts in both the DEP and PDA lines. Brenda stated that next week is Conservation District Week.
- Chapter 102 Training – Brenda discussed this upcoming training and noted that PACD is working with DEP on an agenda.
- Ag Boot Camp Training – One Basic, two Level II, and one (or possibly two) Intro to Conservation Planning sessions are planned, funded jointly by PACD and the SCC.
- Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant program – A round for these is open now.
- PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program – The SCC provided an additional \$100,000 for plan reimbursement after the initial funding was exhausted. These additional funds have also been used. PACD and the SCC are discussing possibilities for continued funding.
- CREP Outreach Program Office – Brenda discussed the CREP mini-grant program.

- 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-funded lawn conversion program which included in-person and virtual training for lawn conversion training to conservation district staff. Districts should view the training before applying for a subgrant. Districts can contact Holly Miller with questions.
- Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Program – Brenda provided an update on the PRISM program.
- Certified Professional Erosion and Sedimentation Control (CPESC) – PACD is offering a CPESC course at a discount for district staff.
- Clean Water Academy – Brenda discussed the continually growing Clean Water Academy course offerings and the growing usage of the program.
- Leadership Development – Brenda discussed the successes of the leadership development efforts completed this year. Districts can contact Matt Miller for district team workshops.

Regional Information Sharing

- *Armstrong* – Holly Laird discussed the completion of the Armsdale Center for Agriculture and Conservation, the hiring of a new agricultural technician, their ACAP program, and a Growing Greener streambank stabilization project with the PA Fish and Boat Commission.
- *Butler* – Ian Harrell reported that all ACAP money was allocated and now they are using technical assistance money for projects. Their DGLVR projects are going well. They are working on their PRISM program with the completion of 5,000 volunteer hours.
- *Forest* – Donna Zofcin stated that half of their ACAP funding has been allocated. They are working on their DGLVR projects. Forest has a new full-time employee handling administrative and DGLVR duties that will start May 13. They are also working with Western PA Conservancy on a streambank stabilization project. For district week, Forest will be writing news articles on district work.
- *Elk* – Kate Wehler discussed their E&S program. They have a large workload, recently had an E&S Technician leave, and have a new employee starting in June. Elk is co-hosting a statewide forestry workshop with neighboring districts. Elk inherited an AMD treatment system, which they are working on. The Elk County Commissioners will give the district \$10,000/year for four years to reimburse farmers for the development of ag plans.
- *Jefferson* – Shaun Wessell discussed the fifteen education events that Jefferson held in April as well as staff changes and fish habitat projects.
- *McKean* – Sandy Thompson reported two new staff members are joining their team. They are redoing their strategic plan with the assistance of the University of Pittsburgh at Bradford. Sandy said their plans for district week include a legislative tour, news releases, and their Envirothon will be held that week. They are also working on ACAP and DGLVR projects, and invasive species through a PDA grant and the PRISM program.
- *Mercer* – Jay Russell discussed their Chapter 102 workload, noting their solar projects. He also provided an update on ACAP, three new staff members, and their PRISM program. The district held an awards ceremony earlier this year where Bob McDonald was recognized for

serving 45 years with the district. Mercer plans to celebrate district week by posting on Facebook and other social media platforms.

- *Lawrence* – Mary Burris discussed three DGLVR projects, four ACAP projects, a Growing Greener Grant, and a streambank stabilization project. Mary noted some 102 challenges in the county. She also said Lawrence has purchased a no-till drill and is planning a field day with the planter. They are also administering a mini-grant program because of the Norfolk Southern train derailment where home and business owners in Lawrence County can apply for up to \$5,000 to do small projects.
- *Clarion* – Trudy Alexander discussed their DGLVR program, noting that their QA/QC was currently going on. Clarion currently has five employees, which is the largest the district has ever been. They are working on two AMD passive treatment system rebuilds and one watershed assessment with two interns. They have increased watershed organization involvement and are working with the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation on AMD projects. She also noted that their ACAP program is stalled pending EQIP funding notifications. Clarion had a successful Earth Day event and Envirothon and will celebrate district week by utilizing their social media platforms.

Partner Reports

- *DEP* – Carl DeLuca provided an update on behalf of the Bureau of Watershed Restoration & Nonpoint Source Management, which has forty staff, Jill Whitcomb being the bureau chief. The bureau has been busy keeping up with the senate budget hearing, the food processing residual (FPR) workgroup, the DEP ag permitting round table, and working with the PA Game Commission. The 2023 NPS annual report is in its final stages. The latest Growing Greener round opened on April 22 and will close on June 21.
- *DEP* – Karen Books mentioned that Susannah Harris was virtually attending the meeting and that she will be training new employees and directors.
- *DEP* – Jaci Kerstetter provided an update on the live budget spreadsheet training she is hosting with districts. The budget spreadsheet transitioned to an online system that is housed on the DGLVR site and will be searchable so reports can be created. Districts will need to upload their FY 22/23 info soon and then the system will be live for FY 23/24.
- *SCC* – Doug Wolfgang provided an update on the ACAP program stating that all hands have been on deck. The program is in a good place, with over six hundred approved/funded applications totaling sixty million dollars obligated to signed contracts. He expressed appreciation for the partnership SCC has with the Penn State Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training. An ACAP conference will be held in State College June 4-6. There are fifty-five signed delegation agreements for the Nutrient Management Program. DGLVR QA/QC visits are currently taking place. DGLVR boot camp will be scheduled in State College. Roy Richardson is retiring from the SCC and will be greatly missed.
- *NRCS* – Jeff Werner provided an NRCS update. There is \$1.5 million in RCPP funding available for the region and the deadline to apply is 7/2/2024. He announced that Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) funding may be available; there is a survey out for that. The initial round of EQIP funding for Western PA has been announced. He asked districts to keep their local NRCS field offices advised of ACAP projects. A cover crop program is available.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:09 pm.

