

PACD Executive Council Minutes
Penn Stater Hotel and Conference Center, State College, PA
July 17, 2024

Call to Order

President Chair Dennis Beck called the meeting to order at 1:15 p.m.

Roll Call

Secretary Charles Duritsa called the roll and reported a quorum was present, with thirty-eight districts answering the roll.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

Secretary Charles Duritsa presented the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was moved by Donna Zofcin (Forest) and seconded by Don Koontz (Mercer) to approve the minutes of the previous meeting as presented. Motion carried.

President's Report

President Dennis Beck provided the following report:

- Dennis thanked everyone for attending the conference, the conference sponsors for their support, his fellow PACD Executive Board Members for their leadership and guidance, the PACD staff for their hard work, and our partners for working with districts to help conserve Pennsylvania's natural resources.
- Dennis noted that our partners will report during the State Conservation Commission Meeting.
- Dennis gave special thanks to John Dryzal for organizing the Silent Auction. John was also a member of the workgroup that helped develop the agenda and Dennis recognized workgroup members in attendance.
- PACD has had many accomplishments over the past year.
- We were able to successfully maintain conservation district funding in the state budget.
- Thanks to the generosity of our partners, we were able to offer additional agricultural and E&S training opportunities for conservation district staff, launch the Conservation Planner and Agricultural Plan Reimbursement Programs, and continue to host successful programs like the Engineering Assistance Program, the Clean Water Academy, and the Leadership Development Program.
- PACD faced significant financial challenges this year, but Treasurer Sonia Wasco will be presenting a balanced budget for the coming fiscal year.
- Dennis closed by thanking everyone for their continued support of the association.



Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided a report on the accomplishments of each staff member over the past year, including the Leadership Development Program; Chapter 102 Technical Training; Agricultural Conservation Technical Training; the Ag Plan Reimbursement Program; the CREP program, including cost-share, conservation district mini-grants, and other outreach; the Lawn Conversion Sub-Grant Program for Conservation Districts; the pilot Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) Sub-Grant Program; the Riparian Buffer Sub-Grant for Conservation Districts Program; the Nonpoint Source Pollution Educational Mini-Grant Program; and the Clean Water Academy.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented the year-end financial reports for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. She reported that PACD expects to record a loss this year, as expected. However, PACD has significantly reduced the projected deficit, with exact numbers to be provided after the annual audit.

In addition to trimming costs where possible, PACD took several steps to help offset the projected deficit. First, PACD opted not to fill the vacant part-time Bookkeeper position, with PACD staff taking up those additional duties. PACD was also able to secure \$100,000 in funding for the Ag Plan Reimbursement Program from the State Conservation Commission. Last, but not least, the association brought in \$26,000 in income for the PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference before the end of June. PACD members also helped the association to offset the deficit. Several conservation districts made voluntary donations to the association and all sixty-six conservation districts are in good standing. Treasurer Wasco thanked all PACD's members for their support of the association.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Donna Zofcin (Forest) to accept the Treasurer's Report pending audit. Motion carried.

NACD Director's Report

NACD Director Ron Rohall recognized NACD Northeast Region Representative Nika Colley, who provided the following report:

- NACD has several grant opportunities for conservation districts, including the Friends of NACD Grant Program; the Urban and Community Conservation Grant Initiative; Outreach and Technical Assistance Grants; Climate-Smart Commodities Grants; and the Perimeter Fencing for Feral Swine Grant Program.
- They are partnering with NRCS on the Working Lands Climate Corps.
- Forestry Program Manager Annica McGuirk has secured a \$585,824 U.S. Forest Service Landscape Scale Restoration Grant to advance regional conservation efforts.
- NACD has hired Loutrina Staley, Ph.D. to lead NACD's Equity and Outreach Program.
- The education team worked hard on the stewardship program, with the 2024 theme *May the Forest Be with You*, that included free educational materials and kits at a cost. The theme for 2025 is *Home is Where the Habitat Is*.
- The NACD government relations team has been working with Congress to encourage passage of the Farm Bill.
- The combined NACD Summer Meeting and Northeast Region Meeting will take place

August 9-14 in Boston, Massachusetts.

