

**PACD North Central Region Meeting
Zoom Webinar/Conference Call
March 26, 2020**

Welcome

Region Director Rob Shannon welcomed everyone to the meeting with a quorum at 10:00 a.m.

In attendance: Judy Becker (Northumberland), Mark Davidson (Lycoming), Bill Kahler (Lycoming), Erica Tomlinson (Tioga), Willie Null (Clearfield), Molly Burns (PACD), Brenda Shambaugh (PACD), Matt Miller (PACD), Sean Levan (Montour), Nancy DiFiore (NRCS), Joan McCarty (Columbia), Cathy Yeakel (Bradford), Karl Brown (SCC), Wylie Norton (Sullivan), Fred Fiscus (DEP), Steve Putt (DEP), Kris Abell (PDA), Jason Childs (Potter), Jim Coslo (Centre), Rob Shannon (NC Region Director), Mary Ann Bower (Clinton), Larry Butler (Clinton), Jaci Kerstetter (DEP), Karen Books (DEP), Nancy Corbin (Columbia), Eric Nyerges (Union), Bob Sweitzer (Centre).

Date of Next Meeting

The group determined that the next PACD North Central meeting will be held on October 22, 2020, at the Clinton County Conservation District.

Date of Meeting with Aneca Atkinson

Brenda Shambaugh explained that DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Programs Aneca Atkinson is interested in meeting with each region to encourage and improve communication. The group determined that the North Central Region would meet with Deputy Secretary Atkinson on December 2, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. at the Clinton County Conservation District.

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Rob Shannon asked if there were any amendments to the minutes. He noted that we have two sets of minutes to approve. The regular region meeting was held on October 3, 2020, and a special conference call was held on November 19, 2020, for the region director election. He noted a correction to the November 19, 2020, minutes.

It was moved by Eric Nyerges and seconded by Jason Childs to approve the October 3, 2019, minutes as presented. Motion carried.

It was moved by Bob Sweitzer and seconded by Judy Becker to approve the November 19, 2019, minutes as amended. Motion carried.



Bylaws Change to Move Armstrong to North West Region

Brenda Shambaugh explained that the Armstrong County Conservation District would like to move from the PACD South West region to the North West region, so they are in the same region for both PACD and DEP. This will require a change to the PACD Bylaws.

It was moved by Bill Kahler and seconded by Cathy Yeakel to support a PACD Bylaws change to move Armstrong County Conservation District to the North West Region. Motion carried.

Brenda asked to hold discussion on the invasive species funding policy until after the presentation from the PA Invasive Species Council, as the presentation will provide information pertinent to the motion.

PACD Report

Brenda provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Clean Water Academy* – PACD’s Nick Yeagy is working hard to add new learning to the Clean Water Academy on an on-going basis.
- *Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants* – Funding is available, and we continue to accept applications.
- *Ag Boot Camp* – Basic will take place in two parts: in-class via webinar April 6-9, 2020, and in the field September 9-11, 2020, at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resources Center. Dates for Level II are pending.
- *102/105 Technical Training* – Basic will take place June 16-19, 2020, and Topic-based will take place September 16-18, 2020. Both will be held at the Wyndham Garden State College.
- *Fluvial Geomorphology Training* – Postponed until the late fall. Dates to be determined.
- *Chesapeake Bay Education Office* – This office has been hosted by PACD for many years and has been discontinued by DEP due to funding cuts by EPA. As a result, PACD has discontinued the Clean Water Farm Award, the Manure Management Mini-grant Program, and hosting County Implementation Plans on our website. The 2020 Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation District and PA Agency Staff Meeting did take place through a different DEP grant. We are currently unsure about future meetings.
- *Leadership Development Program* – Brenda provided an update on Matt Miller’s program activities, including the recent regional director training sessions, which drew a total of 145 attendees.

Presentation from the PA Invasive Species Council (PISC)

Kristopher Abell, PISC Coordinator, provided a presentation on behalf of the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council. The presentation provided information about PISC, an overview of Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMA), how these might be coordinated in Pennsylvania, and examples of other, similar, coordinated activities.

Motion on Invasive Species Policy

The group discussed the motion and it was stressed that each district must be able to decide if they wanted to participate.

It was moved by Joan McCarty and seconded by Erica Tomlinson to support the following motion:

PACD encourages the PA Department of Agriculture and related agencies to develop a delegated agreement with conservation districts to provide funding and authority to battle invasive species.

Motion carried.

State Conservation Commission (SCC) Report

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following report:

- Karl reviewed a document tracking new dates for training opportunities that have been rescheduled.
- He thanked districts for sharing their Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plans with Karen Books. The SCC has been trying to assist districts with their questions as they work through this process.
- He reviewed a draft document defining the new Conservation District Advisory Committee.
- He discussed the Draft Conservation District Drone Policy.

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Report

Fred Fiscus provided the following report.

