

**PACD South East Region
Video Conference Minutes
October 1, 2020**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Region Director Piper Sherburne welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:07 a.m.

In attendance: Molly Burns, PACD; Amy Brown, PACD; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Piper Sherburne, Berks; Jessica Buck, Montgomery; Ted Veresink, Northampton; Charlie Hanner, NRCS; Patrick Patterson, DEP; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Desiree Henning-Dudley, DEP; Ed Magargee, Delaware; Gretchen Schatschneider, Bucks; Holly Kaplan, Lehigh; Jeff Sholly, PACD TAG; Jill Whitcomb, DEP; Karen Books, DEP; Karl Brown, SCC; Kevin Frederick, Lehigh; Linda Mackey, DEP; Matt Miller, PACD; Denise Coleman, NRCS; Chris Strohmaier, Chester; Sharon Pletchan, Northampton; Tara Zrinski, Northampton County Council.

Meeting with Aneca Atkinson

Brenda Shambaugh reminded everyone that the PACD South East Region has a virtual meeting with DEP Deputy Secretary Aneca Atkinson on January 20, 2021. Brenda asked for topics for discussion to provide to Aneca.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on March 25, 2021, either virtually or in-person at Henning's Market.

Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on April 30, 2020, were provided.

It was moved by Ted Veresink and seconded by Ed Magargee to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on April 30, 2020. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report:

- She provided a legislative update on the 2020-2021 Budget, Third Party Reviewer Legislation, Statewide Expedited Review Legislation, the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program, and a bill that changes the definition of pollution (SB 619).
- She provided an update on work to create and fund regional areas to battle invasive species. Piper Sherburne reported that the committee is working on this project and invited input and questions at any time.



- She noted that Chapter 105 modules are in development for the Clean Water Academy (CWA) and provided information on additional CWA training opportunities.
- Brenda discussed the Riparian Buffer Sub-grants available from PACD.
- Fluvial Geomorphology Training is set to take place virtually November 9, 10, 12, and 13.
- If district staff needs training on a particular issue that is not provided through a partner, please let Amy Brown know and she will investigate the possibility of providing it.
- Matt Miller provided a Leadership Development update and urged staff and directors to participate in these learning opportunities. Visit www.paleadership.org for information.
- Agricultural Conservation Training (Boot Camp) took place in a modified format and is scheduled for April 12-16, 2021, for Basic and April 26-30, 2021, for Level II.
- Two Chapter 105 webinars were recently held. Other 102/105 Technical Training is in process and more information will be available soon.
- Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series will take place virtually from 8:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. daily October 6-8, 2020.
- PACD will be hiring a TAG program engineer to replace Ana Turosky.

Regional Information Sharing

Chester – Chris Strohmaier reported they are slightly behind in their budget, but not drastically. They are applying for a grant through NRCS for a multiple watershed project with mushroom composting operations. As part of this process, they are currently hiring a private consultant to do an analysis of each watershed. They are about a year away from finishing up their current RCPP grant. They are applying for an RCPP grant in the Delaware, along with Berks, Montgomery, and Bucks, that is due on November 4. One staff person left for another position and they plan to replace that with an engineering position. Their Ag team has been very busy.

Lehigh – Kevin Frederick reported their budget seems be fine so far. They are trying to make some purchases this year to lighten the load for next year. About 75% of staff are working remotely. They are still waiting to hear back on some grant applications. They have had one staff person contract COVID-19.

Delaware – Ed Magargee reported their budget is going strong. Revamping how to operate has taken quite a bit of staff time. Treated six county parks for the spotted lanternfly with their \$46,000 grant. The infestation was very bad, but they were able to reduce it significantly. They are looking to address issues with changes to the permitting process.

Bucks – Gretchen Schatschneider reported their budget situation is currently above average. They are working hard on permits and are on a staggered schedule in the office. They are sticking with their current plan, which is about half-staff in the office at one time. They purchased touch-screen laptops and monitors to prepare for ePermitting. She is working to figure out how to take electronic payment. They were awarded an NACD technical assistance grant this last round and have hired their first-ever second ag technician who is very experienced with crop sciences and agriculture. They would like to develop a full ag department. They also hope to expand their plan review technicians to six and are working to purchase the adjoining office space, which will increase their space by about two-thirds. They have some equine ag work coming up.

Northampton – Ted Veresink reported they have seven out of nine staff currently positive for COVID-19, so their office is essentially shut down.

Montgomery – Jessica Buck reported they have had a busy year and a significant increase in workload, and they are on-track for their budget. They are fully staffed and have two new resource conservationists hired this spring which has presented training challenges. They are working remotely and are returning to the office on a staggered schedule, primarily to train new staff. Their staff do have a field presence and their receptionist is in every day to process paperwork. They purchased Bluebeam to prep for ePermitting that has been very helpful for plans in general. They completed the spotted lanternfly control grant in coordination with a contractor and parks department. Their watershed specialist just completed a two-part homeowner webinar series on homeowner management. They are looking to do an online ag workshop this fall. Office renovations are now completed.