- Nika thanked all districts who paid their NACD dues, which helps NACD represent conservation districts at the national level.

NACD Director Ron Rohall provided the following report:

- PACD 1st Vice President Emil Bove was able to obtain a scholarship to attend the NACD Annual Meeting in San Diego, California.
- At the annual meeting, PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane received the NACD Employees Award for Outstanding Conservation District Director and Board Member.
- Ron urged Pennsylvania's conservation districts to be active in policy development at the national level, and to consider submitting policies on issues important to the northeast.

PACD Conservation Committee

Committee Chair Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The PACD Conservation Committee met on June 20 with a quorum.
- The committee received a report from Eric Oliver with Green Forests Work on E&S requirements for reforestation projects on abandoned mine land reclamation sites.
 - They are a nonprofit affiliated with the University of Kentucky. Eric is the Pennsylvania representative and works out of State College.
 - They work to reforest abandoned mine land sites. Compaction is a big issue at these sites. They use lighter equipment to reduce additional compaction, work to loosen up the soil and reforest the site.
 - 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.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided a program update.
- The committee also discussed ideas for future PACD conservation initiatives. PACD is seeking to expand partnerships and look for new opportunities.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD District Employees Committee

Chair Holly Kaplan provided the following report:

- The PACD District Employees Committee met on June 25, 2024, with a quorum.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided a report and a list of upcoming training opportunities coordinated by PACD.
- PACD Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller shared information on upcoming Leadership Development training.
- Committee member Sandy Thompson provided information about the combined NACD Summer Meeting and NACD Northeast Region Meeting in Boston, Massachusetts, August 9-14, 2024.
- Sandy also shared that the National Conservation District Employees Association (NCDEA) sponsors free monthly webinars for conservation district staff. Two will be offered in July:
 - How to Work with (Almost) Anyone was offered on Thursday, July 18
 - Difficult Personalities: How to Navigate Relationships with Clients, Co-Workers and Others Who May Have Borderline Personality Disorder, Narcissism, and other Challenging Personalities, will be offered on Wednesday, July 24

- Participants on the call expressed the need for in-person PracticeKeeper training for conservation district staff.
- Brenda Shambaugh reviewed the Joint Annual Conference agenda and encouraged staff and board members to attend.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee

Committee member Kelly Stagen provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met on June 27, 2024, with a quorum.
- The committee received updates on upcoming PACD training, including Agricultural Conservation Technical Training, Environmental Negotiations training, 102/105 Basic Technical Training, the Watershed Specialist Meeting, and a Certified Professional in Erosion & Sediment Control (CPESC) course.
- The committee also heard from Stacey Widenhofer and Stephanie Sherman from the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Educators (PAEE). They spoke about their Environmental Educator Certification Program, PAEE membership, and professional development opportunities.
- PAEE has many resources of interest to conservation districts, including their events calendar and jobs board at PAEE.net and online professional development courses.
- They also host a sharing and learning community on diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and accessibility. And their environmental educator certification program is in the process of accreditation through the North American Association for Environmental Education. When that process is complete, Pennsylvania will be the fifth state in the nation to be accredited.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Legislative Committee

Chair Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The PACD Legislative Committee met on July 1 with a quorum.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided a legislative update.
- Since Brenda's report, the state budget was passed. The budget maintains the Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) budget lines and provides \$50 million in additional funding for the Clean Streams Fund.
- PACD applauds the additional funding and will continue to support dedicated funding for the Clean Streams Fund.
- Prior to the budget passing, Brenda and conservation district representatives met with the Chief of Staff for the Speaker of the House and several other legislators to support funding for conservation districts and the Clean Streams Fund.
- Also prior to the budget passing, some interests were pushing for an increase in transportation funding. PACD will continue to support an increase for the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads program.
- Brenda also provided an update on two proposed policies from the PACD Legislative Committee that will come before Council under new business:
 - The first policy proposes to increase the expense limitation for the Growing Greener Plus Grants Program. If the PACD Executive Council approves this motion, PACD will seek support for the increase from other organizations.

