

**PACD Executive Council
Video Conference Minutes
January 27, 2022**

Call to Order

PACD President Kelly Stagen called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Roll Call

Secretary Charles Duritsa called the roll and announced a quorum was present. Thirty-nine district delegates participated in the meeting.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

Secretary Charles Duritsa presented the minutes of the previous meeting on July 29, 2021.

It was moved by Chuck Duritsa and seconded by Blaine Smith to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried.

President's Report

Before providing her report, President Kelly Stagen yielded the floor to DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, who spoke to current priorities and the partnership between DCNR and conservation districts.

President Stagen thanked Secretary Dunn for the partnership and for joining the meeting to address the membership. She then provided the following report:

- She thanked everyone for attending and thanked the PACD staff for their support and the work they do to support conservation districts.
- PACD hopes to hold a hybrid 2022 Joint Annual Conference in the Harrisburg area this July.
- The PACD Ad Hoc Committee is working to obtain additional funding for conservation districts in the DEP and PDA line-items in the Pennsylvania budget.
- The committee met with DEP Secretary McDonnell, PDA Secretary Redding, and the Governor's office. They will meet with legislators after the Governor's budget proposal.
- She encouraged everyone to participate in the legislative program by undertaking monthly activities, which could be as simple as sending a letter or making a phone call.
- She especially encouraged district directors to reach out to legislators.

Executive Director's Report

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh thanked everyone for attending and provided the following report about activities over the past six months, as well as some upcoming activities:

- Brenda thanked the PACD Executive Board and staff for their support.
- Conservation District Week will take place April 10-16, 2022, followed by a media blitz on



Earth Day. We hope each district will plan to hold some kind of event during the week.

- PACD has been developing monthly social media message for conservation districts and created a PSA on the responsible use of deicer.
- PACD worked with conservation districts to have a booth at the 2022 Farm Show. Many thanks to our volunteers for making this possible.
- Brenda thanked the districts for working with PACD to set up electronic payments.
- John Dryzal (Cambria) and Chris Thompson (Lancaster) joined Brenda to testify in favor of House Bill 1901 at the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee hearing on January 24.
- Through funding from NRCS and the SCC, PACD coordinated 2021 Agricultural Conservation Technical Training Basic, Level II, and Intro to Conservation courses.
- PACD held a bonus round of Nonpoint Source Mini-grants and is currently accepting applications through a new round.
- PACD has been working with partners to expand training available through the Clean Water Academy, with a particular eye to on-boarding new staff.
- At the Leadership Development Staff Conference in February, DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell will be recognizing district staff who have completed the most courses in the DEP Clean Water Academy.
- PACD has held two CREP mini-grant rounds and a new round is currently open.
- We are also working with Water Words that Work on a CREP marketing campaign.
- Over the last six months landowners received over \$55,000 through their Pennsylvania CREP contracts.
- PACD partnered with SEK held a QuickBooks webinar training series for conservation district staff.
- Staff are also working with DEP to hold the Virtual Conservation District and PA Agency Ag Meeting in February.
- PACD is also working with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to hold a NFWF grant-writing webinar on February 1.
- We received a \$100,000 grant from DCNR to continue the Multifunctional Riparian Buffer Sub-grant for Conservation Districts.
- Through a grant with DEP, PACD coordinated the Conservation District Watershed Specialist Webinar Series in October.
- We are currently working with DEP to plan a virtual 102/105 Topic-based training in March and a Basic session in May.
- Brenda thanked the SCC for supporting the Leadership Development Program, which held the Management Summit and a webinar series in the fall. The Staff Conference will take place in February and a director workshop series is planned for February and March.

Treasurer's Report

PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- As of January 19, 2022, \$92,285 of \$105,010 in dues have been collected from 41 conservation districts, representing 62.76%.
- The association thanks all of you for your continued financial support. As a result of your dedication and commitment PACD is in a sound financial position.
- Our annual audit for fiscal year 2020/2021 is complete and once again PACD has received a

clean audit with no findings. PACD auditors provided a review of the report to both the Audit Committee and the Executive Board. To save on printing, an electronic copy of the audit report is available by e-mail upon request.

