

**PACD Legislative Committee
Video Conference Minutes
January 14, 2022**

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairwoman Donna Fisher welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Committee members in attendance: Donna Fisher, Blair; Chuck Duritsa, Westmoreland; Mark Hamilton, Tioga; Larry Kehl, Berks; Kelly Stagen, Pike/PACD; Douglas Beri Jr., Indiana; Jonathan Burgess, Allegheny; Adam McClain, Adams; Christian Strohmaier, Chester; Christopher Thompson, Lancaster

Guests in attendance: Brenda Shambaugh, PACD; Dean Druckenmiller, Berks; Karen Books, DEP; Chris Snyder, Juniata; Karl Brown, SCC; Nicholas DiPaolo, Northampton; Linda Mackey, DEP

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting on July 15, 2021, were provided for review.

It was moved by Kelly Stagen and seconded by Chris Strohmaier to approve the minutes of the July 15, 2021, meeting as presented. Motion carried.

PACD Ad Hoc Committee and Comprehensive Legislative Program Update

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided an update on the PACD Ad Hoc Committee and Comprehensive Legislative Program, which seeks to obtain an increase in the conservation district line items.

- The committee's argument to increase conservation district funding is three-fold. First, there has been no increase since 2004 or 2005. Second, since that time, the number of conservation district programs has grown significantly. Third, many of these programs do not provide enough funding to cover the full cost of the program.
- The committee is currently working to encourage the Governor's office to increase the conservation district line items in his proposed budget, which he will present the first Tuesday of February. The committee has met with the Secretary of DEP, the Secretary of PDA, the Governor's Policy Office, and the Governor's Deputy Chief of Staff. After the Governor's budget is announced, the committee will work with House and Senate leaders to either keep the additional funding in the line-items, or to add additional funding if the Governor does not provide an increase.
- The committee is also promoting a comprehensive legislative program that includes monthly activities to keep districts in the forefront of legislators' minds. There are a wide variety of templates and activities, including meeting with legislators, writing a letter, publishing a press release, or writing an editorial.



- It was noted that the key is for conservation districts to take action as part of the legislative program and interact with their legislators on a regular basis. It was also noted that it is important for directors to take action, as voters and constituents, in addition to district staff.

Update on Annual Conservation District Highlights Project

Brenda Shambaugh reported PACD has Highlights pages from all sixty-six conservation districts. Each page features district accomplishments and the funds brought into each county through the conservation district. Each legislator will receive a page for each county in their legislative district and links to a five-minute video about districts and the full 66-page document. The document link will also be shared with agency partners and the Governor's Office. We are suggesting that districts follow up in about a week.

General Legislative Update

Brenda reviewed legislation PACD has been following in the House and Senate.

- *Third Party Reviewer Legislation (SB 28 and HB 139)* – PACD opposes this legislation. Both the House and Senate versions are in committee.
- *Statewide Expedited Review Legislation (SB 535)* – This bill would allow for a statewide expedited review program. It was introduced by Senator Yaw, Chairman of the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee, where the bill is currently. PACD wants to ensure that it allows districts to continue any existing expedited review programs.
- *Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) (SB 465)* – ACAP allows for a BMP program fashioned after the DGLVR program. There is no funding source in the legislation, which has been since incorporated into SB832.
- *Definition of Pollution (SB 545 and HB 1842)* – The original bill created a threshold for pollution events. The new version requires the Environmental Quality Board to set the threshold. PACD opposes this legislation. The Senate and House bills are in committee.
- *Growing Greener Legislation (SB 525)* – This bill proposes a one-time addition of federal stimulus funding to the Growing Greener fund. This bill has left the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee and is in the Appropriations Committee.
- *Small Project NPDES Permits (HB 591)* – This legislation allows for an entity to request a waiver from DEP for projects below a certain size but does not specify the waiver criteria. It has passed the House and is in the Environmental Resources & Energy Committee. With the PAG-01 going into effect it may not be considered in the Senate.
- *Non-point Pollution Projects (SB 832) HB1901* – This comprehensive piece of legislation proposes to use federal stimulus funds for several programs, including nutrient management. The House bill allows districts 12% administrative funding and the SCC 4%. The Senate bill cuts that in half. Chris Thompson and John Dryzal will join Brenda to testify in favor of the legislation, with full administrative funding, at a House hearing on January 24 at 9:30 a.m. Brenda will share their testimony and any livestream information when available.
- *Water Tax Legislation (HB 20 and SB 868)* – This legislation would create a tax on stormwater. It seems unlikely to move any time soon.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46.