

**PACD Executive Council
Video Conference Minutes
January 26, 2023**

Call to Order

Acting Chairman PACD 1st Vice President Dennis Beck called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Roll Call

PACD Secretary Charles Duritsa read the roll. Thirty-eight conservation districts were present, which constituted a quorum.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

PACD Secretary Charles Duritsa presented the minutes of the previous meeting on July 21, 2022.

It was moved by Emil Bove (Westmoreland) and seconded by Sam Worley (Franklin) to accept the minutes of the previous meeting on July 21, 2022, as presented. Motion carried.

President's Report

PACD 1st Vice President Dennis Beck provided a report on behalf of President Kelly Stagen.

Executive Director's Report

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh gave the following report:

- Brenda thanked the staff for all they do and the board for all of their support.
- Conservation District Week will be April 23-29, 2023. The Senate will be in session, but we do not yet know about the House. Districts are encouraged to meet with their legislators during Conservation District Week and to invite their legislators to any Earth Day activities.
- All 66 conservation districts completed their Conservation District Highlights pages and all 253 legislators have received pages for those counties in their legislative districts, along with a white paper on conservation districts. We have nearly 50 new legislators. All districts are urged to follow up with their legislators, especially if they have new legislators.
- Brenda thanked all the districts who volunteered for the 2023 Farm Show.
- She introduced PACD's new Instructional Designer Chris Grimsley, who is currently working on a new arm of the Clean Water Academy for the regulated community.
- Twenty-four participants from ten districts participated in Conservation Planning in November. Thanks to NRCS and the SCC for making this possible.
- The deadline to apply for Nonpoint Source Mini-grants is January 31, 2023. These grants are funded through a 319 grant from DEP.
- The deadline to apply for CREP mini-grants is February 24. These grants are offered through a Growing Greener grant from DEP.
- Through this same grant, PACD coordinated a two-day CREP Partner Training November 9-



10. The event was recorded and is posted on YouTube and the Clean Water Academy.
- PACD is working with DEP to coordinate the Virtual Pennsylvania Agency Ag Meeting. The event will take place on April 3 for those outside the Chesapeake Bay and April 6 for those in the Chesapeake Bay. Brenda thanked DEP for funding this training.
 - PACD has two buffer grants through DCNR. The Multifunctional Riparian Buffer Sub-grant for Conservation Districts has about \$20,000 remaining with no match. The Riparian Buffer Sub-Grant for Conservation Districts has about \$20,000 remaining and requires a match.
 - PACD held a webinar series for conservation district watershed specialists in the fall of 2022 and anticipates holding an in-person Watershed Specialist Meeting this fall.
 - Thanks to funding from the SCC, PACD continues to host Leadership Development Program Coordinator Matt Miller. The Management Summit was held this fall and he is currently coordinating employment law seminars and CliftonStrengths events.
 - The Ag Plan Reimbursement program is going well, with over 50 applications coming in since it opened. This program helps defray the cost of planning for farmers. Brenda thanked DEP for funding this program through a Growing Greener grant.
 - DCNR recently awarded PACD a grant for Lawn Conversion training and mini-grants for Pennsylvania's conservation districts.
 - PACD is looking forward to the PRISM pilot program once paperwork is completed.
 - PACD is working with DEP to provide Basic Technical Training, Virtual Topic-based Technical Training, and three Verbal Judo training sessions this spring.
 - The PACD Spring Region Meetings will take place in late March and early April. They will take place as a hybrid with both in-person and remote attendance.
 - Brenda thanked our state partners and our federal partners, including NRCS for their unending support.

Treasurer's Report

PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented the mid-year financial reports.

