

**PACD District Employees Committee  
The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel  
State College, PA  
July 25, 2006**

**Welcome**

Chairman Don McNutt called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Committee members in attendance:**

Don McNutt, Lancaster  
Don Bowser, Fayette  
Dan Greig, Chester  
Larry Kehl, Berks  
Greg Phillips, Westmoreland  
Lynn Sandieson, Crawford  
Gary Stokum, Washington  
Wayne Sweitzer, York  
Ernie Tarner, Franklin

**Also in attendance were:**

Susan Marquart, PACD  
Molly Burns, PACD  
John Thomas, Bucks  
Mary Ann Bower, Clinton  
Earl Brown, Erie  
LeRoy Gross, Erie  
Shane Kleiner, DEP  
Leanne Griffith, Westmoreland  
Gerald Breininger, Lehigh  
Rick Mickowski, NACDE  
Gary Smith, USDA-NRCS  
Bob Dobbs, NACDE

**Upcoming National Conservation District Employees Association Activities**

Bob Dobbs, National Conservation District Employees Association (NACDE) President reported that the NACDE is having a conference call on Thursday, July 27, 2006, dealing with the projects completed over the last few years, and invited Chairman Don McNutt to take part. He noted that NACDE is developing an electronic database of all conservation employees, which is a two year project. Bob announced that there will be a leadership meeting in Nashville, TN, November 29-30, 2006, which will include association presidents, chairs for district employees, state agency directors, and other leaders from each state. He also mentioned that there is a scholarship program for the meeting, to assist employees in attending. Bob announced that Rich Duesterhaus is the new NACDE Executive Director. When asked how many district employees exist across the country, Bob replied that there are about 6000 district employees nationwide.

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:**

Don called for any changes to the minutes from the previous meetings.

*It was moved by Dan Greig and seconded by Don Bowser to approve the minutes of the January 18, 2006 meeting and May 4, 2006 conference call as presented. Motion carried.*

### **PA Representative to the Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees (NACDE)**

Don McNutt reported that Pennsylvania still needs a new representative to the NACDE. The committee discussed reasons that PACD members are not more involved with the NACDE. It was noted that Northeast representatives pay their own way to the meetings, and this may be deterring people from volunteering to represent Pennsylvania. Susan Marquart pointed out that PACD has a line item in the budget for travel for representatives to outside committees. Money might be available to reimburse a Pennsylvania representative to NACDE, though PACD would need to budget additional funds to cover these costs. Susan said that this would be a request to put to the PACD Executive Board.

It was noted that someone from the northern tier might be the best choice to represent Pennsylvania, since the meetings are generally held north of Pennsylvania in New York state. Bob Dobbs, NACDE President, reported that NACDE Northeast representatives generally meet in March and November, with an additional teleconference prior to the national NACD meeting. Someone asked about NACDE dues. It was reported that PACD has paid NACDE dues since dues have been in place (for the past two years).

*It was moved by Ernie Tarnier and seconded by Lynn Sandieson to nominate Dan Greig to be Pennsylvania's representative to the National Association of Conservation District Employees (NACDE). Motion carried.*

It was decided that the committee should seek an alternate representative, perhaps from the one of the northern counties.

It was asked that the minutes reflect that some additional funding from PACD may be required to cover travel costs for the representative(s) to the NACDE.

### **Response from NACD Regarding PACD District Employees Policy**

Susan Marquart said that, as requested at the last meeting/conference call, she contacted NACD to inquire about the relevance of an existing PACD District Employees policy indicating that PACD should cover travel expenses for Pennsylvania district employees who are advising NACD standing committees. Susan reported that she learned that this policy is no longer relevant, as NACD now includes district employees as official committee members, which means that their expenses are covered by NACD.

*It was moved by Don Bowser and seconded by Greg Phillips to strike PACD District Employees policy number six, regarding reimbursement for district employee representatives to NACD committees, from the books, as it is no longer relevant. Motion carried.*

### **Salary and Benefit Ranges for Conservation District Positions**

Don McNutt noted that this is a follow-up from a previous meeting. It was noted at that meeting that salaries for the same position vary widely from district to district, and that district managers tend to poll each other throughout the year on an as-needed basis to see what salaries look like in various counties. At the prior meeting the committee decided it would be better to come up with a system whereby this information can be provided to managers once per year. One suggestion from that meeting was that PACD ask for figures from Johan Berger (PDA) and/or Fred Fiscus (DEP), since they receive reports on certain salary and benefits figures. Susan Marquart reported that she spoke with Johan and Fred, and that they have salary and benefit numbers for Managers, First Technicians and Second Technicians as reported under CDFAP. However, DEP and PDA may not be a good source of information on salary and benefits for district employees as their information is generally a year old. In addition, these numbers are not going to reflect the actual cost of every employee, because many districts pay these employees over and above the funding provided through the CDFAP, and these additional salary amounts would not be included in their figures.

