

Meeting Minutes
PACD Conservation Committee
Wednesday, January 18, 2006
Ramada Inn, State College, PA

Chair: Bob Ritchey, Cambria County Conservation District

Attendees:

Committee Members

Don Bashore (Juniata)
Gerald Breininger (Lehigh)
Carol Harrell (Crawford)
George Hildenbrandt (Centre)
Jim Luce (Wyoming)
Ed Magargee (Delaware)
Robb Piper (Cambria)
Jim Resh (Indiana)
Marc Rickard (Venango)
Bill Slosky (Washington)
Sandy Thompson (Potter)

Guests

Donald Baker (Mifflin)
Don Bowser (Fayette)
Victor Cappucci (Wyoming)
John Dryzal (Cambria)
Clair Dumm (Cambria)
Mike Flinchbaugh (York)
Barry Frantz (USDA-NRCS)
Dr. Irvil Kear (Schuylkill)
Larry Kehl (Berks)
Susan Marquart (PACD)
Larry Martick (Adams)
Gary Peacock (York)
Ronald Rohall (Westmoreland)
Jacquelyn Rouse (Sullivan)
Charlotte Severcool (Wyoming)
Brenda Shambaugh (PACD)
Chris Snyder (Juniata)
John Thomas (Bucks)
John Torok (Potter)
Jack Tressler (Somerset)
Marc Tosiano (USDA-NRCS)
Shannon Wehinger (PACD)
Charles Wertz (Lebanon)

1. Welcome and Introductions

Bob called the meeting to order at 3:07pm.

Voting members introduced themselves. There was a quorum.

2. Review and Assignment of PACD Conservation Policy Statements

PACD Policy Book Revisions - Susan Marquart (PACD) handed out a draft of the PACD Policy Book revisions. These need to be revised to fit under the new committees. Section 6 pertains to the Conservation Committee. The revised policy book should be voted on in July if possible.

Brenda Shambaugh (PACD) passed out a draft of new policies that are taking place in the legislature and DEP and thought PACD should have some policies on these items. It's up to the Committee to decide if it wants to address them.

A. Preserving the Pennsylvania Farmer - Senator Wenger and Waugh introduced bills to preserve the Pennsylvania farmer. Some issues didn't pertain to PACD, but those affecting farmland preservation do.

1. **Ag Preservation Enhancement and Sprawl Prevention Program** - the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania wants to work together on an open space program. This tax would be generated in the county and stay in that county. Proposal would give counties option to levy up to 1% realty transfer tax for farmland preservation.
2. **Pennsylvania Agriculture Conservation Easement Purchase Program** - will change who can hold easements.
3. **Alternate Uses of Manure** - grant money to purchase digesters to produce energy. This legislation creates a board to evaluate advancing technologies. This legislation would allow the Renewable Energy Council to be created and get state funding.

It was moved by Gerald Breininger (Lehigh) and seconded by Jim Luce (Wyoming) to accept the following policy statement. Motion carried.

PACD supports portions of the Preserving the Pennsylvania Farmer package that have a positive impact on programs relating to conservation districts. Specifically, we support a program that would take new revenue generated from the dedicated funding proposed from the realty transfer tax and direct that those funds be returned to the counties in which they originated to be used for farmland preservation and open space preservation. We believe that funds should be available for the administration of farmland protection programs, including conservation planning and inspections. We also support legislation that would permit private non-profit entities to join the Commonwealth in preserving agricultural lands, meaning new funding could be made available and a combination of public/private monies can be leveraged to preserve more

farmland. Finally, we encourage the creation of a Board or Council whose mission is to review and evaluate advancing technologies for alternate manure uses.

B. Manure Haulers Act (Act 49) - Every truck driver will have to be certified and pay the fee to become certified.

It was moved by Bill Slosky (Washington) and seconded by Jim Resh (Indiana) to accept the following policy statement. Motion carried.

PACD supports the Manure Hauler and Broker Certification process. While we support the testing procedures, we are concerned about the costs involved in administering the program. Districts need to be adequately compensated for their responsibilities in this endeavor.

C. Nutrient Trading - Districts will have a large role in trading. We can help define what that role is.

It was moved by Sandy Thompson (Potter) and seconded by Gerald Breininger (Lehigh) to accept the following policy statement. Motion carried.

PACD supports the general concept of nutrient and sediment trading to achieve environmental benefits. Conservation Districts are interested in assisting DEP and other interested parties to determine the criteria and regulations governing the trading program with the understanding that conservation districts will be compensated for their time and efforts throughout the process.

Because of the complexity of this new idea to improve the environment, we suggest that DEP consider conducting a pilot program with PACD assistance to demonstrate the positive benefits of nutrient and sediment trading. A pilot approach will help to identify strengths and weaknesses of the program and address specific issues that may arise as the pilot is conducted. In addition, a pilot project will help to identify the role that conservation districts can play in the nutrient and sediment trading process.

D. Comprehensive Watershed Stormwater Act - This bill increases taxes on property. It has passed the House it is in the Senate right now.

It was moved by Robb Piper (Cambria) and seconded by George Hildenbrandt (Centre) to table this issue. Motion carried.

Comments needed on policies. If anyone has comments you can send them to Bob and he will assemble them and pass them onto Susan. PACD will mail out a revised draft to the Committee. The deadline for comments will be February 28. Bob, Jim and Robb will work on this the first week in March and will bring comments to Capitol Day. The next draft will get sent out to the members.

Listserves for Conservation Committee - A sign-up sheet for the Committee Listserve was passed around. The email address is conservation@pacd.org. Comments from non-committee members should come to Bob and he will pass it on to the listserve.

It was moved by George Hildenbrant (Centre) and seconded Ed Magargee (Delaware) that anyone can be on listserve to receive messages but not post messages to the list. Motion carried.

3. No-Till Farming

Bob reported that at the PACD Central Region Meeting in Bedford (RC&D session) Russell McLucas (Fulton) gave a presentation on advantages/disadvantages of a fully no-till farm. The No-till Alliance is trying to convince farmers that this is the way to go. McLucas would like support letter from PACD on no-till concept.

Susan looked up references to BMPs in the PACD policy book. No-till was not listed. Robb suggested we include no-till in our policy statement. Brenda will work on this.

It was moved by Robb Piper (Cambria) and seconded by James Luce (Wyoming) that PACD write a letter to the No-Till Alliance indicating support for no-till practices. Motion carried.

4. Nutrient Trading

Bob opened the floor for discussion on Nutrient and Sediment Trading.

5. Other

Brenda announced the PACD Capitol Day activities taking place March 13 in Harrisburg.

It was moved by James Luce (Wyoming) and seconded by Ed Magargee (Delaware) to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Meeting was adjourned at 5:05pm.