- The second policy 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.
- Berks District Manager Dean Druckenmiller shared some information from Berks Director Piper Sherburne regarding invasive species. Brenda Shambaugh provided an update on the PACD PRISM Pilot Program in the North West and noted that outcomes from the pilot program will provide guidance for PACD in deciding how to move forward.
- The committee passed the following motion, which will go through the next round of region meetings: *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 committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Operations Committee

Chair Emil Bove provided the following report:

- The PACD Operations Committee met on July 12 with a quorum.
- There were no new resolutions from PACD committees. However, Brenda Shambaugh reported the PACD Legislative Committee proposed a policy to go to the 2024 Fall PACD Region Meetings. That policy will come before the Operations Committee in January 2025.
- The committee reviewed and forwarded three motions from the Spring PACD Region Meetings to PACD Executive Council.
 - First, a proposed policy from the PACD Legislative Committee to support increasing the administrative expense limitation for Growing Greener Plus Grants Program from 5% to 10%.
 - Second, a motion from the Ways and Means Committee proposing discussion about PACD requesting a \$500 donation from conservation districts.
 - And third, a proposed policy from the PACD Legislative Committee on mandatory riparian buffers.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Ways and Means Committee

Chair Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- The PACD Ways and Means Committee met on July 11, 2024, with a quorum.
- The committee reviewed the draft financial reports for Fiscal year 2023-2024, which were reviewed during the Treasurer's Report earlier in this meeting.
- The committee reviewed the PACD draft budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 and is pleased that the Executive Board passed the budget after acting on their recommendations.
- The committee reviewed the three-year dues structure and had no recommended changes.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

Proposed PACD Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25

Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented a balanced budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25. She entertained and answered questions from those present.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Thomas McClure (Erie) to approve the proposed budget. Motion carried.

Items from the PACD Region Meetings

Three items from the PACD Region Meetings were provided for review.

Proposed Policy to Support Increase to Growing Greener Plus Grants Program Administrative Expense Limitation

It was moved by Don Koontz (Mercer) and seconded by Donna Fisher (Blair) to approve the following policy:

The Growing Green 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. PACD supports legislation to increase the administrative expense limitation for the Growing Greener program to a minimum of 10% to better cover administrative expenses.

Motion carried.

Proposal to Discuss PACD Requesting a \$500 Donation from Conservation Districts

It was moved by Ray Gorman (Cambria) and seconded by (Lawrence) to approve the following motion from the PACD Ways and Means Committee:

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.

Motion carried.

Proposed Policy on Mandatory Riparian Buffers

It was moved by Donna Fisher (Blair) and seconded by Mary Burris (Lawrence) to approve the following policy:

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.

Motion carried.

(Luzerne abstained from the vote.)

Election of Officers

PACD Nominating Committee Chair Ron Rohall presented his report.

It was moved by Piper Sherburne (Berks) and seconded by David Stoner (Franklin) to nominate Sonia Wasco as PACD Treasurer. Motion carried.

It was moved by Doug Beri (Indiana) and seconded by Erica Tomlinson (Tioga) to approve the slate of candidates as presented:

President – Dennis Beck, Cambria

1st Vice President – Emil Bove, Westmoreland

2nd Vice President – Kelly Stagen, Pike

Secretary – Sonia Wasco, Lancaster

Treasurer – Vacant

NACD Director – Ron Rohall, Westmoreland

Motion carried.

It was noted that Sonia Wasco will continue as Acting Treasurer until a new Treasurer can be found.

Adjournment

It was moved and seconded to adjourn the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:29 p.m.