

**District Employees Committee
Ramada Conference Center, State College, PA
January 17, 2007**

Chair: Don McNutt, Lancaster Conservation District

Welcome and Roll Call

Chairman Don McNutt welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the roll. There was a quorum present.

Committee members in attendance:

Larry Kehl, Berks CD
Dan Greig, Chester CD
Lynn Sandieson, Crawford CD
Ernie Tarner, Franklin CD
Deb Wilson, Jefferson CD
Don Bowser, Fayette CD
Clair Dumm, Cambria CD
Wayne Sweitzer, York CD
Bob Sweitzer, Centre CD

Also in attendance were:

John Thomas, Bucks CD
Earl Brown, Erie CD
David Collura, Allegheny CD
Bob Hester, ACCD
John Orr, Dauphin CD
Mike Lovegreen, Bradford CD
Victor Cappucci, Wyoming CD
Gary Smith, NRCS
Craig Derickson, NRCS
Marc Rickard, Venango CD
John Ravert, Berks CD
Mike Flinchbaugh, York CD
Bill Bowers, NRCS
Maryruth Wagner, Columbia CD
Shane Kleiner, DEP
Bill Zett, DEP
Gerald Breininger, Lehigh CD
Chuck Wertz, Lebanon CD
Sandy Thompson, McKean CD
Renee Melvin, NRCS
Dr. Irvil Kear, Schuylkill CD
Chad Moshier, Potter CD
Larry Martick, Adams CD

Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Chairman Don McNutt presented the minutes of the previous meeting (July 25, 2006) for approval.

It was moved by Don Bowser and seconded by Dan Greig to approve the minutes from the last meeting. Motion carried.

Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC)

Warren Cohn with CPESC addressed the committee. He explained that, to become certified, applicants need a combination of education and field experience. In addition, applicants need four letters of recommendation. No more than two of these letters can come from co-workers, and all four must come from someone who is familiar with the applicant's work. Warren explained that, if a candidate has the education and field experience, they apply, receive an acceptance letter, then take the exam. Warren said that there was a 50% passing rate on the first exam. He explained that 70% is a passing grade and there has never been a score of 100% on the exam. Warren noted that it is a very demanding exam.

Warren explained that requirements are laid out clearly for applicants, and said that there are a number of review courses, which may only be taught by authorized instructors. The courses are intended to be a review based on the idea that you have already been exposed to this information through your education and work experience; the pre-exam course, or review course, should be a review of what you already know or are at least familiar with. Each applicant receives a manual, which costs \$75.00; the manual is also available on the website. There is an additional fee of \$15.00 for the course and \$15.00 for the exam. Warren said that they try to offer the courses locally and in a cost effective manner. He explained that the basis for the exam is the EPA Protocol for E&S control, and said that course material does not significantly differ from state to state. The course goes into detail on the RUSLE equation, so that the applicant has an understanding of the basic fundamentals. Warren reported that last year there were 13 CPESCs in PA, whereas now there are 34. Warren said that there is often a gap between the time that applicants take the course and the time they sit for the exam. It is not unusual for an applicant to take the course at one location, then sit for the exam at another location.

Warren reported that the first water quality certification program workshop for PA is being planned in the Fall. He said that CPESC will also be creating an inspector program. In addition, Warren reported that there is an agreement between CPESC and NRCS to the effect that CPESC training also qualifies an individual to be a technical service provider.

Don McNutt reported that the incentive allowing for additional funding for technicians with NICET certification is still in the CDFAP; there is just no funding to cover it. Susan Marquart pointed out that the SCC is working on the CDFAP now, and they will likely expand the incentive to apply to technicians with CPESC certification, also.