It was generally agreed upon that the committee should poll district managers for salary and benefits information once per year, and that the poll should stick to salary and benefits. It should not include overhead, as districts do not calculate overhead the same way from district to district. The committee decided to request the information in September, with a reminder to be sent out in August. It was suggested that the poll include the class of county, the variety of programs they are involved in, the number of employees, the longevity of their employees (i.e. how long have their employees been with the district) and the county's PACD region. It was also agreed that the poll should not break out clerical categories, as this gets increasingly complicated. Shane Kleiner, DEP Field Rep, volunteered to assist with this project.

### **Training Issues**

Don McNutt introduced the subject of training issues and said that coordinating training dates is important. He noted that there are many overlaps in dates for trainings, meetings, etc., which makes it difficult to take part in all of the trainings offered. In addition, he said that training sessions and meetings need to be planned ahead and should include a detailed agenda to help district managers determine if they should send staff to the sessions, and who would best benefit.

- Certified Professional in Erosion and Sedimentation Control (CPESC) Training  
Don McNutt disseminated a brochure including a CPESC training schedule. He reported that there are four CPESC trainings scheduled: Montgomery (Dec 7-8), Blair (Oct 18-19), Harrisburg (Oct 4-5), and Butler (Nov 8-9). It was pointed out that, according to State Conservation Commission (SCC) policy, the additional ten percent Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (CDFAP) cost share for E&S Technicians is only available if they are National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies (NICET) certified. CPESC training is not included. The SCC is going to rewrite their statement of policy to address changes pertaining to the non-lapsing fund (Act 110). Perhaps it would be a good idea to suggest that the SCC include CPESC training as an alternate justification for the ten percent.

Members of the committee voiced confusion about the fact that the initial allocation for district managers proposed by the SCC for this year is less than the initial allocation proposed last year, even though more money was budgeted overall. Susan explained that this is because salaries and benefits paid to district employees has increased, bringing more districts to the funding cap. In addition, one county moved from a part time to a full time manager.

- Stormwater Training

Lynn Sandieson explained that some districts would like to have stormwater training, but when she inquired about the need for training, many districts felt strongly that districts should not become involved with stormwater management due to liability and responsibilities. In contrast, other districts have been doing it for some time. This program has been delegated to districts, but liability insurance is difficult or impossible to obtain, and the risks are high. The committee discussed whether or not a district has to have a licensed Professional Engineer (PE) on staff to tackle stormwater. Greg Phillips with Westmoreland said that his district works with this issue, and they tried to get liability insurance and could not; they do have a PE on staff. Greg said that the district has memorandums of understanding with each municipality for whom they do this work. It was pointed out that there is a difference between pre- and post-construction stormwater management. There is also a distinction between water quality and water quantity. Liability is not a factor when dealing with water quality, as opposed to reducing the quantity of stormwater. Lynn Sandieson suggested that these issues be addressed as part of the managers summit. Lynn suggested that districts who are working with a stormwater program, such as Chester and Westmoreland, present information on their programs to the other districts during the summit.

Don McNutt noted that the Stormwater Management Manual should be coming out soon. It was suggested that a group of district employees keep an eye on the progress of the manual. The committee discussed the current delegation agreement. It was noted that that there may not be a termination date to the agreement and that districts have the power to change a delegation agreement at any time. It was suggested that a group of district employees should get together to review the delegation agreement with DEP.

Don McNutt took volunteers to be part of the group of employees responsible for keeping an eye on the stormwater management manual, and to take the lead in modification of the delegation agreement. John Thomas with Bucks Conservation District volunteered to help, and Shane Kleiner volunteered to take a look at these issues from within the Department.

### **District Management Summit**

It was asked who can attend the summit. Lynn Sandieson explained that the summit is for both Managers and Assistant Managers. She noted that it is now called the District Management Summit to reflect that it is open to other individuals on the management team. Lynn Sandieson will suggest to Rick Mader and Steve Taglang with DEP that they should include a description of who is eligible to attend as part of the registration materials.

