

Annual PACD Legislative Program

January

Two or three issues will be highlighted as statewide initiatives from the PACD policy book, including the budget. Local districts may want to add their own local concerns to the list.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Write a welcome letter to legislators

This letter could state district priorities for the next few months.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide a model letter and press release for your use. PACD Executive Board will also judge the “Legislator Recognition Award” applications to determine the award winner(s).

February

Since the Governor usually presents his budget address this month, take the opportunity to let legislative leaders know your conservation district response to the Governor’s funding proposal.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Publicize PACD’s initial response to the budget

A letter may be sent to legislators and a press release could be sent to local media.

PACD ACTION: PACD will supply information to districts concerning the Governor’s budget proposal. A model letter to legislators will be provided as well as a model press release for local media coverage. PACD will also send this information to the Capitol Press Room.

March

PACD will host a Capitol Day event in March to recap the last two/ three months of legislative activity. Districts will have the opportunity to sit with their elected leaders during a luncheon. All materials for discussion will be disseminated prior to the luncheon event. The PACD “Legislator Recognition Award” will be presented at this time.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Capitol Day participation and follow-up press release

PACD suggests that district staff and board members plan on attending the Capitol Day event. To encourage legislative participation, districts may want to personally invite their legislators to the luncheon about 2 months prior to the date and explain that local folks will be at Capitol Day. A follow-up contact should be made a week before the function to remind legislators about the luncheon and to provide names of those constituents who will be attending. At Capitol Day, PACD suggests taking pictures of district attendees with legislators for a press release. Offer to send a copy of the picture to each legislator present.

PACD ACTION: PACD will organize and host the Capitol Day event. Invitations will be sent from the state office to all legislators and follow-up phone calls to those legislators that have not responded to the invitation will be made. PACD will generate all background information on the highlighted legislative issues. A template press release will be given to participants at the function for local media. A similar press release will also be distributed at the Capitol News Room.

April

At this time PACD will be gearing up for the budget process and focusing on how the state budget affects folks close to home.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Follow up budget information

Districts may send out another press release to local press and a letter to legislators concerning the budget. The letter could highlight programs that may suffer in your district if the proposed budget does not include adequate district funding. Or if the budget proposal is satisfactory, let the legislators know that any funding decreases in the budget may be burdensome. By personalizing the funding deficiencies, it serves to localize the issue. If the district is planning a local fall legislative event, establish a planning committee.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide a model letter and press release, and ask districts to personalize local issues in those documents.

May

This month PACD will be focusing on the General Assembly's final days of their legislative session before the summer recess. It will be time to push the priority list that was developed in January.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Personal meeting

A personal meeting at the legislator's district office on a Thursday or Friday (when they are back home), complete, with pictures for your newsletter, the legislator's newsletter, and a press release is helpful. If the district has a number of legislators, representatives of the district can either personally go to each individual legislator, or have a legislative meeting with them collectively. Although May is a busy month for farmers only one or two conservation district staff and the same number of directors are needed for this meeting.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide up-to-date information on legislative issues that were targeted in January. Also, the state office will provide districts with a short fact sheet on these issues that can be given to legislators. This information can be disseminated at your local legislative meetings.

June

Personal phone calls and letters are essential this month on all legislative initiatives. June is the last opportunity to discuss the upcoming fiscal year budget. June is also a busy time in the General Assembly for other pieces of legislation. Consequently, it is advantageous to discuss other legislative issues as well.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Final budget and legislative push

PACD suggests that districts utilize this last opportunity to discuss conservation district issues. It would be great to generate a call from each manager and board member to the legislator's district office reminding them of the information that was provided in May. After the passage of the budget, PACD suggests a thank you note be sent to legislators who supported district funding increases. Pick a date, preferably a Thursday or a Friday for your local fall legislative event. Secure a location and decide on the meal. Finally, develop an invitation list including local, state, and federal legislators and their aides.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide the information necessary to generate the phone calls to district legislative offices. As legislative bills progress the information will be printed in the weekly Front Page e-mails, so districts will have current information. PACD will also provide the information on final passage of the budget and other legislative initiatives. Also, PACD will send a template thank you note to districts.