- Everyone should have copies of the December 31, 2021, balance sheet and budget report, which both the Executive Board and Ways and Means Committee have reviewed.
- The Executive Board and Ways and Means Committee have begun to make recommendations for any adjustments to the draft budget for fiscal year 2022/2023 and the proposed 3-year dues, as per our formal Budget Preparation Procedure. These entities will continue to work through the process, to reach a final draft, to present for council's approval in July.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Emil Bove (Westmoreland) to file the financial reports for audit. Motion carried.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Cliff Lane (McKean) to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried.

NACD Director's Report

NACD Director Clifford Lane provided the following report:

- Cliff will attend the upcoming Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, this February.
- They have 600 attendees registered for Orlando with a robust COVID protocol in place.
- NACD is in a good financial position and considering future funding opportunities.
- NACD has had personnel changes in the past year. The new Northeast Region Representative is Annica McGuirk who works out of Maine.
- The Florida state legislature is proposing to eliminate conservation districts. NACD has invited some of the Florida legislators to attend the annual meeting. This reinforces the importance of conservation district week and forming strong relationships with legislators.
- As Alternate NACD Director, Kelly Stagen thanked Sandy Thompson (McKean) and Ron Rohall (Westmoreland) for their support on the national level.
- Pennsylvania serves on two NACD committees, Education and Outreach and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion special committee.

PACD Conservation Committee Report

Chairman Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The PACD Conservation Committee met on January 5 with a quorum and heard three presentations.
- Kristopher Abell, Coordinator for the Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council presented on invasive species. The Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council (or PISC) would like to establish Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management" or "PRISMS" in Pennsylvania. The Invasive Species Council is hoping districts will be a primary partner and will consider hosting on a regional level. Hosts will receive funding to hire staff and fund projects. PRISMs need support to become a reality. More information is available on the PISC website. They also have a newsletter and a hotline to report invasives.
- DEP Environmental Program Manager Sean Furjanic reported on PAG-01 training. The PAG01 permit for earth disturbance less than five acres will go live in March. Eligibility requirements make it more difficult for a project to qualify. DEP has developed a six-module

training program in the Clean Water Academy and a follow-up Q&A session will be held on February 10. Participants who complete the full course will be able to obtain a certificate to go towards professional development hours.

- Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program Manager Roy Richardson provided a presentation on proposed changes to the DGLVR stream crossing policy, replacement standard, and technical manual. The new policy requires more conservation district involvement. The proposed policy is out for review and comment through the end of January and the SCC has asked districts to provide feedback on the proposed changes. PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh has gathered comments from districts to submit to the SCC. The SCC will review comments and make final edits throughout January and February and may seek approval from the SCC in March or May. The changes will likely be implemented in July at the earliest.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD District Employees Committee Report

Chairwoman Jamie Knecht provided the following report:

- The PACD District Employees Committee met on January 7, 2022, with a quorum.
- PACD Program Manager Holly Miller provided a written and verbal report on training opportunities coordinated by PACD.
- PACD Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller reported registration is still open for the 2022 Staff Conference, which will be held February 16-17 in a hybrid format. Managers are welcome to attend virtually but in-person attendance is limited to district staff. Registration for regional director training is also open.
- Sandy Thompson reported that the election of officers took place at the last Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees (NACDE) meeting. The 2022 NACDE Conference will be held in Maryland August 28-30. The National Conservation District Employees Association is offering lunch-and-learn webinars. The National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Conference will be February 12-16 in Orlando, FL.
- The group discussed additional needs not addressed by upcoming training opportunities and it was noted that districts need forestry and timber harvesting guidance.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee Report

Chairwoman Laura Anderson provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met on January 11, 2022, with a quorum.
- PACD Director of Communications and Education Shannon Wehinger reported that the next public service announcement will be on deicers.
- Shannon continues to update the social media calendar and create shared messaging for districts each month.
- The application deadline for CREP Mini-grants of up to \$3,000 is February 25, 2022.
- The application deadline for Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention Mini-grants of up to \$2,000 is January 28, 2022.
- PACD received additional funds from DCNR for Multi-functional Riparian Buffer Sub-grants and is accepting applications on an ongoing basis.
- Lori Glace from the Cumberland County Conservation District shared a project with the committee that was funded by the DEP's Environmental Education Grants Program. The

project included “Rain to Drain, Slow the Flow” kits and a stream table.