Berks – Dean Druckenmiller reported that Berks has stayed open throughout the pandemic. They are down about five or ten percent in terms of budget projections. They have been very busy addressing complaints in addition to plan reviews, etc. They have been working on a staggered schedule and this has provided some challenges. They hired two new ag staff in the late spring and have been busy with training to come up to speed. The ag staff has been busy out in the field. They held an Envirothon fundraiser clay shoot, which was very successful. They are preparing for the WIP CAP. Spotted lanternfly control work has been very successful and is completed for the year. They are in the market for larger office space.

PACD Engineering Assistance Report

Brenda reported that Ana Turosky has left the TAG program to work for NRCS and Jeff Sholly reported the program is very busy in the field. In addition, staff are also working on the Growing Greener Grant final report.

PA State Conservation Commission Report

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following highlights from his written report:

- The district director appointment process is underway. Karl urged districts to speak to chief clerks and county commissioners about what vacancies they have and what they are looking for in directors to help with the selection.
- The new budgeting spreadsheet is due September 30. Contact Karen Books with questions.
- District audits are due to Karen Books December 31.
- Policies on drone utilization and former district employees being appointed as directors or associate directors are out for a 45-day public comment period.
- The SCC is working to consider distribution of CDFAP funds earlier. Brenda urged everyone to get their quarterly reports to the SCC as soon as possible, so they can get those funds out as quickly as possible.
- DGLVR advance funding is out to districts.
- The DGLVR program completed 19 quality assurance visits.
- Environmentally sensitive maintenance (ESM) training is available remotely and in-person.
- Nutrient management regulations may be updated.
- Districts should check that nutrient management specialist certifications are not expiring.

- Conservation Excellence Grants were expanded to Franklin and Cumberland Counties.
- He discussed REAP program changes.
- Karl encouraged districts to have a remote connection available for fall and winter district meetings, so field representatives and others can participate.
- Karl will ensure the Conservation District Advisory Committee minutes are sent out if they were not already.
- He also answered questions about the purpose of the new budget spreadsheet, noting its purpose is to let program managers see how districts are allocating funds to cover positions.
- Karl answered questions from the group.

PA Department of Environmental Protection Report

Jill Whitcomb provided highlights from her written report:

- There was a reorganization in DEP. Jill now oversees the conservation district section, the watershed support section, and a new ag compliance and inspection section. The conservation district field representatives will continue to work out of the regions but will now report to Jill at central office. She will continue to work with the SCC on the nutrient management program. She is working to be as consistent as possible across the state.
- Last week districts should have received a FAQ document addressing CAP implementation grant funds.
- She appreciates the districts' work on the CAPs and WIPs.
- DEP is pushing through batches of financial amendments for the next fiscal year. All the Bay agreements should be complete or in the final phase of review.
- Jill shared her contact information: jiwhitcomb@pa.gov | 717.783.5205
- A handout was included in the packet showing all the available training modules on the Clean Water Academy.
- Jill noted there is a Chapter 105 ePermitting update in the written report. Brenda suggested districts raise questions about Chapter 102 ePermitting during the upcoming South Central meeting with Aneca Atkinson.
- DEP is under a hiring freeze but requested an exception. Fred Fiscus's position will be priority to be filled before the conservation district field representative positions.
- Desiree Henning-Dudley from the South East DEP regional office provided a brief update and noted that support from the field representatives for the region will continue as everyone expects.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Report

Charlie Hanner highlighted items from the written report, including:

- NRCS has been busy with dam rehabilitation in the South East. They just completed repairs on the Hibernia Dam. They have other projects in Chester and Berks, as well.
- He provided an update on the National Water Quality Initiative, Financial Assistance Programs, and Easement Programs for FY 2020.
- NRCS is targeting five watersheds through EQIP NWQI.
- He provided information on program sign-up for FY 2021.
- He updated the group on the RCPP program.
- Charlie reported there is a planned opening process for NRCS offices. It was noted this can be challenging for co-located offices.

Denise Coleman provided the following report:

- They recently awarded an RCPP for the northern tiers of the Delaware in the Poconos for carbon sequestration on forest land.
- She provided an update on state CIG grants, including one with the Mid-Atlantic 4R Alliance that will be looking at nitrogen modeling and how soil health contributes to nitrogen fertility, and one with Penn state promoting soil health and cover crops.
- There will be upcoming training looking at GP6 and GP9 permits based on a letter of understanding between NRCS and DEP.
- Bucks join Lehigh and Bucks in receiving an NACD Technical Assistance Grant.
- She thanked PACD and the SCC for their help in coordinating the Ag Conservation Training. They will be holding Conservation Planning Training as well.
- They are looking forward to RCPP proposals from the South East region.
- COVID-19 update: Offices are staffed on a limited basis but are closed to the public. Field work is on-going. FSA is following a slightly accelerated opening program.

Adjournment

It was moved by Ed Magargee and seconded by Chris Strohmaier to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m.