

PACD North West Region Meeting
Tionesta Church of God, Tionesta, PA
April 27, 2022

Welcome and Introductions

PACD North West Region Director Cliff Lane welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:15 AM.

In person attendance: Danielle Kalp, PACD; Lance Bowes, Venango; Trudy Alexander, Clarion; Shaun Wessell, Jefferson; Thomas McFarland, Jefferson; Holly Laird, Armstrong; Spurgeon Shilling, Armstrong; Lori Boughton, DEP; Mark Kingston, Forest; Curt Kiefer, Forest; Jacob Kennedy, PACD; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Cliff Lane, McKean; and, Donna Zofcin, Forest.

Virtual Attendance: Susan Marquart, NRCS; Karl Brown, SCC; Tracey Crawford, Crawford; Kelly Stagen, PACD; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Holly Miller, PACD; Mary Burris, Lawrence; Jeffrey Werner, NRCS; Karen Books, DEP; Kate Wehler, Elk; Jo Ann McCready, Lawrence.

Date of Next Meeting

The next PACD North West Region Meeting will be hosted by McKean County Conservation District at the Kinzua Bridge State Park on September 21, 2022 beginning at 10:00 AM.

Approval of the Minutes from the Previous Meeting

Cliff Lane called for a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

It was moved by Lance Bowes and seconded by Shaun Wessell to approve the minutes of the hybrid meeting on September 30, 2021. Motion carried.

PACD Report

Brenda introduced Holly Miller from PACD to discuss the PRISM funding grant.

- *Invasive Species:* Holly Miller discussed the pilot PRISM program funding awarded to the Northwest region which was officially announced on April 22nd with the Host organization being PACD. The PRISM program provides funding to combat invasive species. The grant received has a three-year timeline. Beginning in year one, PACD intends to develop a strategic plan for use of the funding and will then begin administering mini-grants up to \$2,000 max for education, outreach, and on-ground projects. A total of \$40,000 is set aside for education and outreach and a total of \$149,000 will be available for on-ground projects for treatment. The grants will be available on a first come first served basis.
- Holly also reported that an iMapInvasives training will be held virtually on June 28.
- Brenda recommended all districts discuss the program with their boards and encourage participation. Lance Bowes asked for clarification on the grant amounts and asked how



districts can participate. Holly Miller discussed possible district participation could be part of planning, providing education and outreach to communities, recruit volunteers, and by completing surveys of where treatment is needed. The PACD contact for assistance with this program will be Holly Miller. Sandy Thompson requested PACD develop an information packet to present to their boards which Holly agreed to provide. Funding for treatment will not be available until the Contract is signed. Brenda thanked Sandy Thompson and Tracey Crawford for their assistance with this grant.

Brenda Shambaugh provided verbal highlights from her written report:

- *Conservation District Week April 10-16, 2022*: Brenda noted the high amount of participation in Conservation District week and asked Districts continue to be vigilant in keeping up contact with legislators.
- *PACD Ag Plan Reimbursement Program*: Brenda discussed the mini-grant program. PACD is waiting for the Contract from DEP and will begin administering once it is received. Contact Holly Miller with any questions.
- *Communication*: PACD continues to update their listserves for the Front Page e-newsletter. PACD also provides a monthly bulletin and online social media.
- *Education and Outreach*: Brenda discussed the ongoing multiple education and outreach efforts including a public service announcement on car maintenance and social media presence. Districts with a social media presence should feel free to use the PACD social media content on their own profiles.
- *Clean Water Academy*: Brenda discussed the Clean Water Academy training opportunities. As a reminder, if scheduling conflicts prevent you from attending training, check on the Clean Water Academy.
- *Agricultural Conservation Technical “Boot Camp” Training*: Basic training was held April 4-8, 2022. In-person Level II is going on now. The Intro to Conservation Planning will be held in the Fall of 2022.
- *Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grant Program*: The 2022-23 mini grant round opened in January. Thirty four projects were funded for over \$60,000.
- *102/105 Technical Training*: Training took place in March 2022. The sessions are recorded and will be posted to the Clean Water Academy. In person training will take place in May 2022. Register through the Clean Water Academy.
- *Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting*: Registration is open for the meeting which will take place via Zoom in May.
- *Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series*: The Series will take place via Zoom on October 5-7, 2022.
- *Leadership Development*: Registration is open for the Building for Tomorrow Spring Leadership series to be held in June. The 2022 Hybrid Staff Conference was held in February. Director training workshops were held in February and March.
- *Conservation Enhancement Program (CREP) Outreach Program Office*: A second round of CREP mini grants was opened in January. PACD partnered with Water Words That Work to discuss the CREP program as part of the CREP Outreach Program Office. Educational and outreach materials are being updated and will be distributed to target counties. The CREPPA.org website is being updated. Brenda clarified this mini-grant program is for education and outreach that supports the CREP cost-share program. Districts could use the funding to conduct tours or make brochures for example.