- As of December 31, 2022, \$95,700.00 of \$158,590.00 in dues have been collected from 39.5 conservation districts, representing 65.08%.
- Sonia thanked all the districts for their continued financial support. Due in part to district support, PACD is able to maintain a sound financial position.
- Our annual audit for fiscal year 2021/2022 is complete and PACD has received a clean audit with no findings. A review of the report was provided to the PACD Audit Committee and the PACD Executive Board. To save on printing costs, an electronic copy of the audit report is available by e-mail upon request.
- Sonia presented the December 31, 2022, balance sheet and budget report, which were reviewed by both the PACD Executive Board and PACD Ways and Means Committee.
- Sonia opened the floor for questions about the report. None were presented.

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Sam Worley (Franklin) to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried.

NACD Report

NACD Northeast Representative Cliff Lane provided the following report:

- The NACD Annual Meeting will take place in New Orleans February 11-15, 2023.

- Cliff looks forward to being the voice for the northeast on the NACD board. Kelly Stagen will take over as acting NACD Director until July.
- The big topic of discussion at NACD is the Farm Bill. NACD will be working closely with the ag committee as they develop the Farm Bill this summer.
- There is also money in the Inflation Reduction Act that districts can access.
- Ron Rohall noted that districts can apply for Urban and Community Conservation Grants funded by NACD and NRCS. Grants are up to \$10,000 for planning in urban ag and conservation and \$60,000 for urban ag conservation projects. These programs require a 25 percent match. Applications are due March 10, 2023. Completion date is September 2024.
- The 2024 Annual meeting will likely take place February 10-14 in San Diego.

New Business: Reports, motions, and resolutions from PACD Committees

PACD Conservation Committee

Committee Chairman Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The PACD Conservation Committee met on January 6 with a quorum.
- MeeCee Baker spoke to the committee on behalf of Governor Shapiro's transition team. She discussed the transition team members and priorities, which include lowering energy costs for consumers and capping abandoned wells.
- Other priorities include addressing short funding. There is a knowledge drain due to retirements, and it is difficult to hire new talent with low starting salaries. Coordination between agencies, such as DCNR, PUC, DEP, and PDA is also a priority. These organizations need to work together on many issues.
- EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz also spoke to the committee. He thanked districts for what they are doing and discussed EPA's priorities.
- EPA is still completing inspections in Pennsylvania, and are visiting MS4s, industrial, and other sites in addition to agricultural locations.
- He reported that, while EPA is a regulation and enforcement agency, it is increasingly a grant provider and funding source. Enforcement is currently less than five percent of their budget and less than twelve percent of their staff.
- They want to use monitoring and other data to focus practices where they can best move the needle on water quality.
- EPA is aware of concerns that not all practices are counted. They are establishing a workgroup to determine the best way to credit those practices, incorporating ideas from Penn State Extension and others.
- They are also aware there are some problematic data sources for CAST, the model they are using to focus resources.
- Kelly Sherk from EPA thanked the districts and state agencies for their cooperation in completing the PA Animal Ag Program Assessment Report.
- Administrator Ortiz said they know pay and staffing is always an issue, and he continues to support salary increases for staff and technicians. They may look to do workload analyses to help support higher pay for staff to keep them on in the long-term.
- There were some comments for EPA:
 - They were urged to provide clarity on priority areas for funding as early as possible, so districts can plan for and promote upcoming opportunities.

- District participation was offered, either for workgroups or as informal advisors.
- It was noted that most of the funding sources focus on implementation and modeling, but education, outreach, and coordination are also critical and need to be incorporated in some of these funding programs.
- The need to keep current with new practices and determine how to credit them appropriately in the models was also noted.
- The Conservation Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD District Employees Committee

Committee Chairwoman Jamie Knecht provided the following report:

- The PACD District Employees Committee met on January 11, 2023, with a quorum.
- PACD Program Manager Holly Miller reported on training opportunities coordinated by PACD and a list of 2023 training opportunities offered by PACD.
- PACD Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller shared information on upcoming Leadership Development training.
- Holly gave an update on the internal salary survey that conservation districts filled out. About 40 conservation districts submitted information for almost 500 staff positions. The internal salary survey was sent to the consultants that are compiling the statewide salary study. Once we have all components of the study, PACD will email the entire package to conservation districts along with a request for a maximum \$500 voluntary donation from each district to defray the cost of hiring the consultant. The salary survey will help justify the continuation of increased funding for conservation districts in the state budget.
- No additional district staff needs were identified or assessed during the meeting.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh gave an update on the highlights pages being shares with legislators, the Environmental Resources and Energy information session, conservation district legislative priorities, and PACD booths at Farm Show and PSATS. She also shared that the Governor's budget address will take place March 7, 2023.
- Chris Grimsley, the new Instructional Designer for PACD, introduced himself to the group.
- The District Employees Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee

