

PACD Conservation Committee
Ramada Conference Center, State College, PA
January 22, 2009

Chair: Bob Ritchey, Cambria Conservation District

Welcome

Chairman Bob Ritchey called the meeting to order and welcomed all members and guests. It was determined that a quorum was present.

Committee members present:

Bob Ritchey, Cambria
Don Bashore, Juniata
Brian Boyer, Berks
Gerald Breininger, Lehigh
Dan Dunmire, Mifflin
Robb Piper, Cambria
Jim Resh, Indiana
Marc Rickard, Venango

Others present:

Susan Marquart, PACD
Brenda Shambaugh, PACD
Molly Burns, PACD
(Recorder)
James Stiehler, DCNR
Earl Brown, Erie
Tom Boldin, Centre
Sandy Thompson, McKean
Rob Shannon, Centre
Bob Sweitzer, Centre
LeeRoy Vatter, Indiana
Tom Matticks, NRCS
Harold Kulp, Chester
Dan Greig, Chester

Abe Repine, NRCS
Sam Worley, Franklin
Don McNutt, Lancaster
Ken Meck, Lancaster
Paul Sell, Lehigh
Bill Slosky, Washington
Chris Snyder, York
Don Koontz, Mercer
Victor Cappucci, Wyoming
Robert Robinson, Wyoming
M. Irvil Kear, Schuylkill
Cheryl Brobst, Columbia
Rich Kadwill, Montgomery
Mary Ellen Snyder, Lehigh

Minutes from Previous Meetings

The minutes of the July 2008 meeting were provided to committee members for their review.

It was moved by Robb Piper and seconded by Don Bashore to approve the minutes of the July 28, 2008 meeting. Motion carried.

Nutrient Trading Update

Brenda Shambaugh reported that PACD continues to move forward with the nutrient trading program. PACD is co-hosting two nutrient trading seminars: on February 12, 2009, at the Ramada Conference Center in State College; and on February 19, 2009, at the Lancaster County Farm and Home Center.

The morning session at each seminar will provide conservation district employees with a hands-on demonstration of the DEP online calculation tool, to determine how many nutrient trading credits can be generated on a farm-by-farm basis. Attendees will take part in a 'Play It Trade It' mock auction and will learn about the potential role of conservation districts in nutrient trading.

The afternoon session at each seminar is open to the public and will include a general overview of nutrient trading, including how it works and how it can be financially beneficial to the farming community. Attendees will take part in a discussion on the successful Mount Joy nutrient trading project, and gain information on carbon trading. Any conservation district employee is welcome to attend, but must make a reservation by e-mailing or calling Brenda Shambaugh at the PACD office.

PACD is also generating two nutrient trading brochures about nutrient trading projects in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, which will be distributed in the near future.

Carbon Trading

Committee members were provided with the following background information:

Climate change impacts the environment, fish and wildlife habitat, water supplies, rainfall patterns, and the weather. There is an opportunity to reduce climate changing pollution by reducing carbon emissions through carbon trading.

Carbon trading is a system where polluters are purchasing carbon credits to cancel out the carbon emissions they produce. The credits, sold by entities which store more carbon than they make (or produce less carbon than their cap, and are therefore in 'credit'), are traded on a market very similar to a futures exchange. Carbon trading brings buyers and sellers of carbon credits together with standardized rules of trade. Any entity, typically a business, that emits CO₂ to the atmosphere may have an interest or may be required by law to balance their emissions through a mechanism of Carbon sequestration. These businesses may include power generating facilities or many kinds of manufacturers. Potential sellers of carbon credits are entities that manage forest or agricultural land who might sell carbon credits based on the accumulation of carbon in their forest trees or agricultural soils. Similarly, business entities that reduce their carbon emission may be able to sell their reductions to other emitters.

The committee considered a potential carbon trading policy. They discussed how slowly nutrient trading is advancing in Pennsylvania. The PA Environmental Council (PEC) and the PA Farm Bureau are working to advance nutrient trading in the Commonwealth.

PACD staff may be able to represent districts during discussions about nutrient trading, and may also be able to find out what the opportunities are for conservation districts to participate in nutrient trading.

Aggregators act as a broker for the credits on a commission basis. They are able to aggregate credits so that they can be sold in large blocks, as is required by the credit exchange bureaus.

It was moved by Gerald Breininger and seconded by Jim Resh to approve the following carbon trading policy:

*The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) supports programs to reduce carbon emissions, slow global warming, and consequently help the environment. PACD supports carbon trading to reduce total carbon emissions into the atmosphere. PACD supports **conservation districts' efforts to become involved in local efforts to sequester carbon and provide technical assistance to help generate carbon credits.***

PACD supports conservation district activities to become further involved in the carbon trading market that fits with their local priorities. PACD will also pursue options available as an aggregator of carbon credits and provider of other services to assist and support conservation districts in carbon trading.

Motion carried.

Global Warming

Committee members were provided with the following background information:

For over the past 200 years, the burning of fossil fuels, such as coal and oil, and deforestation has caused concentrations of heat-trapping "greenhouse gases" to increase significantly in our atmosphere. These gases prevent heat from escaping to space, somewhat like the glass panels of a greenhouse, and cause global warming.