- *Riparian Buffer Sub-Grants:* PACD is continuing to accept sub-grant applications to implement multi-functional riparian buffers. A \$100,000 C2P2 grant from DCNR was recently awarded to PACD for the buffer sub-grant program. The funding requires a match and is available on a first come first served basis.
- *Legislative Activity:* All of the districts developed a “Highlights Page” document that was distributed to all PA House and Senate members. Brenda encouraged districts to share the document again with legislators.
PACD has formed an ad hoc committee to develop a budget strategy for districts. The committee is asking for approximately double the funding for districts. Sandy Thompson suggested funding could be pursued in block grants. Brenda clarified all avenues are being considered including funding as a block grant. Brenda requested districts contact their legislators to provide information on what they are doing and request the additional funding. PACD continues to monitor the legislation listed in her report. Since many legislators’ seats are up for election this year, campaigning will begin to become priority soon.
- *Three-Year PACD Dues Schedule:* The PACD Ways and Means Committee and the PACD Executive Board is recommending a three-year dues schedule. A vote on the proposal will take place at the July Executive Council meeting. The schedule was discussed, and Brenda noted the material provided as supporting information for the increase. Cliff Lane asked for a motion on the dues schedule so that it could be opened for discussion.
Lance Bowes moved to support the approval of the three-year dues increase as presented. It was seconded by Holly Laird.
Cliff Lane opened the motion for discussion. Lance Bowes noted the districts pay dues to several organizations but feels PACD provides the most return.
Cliff Lane called for a vote on the motion. Motion carried.
Kelly Stagen thanked everyone for their support in the dues increase and asked the districts to continue to provide information to PACD on what can be improved.
- *PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference:* The 2022 PACD/SCC Joint Annual Conference will be held this year in-person at the Red Lion in Harrisburg, PA. Brenda discussed the agenda for the conference and her hopes everyone can attend in person. The only portion of the event with a virtual option this year will be the Executive Council meeting.

Regional Information Sharing

- *McKean*– Sandy Thompson discussed the Northeast NACD meeting will be held in Cambridge, MD August 28- 31 this year. The district will be hiring a new conservation technician which they are currently interviewing for. Sandy also discussed the multiple educational events the district is providing including the Forested Watersheds and their importance, My Growing Tree Program, the Envirothon, a Rain Barrel Workshop, and BMP/AMD tours.
- *Armstrong* – Holly Laird discussed the district is hiring for a Conservation Educator position. The district is also putting on a Stormwater and Rain Barrel Workshop. The district also received a grant for a new office building which is currently being planned. Spurgeon Shilling added Dave Rupert has been kept on part time to oversee the building project.
- *Jefferson* – Shaun Wessell discussed the district has hosted multiple environmental education opportunities including a vernal pool tour. The district also assisted with the coordination of the Grazing Conference held in Clarion, PA this year. The district will be holding their Envirothon next week.

- *Clarion* – Trudy Alexander discussed the various educational opportunities the district is hosting including a Nutrient Management workshop, Cook Forest event, and a composting event. The district is considering an educational project with their AMD systems in the County Park. The district received two Growing Greener grants for stream projects. The district will also be celebrating its 85th year this year.
- *Venango* – Lance Bowes discussed the district’s educational opportunities including two Rain Barrel workshops, DCNR environmental education, and their Envirothon. They are busy with construction season ramping up including with DGLVR projects starting and permits. The district will be holding an Open House on May 6th. The district also received an Ag BMP grant which they will begin administering this year.
- *Forest*– Donna Zofcin discussed the district has partnered with the Western PA Conservancy to complete stream projects in their area. They are busy with DGLVR construction projects starting up and a QAB meeting tomorrow night.
- *Lawrence* – Mary Burriss discussed the district is busy with the Envirothon, Growing Greener applications, and DGLVR projects ramping up. They completed their Plant Sale this Spring and will be holding a rain barrel and composting event in May. The district is also receiving bids for a green alley in New Castle.
- Jo Ann McCready discussed the district is continuing to monitor tension between the solar companies and municipalities. The official stance of the district is that they do not support the installation of solar farms on productive farm land. They currently have proposals for over 2,000 acres of land to be converted to solar farms.
- *Elk* – Kate Wehler reported the district is getting ready for their Envirothon. They will also be hosting a workshop for realtors to discuss water management and wetlands as it applies to residential real estate. The district received a grant for an old AMD system rehab. Kate also discussed the district’s involvement in a recent streambank project where they provided a connection between a property owner and the Natural Gas company to complete a project.

PA DEP Partnership Report

- Lori Boughton announced the unexpected passing of DEP field representative John Green. There will be a memorial held on May 11, which will include John’s professional contacts and family. More information will be forwarded as it becomes available.
- Lori also wanted to clarify a question that had been raised regarding PennDOT projects and permitting. Chapter 105, since 2018, is handled by specific DEP employees who deal specifically with PennDOT projects. Chapter 102 is dealt with just like a private entity applicant but does not pay fees.
- Lori just received word that Aneca Atkinson will no longer be the DEP Deputy for Water Programs.
- Karen Books confirmed receipt of the change of the DEP Deputy for Water Programs position. There is no word on who will take over the position.
- Karen also noted John Green’s vacant position is currently being advertised for application and will be open until May 4,
- Karen then provided verbal highlights from her written report as follows:
- *Technician Contract Updates*: Contract renewals and associated information will be forthcoming. Please process them as quickly as possible.

