

CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
April 14, 2021
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Rachel Carson State Office Building,
and via WebEx

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:

Chairperson Steve Krug	Lindsay Baxter
Vice-Chairperson Marc Mondor	Glendon King (for Rep. Metcalf)
Robert Graff	Alissa Burger
Gary Merritt	Stephen McCarter
Kim Kipin-McDonald	Jen Quinn (for Zakia Elliot)
Jaret Gibbons	Greg Czarnecki (for Cindy Dunn)
Griffin Caruso (for Rep. Stambaugh)	Joseph Sherrick (for Gladys Brown Dutrieuille)
Patrick Henderson	Adam Walters (for Neil Weaver)

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Terry Bossert, Rep. Sara Innamorato, Luke Brubaker, Jim Felmlee, Paul Morris

PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) STAFF:

Lindsay Byron, Andrew Hansrote, Christopher Nafe, Kerry Campbell, Darek Jagiela, Ngani Ndimbie, Amanda Eyer, Sarah Pinter

INVITED GUESTS:

Cody Kiefer, Shawn Lehman, Seth Cassel, Mike Roth

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Eli Brill, Brian Smiley, David Gelman, Josephine Martin, Chad Heister, Franklin Egan, Andrew Rohrbaugh, Sam Lehr, Rachel Gleason

MEETING:

The April 14, 2022 meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC) was called to order at 9:02 a.m. by Chairperson Steve Krug. With 11 of 21 seated members present at the start of the meeting, a quorum was established. The Chairperson reminded those in attendance of the upcoming holiday Earth Day on April 22nd. He introduced new committee member, Representative Perry Stambaugh, and acknowledge his delegate, Griffin Caruso, who was in attendance. Chairperson Krug also thanked former appointee, Zachery Smith, and his delegate, Rachel Gleason, for their years of service. Ms. Byron noted that the committee is due to conduct officer elections in August.

MINUTES: The minutes of the February 23rd, 2022 CCAC meeting were presented to the committee for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice Chairperson Mondor and seconded by Mr. Henderson. There were no requests to edit the minutes by any members. The motion to approve the minutes carried by a voice vote and passed.

MEETING SUMMARY: (This narrative provides a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting. It is not a transcript of the proceedings.)

Seth Cassell and Shawn Lehman DCNR Bureau of Forestry: Forests and Carbon

Seth Cassell and Shawn Lehman of the DCNR Bureau of Forestry presented on Carbon and Carbon Sequestration in relation to Forest management in the Commonwealth. Mr. Cassell and Mr. Lehman presented information on the total forest cover of Pennsylvania, the percentage of that forested land that is owned and managed by DCNR, and the outreach efforts made to private forest owners on resilience, carbon sequestration, and the role they play in mitigating climate impacts. They outlined efforts for internal management and guidance to private forest owners which included forestry strategic plans, resource management guides, certification standards, and carbon smart practices (such as forest restoration and invasive species control). There was also discussion of federal grant funding and studies on timber flows, voluntary carbon markets, and carbon quantification models relating for forestry. Mr. Lehman emphasized that PA forest lands are part of the climate solution, PA needs to evaluate carbon offset programs, and adapt state forest land management to consider other uses and values but also optimize carbon.

DISCUSSION:

Chairperson Krug asked how much DCNR overlaps with the timber industry and the management of forestry products. Mr. Cassell explained that there has been a significant shift over the past 100 years away from the wholesale harvesting of the forests toward the integration of conservation in forest management, which is achieved through a healthy timber industry. Diverse forests of different ages across the Commonwealth are managed and harvested in a sustainable and responsible way using best management practices which support the wood products industry.

Chairperson Krug asked a second question related to wood product development being good for sequestration and if DCNR is projecting more sequestration through wood management. He also noted that would be good to include in the next climate action plan.

Vice Chair Mondor commented that there is a movement to have more focus on embodied carbon in the future with green building. He asked the presenters if they could talk about the health of the forests in terms of pests, and environmental stressors. Mr. Lehman added that in the Southcentral part of the state one of the most common tree types for that region, chestnut oak, is being impacted by these types of things. There is a lot of mortality in this particular species, and currently there is no net growth in the total number of them in southcentral Pennsylvania. Mr. Lehman indicated that there was not one specific factor to blame, but wetter springs, secondary fungus, and late frosts have an impact. Mr. Cassell added that extremes in “both directions” (more extreme heat and more extreme cold) are detrimental to Pennsylvania’s forests. Chairperson Krug noted that a new cardboard factory is opening in Chester County.

Mr. Sherrick asked what timeframe is expected for the Pennsylvania Carbon Quantification Model study. Mr. Sherrick also commented that some private forest owners may not understand aspects of the long-term sustainability and third-party verification and asked the opinion of the presenters. Mr. Lehman commented that the study should be completed between 2024 and 2025. He also mentioned that the forest product market space is evolving rapidly and there are some open questions such as

what happens if a landowner does not hold carbon on the land for the term agreed to, and that the consequences for this are unclear.

