

**PACD Executive Council
Video Conference Minutes
January 28, 2021**

Call to Order

Chairman Mike Price welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Housekeeping

PACD Zoom Host Nick Yeagy provided some helpful Zoom housekeeping items.

Roll Call

Secretary Charles Duritsa called the roll and announced a quorum was present. Forty districts were represented at the meeting.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

Secretary Charles Duritsa presented the July 23, 2020, minutes.

It was moved by John Akers (Bedford) and seconded by Mark Kimmel (York) to approve the minutes of the previous meeting on July 23, 2020. Motion carried.

President's Report

President Mike Price announced that PACD Director of Operations Lisa Jo Suhr is retiring on February 12, 2021, after more than 19 years with the association. PACD showed a brief video recognizing and remembering her years of service.

Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided the following report:

- PACD Program Manager Amy Brown has been training with Lisa and will take over the Director of Operations position when Lisa retires. PACD has hired former Sullivan County Conservation District Manager Holly Miller to take over the Program Manager position.
- Brenda asked that districts please provide updated director and associate director email addresses to Molly Burns for the PACD director listserv.
- The most recent Public Service Announcement (PSA) about proper disposal of fall leaves was played for those in attendance. Brenda noted that PACD is planning more PSAs and asked anyone with topic ideas to please contact Shannon Wehinger with PACD.
- Through an Environmental Education Grant from DEP, PACD has created sign templates on fish structures, macroinvertebrates, and buffers for conservation district projects. Please contact Shannon Wehinger with PACD for more information.
- PACD has almost \$400,000 in funding available for Multifunctional Riparian Buffer Sub-grant for Conservation Districts. There is no minimum, maximum, or match for these grants.



Please contact Amy Brown with PACD if you have any questions or know of any landowners who might be interested in working with the district on a project.

- PACD is seeking farmers in the Ohio and Delaware watersheds, and Spanish-speaking producers statewide, to participate in focus groups to help increase participation in the CREP program. Each participant will receive \$125.00 for their time. Please contact Shannon Wehinger with PACD if you know of any interested landowners.
- The Leadership Development Program is gearing up for the Staff Conference February 8-12, 2021, and the Director Training Webinar Series February 15-24, 2021.
- PACD and DEP held a number of 102/105 webinars in 2020 and are planning more for this spring. Virtual training for new technicians is also in the works.
- The Virtual 2021 Conservation District and PA Agency Ag Staff Meeting (formerly the All Bay Meeting) will take place March 16-17, 2021, and will be open to district and agency staff statewide.
- The 2021 Watershed Specialist Meeting will take place virtually October 5-7, 2021.
- NRCS, SCC, and PACD are working on ACT training (Boot Camp Basic and Level II), which will take place as a combination of virtual and in-person. The deadline to apply is February. Please contact Shannon Wehinger with PACD with any questions.
- The Clean Water Academy, funded by DEP, continues to generate many courses for districts and includes recordings of DEP webinars. New modules include Timber Harvest, Intro to Chapter 105, and Stormwater Management.
- Brenda recognized Stephen Beach with Blair, Matthew Golden with Washington, and Tom Ulrich with Washington, for completing the most Clean Water Academy training for 2020. The three districts with the most Clean Water Academy training completed overall were Washington, Blair, and Lancaster.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- As of January 25, 2021, PACD had received \$96,410, which is over 65% of the total dues. Forty-two districts have paid in full and four have paid 50%.
- Any dues balance is due by March 31, 2021.
- Sonia thanked the members and noted that PACD maintains a sound financial position thanks in part to their continued financial support.
- PACD received a clean audit for Fiscal Year 2019-20 with no findings and an electronic copy of the audit report is available upon request.
- Sonia presented the balance sheet and P&L as of December 31, 2020 and noted that both the PACD Executive Board and Ways and Means Committee have reviewed both reports.

It was moved by Jeff Pflug (Beaver) and seconded Josh Longmore (Luzerne) to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried.

NACD Director's Report

NACD Director Clifford Lane reported that the NACD meeting is taking place virtually February 1-10, 2021, with a registration fee of only \$50.00. It is a great opportunity for anyone to participate if they have never been able to attend. There are six resolutions relating to climate change that will be sunseting in 2021. The Northeast, including Pennsylvania, is working to formulate a new resolution that will incorporate relevant aspects of the expiring resolutions and

represent a cohesive position on climate change. Pennsylvania's Kelly Stagen is on the NACD Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force, so please touch base with her if you have any questions or input on these issues.