- *Growing Greener Plus and Section 319 Nonpoint Source (NPS) Management Program: 2022 Grant Rounds* were opened on April 22 and will close on June 24. If districts would like to discuss a project, please contact DEP by June 3.
- *Section 319 NPS Management Program Annual Stakeholder Meeting:* The meeting will be held virtually May 18-19, 2022. Registration is open.
- *Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 3 Animal Agriculture Assessment:* The EPA is conducting an assessment and update to the 2015 PA Animal Agriculture Program Assessment. DEP will be receiving a draft report for review and comment from the EPA.
- *Trenchless Technology Technical Guidance Document, Public Comment Period Open:* The Draft was published for public comment on March 19 and will be open until May 18, 2022.
- *Chapter 102 ePermitting and KEES Updates:* The e-permit system now includes NOIs and amendments for the ESCGP-3. Information for external users can be found on the 102 e-Permit System Webpage and training for internal users can be found on Clean Water Academy. CCD Resource Accounts will now receive pertinent Chapter 105 email notifications from KEES for PennDOT projects.
- *PAG-01 NPDES General Permit:* PAG-01 went live on March 1, 2022. A course is available on the Clean Water Academy for districts and regulated community. A question and answer document on PAG-01 is also available. Beginning the quarter ending March 31, 2022, districts will need to report ESCGP O&G Transmission Lines, NPDES PAG-01 and NPDES PAG-02 separately on the 102 Greenport report.
- *State Water Plan:* The ninth round of regional committee meetings were held through April. The tenth Statewide Committee meeting is scheduled for May 11.
- *Chesapeake Bay:* Information is provided in the report for BMP verification efforts.

PA State Conservation Commission Report

Karl Brown noted that there are two SCC Commissioners whose terms are ending and provided verbal highlights from his written report as follows:

- *Heidi Secord Appointed Pennsylvania FSA State Executive Director:* Heidi Secord has been appointed to serve as the State Executive Director for USDA FSA in Pennsylvania and has resigned her position on the Commission.
- *Statement of Financial Interests:* Karl reminded the district directors to complete their Statements of Financial Interests forms no later than May 1st.
- *2022 Conservation District Director Appointment Update:* Thank you to all district managers and county chief clerks that have submitted their 2022 director nominations to the SCC.
- *Funding Proposed for PRISM Concept:* Karl noted as previously discussed, a statewide PRISM funding has been proposed for Invasive Species Management.
- *DGLVR Program Proposed Stream Crossing Policy Revisions, Stream Crossing Replacement Standard, and Technical Manual Revisions:* Commission and Center staff continue to work on revisions to the DGLVR Program policy for stream crossings. The Commission is currently evaluating comments received.
- *DGLVR Program Quality Assurance Quality Control (QAQC) Visits:* QAQC visits have begun. Twenty-two counties are scheduled for visits this year.
- *Conservation Excellence Grants:* The CEG program has expanded into seven counties in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This program doesn't apply to most of the NW region, but information is available if desired.

- *REAP Tax Credit Program*: Karl discussed the REAP program. Karl also discussed the Agrilink Program which can assist with Ag BMPs. More information is in the written report.
- *Nutrient Management Program Update*: A new 5-year Nutrient/Manure Management Program will be proposed for approval in May. A new budget and conservation district delegation agreement funding levels will also be proposed.
- *PA AG Files Civil Action Against NM Planner*: The PA Attorney General has filed a civil action against Ms. Diane Comrey as an agricultural consultant and NM/MM planner. Information was provided for anyone needing to file a complaint.
- *NM Program Provides Guidance to Delegated Districts on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)*: Until further notice, the SCC is asking all delegated conservation districts suspend all routine inspections of poultry facilities and regulatory work at a known premise where poultry is present.
- *PDA Guidance to Help Protect Pennsylvania Poultry Against Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI)*: Karl discussed the poultry disease and measures taken to combat the spread including providing guidance on Biosecurity.
- *PSU Agriculture Best Management Practice Survey*: Karl discussed the survey the Penn State College of Agriculture Penn State is conducting with farmers in the Chesapeake Bay.

USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Report

Jeff Werner provided verbal highlights of his written report as follows:

- *Conservation Through Conversion*: Jeff noted the success story in his report.
- *News*: NRCS discussed the USDA Expanded Conservation Program Opportunities and reminded the Districts EQIP and CSP are still available programs.
- *Farm Bill Programs*: Jeff discussed FY 2022 Farm Bill Programs including CARP, CSP, Easement Programs, and Urban Practice Payment Rates.
- *Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza*: Jeff discussed the HPAI and the Biosecurity measures NRCS is taking. Any questions on NRCS Biosecurity Protocol can be directed to Jeff.
- *NRCS Watershed Programs*: There are several NRCS Watershed Program projects being completed including dam rehabilitation which Jeff discussed.

Adjournment

Cliff Lane called for a motion to adjourn. It was moved by Donna Zofcin and seconded by Lance Bowes. Meeting was adjourned at 12:08 PM.