

**PACD Executive Council
Videoconference Minutes
January 29, 2026**

Call to Order

Chair and PACD President Emil Bove called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

Roll Call

Secretary Sonia Wasco called the roll and confirmed a quorum was present. Thirty conservation districts responded to the roll call.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

Secretary Sonia Wasco presented the minutes of the previous meeting on July 16, 2025.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco and seconded by Rob Shannon to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on July 16, 2025. Motion carried.

President's Report

President Emil Bove provided his report, thanked members who volunteered to help PACD develop the new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan, and provided an overview of the plan for those present, including PACD's updated mission and vision.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Amy Brown reported on PACD accomplishments since the PACD Executive Council met last July. She also thanked PACD's partners, extending particular thanks to Jill Whitcomb, Deputy Secretary for DEP's Office of Water Programs, and Greg Hostetter, PDA Executive Deputy Secretary, for working with PACD on the budget process.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Vince Pennoni presented the treasurer's report, including mid-year financial reports.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco and seconded by Kelly Stagen to accept the treasurer's report. Motion carried.

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Report

NACD Director Ron Rohall reported he has been forwarding NACD legislative updates to the PACD directors listserve and encouraged everyone to sign up for the NACD e-Resource and Conservation Clips. He noted that the Center for Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads and the McKean County Conservation District will be presenting during the 2026 NACD Annual Meeting February 14 - February 18 in San Antonio, TX.



Cliff Lane, NE Region Representative to the NACD Executive Board, reported the NACD Legislative Fly-in will take place March 25, 2026, and the 2026 Summer Conservation Forum & Tours will take place July 17-22, 2026 in Grand Rapids, MI.

NACD NE Region Representative Nika Colley thanked PACD for having her. She complimented Ron Rohall and Cliff Lane on their service representing Pennsylvania and noted that, as a Philadelphia resident, she is excited for the potential for a new district there.

It was asked if there is a way to better take advantage of NACD resources, and Nika shared several links to additional information.

New Business

Reports, motions, and resolutions from PACD Committees:

PACD Conservation Committee

Committee Chair Josh Longmore reported that the PACD Conservation Committee hosted a presentation on data centers by Jim Ladlee with Penn State. This presentation is available for viewing and the link will be distributed to the membership.

PACD District Employees Committee

Committee Chair Holly Kaplan provided the following report:

- The PACD District Employees Committee met on January 9, 2026, with a quorum.
- The group reviewed goal 2A of PACD's draft strategic plan, which involves establishing a resource library to share documents and resources and establishing a communications hub to provide more flexible communication between districts.
- The group discussed some possible tools including Google, Teams, and Slack.
- Kate Wehler volunteered to work with her staff to research tools and bring information back to the managers at their next meeting.
- Special training needs like CPESC, CBLP, wetlands ID, etc. were discussed. Holly Kaplan offered to reach out to conservation district managers to determine staff needs and requests.
- The group is also gearing up to work on another salary study. It was recommended that we reach out to DEP for salary information and to other state associations for salary and recruitment and retention information.
- A motion was made to propose incorporating the cost of periodic salary studies (every 3-5-years) to the PACD Ways and Means committee.
- Roles and Responsibilities for the District Employee Committee were provided. Matt described how committees will be moving forward with the strategic plan. Our goal is innovation and engagement.
- Matt Miller reviewed the 2026 staff training initiative.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee

Committee Chair Laura Anderson provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met on January 13, 2026, with a quorum.
- PACD Director of Communications and Education Shannon Wehinger reported on PACD

activities.

- PACD hosted a conservation district booth at the PA Farm Show. Many thanks to the conservation district volunteers.
- Shannon submitted a DEP Environmental Education Grant application to hold a training for conservation district educators
- The PACD Strategic Plan will require help from the committee on some of the objectives
- PACD Water Resource Trainer Molly Bengs gave an update on the Clean Water Academy.
 - She showed attendees the updated orientation materials for new users
 - She highlighted the filters and search functions to make finding content easier
 - She also announced that in 2025, there were 40,323 course completions, including 4,219 completions by conservation district staff
- It was noted that committee members were encouraged to attend the PACD Conservation Committee data center presentation the week prior in lieu of a separate presentation.

