

**PACD Executive Council
Red Lion Harrisburg-Hershey, Harrisburg, PA
July 21, 2022**

Call to Order

PACD President Kelly Stagen called the meeting to order at 9:51 a.m.

Roll Call

Secretary Charles Duritsa called the roll and announced a quorum was present with forty-four district delegates answering the roll.

Minutes of the Preceding Meeting

Secretary Charles Duritsa presented the minutes of the previous meeting on January 27, 2022.

It was moved by Emil Bove (Westmoreland) and seconded by Lance Bowes (Venango) to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Motion carried.

President's Report

PACD President Kelly Stagen thanked everyone for attending, both in person and virtually. She also thanked all the districts that reached out to their legislators and the PACD Ad Hoc Committee. She reported that 100% of districts have paid their dues and thanked them for doing so. Kelly also thanked the PACD staff for the great work they do.

Executive Director's Report

PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh thanked the PACD Executive Board for their support and the PACD staff for successfully running a wide variety of programs to support the work of conservation districts and conservation in Pennsylvania.

- Brenda discussed the state budget and preparing for next fiscal year. Conservation districts must make it a priority to demonstrate how they are using the funds supplied by the general assembly. She encouraged districts to personally thank their legislators for the additional funding. PACD sent a letter to each legislator and sent personal notes to those Brenda met with in-person.
- The Conservation District Highlights project will be more important than ever this year because we will have many new legislators and a new Governor. The document will be important to familiarize new legislators with their conservation districts in January 2023.
- Thanks to our partners, PACD administers a variety of programs. This includes training, such as leadership development, which is paid for 100% by the State Conservation Commission. Over the last six months, Matt Miller coordinated the hybrid staff conference, a director workshop series, and a webinar series. More programming is scheduled for the fall.
- Through a DEP Growing Greener Grant, PACD offered two rounds of CREP mini-grants to conservation districts. The project also includes a marketing campaign with Water Words That Work.



- PACD partnered with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) to hold a virtual grant-writing workshop. NFWF has since reported an increase in applications.
- PACD also coordinated a virtual training on iMapInvasives and presented at the 2022 Virtual Watershed Forestry Summit.
- We continued our multi-functional buffer grant program through our current grant with DCNR and have received a new DCNR grant to fund buffer implementation.
- 102/105 Basic Technical Training took place this spring. Planning has begun for spring 2023.
- PACD coordinated the Section 319 Virtual Watershed Planning and Implementation Meeting in cooperation with DEP.
- Funded through a partnership with PACD, the SCC, and NRCS, an Intro to Conservation Planning course is scheduled for November. Basic and Level II Ag Conservation Technical Training will be held in Spring 2023.
- Through a grant from DEP, PACD completed a round of Nonpoint Source Pollution Prevention mini-grants, and a new round is underway.
- The DEP Clean Water Academy had over 25,000 course completions.
- Brenda thanked our partners for their support in providing these services to our members,

Treasurer's Report

PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented the year-end financial reports for Fiscal Year 2021-22. She reported that the PACD Balance Sheet is in good standing and the Profit & Loss Report shows everything is in line with expectations. All sixty-six conservation districts have paid their dues and PACD is in a good financial position. She reported that a draft budget and a proposed three-year dues structure will be presented under New Business, and that both were reviewed by the PACD Executive Board and the PACD Ways and Means Committee.

A motion was made by Jack Hanish (Luzerne) and seconded by Bill Clouser (Clearfield) to accept the Treasurer's Report. Motion carried.

NACD Director's Report

NACD Director Clifford Lane provided the following report:

- Glenn Thompson from the NACD Ag Committee noted the 2023 Farm Bill is coming up, so we need to start thinking about that.
- PACD got a grant to do a pilot PRISM project on invasive species.
- Brenda Shambaugh and Cliff provided an NACD Lunch & Learn presentation, which they have been asked to present again at the Northeast Regional Meeting.
- The NACD capacity building project begun in New York will be relaunched at the Northeast Regional Meeting in Maryland August 28-31, 2022.

PACD Conservation Committee Report

Chairperson Josh Longmore provided the following report:

- The PACD Conservation Committee met on July 6 with a quorum.
- EPA Region 3 Administrator Adam Ortiz spoke to the committee about the progress needed in the Chesapeake Bay, the Chesapeake Bay WIP, and EPA inspection and enforcement actions in Pennsylvania.
- Chris Houser with the Penn State University provided an update on their agricultural survey,

which aims to identify and incorporate voluntary conservation activities into the Bay model.