PACD Conservation Committee Report

Conservation Committee Chairman Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The committee met on January 8, 2021, with a quorum.
- The committee received a report from Piper Sherburne on her work with the PA Invasive Species Council to develop a comprehensive statewide Invasive Species program. Piper is looking for ideas from the membership on how to make the case for conservation districts to play an integral role.
- Tiffany Landis from DEP provided an update on e-Permitting. E-permitting was tentatively slated to go live on January 25, 2021. This is for new applications and amendments.
- Brian Chalfant from DEP provided an update on PAG-01. They are aiming to have it finalized by spring and published as final at that time.
- DEP and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are discussing a new program of digital training for conservation districts, the public and regulated community. If approved, the Clean Water Academy would create a green infrastructure and stormwater BMP "training program" for conservation districts, local governments, and MS4 permittees.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD District Employees Committee Report

District Employees Committee Chairwoman Jamie Knecht provided the following report:

- The committee met on January 12, 2021 with a quorum.
- PACD Program Manager Amy Brown shared a report on 2021 training opportunities coordinated by PACD.
- PACD Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller shared information on upcoming Leadership Development training. The February Staff Conference will cover mental health, team cohesion during remote work, conflict resolution for conservation workers in the field, and tools and technology. The February Board Leadership Webinar Series will cover ethics and conflict of interest, with a workshop on the role of the board committee in planning.
- Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation District and PA Agency Staff Meeting will take place virtually over two half-days in March 2021.
- Sandy Thompson gave a report on the annual meeting, clarified her role within NACD, and encouraged participation in the 2021 meeting, which will take place virtually February 1-10, 2021. She noted that NCDEA sends out helpful information regarding conservation planning on a weekly basis.
- Sandy Thompson discussed the PACD Conservation District Employee Service Recognition Awards and the consensus was to continue the program in 2021.
- The committee discussed morale-building and mental health activities districts have undertaken during remote work. Suggestions included weekly virtual staff meetings and perhaps allowing time for staff to share one or two positive things from their lives during the meetings.
- The group discussed QuickBooks training. Jamie offered to follow up with the workgroup regarding previous discussions and progress made. She also noted that Wayne received a grant through Workforce Development (part of a COVID relief program) which offers

college-level classes free of charge, including Website Development & Design, Microsoft Office, and QuickBooks.

- John Dryzal expressed the need for cross-training for administrative staff (specifically QuickBooks)
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee Report

Education and Outreach Committee Chairwoman Laura Anderson provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met virtually on January 14, 2021, with a quorum.
- The committee received a report from PACD on their DEP Environmental Education Grant project to create template signage. The template signage is complete and available to districts. The topics are fish structures, macroinvertebrates, and buffers.
- PACD also created a public service announcement in the fall on proper disposal of leaves. Topics were suggested for 2021. PACD plans to release at least two new public service announcements this year.
- Staff from McKean and Potter presented their work on developing a kit and videos for teachers, since they are unable to be onsite in the schools. Teachers used the kits and videos to continue the My Growing Tree Program for first graders.
- Districts shared the many online programs they are conducting during the pandemic.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Legislative Committee Report

Legislative Committee Chairwoman Donna Fisher provided the following report:

- The PACD Legislative Committee met on January 11, 2021, with a quorum.
- Brenda Shambaugh provided a general update on the state of the House and Senate post-election. She urged districts to contact their legislators to educate them about the district and the good work you do, especially new legislators
- Brenda also shared that almost half of the districts, and PACD, received Growing Greener Grant funding.
- PA State Budget – The PA General Assembly passed, and the Governor signed, a final budget that will expire on June 30, 2021. Most lines were level funded, including the Conservation District Lines in both the PDA and DEP budgets. It is anticipated that severe budget cuts could be made when the General Assembly completes the 2021-2022 fiscal year budget.
- HB 509/SB 252 – The third-party reviewer legislation passed the House, but the Senate version never made it to the Senate floor. PACD's suggested language did not make it into the bill. These bills will be reintroduced with a new number this legislative session.
- SB 891 – The Statewide Expedited Review Legislation, sponsored by Senator Yaw, will be introduced again this legislative session. PACD has been working with Senator Yaw's staff to amend the legislation to allow conservation districts to use their existing expedited review program, if they have one.
- SB 1272 – Sponsored by Senator Yaw, creates a grant program for landowners who want to develop and implement BMP's on their land. The program is fashioned after the Dirt and Gravel Road program.

- SB 619 – Also sponsored by Senator Yaw, changes the definition of pollution, creating a threshold below which spills, etc. would not be reportable. Currently all spills must be reported. Previously, the bill passed the Senate and the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee but was not considered by the full House. This legislation will be re-introduced this session.
- HB 1822 – During the most severe COVID-19 restrictions, a piece of legislation was introduced that would freeze any new contract funding from special funds, including the Conservation District Fund. PACD opposes this legislation unless it is amended to delete the Conservation District Fund. The legislation passed the House but was stopped in the Senate. PACD will keep an eye out to see if this legislation is reintroduced.
- PACD received all 66 Conservation District Highlights Pages. Thank you to everyone for helping with this important legislative outreach project.
- PACD will sponsor Conservation District Week this year and is asking districts to contact their legislators at the local level. Unless things change, there will be no capitol visits to legislators in Harrisburg. The PACD Legislative Committee may hold a Zoom meeting with key legislators to touch on items and topics of particular concern.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Operations Committee Report

Operations Committee Chair Kelly Stagen reported that the PACD Operations Committee met with a quorum on January 21, 2021. The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the previous meeting. Not additional business was presented.