PACD Legislative Committee

Committee Chair Kelly Stagen provided the following report:

- MeeCee Baker and Derek Snyder from Versant Strategies provided information on how they track bills for the districts, gave a legislative update, and discussed plans to enhance Conservation District Week.
- PACD's Molly Burns joined them to discuss the current legislative strategy, which focuses on the districts' appropriations ask for the upcoming budget, and seeking to increase the Growing Greener administrative threshold from 5% to 10%.
- Looking ahead, Molly Burns reported that the draft strategic plan incorporates a mini-strategic planning process for the PACD committees. This is designed to reinvigorate the committees and refocus their energies.
- Kelly Stagen asked committee members to consider what kinds of legislative activities would make things better and improve things for conservation districts. The group can discuss these ideas during the summer committee meeting.

PACD Operations Committee

Committee Chair Emil Bove noted there was no meeting of the PACD Operations Committee due to lack of business.

PACD Ways and Means Committee

Committee Chair and PACD Treasurer Vince Pennoni provided the following report:

- The PACD Ways and Means Committee met on January 22, 2026, with a quorum.
- The committee approved the minutes of the July 10, 2025, meeting.
- The group reviewed a summary of financials for FY 2024/2025 and Vince Pennoni and Executive Director Amy Brown answered questions. Highlights include:
 - So far, PACD has received about 50% in dues for this fiscal year.
 - Interest was higher across all accounts this year due to moving accounts to PA INVEST.
 - PACD wages are higher than budgeted due to staff doing more PACD-paid work. This is partly due to the federal and state shutdowns, which resulted in a hold on grant work
- The financial reports, once passed by the council, will be filed for audit.
- The committee discussed the roles and responsibilities of the committee along with plans for

a mini strategic planning process for the committee to encourage more engagement.

- The group reviewed ideas to increase revenue, including a partnership with PennDOT to supply conservation districts with permitting fees, co-hosting an engineering conference, hosting the Joint Annual Conference at the PA Farm Show complex, and possibly affiliate memberships.

Partner Reports

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DCNR sent their regrets that they were not available to report and thanked everyone present for their hard work and partnership.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist Denise Coleman reviewed highlights from the 2025 USDA NRCS Annual Report for Pennsylvania, with special focus on conservation district contributions. She reported that NRCS applied 42,958 practices in 2025 despite a 20% staffing cut. She also provided highlights on funding by watershed, investments on private working lands, the Regional Conservation Partnership Program, conservation planner training, Emergency Watershed Protection, the Pennsylvania Dam Rehabilitation Program, and partnership accomplishments.

PA State Conservation Commission

Executive Secretary Doug Wolfgang provided an update on SCC activities, including the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), the Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training (CACAT), The Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads program, and the Nutrient Management Program.

Doug thanked PACD for their work to support agricultural conservation technical assistance and to manage programs that help the districts and partners, such as the Ag Plan Reimbursement Program. He complimented PACD on their updated outreach efforts to promote the good work of conservation districts and the partnership and thanked DEP, PACD, and the individual conservation districts for their partnership.

PA Department of Environmental Protection

Deputy Secretary for DEP's Office of Water Programs Jill Whitcomb announced the release of the *January 2026 Pennsylvania's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan and Countywide Action Plans: A Case Study in Collaborative Watershed Restoration* and spoke to some of the messages it shares. She also touched on the upcoming Virtual Watershed Specialist Meeting, permitting updates, and other key highlights. She closed by stressing the importance of the partnership and what we can all accomplish together.

Adjournment

It was moved by Josh Longmore (Luzerne) and seconded by Donna Zofcin (Forest) to adjourn the meeting at 11:55 AM. Motion carried.