

**PACD North East Region Meeting Minutes
Schuylkill Conservation District, Pottsville, PA
March 25, 2022**

Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

North East Region Director Chuck Gould called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:03 a.m.

Virtual and In-person Participants: Chuck Gould, PACD Region Director & MCCD Board Director; Chris Storm, Carbon; Josh Longmore, Luzerne, Tom Herbert, Luzerne, Jack Hanish, Luzerne; Kristina Heaney, Monroe; Kelly Stagen, Pike; Michele Long, Pike; Jenna St. Clair, Schuylkill; Russ Wagner, Schuylkill; Lorie Reichert, Schuylkill; M. Irvil Kear, NACD; Jamie Knecht, Wayne; Doug Deutsch, Wyoming; Bob Robinson, Wyoming; Dorne White, Wyoming; Scott Heckman, NRCS; Dakota Welkom, PACD TAG; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Karl Brown, SCC, Karen Books, DEP; Jennifer Matthews, NRCS.

Set date for next meeting

Schuylkill County again offered to host the meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2022 in-person and with a virtual option.

Approval of the previous meeting minutes:

The minutes from the October 8, 2021, meeting were provided for review.

A motion was made by Kelly Stagen to approve the meeting minutes of October 8, 2021 with changes recommended by M. Irvil Kear. Jack Hanish seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PACD Business and Report:

Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided highlights from her written report:

- **Conservation District Week April 10-16, 2022** – All conservation districts are encouraged to participate in Conservation District Week. Brenda recommended contacting elected officials regarding the state budget.
- **Invasive Species** – The federal government will be providing funding for a pilot PRISM (invasive species) program in Pennsylvania. The Governor's proposed Agriculture Department budget includes funding for PRISMs and additional funding to combat the spread of Spotted Lanternfly.
- **PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program** – PACD was recently awarded a Growing Greener grant in the amount of \$500,000 from DEP to offer an Ag Plan Reimbursement Program to conservation districts. A 20% match will be required from the landowner/operator.
- **Communication** – PACD continually updates its director and conservation district staff position listserves.



- **Education and Outreach** – PACD released a public service announcement (PSA) last fall about car maintenance to prevent pollution and another PSA in January about responsible use of deicers.
- **Clean Water Academy** – PACD continues to receive DEP funding for the Clean Water Academy (CWA) focusing on Chapter 102 and Chapter 105. Recently, PACD worked with DEP to provide training on the new PAG-01 General Permit prior to its rollout.
- **Ag Boot Camp** – Basic training will be held April 4-8, 2022, at the Keystone Conference Center, Ft. Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA. Level II training will be held April 25-29, 2022, at the Keystone Conference Center, Ft. Indiantown Gap, Annville, PA and the USDA NRCS State Office, Harrisburg, PA.
- **Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program** – The 2022-23 mini-grant round opened in January.
- **102/105 Technical Training** – Virtual Technical Training will take place via Zoom March 29-31, 2022. 102/105 Basic Technical Training will take place in-person with a field component May 3-5, 2022.
- **Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting** – PACD is working with DEP to coordinate the meeting that will take place via Zoom May 18-19, 2022. Registration will open in March.
- **Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series** – The Watershed Specialist Webinar will take place October 5-7, 2022 via Zoom. Registration will open in August.
- **Leadership Development** – Over 200 attendees participated in the 2022 Hybrid Staff Conference that was held on February 16-17, 2022. Director Training workshops were held in February and March.
- **Conservation Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach Program Office** – PACD has extended the application deadline for the 2022 CREP mini-grant program to April 8, 2022. PACD partnered with Water Words That Work to offer farmer focus groups across Pennsylvania to discuss the CREP program. The updated *Landowner Guide to Buffer Success* is still available in print and electronic formats.
- **Riparian Buffer Sub-grants**
PACD is accepting sub-grant applications to implement multi-functional riparian buffers.
- **Legislative Activity**
All districts developed a “Highlights Page” document that was distributed to all PA House and Senate members. Follow-up with state legislators is encouraged.
- **Three-Year PACD Dues Schedule**
The PACD Ways and Means Committee and Executive Committee is recommending a three-year dues schedule beginning in July 2022. The proposed schedule is as follows:
2022-2023 Fiscal Year - \$130.00 increase (includes \$55.00 from the 2020-2021 fiscal year that was not implemented due to Covid)
2023-2024 Fiscal Year - \$75.00 increase
2024-2025 Fiscal Year - \$75.00 increase
- **PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference**
The PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference will be held in-person on July 20-21, 2022, in Harrisburg. The Executive Council will meet in-person and virtually.