Ways and Means Committee Report

PACD Ways and Means Committee Chair Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- The PACD Ways and Means Committee met virtually on January 19, 2021 with a quorum.
- The committee reviewed and approved the minutes of the July 14, 2020 meeting.
- The committee reviewed the financial reports for July 2020-December 2020.
- The committee reviewed the three-year preliminary dues schedule and discussed possible options for fiscal year 2020/2021 dues. The committee will schedule a meeting in late Spring, to assess the financial situation at that point, to make a more informed decision on a recommendation for dues amount for fiscal year 2020/2021.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

Proposed Bylaws Change: Armstrong County Region Change

Mike Price presented the proposed bylaw change for final review. The change will reflect Armstrong Conservation District moving from the PACD South West Region to the North West Region.

It was moved by Eugene Metcalf (Clarion) and seconded by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) to approve the bylaw change to reflect Armstrong Conservation District moving from the PACD South West Region to the PACD North West Region. Motion carried.

Report from the Department of Environmental Protection

DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell provided the following report:

- DEP recently announced more than \$34 Million has been awarded to fund 149 projects to

clean up waters through the Growing Greener Program. Thirty-one conservation districts across the state were awarded a total of fifty-two grants totaling over \$10.2 million.

- The Chapter 102 ePermit System is live for PAG-02 General NPDES NOIs and Amendments. DEP provided two rounds of internal trainings: one on January 5-6, 2021 and one on January 19-20, 2021. Recordings of the trainings are posted on Clean Water Academy along with Internal and External User guides and an SOP for Review of PAG-02 General NPDES Permit NOIs. Please contact Tiffany at tilandis@pa.gov with questions.
- New courses are being added to the Clean Water Academy on a regular basis, with fourteen new courses added in the past month alone. Topics include Agriculture, Chapter 102 Construction Stormwater, Chapter 105 Dam Safety & Waterway Management, MS4 and Water Quality and Water Resources. The account request feature has been disabled on the CWA due to an influx of account requests from the public. If you or a new staff need an account, email Nick Yeagy at nyeagy@pacd.org and he will set one up manually.
- The Conservation District Support Section Chief position has been posted. Interviews and selection process will proceed once the posting closes.

Report from the State Conservation Commission

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided the following report:

- He thanked PACD's Lisa Jo Suhr for her excellent service and wished her well in her retirement. He thanked district staff and directors for keeping everything up and moving during the pandemic. He noted it has been a learning experience and the adaptability, flexibility, and patience of districts have been commendable.
- He also thanked the commission staff and partner agency staff.
- The legislature provided level funding for the Conservation District Fund. Karl thanked PACD and the districts for working hard to obtain that funding level.
- He encouraged districts to continue virtual or hybrid meetings to help individuals participate who may not be able to attend meetings in person.
- He stressed the importance of transparency with co-located agencies during the pandemic.
- New appointments are in process. Please be in touch with commissioners and county clerks to ensure this process goes smoothly.
- There was a new managers conference call yesterday. There are many new managers on-board. Karl encouraged experienced managers to help mentor and assist new managers and noted this is a particularly difficult time to begin as a new manager.
- Statements of financial interest are due to the PA Ethics Commission on May 1, 2021.
- Karl shared a *Where Are They Now* piece from the PA Envirothon newsletter to demonstrate the impact the Envirothon and district environmental education efforts can have on young people.

Report from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist Denise Coleman thanked Lisa Jo Suhr for her years of service and provided highlights from the USDA NRCS annual report for Pennsylvania:

- She highlighted the conservation practices applied and funding by watershed for 2020.
- She noted the numbers for the Ag Conservation Easement Program. The Agricultural Land Easement had 183 acres enrolled for \$209,530 and 580 acres closed/acquired for \$755,403. The Wetlands Reserve Easement had 17.7 acres enrolled for \$127,394 and 41 acres closed/acquired for \$255,281.

- Work on the Hibernia Dam in Chester was completed as part of the Pennsylvania Dam Rehab Program. Denise highlighted a list of other upcoming projects.
- Despite the pandemic, USDA NRCS was able to hold 33 trainings. She thanked PACD and the SCC for helping to make the 2020 Boot Camp Basic and Advanced Training possible.
- The state Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) announcement and annual easement funding announcements went out last week.
- She thanked PACD for helping to organize a joint agency workshop on pollinators.

Adjournment

It was moved by John Akers (Bedford) and seconded by Ted Veresink (Northampton) to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.