### **Conservation District Staff Conference and 102/105 Training**

Don McNutt asked Susan Marquart if the Staff Conference would be planned congruent with a PACD meeting this year. Susan replied that the meetings are going to be separate this year. Don then called for suggestions for agenda items for the conference.

It was noted that there are many different kinds of trainings and meetings for district staff and it is difficult to manage who should go to what trainings and when. Committee members voiced the opinion that some of these training sessions need to be reduced and/or combined. Training sessions should be substantive. Managers do not want to send their employees to training sessions that are 'fluff' or repeat prior training. In addition, the agenda, target audience and experience level for each training or meeting should be clearly laid out ahead of time. It was suggested that training levels be introduced for the meetings, so that employees don't receive duplicate levels of training. For example, Boot Camp is organized with two levels, Level I and Level II. This is complicated by the fact that a number of different organizations coordinate various different kinds of training. In order to organize the various training sessions so that they don't overlap, these organizations would need to coordinate together. The coordinators for Boot Camp, for example, work together to plan the curriculum for the training. It will require a great deal of time and effort for the organizations who are coordinating the training to get together to discuss what the trainings encompass and to come up with a comprehensive training plan for district employees

It was suggested to obtain a grant to pay someone to do a study on how training works in other states and to analyze the current situation in Pennsylvania.

In the early days of the District Employees Committee, there was a subcommittee that coordinated trainings for the year. Perhaps this is something the committee should institute again. The committee asked PACD to coordinate a meeting between the primary training planners for district employee training in Pennsylvania, including Boot Camp, Watershed Specialist Meeting, Chapter 102, Chapter 105, D&GR, Nutrient Mgt., Managers Summit, Staff Conference. Ernie Tarner, Lynn Sandieson, Greg Phillips and Don McNutt volunteered to act on the subcommittee to attend this meeting and help to explain the committee's concerns. PACD will try to set the meeting date for sometime in the Fall, hopefully in September.

### **State Conservation Committee (SCC) Advisory Committee**

Susan Marquart reported that the SCC asked districts to nominate a district manager representative from each region to represent the districts and provide input as they work through the process of allocating funds and rewriting the SCC Statement of Policy. The SCC office has been receiving nominations, which will be taken before the Commission during their meeting tomorrow morning (Wednesday, July 26, 2006). The Commission would like this committee to stay in place in the future to provide feedback on behalf of the districts, with rotating terms of representation. It was suggested that the SCC should consider people, other than managers, who have the necessary experience and understanding to represent their region, should a region not bring forward a nominee. It was also suggested that there should be significant diversity in the committee.

### **Clearances for Federal Computer Usage**

As part of an increase in national security, anyone connected to any government computer system is required to go through a clearance process that involves fingerprinting and a background/credit check. This requirement is not a policy of the NRCS, it is a policy of the U.S. government that affects anyone who is using or has access to any government computer system. It is affecting district employees because of the unique relationship that districts share with USDA-NRCS.

Gary Smith from USDA-NRCS reported that district employees can have fingerprinting done at the local police station if they live in a municipality. State police can also do this, no matter where you live. The USDA has implemented the policy and the clearance process must begin by September 15, 2006. It was noted that instructions on this process have not been received at the district offices. Gary said that he will look into sending the instructions to the managers via the PACD listserve. It was asked if NRCS be covering some of the costs of this process. Gary responded that if districts can cover the expenses via grant overhead, or some other route, that would be the best route. If this is not possible, there may be some assistance available for districts who have working agreements with NRCS.

It was reported that the government did not want to offer non-NRCS employees the opportunity to continue to stay on the NRCS computer network via the background check, and NACD went to bat for the districts to get the districts the ability to stay on the network. It may be best for districts to look at this as an opportunity to stay on the network, rather than as a barrier.

#### **Non-Lapsing Fund for Districts**

Susan Marquart reported that Karl Brown with the SCC has put together a workgroup to create a system for the new non-lapsing fund empowered by Act 110. Johan Berger with PDA, Fred Fiscus with DEP, the Office of Management and Budget, and the PA Comptroller are working to set up the account so that they can begin moving money via the new system. The SCC wants to rewrite the CDFAP statement of policy to include the new information about the fund. Fred and Johan are very excited about the possibilities of the new fund, which has the potential to make movement of funds much smoother and easier.

*It was moved by Dan Greig and seconded by Wayne Sweitzer to adjourn the meeting.*

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 pm.