Committee Chairwoman Laura Anderson provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met on January 12, 2023 with a quorum.
- The committee met Chris Grimsley, the new Clean Water Academy expert. We will be working with Chris in future to add environmental education content to the Academy.
- Kristen Currier, Environmental Educator at Erie County Conservation District, spoke about the various programs the district does with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts as far as Eagle Scout and Gold Award projects. The district also helps scouts with badge-earning workshops.
- Shannon Wehinger, Director of Communications & Education at PACD, spoke about the two interactive games (cornhole and Plinko) that PACD created to have more interaction at conservation district booths at the PA Farm Show, PA State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) Annual Conference, and Ag Progress Days. Districts are welcome to create their own games or borrow PACD's if they aren't being used. Template graphics are available. Contact Shannon for the link.
- The Education and Outreach Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Legislative Committee

Legislative Committee Chairwoman Donna Fisher provided the following report:

- The PACD Legislative Committee met on January 17 with a quorum.
- Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh provided a report on changes in the PA General Assembly. There are nearly 50 new legislators who may not know anything about districts. It's always important for districts to meet with their legislators regularly and develop that relationship. For anyone with new legislators, this is crucial. Meet with your legislators, invite them to your events, like local Envirothons or project tours. If you need talking points or other information, contact Brenda or go to the Legislative section of the PACD website.
- Brenda also provided an update on the state budget. The House is waiting for three vacant seats to fill this February and we have a new Governor. These things may slow the process. We will have to wait and see.
- Highlights pages have gone out to legislators and now is the perfect time to reach out and follow up with them.
- Brenda provided an update on the Salary Study.
- Brenda also reviewed some pieces of legislation PACD was tracking last session.
- The Third Party Review Legislation is likely to be reintroduced. Districts want to ensure they are considered a third party for the purposes of this legislation. Districts are also concerned that allowing for third-party reviews might result in less rigorous reviews and even create a conflict of interest.
- The Expedited Review Legislation was sponsored by Senator Yaw last session. Districts want to ensure participation is voluntary and also that they can maintain any existing expedited review programs they may have.
- As everyone knows, ACAP has passed, and the SCC is working to implement the program.
- PACD will continue to oppose the legislation changing the Definition of Pollution, should it be reintroduced. Current law requires any spill be reported to DEP. This legislation creates a threshold below which a spill does not need to be reported.
- The Growing Greener legislation did not move last session but may be reintroduced.
- Legislation that would impose a Water Tax on large amounts of water use did not move last session. It may be reintroduced this session.
- Brenda represented districts at a Senate information session on ACAP on January 12. She stressed the importance of maintaining funding levels in the state budget. The importance of funding to improve district staff retention was also discussed.
- The Legislative Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Operations Committee

Operations Committee Chairman Dennis Beck provided the following report:

- The PACD Operations Committee met on January 20 with a quorum.
- The committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting.
- The committee also forwarded the Cambria County motion asking PACD to request voluntary contributions to conduct a salary study. It was unanimously approved by the six PACD regions in the Fall and will come before this council soon under New Business.
- The PACD Operations Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Ways and Means Committee

Ways and Means Committee Chairwoman and PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco provided the following report:

- The PACD Ways and Means Committee met on January 19, 2023 with a quorum.
- The committee approved the minutes of the July 14, 2022 meeting.
- The committee reviewed a summary of financials for the first half of FY 2022/2023
- Members held discussions on PACD funding opportunities.
- The Ways and Means Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

New Business: Items from the Fall PACD Region Meetings

Salary Study Project

All six PACD regions voted unanimously to support the motion from Cambria County Conservation District requesting PACD hire a consultant to undertake a salary comparison study to justify the continuation of increased funding for conservation districts in the state budget.