Regional Information Sharing:

- *Carbon:* Chris Storm noted that they have hired a new District Secretary, Brenda Drew but their technician's last day was yesterday.
- *Lackawanna:* No report.
- *Luzerne:* Josh Longmore mentioned that they are gearing up for a busy construction season. He said that two recent bid openings were much higher than expected. PENNVEST has non-point source loans available for Ag BMPs. Luzerne continues to do education & outreach with their recent Women in Agriculture conference, Spotted Lanternfly work and Envirothon.
- *Monroe:* Kristina Heaney stated that they are holding a quarterly regulatory forum. Clean fill complaints have become an issue. Changes in regulations in NY and NJ have carriers dumping fill in PA that contain trash and contaminants. They are working with the NJ DEP. Maple syrup production is going well.
- *Pike:* Michele Long noted that they are working with their board, staff and public to create a strategic plan. They are also looking for a District Engineer. Pike is implementing an electronic payment system through MunicIPAY.
- *Schuylkill:* Jenna St. Clair stated that Schuylkill is dropping its Chesapeake Bay program. They will re-visit their strategic plan and determine where they want to go with Chesapeake Bay in the future. Schuylkill is still working on its CAP implementation. They are planning a fall outreach program at the county park.
- *Susquehanna:* No report.
- *Wayne:* Jamie Knecht mentioned that Wayne has a seedling sale coming up. Their E&S department is busy with complaints, some of which include stone harvesting. Ag Days will be held May 6, 2022 at the Ag Innovation Center.
- *Wyoming:* Doug Deutsch noted that Wyoming also has an upcoming seedling sale. There have been lots of E&S complaints. Wyoming has deer tick virus hot spots. They are handing out information about the virus to the public. 265 participants attended Wyoming's recent Contractors Workshop. Wyoming's new Ag Technician is Chris Fox.

Partner Reports

- *DEP:* Karen Books reported that the Chesapeake Bay Technician contract renewals will be available in the coming months. Growing Greener Plus and Section 319 NPS Management grant rounds will be announced this spring. EPA Region 3 Animal Agriculture Assessment draft report is expected to be available for review and comment by April 1, 2022. The public comment period is open for the draft Trenchless Technology Technical Guidance document until May 18, 2022. The Chapter 102 ePermit system now includes new NOIs and amendments for the ESCGP-3 for earth disturbance associated with Gas Transmission Facilities. Conservation districts will now receive Chapter 105 email notifications from KEES for PennDOT projects. PAG-01 went live on March 1, 2022. The State Water Plan's ninth Statewide Committee meeting was held January 19 to review draft components of the State Water Plan Update document. The tenth Statewide Committee meeting is scheduled for May 11. The Chesapeake Bay Office is supporting county partners' BMP verification efforts. Volunteers are needed for the PA Envirothon.
- *SCC:* Karl Brown noted that Heidi Secord has been appointed PA FSA State Executive Director. Conservation district directors are reminded to complete their Statements of Financial Interests forms no later than May 1, 2022. As of February 24, 2022, 61 counties

have submitted their 2022 director nominations to the SCC. Gov. Wolf included \$3.5M in state funding in the PDA's proposed 2022-2023 budget to support the implementation of the Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM). The SCC and DGLVR Center staff continue to work on revisions to the SCC's DGLVR policy regarding stream crossings and on the development of a new stream crossing standard and technical manual. Twenty-two counties are scheduled for DGLVR Program QAQC visits in 2022. The Conservation Excellence Grant program has expanded into seven counties in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The SCC has received 347 applications for the REAP program for the 2021-2022 program year. SCC staff are preparing to ask for Commission approval of a new 5-year Nutrient/Manure Management Program delegation agreement in May 2022. The PA Attorney General has filed a civil action against Ms. Diane Comrey, an agricultural consultant and NM/MM planner. Per the press release, "Pennsylvanians who have paid for goods and services that haven't been delivered should file a complaint or contact the Office of the Attorney General's Bureau of Consumer Protection." The SCC is asking that delegated conservation districts suspend all routine inspections of poultry facilities due to the elevated threat of HPAI (highly pathogenic avian influenza). The PDA's Bureau of Animal Health is encouraging conservation district staff to practice enhanced biosecurity measures during the elevated threat. Farmers in 14 PA counties are invited to participate in a survey to inventory conservation practices on their farms that improve water quality. Discussions are continuing with stakeholders from Philadelphia to form a conservation district.

- *NRCS*: Jennifer Matthews stated that NRCS is announcing new and expanded opportunities for climate-smart agriculture in 2022. Updates include nationwide availability of the EQIP Conservation Incentive Contracts option, a new and streamlined EQIP Cover Crop Initiative, and added flexibilities for producers to easily re-enroll in the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). The Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) program in the northeast region is moving forward with three sites that have a sponsor and matching funds. Corona virus Agricultural Relief Payments (CARPs) for EQIP contracts have been affected by higher material costs. New urban payment scenarios have been added to encourage urban agriculture. NRCS is now accepting proposals for its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) program. PA NRCS has suspended visits to operations where poultry would be present due to concerns about HPAI. The Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Program was amended in 2000 to provide NRCS authorization to assist communities with rehabilitation of their aging dams.

Meeting adjourned at 11:59 p.m.