

Northwest Regional Director's Meeting
Mercer County Conservation District
November 12, 2009

Those in attendance:

Lynn Sandieson-Crawford
Heidi Moorhead - Crawford
Earl Brown-Erie
Don Koontz - Mercer
Jim Mondok-Mercer
John Lechner - Mercer
Ron Fodor - Butler
Jim Faust - Butler
Sandy Thompson-McKean
Kerry Fetter - McKean
Deb Wilson-Jefferson
Marc Rickard -Venango

John Green, DEP
Ron Lybrook -DEP
Tom Matticks - NRCS
Susan Marquart - PACD
M. Irvil Kear - PACD
John Scott - PDA

Welcome, Introductions & Approval of Minutes- John Lechner, Mercer County Commissioner Director opened the meeting and everyone introduced themselves. A motion by Sandy Thompson from McKean County and seconded by Earl Brown from Erie County, carried unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 12, 2009 meeting.

Voting Delegates - M. Irvil Kear, PACD President conducted the roll call of voting delegates as follows:

Butler - James Faust
Crawford - Lynn Sandieson
Erie - Earl Brown
Jefferson - Deb Wilson
McKean - Sandy Thompson
Mercer - Don Koontz
Venango - Marc Rickard

PACD Update - Susan Marquart - Susan Marquart handed out information on PACD Activities. The State Budget was reviewed and its impact to Conservation Districts as well as PACD continuing to hold meetings with John Hines and his expressing the need for District's to speak as one voice with three common themes. An update was given on the Chapter 102 regulations, Chesapeake Bay strategies and meeting with SCC, DEP and PennDOT to review the Letter of Understanding between the agencies and Districts. The draft 2009 Strategic Plan was dispersed and will be voted on during the PACD Executive Council in January. Discussions are ongoing with stakeholders concerning recent nutrient credit trading. Capitol Day has tentatively been scheduled for March 16 and will consist of a PACD legislative briefing session and individual meetings between Districts and their representatives in the state' Capitol.

Susan put out a call for volunteers to serve on PACD Committees requesting submittal of the volunteer form by November 13th. The PACD Marketing project has 16 Districts reported using or planning to use the new PACD marketing materials. The logo, letterhead, and business cards are the products used the most. PACD has expanded the education section of the website to include materials available from PACD, information on nonpoint source pollution and other resources. Susan announced that they would no longer be printing out the monthly newsletter, *News & Notes* and to sign-up for the weekly e-Newsletter, *Front Page*. A reminder was also given to be aware of the upcoming All Bay Meeting on December 8 and the PACD Winter Meeting at the Ramada Inn in State College on January 20 - 21, 2010.

SCC Update - Karl Brown - Karl joined the group via a webinar and he too gave an update on the State Budget and allocations to Districts. An update was given on the recent SCC staff/office changes with a new address. He reported on the status of the Dirt and Gravel Road Program to upgrade the GIS software.

The New Leadership Development Website - Karen Ely - Karen also joined the group via a webinar with a presentation on the new Leadership Development Website. This site was developed to house resources and provides district directors and staff with online training opportunities for the operation of conservation districts (white papers, Director Handbook, sample policies, etc.). The site is located at www.paleadership.org and also includes Director training modules.

NRCS Update - Tom Matticks - Tom dispersed the November 2009 NRCS Talking Points and gave an update on the federal budget stating they expect a large increase in Chesapeake Bay watershed projects. He discussed the current activities noting the closing of the Venango County NRCS office and will now be covered by the office in Clarion bringing the number of NRCS employees to 14 within the Northwest Region. A report was given on the farm bill funds that have contracted or obligated to the Northwest Region.

As for Engineering within NRCS, Tom stated that Area Engineer, Gary Miller has retired and the possible award of Watershed Planning work for the Conneautville Dam to assess the potential rehabilitation of the Dam.

PA Department of Agriculture - John Scott - John gave a brief introduction of himself explaining his coverage of 23 counties. He also briefly discussed the Farm Show.

DEP Watershed Management Update - Ron Lybrook - Ron discussed the changes to the Chapter 102 and general permit. He stated a further explanation of the CD-DEP Workflow will be sent out to Districts and also discussed the procedure when resolving complaints on farms as well as involving NRCS in the process.

PACD Regional Director Elections - The elections were conducted by PACD President, Irvil Kear. A motion by Sandy Thompson from McKean County and seconded by Earl Brown from Erie County passed unanimously to nominate Don Koontz as the Northwest Regional Director. A motion by Don Koontz of Mercer

County and seconded by Lynn Sandieson of Crawford County passed unanimously to close the nominations. Don was elected as the PACD Northwest Regional Director.

CD Information & Exchange – Don went around the room asking each District to share information: During the exchange each District discussed their interactions with legislators with all Districts present holding conversations and meeting with their legislators.

Butler CD – Discussed the farm tour that was recently held with 5,000 in attendance as well as the Growing Greener Grant they obtained for the implementation of Ag. BMP's.

Crawford CD – Lynn spoke of signs being placed along the Pete Yeager Trail and the grants obtained for implementing Ag. BMP's, riparian areas and stormwater practices. She noted the great response they have received for their Educational programs with over 200 for a Wind Energy workshop alone. They have preserved their third farm of 400 acres through the Farmland Preservation Program and Lynn also introduced the District's newly appointed director, Heidi Moorhead.

Erie CD – Earl handed-out information on the District hosting the Mobile Agriculture Education Science Lab at the outdoor classroom at Headwaters Park as well as the availability of other stations. The District is also working on promoting "Taste of Harvest" in the hopes of buying local. They are looking to the Great Lakes Commission for funding of projects and discussed their implementation plans for a few of their streams. The District was fortunate to obtain ARRA funding to implement Dirt and Gravel Road practices with the potential for future funding through EPA for additional stormwater management projects.

Jefferson CD – Deb discussed the need to recognize the necessity to protect specifically our water resources. She discussed from personal experience the impacts she has encountered with the oil and gas industry.

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McKean CD – Sandy discussed PACD's efforts to develop the Annual Report and using this as a prelude to the District's Annual Report as well as a handout during their 50th Anniversary Celebration. The District has obtained funding to conduct stream assessments of watersheds listed on the 303d list. Sandy also reported on the District holding an Oil & Gas tour/meeting held with John Hines and other DEP personnel. A discussion was also held on training/certification needs of the Districts. It was also noted that West Nile funding should be added to the list as an item that needs to be watched as it is an impact for some Districts.

Mercer CD – Jim went into detail on the District moving into new offices located on Munnell Run farm as well as the activities taking place on the farm. He discussed the District's implementation of stormwater practices and growing greener grants.

Venango CD – Marc discussed obtaining PennDOT fee for reviews and opportunities for having them provide in-kind contributions towards projects, such as stream

restoration projects. Their District was also impacted by the loss of West Nile Virus funding. He discussed the implementation of their streambank stabilization program funded through the CEIP program and their participation in the Ameri-Corp program to conduct educational programs.

Next Meeting - The next meeting is scheduled for March 11, 2010 in McKean County

Motion to adjourn by James Faust from Butler County and seconded by Marc Rickard from Venango County carried unanimously at 1:38 PM.