The PACD North East Region added the word “voluntary” to stress that district contributions are voluntary, and the PACD South West Region added a maximum of \$500.00 per district. The final motion incorporates Cambria’s original motion/request and the additions from both the North East and South West regions.

It was moved by Emil Bove (Westmoreland) and seconded by Rob Shannon (Centre) for PACD to ask the districts to provide voluntary funding, with a maximum of \$500 per district, to hire a consultant to undertake a salary comparison study in order to provide valuable data to justify the continuation of increased funding for conservation districts in the state budget. Motion carried.

Partner Reports

PA Department of Environmental Protection

Acting Deputy Secretary for Water Lisa Daniels provided highlights from her written report:

- She highlighted the announcement of Growing Greener Grants and Mariner East 2/Revolution Pipeline Grants. District received 22 grants for a total of about \$2.9 Million.
- She provided an update on the Nutrient and Manure Management Delegation Agreement
- DEP’s Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management has fully consolidated the programs reporting to the Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management on the DEP website:
<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Watershed-Restoration/Pages/default.aspx>.
- She provided an update and statistics on the Pennsylvania Clean Water Academy.
- She explained the status of the PAG-12 Administrative Extension, Published December 17

PA State Conservation Commission

Executive Secretary Doug Wolfgang provided the following report:

- The SCC has been working hard on ACAP. The Clean Streams Fund passed this summer provides \$220 Million and \$154 Million of that goes to ACAP for BMPs on farms. These are historic funding levels for BMPs. The challenge is the funds must be committed by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.

- There is also funding for Nutrient Management and administrative funds.
- The program guidelines and delegation agreements have been sent out and they have about half of them back.
- The SCC passed a stream setback requirement in cases where it is included as part of the relevant plan and involves an ag structure. This is effective January 1, 2024.
- They are working with Penn State and NRCS to develop a technical assistance center to train the next generation of technical assistance staff. They hope to have it up and running by late winter or early spring.
- CEG was part of the 2019 farm bill, beginning with \$2.5 Million in funding to Lancaster and York, then expanding to additional counties. They have spent about \$11.4 Million with 59 projects funded.
- They continue to work on the REAP program, which provides tax credits to offset the cost of implementing BMPs.
- The SCC approved new five-year template agreements for the DGLVR program. These agreements will be going out soon and will take effect on July 1, 2023.
- Chairman Dennis Beck thanked Doug and the SCC for their support of districts.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

State Conservationist Denise Coleman provided the following highlights from the NRCS 2022 Annual Report:

- In FY 2022, more than 35,000 conservation practices were applied on Pennsylvania's private lands to help improve soil, air, and water quality; enhance wildlife habitat; and preserve land for future generations.
- She shared NRCS funding by watershed. In 2022, the Chesapeake Bay had 434 contracts on 89,959 acres totaling \$30.98 Million. Ohio had 205 contracts for 45,761 acres for \$9.0 Million. Delaware had 91 contracts on 196,777 acres totaling \$6.1 Million.
- She reviewed farmland preservation funding and activities.
- She highlighted the Watershed Rehab Accomplishments, including dams in the process of rehabilitation and where they stand in the rehabilitation process.
- They were approached by Tioga County to examine flood control in the upper northwest corner of Tioga County. That is currently being evaluated for funds through PL566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act Rehabilitation.
- They are going to be opening an urban location in the Leon Sullivan building in Philadelphia. They are currently renovating the building, which they will share with FSA. They hope to move in the summer of 2023. They also plan to hire a soil scientist and conservationist.
- Brenda thanked Denise for the partnership with NRCS.

PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

The PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provided a written report.

Adjournment

It was moved by Cliff Lane and seconded by Emil Bove to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:39 a.m.