- Jill Whitcomb with DEP spoke to the group about email correspondence from DEP, nutrient management updates and changes, and personnel openings and hiring.
- The committee received an update on the potential for a PRISM program to combat invasive species. PACD received a federal grant to fund a pilot PRISM program in the North West and is waiting for the final paperwork to begin work on the project.
- The committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD District Employees Committee Report

Committee Member Sandy Thompson provided the following report:

- The PACD District Employees Committee met on July 8 without a quorum.
- PACD Program Manager Holly Miller reported on, and provided a list of, training opportunities coordinated by PACD.
- PACD Leadership Development Coordinator Matt Miller shared information on upcoming Leadership Development training.
- The committee created a sub-committee to work on a new conservation district salary and benefit survey. The last survey was conducted in 2019.
- Allegheny County Conservation District would like to submit a nomination for an NACDE award. In the past, the committee has submitted the nomination form. Allegheny will submit the nomination information to the committee.
- The committee discussed conservation district staff needs.
- Holly Miller provided a brief report on timber harvest training, which is still in the preliminary stages of planning.
- NACDE Rep Sandy Thompson gave an update on the NE NACD Region Meeting.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda gave an update on the state budget and the increase to Conservation District Fund.
- The District Employees Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Education and Outreach Committee Report

Chairperson Laura Anderson provided the following report:

- The PACD Education and Outreach Committee met on July 11, 2022 with a quorum.
- PACD Director of Communications & Education Shannon Wehinger reported on the conservation district booth at Ag Progress Days August 9-11. Thanks to the conservation districts that volunteered, the booth is fully staffed.
- PACD Software Specialist Nick Yeagy spoke to the committee about identifying training needs for environmental educators that can be addressed through the Clean Water Academy.
- Tammie Peffer from the PA Department of Education updated the group on the PA Science Standards and opportunities for conservation districts to be a resource for schools.
- J.T. Bandzuh and Chelsea Weyant from Blair County Conservation District provided a virtual tour of the district's NatureWorksPark property and included information on how everything was funded. Highlights included an amphitheater, boardwalk, and three turtles that serve as clean water ambassadors. The district continues to install a variety of exhibits and educational stations for the public. The next phase will include a new district office and a hoop house. Everyone is encouraged to natureworkspark.org to see for themselves!
- The Education and Outreach Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

PACD Legislative Committee Report

Committee Member Doug Beri provided the following report:

- The PACD Legislative Committee met on July 12 with a quorum.
- PACD Executive Director Brenda Shambaugh reported the recently approved state budget incorporates an increase of over 300% for conservation districts—a huge accomplishment!
- The implementing legislation, or fiscal code, was also passed by the general assembly and signed by the Governor.
- The Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (or ACAP) is implemented as part of the fiscal code. This program includes funding for Nutrient Management, stormwater, and other environmental issues. The SCC will oversee this program and expects to run this in tandem with the Conservation Excellence Grant (or CEG) Program.
- ACAP includes 4% for SCC administrative costs and 6% for district administrative costs and provides a total of \$154 million that needs to be obligated by the end of 2024 and spent by the end of 2026.
- The Stream Flooding Legislative Package, which incorporates several pieces of legislation, is in the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee and any or all pieces could be adopted when the legislature returns in September
- Federal funds have been allocated for a Growing Greener program, which will likely be fashioned after the existing program.
- Brenda also provided an update on legislation PACD tracked during this legislative session.
- The Legislative Committee had no motions to bring before the Council.

PACD Operations Committee Report

Chairman Dennis Beck provided the following report:

- The PACD Operations Committee met on July 15 with a quorum.
- No new resolutions from PACD committees were presented.
- The committee forwarded the proposed three-year dues schedule, which was approved by all six regions this spring, and will come before the Council under New Business.
- The Operations 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 July 21 with a quorum.
- The committee reviewed the year-end financial reports, the draft PACD Budget for FY 2022-23, and the proposed three-year dues structure the committee proposed in January, which will come before the Council under New Business.
- The Ways and Means Committee had no motions to bring before the council.

New Business: Proposed Three-Year Dues Schedule

PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented the Proposed Three-year PACD Dues Schedule.

It was moved by Ray Gorman (Cambria) and seconded by Dave Stoner (Franklin) to approve the three-year PACD Dues Schedule as presented. Motion carried.

New Business: Proposed PACD Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

PACD Treasurer Sonia Wasco presented the Proposed PACD Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023.

It was moved by Doug Beri (Indian) and seconded by Sally Tengeres (Perry) to approve the PACD Budget for Fiscal Year 2022-2023. Motion carried.

Election of Officers

PACD Nominating Committee Chair Ron Rohall presented the slate of officers:

- President: Kelly Stagen, Pike County Conservation District
- 1st Vice President: Dennis Beck, Cambria County Conservation District
- 2nd Vice President: Emil Bove, Westmoreland Conservation District
- Secretary: Charles Duritsa, Westmoreland Conservation District
- Treasurer: Sonia Wasco, Lancaster County Conservation District
- NACD Director: Clifford Lane, McKean County Conservation District.

There were no nominations from the floor.

