

**PACD Legislative Committee
Videoconference Minutes
January 16, 2025**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairwoman Donna Fisher called the meeting to order at 10:01 a.m. with a quorum.

Committee members in attendance: Donna Fisher (Blair); Chuck Duritsa (Westmoreland), Thomas Herbert (Luzerne), Kelly Stagen (Pike), Doug Beri (Indiana), Mary Burris (Lawrence), Adam McClain (Adams), Chris Strohmaier (Chester), Chris Thompson (Lancaster)

Guests and staff in attendance: Abby Frey (Columbia), Brenda Shambaugh (PACD), Dave Stoner (Franklin), Dean Druckenmiller (Berks), Denise Coleman (NRCS), Dennis Beck (Cambria), Doug Wolfgang (SCC), John Dryzal (Cambria), Molly Burns (PACD), Shannon Wehinger (PACD), Tara Burnham (Pike)

Minutes of the July 1, 2024 Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on July 1, 2024, were provided for review.

It was moved by Adam McClain and seconded by Chris Strohmaier to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried.

Legislative Updates and Dedicated Funding for the PA Clean Streams Fund

SCC Executive Secretary Doug Wolfgang provided an update on dedicated funding for the Clean Streams Fund. He thanked the conservation districts for helping make the case for dedicated funding, particularly the portion dedicated to ACAP. He reviewed the distribution of the funds as well as the Commission's plans.

Doug also addressed the federal American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds that need to be spent by the end of 2026 and noted the SCC wants to help in any way they can to increase capacity for engineering, technical assistance, and other resources needed to get projects on the ground. He encouraged districts to reach out with any suggestions.

Doug also noted the SCC Conservation District Advisory Committee is considering how to simplify the administrative process for Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) funding. The SCC wants to identify where change is needed, determine the mechanism to make those changes (legislative, policy, etc.), and simplify the process where possible.

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported she and Lancaster District Manager Chris Thompson recently met with Senator Martin. They updated him on district programs and



discussed prevailing wage, the Growing Greener administrative cap, DGLVR program funding, and the potential for a statewide PRISM program to address invasive species.

State Conservationist Denise Coleman provided a brief update on federal funds and programs and stressed the urgency of locking down the Inflation Reduction Act funding to ensure Pennsylvania can use those funds for conservation projects. Doug thanked Denise for all the support from NRCS.

Brenda noted PACD is planning to partner with the SCC to apply for a soil health grant through the RCPP program. PACD will keep the districts updated as things develop.

Update on Proposed Policy from the PACD Legislative Committee

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported the South West, North West, South East, and South Central regions voted to support the original policy proposed by the PACD Legislative Committee on July 17, 2024 (Policy A). The North Central opted not to consider the policy. Both policies will go before PACD Executive Council on January 28, 2025.

The original policy proposed by the Legislative Committee is as follows:

- A. PACD recognizes the significant environmental benefit of protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources through Best Management Practices (BMPs). PACD supports education and incentives for voluntary installation of BMPs.*

The PACD North East Region proposed an alternate policy for consideration by PACD Executive Council:

- B. PACD recognizes the significant environmental benefit of protecting our Commonwealth's natural resources through Best Management Practices (BMPs). PACD supports programs for education and increased incentives and funding for voluntary installation of BMPs.*

PACD Ad Hoc Budget Committee Overview

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided some background on the committee and noted they are surveying the membership to help identify priorities. They will consider requesting an increase in CDFAP funding, depending on survey results and other considerations, and will meet with the administration prior to any request for an increase. John Dryzal noted they are looking at the Consumer Price Index to determine and justify a request for increased funding.

Webinar: PA General Assembly Legislative Process

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported she will be providing a webinar on Conservation Districts and Pennsylvania's Legislative Process at Noon on February 5. The presentation is specifically geared toward conservation districts.



Ag Plan Reimbursement Program Update

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh noted the Ag Plan Reimbursement Program is underway and has already committed 73,000 since the paperwork was signed two weeks ago. Many of the plans are for farms in Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program.

State Conservationist Denise Coleman added that NRCS has \$2 million set aside to implement conservation practices on farms in Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program.

Formation of a Subcommittee

Chris Thompson, Kelly Stagen, Tom Herbert, Doug Beri, and Donna Fisher volunteered to form a subcommittee to discuss a potential push for legislation addressing conservation district priorities. This could be related to district funding, funding specifically for watershed specialists, prevailing wage, or other issues.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

