

**PACD North East Region Web Meeting
Video Conference Minutes
October 2, 2020**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Region Director Chuck Gould welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

In attendance: Molly Burns, PACD; Amy Brown, PACD; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Chuck Gould, Monroe; Jamie Knecht, Wayne; Jennifer Ramey, Susquehanna; Kelly Stagen, Pike; Shane Kleiner, DEP; Doug Deutsch, Wyoming; Audrey Wargo, Carbon; Jack Barnett, Wayne; Jerry Stiles, Lackawanna; Josh Longmore, Luzerne; Karen Books, DEP; Karl Brown, SCC; Kristina Heaney, Monroe; Matt Miller, PACD; Michele Long, Pike; Nancy Fiore, NRCS; Susan Marquart, NRCS; Jen Matthews, NRCS; Tim Ferrence, Luzerne; Jill Whitcomb, DEP.

Set Date for Next Meeting

The North East Region has a virtual meeting with DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Programs Aneca Atkinson on October 28, 2020. Brenda asked each district to provide a list of potential topics for discussion prior to the meeting. The next PACD Region Meeting will be held on April 16, 2021, either virtually or in-person at the DEP Northeast Regional Office, if available.

Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the April 3, 2020, meeting were provided for review.

It was moved by Jamie Knecht and seconded by Audrey Wargo to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2020, meeting as presented. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report

Brenda Shambaugh, Executive Director 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.
- 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.
- 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

Carbon – Audrey Wargo reported they are beginning Phase 3 of their Growing Greener grant. They have some dirt and gravel road projects in the works. Chapter 102 staff are busy with inspections and dealing with complaints. They formed a human resources committee to revamp their personnel handbook.

Lackawanna – Jerry Stiles reported they are busy administering their programs. Their farm equipment is still being used. They are not doing routine inspections in the field but are handling complaints. They are seeing a steady uptick in the number of complaints. Plans and permits have been steady. He asked for input from others about the Bay WIP.

Luzerne – Josh Longmore reported their workload remains steady with construction, complaints, and plans. Their ag staff are also busy and able to complete their work. Their office has adjusted well to the new operational realities. They are concerned about the report from Northampton that their staff have contracted COVID-19 given that they seemed to be doing everything right in terms of prevention. This is a reminder to be vigilant about safety. Luzerne has volunteered to be the primary contact for their county's WIP as their planning department is not currently able to take over this project. They have been assured that this is a voluntary, non-regulated process and the district strongly supports voluntary conservation. This will likely be quite a bit of work involved, but he is cautiously optimistic.

Monroe – Kristina Heaney reported they are essentially back to normal regarding Chapter 102 and 105 reviews and inspections. They are accepting plans electronically only and their online payment system has been a great option to pay online and contact-free. They have been working with Lehigh and Northampton to develop an MOU to assist Northampton with their program work while their staff are out with COVID-19. They have three new staff for a full complement of 17. They are beginning to put grants together for strategic planning. They just received a \$20,000 grant from the county bar association to provide free environmental education programming to county school districts.

Pike – Michele Long reported they worked with Natural Lands and DCED to provide workshops to municipalities in Pike and Wayne counties that had good participation. The municipalities are also seeing an uptick in complaints. In addition, the county is experiencing an influx of people from New York and New Jersey, like the one that took place after September 11, 2001. Essentially, secondary homes are becoming a primary residence. The Governor's office set up a task force that includes several state agencies. They are working to develop a protocol to respond to harmful algal blooms. Complaints are up and general permitting is up. The office is functioning well, and the staff have been doing an excellent job keeping up with their work.

Susquehanna – Jennifer Ramey reported it is largely business as usual in Susquehanna and their farm inspections and plan reviews are on-going. Their DGLVR technician is working on applications. Their no-till technician is very busy. Rental of their no-till equipment is up.

Wayne – Jamie Knecht reported one of her staff was in late last night working on a sojourn video to replace their in-person sojourn. This required learning a whole new skill set and was time-intensive. Forestry activities are going well. Jay Braund (DEP) and Nick Yeagy (PACD) recently visited to take video for the timber harvest training modules they are developing for the Clean Water Academy. The district held, and posted video of, an in-person workshop on forest invasives. Their cover crop reimbursement program is active. They are seeing a lot of Chapter 105 permits and complaints, notably for dock-building. DGLVR is also busy, as always.

Wyoming – Doug Deutsch reported they are in the final stages of hiring a new ag technician. They are working on a manure storage project funded by Growing Greener and NRCS. DGLVR work is moving forward. Plans and complaints have been up. They have also been seeing quite a bit of dock-building. They have developed some remote environmental education programming.

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 appointing former district employees 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, so they can get 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 DEP field representatives and others can participate.

PA Department of Environmental Protection Report

Jill Whitcomb provided highlights from her written report:

- She reviewed the recent DEP reorganization. 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.

- Jill provided an update on Nutrient and Manure Management Delegation Agreement Budget Amendments, Chesapeake Bay Technician and Engineer Specialist/Assistant Budget Amendments, CDFAP UGWF Allocation Worksheets, and ACT Applications.
- She is working to fill open positions as quickly as possible given the current hiring freeze.
- She noted that the Phase III WIP gives them the opportunity to work with other bureaus and agencies like DCNR, PDA, and PennDOT, to create a holistic approach to the problem and likened the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plans to the County Implementation Plans, but incorporating a broader range of stake-holders and resources.
- Jill's contact information is: jiwhitcomb@pa.gov | 717.783.5205
- A handout was included in the packet showing all the available training modules on the Clean Water Academy and Jill encouraged everyone to take advantage of this resource.

Shane Kleiner provided the following report:

- He thanked district managers and staff who are attending regional bi-monthly meetings.
- He reinforced Karl's request to include the regional staff in district board meetings.
- He noted the 319 grant round is open.
- He will be working with districts to put together a list of potential wetland and similar projects for PennDOT.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Report

Nancy DiFiore provide the following report including highlights from their written report:

- Nancy greeted everyone and thanked PACD for having NRCS as part of the meeting and introduced Jenn Matthews and Susan Marquart.
- She provided an update on NRCS regional office status. There are 21 counties in their North East Region. About one-third to one-half of them are in Phase I, which means they are open and working on a rotational basis but are closed to the public. They are maintaining social distancing, conducting field visits, and working with producers in the field.
- She highlighted the NRCS Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program, which was active in the 1950's and amended in 2000. They are preparing to work on the Kintz Creek Dam in Pike and four dams in the Lackawaxen Tributaries Watershed in Wayne County.
- She provided an update on the National Water Quality Initiative, Financial Assistance Programs, and Easement Programs for FY 2020.
- She provided information on program sign-up for FY 2021 and noted that EQIP round one applications are due by October 16.
- Program coordinator Susan Marquart updated the group on the RCPP program. There are now two pools: State/Multi-State and Critical Conservation. All of Pennsylvania is eligible for State/Multi-State and the Critical Conservation Area in Pennsylvania is the Chesapeake Bay. Proposals are due November 4, 2020. Please contact Susan Marquart at Susan.Marquart@pa.nrcs.gov if you have any questions or want to talk about the program.

Adjournment

It was moved by Chuck Gould and seconded by Michele Long to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:52 a.m.