

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
CONFERENCE CALL MEETING MINUTES
January 4, 2013
1:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.**

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Mark Hammond, Christina Simeone, Darren Gill, Luke Brubaker Paul Roth, Rob Graff, J. Scott Roberts

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES ABSENT:

Mike Winek, Robert Bear, Steve Krug, Lauren Boles, George Ellis, Rep. Greg Vitali, Paul Opiyo, Ed Yancovich

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Bill Neilson (PA Farm Bureau)

PA DEP STAFF:

Joe Sherrick, Mark Brojakowski

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Mr. Sherrick facilitated the meeting and welcomed everyone as they joined the call. The specific purpose of the call was to discuss comments and possible edits to work plans under the purview of the Ag/Forestry Subcommittee. There would be no voting or formal actions on this call.

WORK PLAN DISCUSSION:

Mr. Roth began discussions of the forestry work plans and Mr. Sherrick provided overviews of the agricultural work plans. Below is the summary of each work plan discussed.

Urban Forestry – Mr. Roth provided an overview of the plan and the goals. For reference, he then stated that trees, by weight, are 50% carbon. Ms. Simeone asked if there is a funding source in mind to facilitate the goals. Mr. Sherrick replied that no specific funding source is identified in the work plan. There was general discussion of the cost-effectiveness of the plan, calling into question the values used in the economic calculations. Mr. Graff recommended the plan include a more transparent assessment of what assumptions are included in the values cited from the New York and Philadelphia studies. Mr. Sherrick offered that an attempt will be made to better clarify and rerun the calculations, as necessary.

Reforestation – Mr. Roth explained that this work plan considers under-stocked land as opportunities for restocking (planting) and provided differences between this and other forestry work plans. He also made reference to several carbon accounting protocols that have served as a resource in helping shape this work plan and/or are consistent with this work plan. A question was raised about the appropriateness of using the pine/spruce forest data as an assumption for replanting.

Forest Protection Easements and Forest Protection Initiative - Acquisition – Mr. Roth explained that these two work plans, although similar, take different approaches to conserving forest acreage; namely purchase of easement rights and fee-simple purchase of acreage, respectively. Mr. Roberts asked if the assumption for acreage in these work plans includes poor or well-stocked forests. Mr. Roth replied that the land must be under imminent threat of development and therefore the assumption is they are well-stocked forested acres.

Durable Wood Products – Mr. Roth explained that this work plan credits the long-term storage of carbon in products and that there are numerous studies on the topic supporting this practice. Comments were raised that the Reforestation work plan seems to increase wood utilization for durable products, but the Durable Wood Products work plan actually seems to discourage this by

recognizing the long life of wood products, which was followed by a comment about the potential for double counting. Mr. Roth clarified that there is no double-counting occurring.

No-Till Farming and Organic Row Crop Farming – Mr. Sherrick provided an overview of this work plan and the goals and stated that the No-Till Alliance, PA Department of Agriculture and Rodale Institute had been consulted and were instrumental in helping to shape this work plan. Much of PA's traditional crops (corn, soybeans, etc.) are now being cultivated using no-till. Mr. Brubaker agreed that no-till is being widely embraced by farmers and has a high profitability. He added, though, that organic row crop farming is being market-induced. Mr. Neilson of the Farm Bureau supported that statement and added that organic row cropping is being carried out on smaller farms such that the goal for organic row cropping may not be realistic. Mr. Neilson and Mr. Brubaker suggested cutting this goal in half, but Mr. Brubaker went on to state that organic row cropping requires soil disturbance, working against the goals of the no-till work plan. Mr. Sherrick suggested that the organic row crop farming aspects of the work plan could be removed entirely from consideration, particularly given the cost estimates and negligible carbon benefits that have been estimated. Mr. Brubaker agreed that the suggested course of action may be best at this time.

Management Intensive Grazing (MIG) – Mr. Sherrick reviewed the goal for attempting to increase acreage utilized for MIG or pasture-fed livestock. Mr. Brubaker stated the goal will be limited by economic values for land and should probably be downscaled. Mr. Neilson further suggested that emphasis should be placed on utilization of marginal lands for grazing so as not to remove prime acreage from row cropping potential or other beneficial use. Mr. Brubaker commented that grass or pasture fed livestock will still require feed supplements in their diet. Mr. Sherrick questioned what could be offered as direction or implementation steps for increasing the use of marginal lands and then questioned whether the PSU Cooperative Extension Service could potentially play a role. Mr. Neilson commented that the cooperative extension service already does a good job of encouraging this practice. The discussion ended with uncertainty as to the appropriateness and need to keep or eliminate this work plan.

Manure Digesters – Mr. Sherrick explained that this work plan had been reviewed on yesterday's call because it is a form of energy generation—the digesters created a methane-based gas that can be used for electric generation—and is therefore also included within the energy subcommittee. Mr. Sherrick reviewed goals of this work plan for dairy and swine operations and stated that the goals were significantly downscaled from what was included in the 2009 action plan report due to limited financing opportunities that exist currently. Mr. Sherrick further explained that most of the digesters that have been brought online in the last several years have benefitted from DEP grant funds or other Commonwealth agency funding. He also explained that a private carbon offset trading company, Native Energy, has been very influential in providing capital funds for several dairy digester projects. Pennsylvania currently ranks 3rd or 4th in the nation in the number of farm-based anaerobic digesters, although the size of our farms is typically much smaller than in some states. Mr. Sherrick indicated that digesters reduce overall greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in three ways: direct capture of methane emissions, lower GHG emissions as compared to grid-supplied electricity from the use of the captured digester gas, and reduced consumption (and associated GHG emissions) of heating oil and other fuels due to the capture and utilization of waste heat from the electric generating process. Mr. Brubaker noted the economics of operating a digester have changed in recent years as the locational marginal price paid as part of the net metering process is significantly lower now, increasing the difficulty in financing these projects. A typical dairy farm digester project will have a capital cost of approximately \$1.2 million. More creative financing options are needed including the possibility of loan guarantees, zero or low-interest loans, tax credits and grants. Mr. Brubaker, who is a recipient of a DEP grant to install an anaerobic digester on his dairy farm, suggested that it would be fair if grants are offered on a 50/50 cost share basis. The significant reduction in funding available from the Commonwealth for these types of projects was discussed, and a comment was offered that the work

plan should detail the amount and source of Commonwealth funding previously and currently available to help finance digester projects in PA.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. Sherrick thanked everyone for participating and stated that these discussions will be summarized during the face-to-face CCAC meeting on Tuesday, January 8, 2013 to allow for member and public participation. The call was adjourned at 3:00 p.m.