Cody Kiefer: Trees for People – Urban Forestry in Lancaster, PA

Cody Kiefer, the Urban Forester with the City of Lancaster presented on the Lancaster Trees for People program. Mr. Kiefer explained that Lancaster created the urban forestry position just last year, and that the city has a great interest in managing as well as expanding its urban tree canopy as the City has more tree cover than the surrounding county because of the large amount of agricultural land present. Mr. Kiefer presented some demographic information about Lancaster City as well as background on its environmental justice and climate efforts and how their Trees for People program played a role in those efforts. He discussed the tree data collection process, policy development and tree program goals such as increased canopy cover, full adoption of urban forest management, and community support. Mr. Kiefer provided some lessons learned and challenges to this type of effort as well such as root systems damaging older terracotta pipe systems.

DISCUSSION:

Mr. Sherrick asked if the city provides information about what street trees are appropriate. Mr. Kiefer indicated that over 90% of city street trees have to be approved by the Lancaster City government. He created a tree decision matrix that helps residents select the right tree.

Vice Chairperson Mondor commented that he was not familiar with the New York Million Trees Initiative mentioned in the presentation, even if only half the trees remained that is still half a million trees and could still be considered success. Mr. Kiefer noted that urban trees will not survive as long as rural trees, but it may be better to consider a sort of “half-life” for them. He indicated that a program would need to have a 96% success rate of tree survivability to expand canopy due to all other issues that affect tree viability and lifespan. If a program is resulting in year over year growth and the number of trees removed every year is shrinking, it would be considered successful.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No public comments were presented at this meeting.

Mike Roth with PA Department of Agriculture Presentation on Climate and PA Agriculture

Mike Roth with the PA Department of Agriculture (PDA) provided a presentation on how climate change is likely to affect the future of agriculture in Pennsylvania. Mr. Roth started his presentation providing an overview of agriculture in the Commonwealth including the amount of land utilized, the number of jobs in the industry and the revenue generated. He discussed the intersection of climate change and agriculture, how the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is considering both mitigation of climate change and adaptation to its impacts. Specific conservation practices were outlined such as cover crops and no till farming, anaerobic digesters, forest buffers, etc. and various conservation programs such as the Resource Enhancement & Protection program, Agri-Link, and market-based solutions linked to growing agricultural products such as hemp being used in new industries (green building).

DISCUSSION:

Vice Chairperson Mondor commented that regarding SFI certification, LEED and other green building organizations seem to focus on SFC certifications, not SFI. He asked Mr. Roth which seemed to be more appropriate. Mr. Roth advised that there is a slight misalignment between US and the EU in that area, and through the US Smart Commodities Grant, PDA is working to track carbon storage data for this.

Chairperson Krug asked about the Clean and Green carbon market credit plan. Mr. Roth responded that the PDA's hope is that there will be more standardization and consistency there. There is no formal mechanism for that type of work. Chairperson Krug thanked Mr. Roth again for his presentation and discussion on some new technologies being developed such as hempcrete.

DEP UPDATES:

Ngani Ndimbie Presentation on PA DEP's Environmental Justice Policy

Ngani Ndimbie, the Regional Coordinator from the DEP Office of Environmental Justice (EJ), presented on PA DEP's Environmental Justice Policy planned updates, which had recently been posted publicly. Ms. Ndimbie provided some general background information on Environmental Justice, the definition provided by the EPA, DEP's own definition of Environmental Justice, and how that guides the policy. Some historic examples of Environmental Justice issues were provided, specifically redlining in the City of Harrisburg, relation to the Civil Rights Movement, and Environmental Justice cases in Pennsylvania, specifically Chester County. Ms. Ndimbie went on to cover components of the EJ Policy: general information, permit review process, and community input, oil and gas industry engagement, inspections and compliance, climate initiatives, community development, and policy updates. Finally, the presentation closed with the policy update timeline.

DISCUSSION:

Chairperson Krug thanked Ms. Ndimbie for her presentation and advised that he would be sure to get some comments to her for virtual hearings during the comment period. Mr. Henderson asked if his understanding was correct that "trigger" permits are only applicable if they are in a defined EJ area. Ms. Ndimbie confirmed that he was correct. Mr. Henderson commented that the history of EJ Ms. Ndimbie provided was helpful. Mr. Henderson provided many detailed comments on various forms of permits and permit related issues as well as a number of other items in the new EJ policy. Ms. Ndimbie responded to several of the many points Mr. Henderson made regarding DEP permitting processes and how the new EJ policy changes would require community input, how permit applicants were engaging with local communities, and the issue of prison populations being counted as affected communities.

Chairperson Krug thanked Ms. Ndimbie again for the presentation and noted that the comments such as the permit comments should be made at the virtual hearings during the comment period.

Ms. Byron provided updates on the currently open Agricultural Energy Efficiency Rebate Program which will continue to accept applications until available funding is depleted. Ms. Byron also advised that presentations for climate outreach had been conducted with the current PA Climate Academy cohort and to the Brandywine Conservancy.

New Business/Next Steps

Ms. Byron reminded the committee that the June CCAC meeting would be on building and energy efficiency. Chairperson Krug made a final reminder about Earth Day for next week, and advised committee members to look out for the associated events that would be held.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Greg Czarnecki and seconded by Joe Sherrick. The motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:43 a.m.