Training Coordination Steering Committee

Susan Marquart and Don McNutt explained that PACD has organized a Conservation District Staff Training Coordination Steering Committee in response to the District Employees Committee's request for training coordination. The steering committee includes some members of the District Employees Committee who volunteered to take part, as well as key people involved in coordinating district training. Susan reported that the first meeting was held on December 8, 2006. PACD asked members to send an agenda, syllabus or description for their training sessions. The first meeting included a review of all of the information that was provided, as well as a verbal run-down of all of the programs and training by the coordinators. As a result of this meeting, PACD was able to compile a matrix outlining key aspects of each conservation district staff training opportunity. Susan reported that the committee met again earlier that day to review the matrix, and has decided to meet again in February to generate some goals and ideas. Don McNutt pointed out that one potential use of the matrix is to coordinate hiring for Nutrient Management technicians with necessary training. He also said that it will be a useful tool to ensure that overlaps in training can be avoided. The committee requested that Susan make a draft of the matrix available to them. Susan explained that the steering committee determined they are not ready to distribute the matrix yet, as it is still in draft form. However, she agreed to post a draft copy at registration the next morning for people's review.

Salary and Benefits Ranges

Don McNutt distributed a draft document titled "Conservation District Employee Salary and Benefit Survey 2007." Don explained that the finished survey will be an information gathering tool to help districts compare salary and benefits levels across the state. Don submitted that districts need an incentive program for employees, to provide technicians with room to advance in salary and/or level. Don suggested that training and professional improvement/development can be a significant part of that process. It was suggested that Employee Development Plans can act as a guide for creating a stepped advancement plan for district staff.

It was suggested that Don add "Cost for Health Insurance" to the form. It was also suggested that he add "Class of County" to the form. Lastly, it was suggested that this form be formatted as an Excel spreadsheet, so that data can be entered directly into the document.

Report from NACDE and National Leadership Meeting

Dan Greig thanked PACD for enabling him to attend the conference, and thanked the Chester Conservation District Board for allowing him the time to attend. Dan reported that the meeting was well attended from Pennsylvania, and that there were 47 states represented at the meeting. Dan pointed out that there are over 6000 district employees nationwide, and PA has over 500, which means that Pennsylvania represents 8% of the nation's district employees; this should encourage Pennsylvania to play an active part on the national level. Dan reported that Susan Marquart and Craig Derickson offered an excellent presentation on the conservation partnership in Pennsylvania. Dan noted that we identify a number of problems in Pennsylvania, but pointed out that there were a number of states represented at the meeting who would love to have our problems. Dan said that

Pennsylvania has a great deal to be proud of and a great deal to be thankful for. He reported that the motivational speakers were excellent and dealt with many issues and topics that apply across states. Dan noted that there were many state conservationists at the meeting, as well as district employees.

Dan reported that the conference organizers are discussing holding these conferences every two years. Dan recommended that a newer employee attend in future, as there is much they could learn from the experience. He said that there was a national conference call for NACDE during the meeting, during which they reviewed the budget. NACDE receives a small portion of each individual membership (not district dues) with NACD. In addition, some small amount of the budget comes from grants, and quite a bit from NACDE fundraising activities. Dan noted that the organization does a great deal with the relatively little funding they have. He said that there is an NACDE Luncheon planned at the national NACD meeting, and that someone needs to present a 'State of the States' report for PA, to update those present on activities in PA.

NACD Conference Call

Susan Marquart announced that NACD is setting up conference calls between the NACD President and Vice President and every state. She relayed that the conference call with Pennsylvania will take place on January 30, 2007 at 10:00 am. Susan said that any managers and directors who are interested are encouraged to take part in the call, and reported that PACD would distribute the toll free number via the PACD listserves.

Dedicated Funding for the PA Envirothon

It was reported that the Pennsylvania Envirothon is seeking dedicated funding to cover the PA Envirothon Coordinator position, as well as to provide funds for mini-grants to support county Envirothons. Everyone was asked to look to the legislature for support in this venture. This would also be something to include in the PACD Front Page when the time comes.

*It was moved by Clair Dumm and seconded by Ernie Tarnier to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried.*