- Mindy Musser from Juniata County Conservation District and Lauren Cheran from Snyder County Conservation District spoke about their Enviro Camp program, which was funded in part by a 2021 DEP Environmental Education Grant. The two districts worked together to co-host the camp in August 2021. It was open to first to fourth graders and was very successful. They are planning the next camp for June 2022.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Legislative Committee Report

Chairwoman Donna Fisher provided the following report:

- The PACD Legislative Committee met on January 14, 2022, with a quorum.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported PACD received Highlights pages from all sixty-six conservation districts, which will go out to legislators, the Governor’s office, and partners.
- Brenda provided an update on the PACD Ad Hoc Committee.
- Brenda also provided an update on current legislation.
- 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. PACD wants to ensure that it allows districts to continue any existing expedited review programs.
- Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) (SB 465) – This legislation has been 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.
- Growing Greener Legislation (SB 525) – This proposes a one-time addition of federal stimulus funding to the Growing Greener fund and is in Appropriations.
- Non-point Pollution Projects (SB 832 and HB1901) – This legislation proposes to use federal stimulus funds for several programs, including nutrient management. PACD testified in favor of the legislation on January 24, 2022.
- Water Tax Legislation (HB 20 and SB 868) – This legislation would create a tax on stormwater.
- The Legislative Committee had one motion to bring before the PACD Executive Council. All six PACD regions voted to support this policy, which was proposed by the PACD Legislative Committee on July 15, 2021. House Bill 591 would create a program for a small-project NPDES permit program. The PACD Legislative Committee has concerns about the lack of criteria in the legislation.

It was moved by Kate Wehler (Elk) and seconded by Donna Zofcin (Forest) to approve the following policy:

PACD opposes House Bill 591 (2021-2022 Session) as currently written.

Motion carried.

PACD Operations Committee Report

Chairman Dennis Beck provided the following report:

- The PACD Operations Committee met on January 19, 2022, with a quorum.
- No new resolutions from PACD committees were presented.
- The committee reviewed and forwarded the resolution opposing House Bill 591, which was just addressed.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Ways and Means Committee Report

Chairwoman Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- The PACD Ways and Means Committee met on January 18, 2022, with a quorum.
- The committee reviewed a summary of financials for the first half of FY 2021/2022
- The committee also recommended a three-year dues schedule to the PACD Executive Board. The committee proposed an increase of \$130.00 per district for FY 2022/2023, which represents a \$75 increase plus the \$55 increase that was waived in FY 2019/2020, and a \$75.00 increase in each of the two following fiscal years (2023/2024 and 2024/2025).
- The group discussed future funding opportunities for PACD.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PA Department of Agriculture Report

Deputy Secretary Gregory Hostetter provided the following report:

- He thanked the conservation districts for having a presence at the Farm Show.
- The House and Senate Appropriations Committee hearings for the PA Department of Agriculture budget will take place in early March. Brenda met with the Department about the need for additional conservation district funding and the Department supports this.
- The Department is holding team meetings on the Chesapeake Bay WIPs.
- Bio-security is always important. Extra care should be taken as some strains of concern were found in wild waterfowl in nearby states.
- He thanked the district directors and staff for their leadership and support of agriculture. The Department appreciates that partnership.

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Report

Drew Gilchrist provided the following highlights from his written report about DCNR's Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (BRC) Community Conservation Partnership Program (C2P2):

- In December, Governor Wolf announced \$111 million in funding for 317 C2P2 projects across the state. This represents the highest amount of grant funding in ten years.
- Funded projects related to River Conservation included stream restorations, dam removals, bridge rehabilitation, non-motorized boat launch areas, and riparian buffer installations.
- PACD recently received a \$100,000 grant for riparian buffer mini-grants to conservation districts on behalf of local partners. This is the third riparian buffer grant DCNR has awarded PACD. The mini-grants require a 50/50 match and include preparation, plant protection, and post installation maintenance for the length of the grant. This grant covers both conventional and multi-functional buffers.
- Districts are encouraged to contact Holly Miller with PACD for more information.