July – August

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Summer Tour

Summer is the perfect time to conduct a tour of a project that you are working on or a successful finalized project. It is time to shine. We suggest taking pictures and creating a personal interest story for the papers. The press will love it and so will the legislators. Send out the invitations for your local legislative event complete with directions to those legislators and aides that you plan to invite.

PACD ACTION: While the districts are planning and conducting summer tours, PACD will be gathering information for next year's budget request. We will be talking to Districts and various state agencies gathering the information necessary to develop an appropriate budget document for distribution and approval at our annual meeting in July. After the districts have approved a budget proposal we will meet with the Secretaries of various departments to discuss our budget requests.

September

During an election year, the legislature does not meet often in the fall. It is time to make sure your legislators know our fall agenda. Since most of them will be campaigning, it is a great time to focus on the press as well. Any positive publicity is appreciated by legislators. Even though

the General Assembly just passed the budget, the Governor's Budget Office and the state agencies are already beginning to crunch numbers.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Fall priorities letter

A fall priorities letter will provide legislators with our legislative priorities for the next few months. PACD will also unveil the conservation district budget requests to the governor's office and the PA General Assembly at this time. At the beginning of the month, prepare an agenda and presentations for your local legislative event. Make sure you confirm your speakers.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide conservation districts with a model legislative priorities letter and press release. PACD will also make sure that the Districts are given the statewide budget proposal.

October

This is the time to pull out the stops and hold a full fledged legislative event on your home turf. Coordinate with several counties if that is appropriate.

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Legislative breakfast or event

PACD will provide districts with guidance materials to prepare for a successful legislative event at the local level and a model press release. This project will take several months to organize, so you will have to begin preparations in the spring as have already been outlined. Two weeks before the event, prepare a press release and invite the media. Make follow-up calls to the media the day before the event. Finally, after the event send thank you notes and photos to the legislators attending.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide a timeline of activities to help districts successfully organize a legislative event in your county or region. Provided materials will include model invitations and press releases, and background material.

November

During election years, November 30th marks the end of the 2 year legislative session. Anything that does not pass the General Assembly dies and the legislative process starts again in January. November is a final push to finalize legislative issues. On off election years, the legislature will most likely not have this final push until December. November is the month to determine your local "Legislator Recognition Award".

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Personal calls during end of legislative term

A legislative letter and phone call are appropriate at this time outlining legislative initiatives and focusing on legislation that still is under consideration in the PA General Assembly. It is recommended that district staff and board members call the legislator's home office during November. Districts may also consider choosing a recipient of the Legislator Recognition Award to be presented in December and sent on to the PACD office for consideration of a

statewide “Legislator Recognition Award.” An application form for this award is posted on the PACD website. If you are planning on holding a local fall legislative event for the next year, now is the time to determine what counties will be participating with you. Contact those counties you wish to work with and get commitments from them. Determine your budget for the event.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide information on legislation that the General Assembly is considering in the last days of the session. A model press release on wrap-up legislative activity will also be provided.

December

Have a friendly social event just for fun, but keep that personal relationship going. Be sure to invite all newly elected leaders who will begin officially in January. This event will serve as a “getting to know you” opportunity for new legislators and a thank you to those legislators who have supported the district throughout the year. Again this event must be held on a Thursday or Friday so the legislators will be in their district office. It will also be an opportunity for districts to honor their “Legislator Recognition Award.”

SUGGESTED DISTRICT ACTION: Welcome to the office event – Holiday reception
An easy to plan reception that includes a few refreshments will be all that you need to thank legislators for their help throughout the year. Honor your Legislator of the Year at the reception. Please make sure that the “Legislator Recognition Award” applications are sent to the PACD office this month.

PACD ACTION: PACD will provide a template press release for your event and Legislator of the Year, and provide tips on holding a holiday reception with a timeline for preparation.

General Tips for Connecting with Legislators

- Always invite legislators to all district events, such as awards dinners.
- Make sure pictures are provided to legislators and press after the event.
- Send press releases out about once a month.
- Provide written material for each face-to-face meeting.
- Always send legislators your newsletters.