

**PACD Conservation Committee
Video Conference Minutes
July 6, 2022**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairman Josh Longmore welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order with a quorum at 1:03 p.m.

Committee members in attendance: Josh Longmore, Luzerne; John Akers, Bedford; Bill Clouser, Clearfield; Doug Goodlander, York; Piper Sherburne, Berks; James Coslo, Centre; Carl Goshorn, Cumberland; Adam McClain, Adams; Dan Miloser, Chester; David Stoner, Franklin

Guests in attendance: Adam Ortiz, EPA; Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Celina Seftas, Huntingdon; Chris Houser, Penn State Extension; Christopher Thompson, Lancaster; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Erica Tomlinson, Tioga; Frank Schneider, SCC; Jeffrey Werner, NRCS; Jenna St. Clair, Schuylkill; Jill Whitcomb, DEP; John Dryzal, Cambria; Karen Melvin, EPA; Karl Brown, SCC; Kelly Shenk, EPA; Kelly Stagen, PACD/Pike; Larry Kehl, Berks; Lillian Theophanis, Susquehanna; Mark Jackson, SCC; Matt Miller, PACD; Michele Long, Pike; Sally Tengeres, Perry; Sandy Thompson, McKean; Shane Kleiner, DEP; Shannon Wehinger, PACD; Susan Marquart, NRCS; Kyle Zieba, EPA.

Minutes of the January 5, 2022 Meeting

The minutes from the previous meeting on January 5, 2022, were provided for review.

It was moved by Adam McClain and seconded by John Akers to approve the minutes of the January 5, 2022, meeting. Motion carried.

EPA Chesapeake Bay Report and EPA Inspections

EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz thanked everyone for the opportunity to participate.

- He thanked everyone for their work.
- He started in this role in November and worked with districts prior to taking this position.
- He has visited Central Pennsylvania, including Lancaster, and looks forward to more visits.
- There is currently federal support for environmental protection across sectors
- He has met with members of the legislature to request support for Pennsylvania's conservation efforts and Chesapeake Bay nutrient and sediment reduction goals.
- Pennsylvania has fallen short of some Bay targets, but that should not overshadow the considerable progress made in Pennsylvania.
- EPA is currently in the role of enhanced inspection and enforcement action. A letter was sent to DEP in December noting that EPA expects a WIP that can generate the needed results and



that, failing this, they would have to go after reductions however they can, including stepping up their inspection and enforcement actions in permitted sectors.

- In June they held ten enhanced inspection and enforcement actions. They did not focus only on agriculture and small farms. Sites included urban and suburban areas, wastewater treatment plants, factories, farms, and CAFOs.
- He expressed hope about the proposed legislation to help farmers install BMPs.
- He noted this is not just a Bay issue, though that is clearly an area of concern.
- Over the last few years EPA has invested more than \$50 million and 300 hours of technical assistance to PA.
- They hear our concerns, particularly making sure that farmers get credit for practices. They sent a letter to PFB and the Secretary regarding submission of practices.
- EPA will continue to provide financial support and they are happy to speak with state leader to stress the importance of sufficient funding and support for Pennsylvania's efforts.
- He opened up the floor for questions.
- *Question:* Districts have concerns about how inspections will affect their relationship with the farming community. Can EPA notify districts about upcoming inspections so the local district can work with farmers to help bring them into compliance? *Answer:* EPA has a letter of understanding that says EPA will notify PDA of any enforcement actions or inspections, so EPA is obligated to notify the Secretary of Agriculture, and it would be the Department's responsibility to notify the local district. However, EPA can certainly reinforce the importance of keeping districts in the loop.
- *Question:* Is there an update on the EPA animal ag program assessments? *Answer:* In 2015, EPA published an assessment for each of the mid-Atlantic states to examine activities related to the TMDL. They have a draft report they hope to submit to the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in July or August.
- *Question:* What is the value of water quality monitoring? It is expensive but there is a great deal of interest from municipalities in measuring actual water quality. *Answer:* Many partners have expressed interest in more monitoring data. Mr. Ortiz would like to set an internal goal of at least doubling the number of monitors in the state over the next five years.
- Chris Thompson invited Mr. Ortiz and his staff to meet with Pennsylvania's managers annually to provide an update on what is happening in Pennsylvania.

PSU Survey Update

Chris Houser with Penn State University provided an update on their agricultural survey:

- The survey is a collaborative effort created to incorporate voluntary conservation practices that may not be incorporated into the Bay model through other avenues (such as state or federal cost-share programs).
- It is open to farmers in Chesapeake Bay Phase 3 WIP Tier 2 and Tier 3 counties: Bedford, Centre, Columbia, Cumberland, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lebanon, Lycoming, Mifflin, Northumberland, Perry, Snyder, and Tioga.
- Partners include Penn State University, PennAg Industries, PACD, PASA, PDA, DEP, PA Farm Bureau, PA Farmers Union, Professional Dairy Managers of PA, and the SCC.
- The first survey was held in 2016 with nearly 7,000 farmers participating.
- The survey was repeated in 2020 in Lancaster, York, Adams, and Franklin counties with nearly 1,800 farmers participating.

- Many conservation practices were reported and accepted into the Chesapeake Bay Model.
- The 2022 survey includes tier 2 and 3 counties
- They are currently implementing Part 1 of the survey, which gathers general information about the farming operation. Part 2 will gather information about priority conservation practices identified in the WIP that achieve high levels of nutrient and sediment reductions.
- The Penn State Agriculture & Environment Center administers the survey.
- They are using a new online tool with a paper option.
- The online survey was launched in mid-January with paper copies mailed in mid-February, and surveys were received through about May 1. Participating farmers received a complimentary soil test kit.
- Educators visited 10% of the farms to confirm/validate survey information. Agronomy guides were provided to participants whose farms they visited.
- To date, 1,018 surveys were returned.
- After the visits, they will undertake analysis to ensure no duplication of cost-shared practices.

Nutrient Management Updates and Watershed Specialist Reporting Requirements

Jill Whitcomb provided the following report:

- She received emails regarding distribution of the watershed specialist reporting and tracking email. She noted that when they send out emails, they go to the DEP conservation district listserv. This goes to whomever the manager has signed up for this list, usually the manager.
- She thanked PACD for sharing the Nutrient Management information from Frank Schneider and noted this information was updated between the May and June SCC Meetings.
- They just hired Melissa Harrison for a biologist position in the watershed support section. The Northcentral field rep position was posted today. They are hoping to hire an environmental engineer in the ag compliance section. Other field rep positions are in the pipeline for posting and there is another group manager position open.
- *Question:* The new ROMs require that someone enters in data. Is there going to be support for data entry so districts can keep their technicians in the field? *Answer:* There will be two times they need to enter the information. Once at the beginning of the project and once at the end. Some counties will have more to enter than others. They are going to work to make entering the information as easy as possible over time.

PRISM Update

PACD received a federal grant to fund a pilot PRISM program in the North West and we are just waiting for the final paperwork to begin work on the project. The Governor's budget included funding for a statewide invasive species program, but we do not know if this funding will remain in the final budget.

Adjournment

It was moved by Bill Clouser and seconded by Dave Stoner to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.