Department of Environmental Protection

Secretary Patrick McDonnell provided the following report:

- DEP recently awarded Growing Greener grants, including 19 grants to districts. PACD received two grants, one for the PACD Agricultural Plan Reimbursement Program and one for the Engineering Assistance Program.
- DEP plans to transition to paperless Chapter 105 General Permits this spring. Chapter-105-delegated districts will no longer need to provide quarterly reports for general permits.
- The draft 2022 Integrated Water Quality Report has been released for public comment.
- Pennsylvania recently announced a plan to meet its 2025 pollution reduction goals in the Chesapeake Bay watershed and called for funding support to make it happen.
- On January 6, 2022, Chesapeake Bay Office Agriculture Compliance Staff met with involved counties and their regional offices about Phase II Chesapeake Bay agricultural inspections.
- There is new training on the Clean Water Academy to support the BMP verification effort.
- The PAG-01 goes live on March 1, 2022. DEP is providing a six-module training program in the Clean Water Academy for the new permit, followed by a Q&A session on February 10.
- DEP announced Coastal Resources Management Program Grant awards for the Delaware Estuary Coastal Zone.
- CREP acres under contract and related nutrient load reductions were highlighted.
- The State Water Plan's eighth round of regional committee meetings began in January.

President Stagen thanked Secretary McDonnell for attending and for the Growing Greener grant funding for PACD and the conservation districts.

State Conservation Commission

Executive Secretary Karl Brown provided highlights from his written report:

- He thanked President Stagen and the PACD board and staff for the opportunity to be here.
- SCC staff are working a hybrid schedule. He thanked districts for their flexibility and innovation over the past two years.
- We have excellent participation at today's meeting. As we move into 2022, please consider incorporating a virtual component so agency staff can participate.
- We do want to return to face-to-face training, but it is not an easy process. Karl urged everyone to be patient as agencies continue to navigate constant changes.
- As Deputy Secretary Hotstetter mentioned, the budget process has begun.
- Karl provided an update on nutrient management, REAP, the Conservation Excellence Grant program, and the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program. He noted that progress has continued in all of these programs despite the pandemic.
- The AgriLink Loan Program is open for low-interest agricultural loans up to \$250,000.
- They are making updates to the stream crossings portion of the DGLVR program and taking comments through the end of January.
- As mentioned earlier during the meeting, the legislature is considering legislation that would provide additional funding for conservation using the DGLVR program as a model.
- So far, about 85% of district director nominations are in. Karl thanked districts who have already submitted them.
- Karl completed his report by thanking conservation district directors for all they do.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Assistant State Conservationist for Partnerships and RCPP Coordinator Susan Marquart provided highlights from the NRCS Annual Report:

- She thanked everyone for the opportunity to be here.
- NRCS has applied over 31,000 practices over the past year.
- She reviewed the allocations of funding and technical assistance for each program.
- She noted NRCS has made some adjustments to provide supplemental payments for practices with increased costs due to supply chain shortages.
- She highlighted the Kittatinny Ridge conservation easement project.
- Over the past year, NRCS provided significant support for the PACD Engineering Assistance Program, as well as technical training and other investments in conservation districts.
- NRCS offices are open with reduced staff, and field visits continue.
- Susan thanked everyone for the opportunity and PACD and the districts for their partnership.

President Stagen thanked district directors and staff for their hard work and thanked the PACD Executive Board and staff. She thanked the managers and staff for fulfilling so many roles so well.

John Dryzal (Cambria) thanked Mike Flinchbaugh from York for testifying on Monday's House hearing about House Bill 1901 and encouraged district staff and directors to keep building good relationships with legislators.

Adjournment

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Emil Bove (Westmoreland) to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:41 a.m.