

## MEETING MINUTES

### PA Association of Conservation Districts Southeast Regional Meeting Franconia Heritage Restaurant October 13, 2006

The meeting was opened by Harold R. Kulp at 9:15 AM. A motion was made and seconded, to approve the minutes from the last meeting. It passed unanimously.

#### **Conservation District Exchange**

Berks County stated that they were currently working on their 10-year strategic plan, and in reviewing their previous plan, found that the goals were pretty lofty. They were attempting to create a plan that was more realistic.

Bucks County stated that they were currently working with DEP on their 2007 Budget. Mr. Thomas made mention of their Envirothon Program, and that their Nutrient Management Specialist was now certified. He added that there was approximately \$60 Million in agriculture in Bucks County in 2005, and that they have between 30 and 40 dairy farms. They are currently looking to add an Associate Director to their Board.

Chester County spoke about at the Inspection Partnership Program being conducted by Chester and Delaware Conservation Districts and that they have 13 builders involved. Those involved attended a training course, took a pre- and post-test. All sites had an initial walk through with District personnel, and then inspections will be done by the builders. There will be a mid-program evaluation.

Delaware County commented on the initiatives proposed by DEP, and that there is a 200 permit backlog in the Northeast Region of DEP, and that the Legislators have proposed the privatization of E&S reviews. Mr. Magargee went through the 4 initiatives and stated that we have to watch this closely.

Lehigh County did their 3-5 year strategic plan, and has obtained 501c3 status from the IRS. They want to help funding and outreach to Municipalities. They also stated that they have an upcoming awards meeting on November 17th.

Montgomery County stated that a Post Construction BMP Tour will be held on October 25th through the Coastal Zone Management Grant Program. The District Agriculture Conservation Technician is currently working with a farmer storing paunch material from processing operations on agriculture land to gain compliance. The watershed program has completed riparian restoration projects totaling 43.34 acres and there are currently two basin retrofit projects being conducted. Montgomery County Conservation District supported the initiative to upgrade the Upper Perkiomen Watershed to exceptional value. Montgomery County currently has 7 active grants and was the recipient of a "Municipal Environmental Award" from the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy.

Northampton County stated that they held a very successful Watershed Conference with Lehigh County last Friday. They also discussed the four initiatives developed by DEP, and added that they are awaiting the downturn in development, but have yet to see it.

### **PACD Update**

Ms. Marquart went through her written report which was distributed to all members in attendance.

### **State Conservation Commission Update**

Mr. Brown highlighted his written report which was distributed to all members in attendance.

### **Leadership Development Update**

Mr. Mader stated that the Leadership Development Committee is comprised of District staff and Directors, and members from NRCS, PDA, Cooperative Extension, and DEP. The committee had gone through a reorganization in July. There is now a Letter of Understanding, and it is now more formal. There is currently one opening for District staff on the committee, and a request for District representation will be emailed shortly. He hoped that the positions may be filled in November, with the two alternating 2-year terms beginning in January being filled at that time. He stated that the District Staff Conference would be held November 1-2 and that the theme would be "Communication is Everything". The deadline for hotel reservations is October 16th, and the deadline for registration at the event is October 25th. He discussed Strategic Planning Grants and that 8 counties are applying for them. He discussed the "Learning Today / Leading Tomorrow" course, and that it would be given in its entirety in several regions. Portions of the course will be given at the PACD meeting in January. He stated that the Committee is developing white papers. Three are scheduled for this year, and 3 are scheduled for next year. He stated that Regional Management Seminars are tentatively scheduled for April 2007, and that updates and upgrades to the Rich Media Interactive CD are going to be available shortly. A management Summit will be scheduled in early July 2007, which will be an opportunity to bring District Managers together. He stated that the Committee Initiatives are to develop a strategic plan, to determine the best way to meet the needs of the District Managers. They want input from the District Directors, Managers, and staff. A "Goals and Objectives" meeting will be held in February. Mr. Magargee asked about a reserved fund white paper. Mr. Mader stated that a final draft of the paper has not yet been reviewed.

### **NRCS Update**

Mr. Frantz began by stating that they have no budget as of yet, but they are assuming the same budget as last year. Applications are still being taken for the programs until the December 1st deadline. Although applications will be accepted after that date, those received later will be given a lower priority. He spoke about the Agriculture Management Assistance Program (AMA), Conservation Security Program (CSP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Farm and Ranch Land Protection Program (FRPP) and how the programs relate to the Counties in the southeast region. He stated that Arlen

Lancaster is the new chief of NRCS. He stated that the Farm Bill has to be extended or redone within approximately the next year, or it will revert to a 1949 version. Berks County asked why the Districts are being charged half of the cost of the background check for employees with access to the NRCS computer network. Bucks County asked about the mowing on CREP and CRP lands. The contacts state that noxious weeds must be controlled, and that the preferred method is spot spraying. Mowing every three years is allowed on CRP land, but not on CREP land. Montgomery County added that the contracts include a statement about mowing is allowed with prior approval from FSA.

### **SE RC&D Update**

Mr. Metrick handed out flyers about the Farm Market Trip program. He stated that the program has funding for one more year. He stated that the no-till vegetable equipment was being used throughout the region, but that the program is losing money, and they are looking to turn the program over to someone. He stated that the "Products and Services Directory" is done and that each District will get approximately 500 copies. It is going to the printer soon, and should be at the Districts in early December. He stated that RC&D Council is working with EPA to get a grant in Delaware County regarding stormwater issues. He stated that most of the partners are already on board with the program, and they are just waiting for EPA to finalize their end.

### **PACD Auxiliary**

Mrs. Thomas asked for a \$30.00 donation from each of the seven represented Districts to cover the cost of matting and framing a wall hanging to be raffled off at the January PACD meeting. The proceeds will fund a scholarship.

### **PACD Strategic Planning**

A brainstorming session was held for the purpose of discovering and prioritizing the needs / desires of the Districts regarding the future direction of PACD. The categories discussed were:

1. Exerting Influence
2. Information Exchange
3. Products and Services
4. PACD Operations
5. Other

The choices were prioritized by those in attendance, and Susan Marquart will compile and distribute the results of the session.

The next meeting was scheduled for March 23, 2007 at the Franconia Heritage Restaurant.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 PM.

Jeffrey McKenna, Montgomery County Conservation District