- Karen has received COOPs from all 66 districts and is updating the spreadsheet daily as updates come in.
- He discussed the Fiscal Year Budgeting Spreadsheet for conservation district staff, which was approved by the commission in March and will take effect on July 1, 2020. Several districts have piloted the spreadsheet and had no major issues. To help offset the additional reporting requirement, districts no longer need to submit the CDFAP year-end Financial Statement.
- The SCC has established a Conservation District Financial Management Workgroup. The workgroup will oversee the development of an accounting and administrative procedures manual containing a standard chart of accounts and/or a comprehensive financial management system. Karen Books provided additional information on the group.
- Karen noted that she sent out an email about Right to Know and the Sunshine Act to conservation districts and recommends that districts check the PA Office of Open Records (OOR) website at www.openrecords.pa.gov regularly. The OOR is having a webinar Tuesday, March 31, 2020, at 10:00 a.m. to answer questions specific to how this COVID-19 emergency affects the Sunshine Act and Right to Know.
- Summer Kunkel is the new Acting Director for the DEP Office of Water Resources Planning.
- Jaci Kerstetter thanked everyone for their efforts during this difficult time and for keeping in communication with each other and with partners.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Report

Nancy DiFiore provided the following report, referring to the PA NRCS Conservation Update for the SC region:

- Offices are closed to the public and staff are taking turns to rotate into the offices to handle needed items. Remaining staff are teleworking. They are trying to support field work as much as possible while maintaining social distancing. The Dauphin office has been closed completely for the time-being.

- The Soil Survey is undergoing update on an on-going basis.
- They have begun the process of assigning Ecological Sciences Job Approval Authority (ESJAA) to those for whom it applies.
- They are taking nominations for the Leopold Award.
- She reviewed the FY 2020 Farm Bill Programs Allocations.
- NRCS has extended the application deadline for the Conservation Stewardship Program to May 29, 2020.
- NRCS is accepting On-farm Conservation Innovation Trial proposals through May 11, 2020.
- NRCS is accepting Regional Conservation Partnership Program's (RCPP) Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFA) proposals through May 18, 2020.
- She provided an update on the Emergency Watershed Protection program and thanked districts who have been key in supporting that program.

Regional Discussion

- *Bradford* – Cathy Yeakel reported they are working remotely and are canceling their Envirothon and other in-person activities, though they plan to hold their tree sale using curbside pick-up to minimize contact.
- *Potter* – Jason Childs reported that Potter was able to hold their legislative luncheon before COVID-19 broke. They are planning to have a two-county project tour with legislators on May 8. Their environmental educator has created a remote scavenger hunt, which has participants hunting remotely and submitting photos. They are going to have an internship position at their office this year.
- *Clinton* – Mary Ann reported that they are canceling their tree seedling sale, Envirothon, and several other educational events. They have three new hires, which equates to 50% of their staff. Their new ag conservationist and resource technician began in February, and a new E&S technician began in March.
- *Tioga* – Erica reported the district is also going to host its tree sale with a drive-up low-contact format. They just hired a new dirt and gravel technician and lost an E&S technician. They closed on both of their PENNVEST grants yesterday.
- *Northumberland* – Judy reported that they had to cancel their legislative luncheon next week. They are cancelling the multi-county Envirothons. They are still determining what to do about their tree sale.
- *Clearfield* – Willie Null reported that they had to cancel their tree sale in January due to staff turnover. They have cancelled their awards banquet and staff are all working remotely.
- *Lycoming* – Mark Davidson reported their E&S technician has received a couple of permit applications electronically, so things are still moving forward.
- *Centre* – Bob Sweitzer reported they had a manure management ag E&S workshop just prior to the county ordering everyone to work from home, with 40 people in attendance. The state Envirothon is officially cancelled. The NCF International Envirothon is still on for Nebraska in late July/early August, but he expects that will have to be cancelled because so many spring state-level events have been cancelled. They are having their first video conference board meeting on April 1. They will be discussing extending their dirt and gravel roads deadline for municipalities and some other district events. Also, he is retiring in mid-April.
- *Sullivan* – Wylie Norton with Sullivan reported they have a board meeting next week. He thanked Cathy Yeakel for helping them with their management transition.

- *Columbia* – Nancy Corbin reported they have limited staff in the office and others working from home. They have cancelled most everything they had planned. They have not cancelled their rain barrel workshop for April 18 and will be holding it as a webinar with drive-up pick-up. They have been working to promote soil health to small groups of farmers. They are hoping to do a soil health field day when things settle down. They are also hoping to continue/expand this work through a Growing Greener grant.

Conservation District Week

Brenda reported that conservation district week will most likely need to be postponed. It was originally going to take place the week of May 3-9, 2020, with the legislative day taking place that Wednesday. She encouraged everyone to please take advantage of the template letters and materials on the PACD website at www.pacd.org and reach out to their legislators in lieu of meeting with them in person.

Adjournment

It was moved by Erica Tomlinson and Jason Childs to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 a.m. Motion carried.