Greenhouse gases are necessary to life as we know it, because they keep the planet's surface warmer than it otherwise would be. However, as the concentrations of these gases continue to increase in the atmosphere, the Earth's temperature is climbing above past levels. **Global climate change is already making a mark on Pennsylvania's landscape, livelihoods, and traditions,** and over the coming decades impacts are expected to become even more substantial. They may include altered precipitation patterns, melting ice caps and winter snowpack, northward shifts in the ranges of valued plant and animal species, declining yields of key agricultural crops, and rising sea levels threatening our way of life. As a result, the potential environmental risks and the economic costs of climate-related disasters brought on or exacerbated by global warming are enormous. The magnitude of warming that occurs during this century and the extent to which Pennsylvanians will need to adapt depend largely on energy and land use choices made within the state in the next few years.

The United States government has established a comprehensive policy to address climate change. This policy has three basic components:

- Slowing the growth of emissions
- Strengthening science, technology and institutions
- Enhancing international cooperation

To implement its climate policy, the Federal government is using voluntary and incentive-based programs to reduce emissions and has established programs to promote climate technology and science. In February 2002, the United States announced a comprehensive strategy to reduce the greenhouse gas intensity of the American economy by 18 percent over the 10-year period from 2002 to 2012. Congress is also considering legislation mandating reduction of global warming pollution.

The committee considered a proposed global climate change policy.

It was moved by Don Bashore and seconded by Jim Resh to approve the proposed policy on global climate change.

It was moved by Dan Dunmire and seconded by Jim Resh to amend the proposed policy to read:

To protect and restore ecosystems impacted by global climate change and to avoid potentially high costs later to restore or replace them, PACD supports climate change legislation and policy that encourages greenhouse gas emission reductions. PACD also recommends investing the necessary funds to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and market-based payments for emissions offsets. Specifically, PACD supports:

- *Reduction of energy inputs required to produce and transport agricultural products.*

- *Strong and immediate action to reduce emissions. This includes a verifiable "cap and trade system" that will begin to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 3 percent per year over the next decade, with a goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the year 2050.*
- *Policies that encourage conservation through increased fuel economy standards, investment in public transportation, implementation of smart growth strategies that reduce sprawl, establish a national renewable electricity standard, and transition to clean coal and renewable energy technologies, green building technology and energy efficiency.*

Motion carried.

The original motion as amended was put to the vote. Motion carried.

PACD Capitol Day

It was announced that the PACD Capitol Day Event will be held on March 16, 2009 at the Crowne Plaza in Harrisburg, PA. Representative Keith McCall from Carbon County and Senator Rob Wonderling from Bucks, Montgomery, Lehigh, and Northampton Counties will be receiving the PACD Legislator Recognition during the Luncheon. Representative McCall, newly elected Speaker of the House, was invited to be the Keynote Speaker.

Brenda was asked how the registration fee is determined for this meeting. Brenda Shambaugh and Susan Marquart explained that the registration fee is determined by taking the estimated costs dividing them by the estimated number of attendees.

Brenda was asked when legislative directories will be provided to members. Brenda responded that the House has not yet determined committee members, and that there is a special election for one of the PA districts on March 3, 2009. So, there may be a delay in the production of legislative directories this year.

Proposed Resolution from Chester and Lehigh Conservation Districts

Susan Marquart reported that PACD received requests from Chester and Lehigh Conservation Districts to adopt a policy opposing the proposed permit by rule policy by DEP. Susan read the proposed wording of both proposals, which was almost identical:

"PACD opposes the PA Department of Environmental Protection's proposal to establish "Permit by Rule" (PBR) for projects requiring coverage under the NPDES Permits for Conservation and Post Construction Stormwater Management."

The letters further requested that PACD supply direct correspondence of the resolution to DEP Acting Secretary John Hanger, with a copy to the Governor of Pennsylvania, within three days of adoption.

Discussion:

Committee members wondered if these districts still feel the same way about the proposed policy, given the additional information presented by DEP during the Issues Forum earlier in the day (on January 22, 2009). Representatives from Chester and Lehigh Conservation Districts indicated that they did not feel that the presentation by DEP changed the position of either district.

It was suggested that DEP provide a more exacting definition of the issues that this is designed to fix, how it is going to address these specific issues, and how we will measure the success of the measure in addressing the issues.

It was pointed out that this is only one piece of the revisions to Chapter 102. How is DEP going to provide additional enforcement, when they are not able to provide enforcement for existing policy?

At a previous meeting, DEP indicated that they would like to see fifty percent participation in this program. This is unlikely, given what was presented today.

Permit by Rule is a revision to Chapter 102, which takes time. Some DEP representatives have indicated that they will create a new general permit, with no review, that will bridge the gap until the new Permit by Rule goes into effect.

The committee agreed that NPDES permits should not be provided without a technical review. By the time the shovel hits the ground, it is too late. Districts are concerned that DEP cannot provide enforcement now, how will they provide additional enforcement? DEP should adequately staff compliance specialists.

It was moved by Jim Resh and seconded by Dan Dunmire to adopt some kind of wording to the Department regarding districts' involvement in the development of Permit by Rule.

It was moved by Gerald Breininger and seconded by Marc Rickard to amend the motion to adopt the following policy:

Any Erosion and Sedimentation or NPDES permit must include technical plan review(s) by the conservation district, where delegated, prior to permit issuance.

Motion carried.

The original motion as amended was put to the vote. Motion carried.

Adjournment

It was moved by Gerald Breininger and seconded by Don Bashore to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.