It was moved by Larry Kehl (Berks) and seconded by Donna Zofcin (Forest) to approve the slate of officers as presented. Motion carried.

PA Department of Environmental Protection Report

Karen Books provided the following report.

- Karen reported that, as everyone is probably aware, the DEP line-item for conservation districts was tripled this year. The Abandoned Mine Drainage Abatement Fund was increased by \$4.4 million. The Act 167 line item was reinstated at \$8.8 million. Unfortunately, there were no additional funds added to Growing Greener, so they have \$12.3 million available for Growing Greener Grants, while they received \$65 million in applications. Grant awards will be announced later this year.
- The SCC set allocations for the Conservation District Fund during their July 20 meeting. DEP and the SCC will hold a webinar to walk through the Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) Statement of Policy and worksheet, so districts fully understand how to use the funds. The webinar will be offered twice, once on July 26 and once on July 27, and will be recorded.
- The 2023 DEP Environmental Education Grants program will accept applications from August 1 to December 9, 2022. Priorities are water, climate change, and environmental justice. There are three funding levels. DEP will hold a webinar for the program on September 27 from Noon to 1:00 p.m.
- DEP submitted the final amended Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) to EPA.
- The DEP Chesapeake Bay Office will hold a hybrid WIP 3 meeting on July 28 from 10:00 a.m. to Noon at SRBC.
- The stream improvement program continues to work with federal and local partners to conduct projects in 13 counties. This program is funded by NRCS and DEP.
- Elwood Blake retired last week. The position is expected to be filled soon. In the meantime, those districts are asked to contact Karen for assistance. The Northcentral Conservation District Field Representative position is being advertised. The Southeast position will be advertised soon.

- The DEP Ag Compliance office has two vacancies, and they are adding an Environmental Engineering position, which will be posted soon.
- They will be hiring for a new Environmental Group Manager position.
- The Watershed Support section recently hired Melissa Harrison to fill the vacant aquatic biologist position and they are planning to fill two other vacancies.

PA State Conservation Commission Report

Executive Secretary Karl Brown and provided the following report:

- He thanked PACD, the conservation districts, and our partners for their hard work, especially over the last year.
- He congratulated everyone on a successful effort to garner increased funds for the CDFAP.
- The Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) program was enacted and received \$154 million to spend over four-and-a-half years.
- Nutrient Management/Manure Management comments included concern about where districts are headed in relation to these programs. The SCC encourages strategic planning for districts and Leadership Development has some funds available for strategic planning.

Kelly Stagen recognized Karl Brown's retirement and thanked him for all he has done for conservation districts. Karl reported the SCC expects to have a new Executive Secretary by October or November.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Report

USDA NRCS State Conservationist Denise Coleman provided the following report:

- She discussed the *Soil Your Undies* project in partnership with the Soil for Health Alliance.
- She is thrilled to see the ACAP program enacted. She encouraged districts to take advantage of NRCS training on conservation planning and practice implementation, particularly in light of ACAP. She stressed that participants must be vaccinated to attend NRCS training.
- In the North West, NRCS is putting in a joint chiefs partnership proposal to fund projects for forest land. They are asking for \$400,000 for the first year, \$450,000 the second year, and \$500,000 the third year. They are looking for more interest from conservation districts. Funds will be used for forest health and invasive work around the Allegheny National Forest.
- PA NRCS would like to do more PL566 Projects, which is the flood prevention and land treatment program. The North East part of the state has a lot of emergency projects—Denise thanked the districts for sponsoring these projects—and she would like to see a long-term pro-active project for flood prevention in that part of the state.
- NRCS plans to enter into a joint agreement with the SCC to fund five additional engineers to increase engineering capacity. The agreement will provide 75% funding from NRCS and 25% from the SCC. These engineers would be NRCS employees and would help with the ACAP projects. This is in addition to engineering services provided by the TAG program.
- NRCS is opening a service center in Philadelphia to address urban agriculture. Denise asked the PACD board to think about opportunities in Philadelphia.
- There is a lot of work to do. NRCS staff are working flat-out to encourage farmers to agree to contracts, but they are finding that supply costs are extremely high. They are supplementing in many cases. However, they cannot supplement for RCPP projects, and they cannot cost-share certain supplies. Denise asked districts to examine whether they have the capacity to provide additional assistance to producers who are trying to implement 2019 contracts at

2021 prices.

- She noted that NRCS could not implement their dam rehabilitation program without conservation districts. They are rehabilitating 85 dams across the state with conservation district assistance.

Kelly thanked Piper Sherburne for getting the word out on invasive species. Dennis Beck reminded folks to check their cars for spotted lantern flies before driving home.

Ron Rohall recognized that this is Susan Marquart's last meeting and thanked her for her service before she retires.

Adjournment

It was moved by Sonia Wasco (Lancaster) and seconded by Bill Clouser (Clearfield) to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.