

DRAFT

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

December 18, 2013

DEP SouthCentral Regional Office
Susquehanna Room A
Harrisburg, PA

In Attendance – Members

Jennifer Reed-Harry, PennAg Industries, Chair
Kelly Jean Heffner, Deputy Secretary, Office of Water Management, Department of Environmental Protection
William Neilson, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Matt Royer, Penn State University
Jay Howes, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
Walter Moore – Dairy Producer
Darwin Nissley, Livestock Producer
Christopher Uhland, Ornamental Horticulture
Matthew Matter, Grain Producer
Kerry Golden, House Agriculture Committee Staff
Greg Hostetter, PA USDA, Farm Service Agency
Susan Marquart, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

Grant Gubbion, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
Greg Robertson, Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association
Kelly O'Neill, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
DEP Secretary Christopher Abruzzo
Glenn Rider, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Nicki Kasi, DEP Bureau of Point and Nonpoint Source Management
Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Andrea Blosser, DEP SouthCentral Regional Office
Ryan Kostival, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Tom Juengst, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration

The meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) was called to order by Board Member Jennifer Reed-Harry at 10:00 a.m.

Members of the AAB introduced themselves, as did the other meeting attendees.

Legislative Update – Kerry Golden said that SB 994 on the establishment of a verified TMDL parameter credit program was reported out of committee. Kerry also said that SB 1149 on the area of fertilizer use and labeling was still in committee. Kerry advocated two bills SB 638 and HB 1439 that exempted high tunnels from being taxed as real estate.

Programmatic information was also provided. Frank Schneider noted that the Dirt and Gravel Road Program funding levels increased to \$28 million of new funding, which would mostly be for low-volume roads, and that DCNR would receive an additional \$7 million. Susan Marquart provided information on the NRCS, Chesapeake Bay Conservation Effects Assessment Project

(CEAP). The information is located at:

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detail/national/technical/nra/ceap/?cid=stelprdb1240074>

Brief Remarks – DEP Secretary Christopher Abruzzo said that, as the newly confirmed Secretary of DEP, it is important for him to be involved with and to know about all the boards, committees, and commissions that DEP is a part of. He has recently been working on a new Chesapeake Bay Agreement and asked that all parties do their fair share. One of his roles has been as a township supervisor for Derry Township, which has been a good forum for experiencing and dealing with issues and people. Two of his practices are to look for unintended consequences and win-win situations. He extended thanks to the board and its help in shaping policies and programs.

Conewago Creek Watershed Initiative Update – Matt Royer, Penn State University (PSU) and Director of the Agriculture & Environment Center, provided an overview of the significant progress that has been made by the Conewago Creek Watershed Initiative. This multi-county comprehensive watershed stewardship partnership, lead by PSU, garnered support from many sources, including: NWIF, the Federal Clean Water Act 319 Program, and DEP Growing Greener funds. Some of the activities included the involvement of 3,400 youths in fish, stream, and macro-invertebrate surveys. Nearly 100 percent of the farms had conservation plans developed or updated, BMPs were cost-shared on these farms, and 26,000 feet of stream fencing was installed. Also, non-Ag activities such as storm water management and rain barrel events were held. A video of this initiative was presented; this video can now be viewed on You-Tube under the title, “Conewago Creek Story”.

Update on Nutrient Trading – Nicki Kasi, DEP - Bureau of Point and Nonpoint Source Management, reviewed the current status and enhancement goals for the DEP Nutrient Trading Program. The current program was formalized by policy in 2006, and then regulations in 2010. In 2012, an EPA evaluation was completed and a stakeholder group was convened. The program has been working and now has a cumulative total of over five million pounds of nitrogen and 400,000 pounds of phosphorus being certified. Some of the challenges with the program, especially as related to agriculture, include: the timing, efforts, and risks involved with certifying the practices; and then selling and buying big chunks of credits over longer time periods. This program has not been easily integrated with the TMDL process or with the Chesapeake Bay modeling, and it has been difficult to gain large amounts of credits. Enhancements that were considered include: process streamlining; creation of a clearinghouse; permit and regulations revisions; and creation of an audit program.

EPA CAFO Settlement Update – Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration, provided an update of activities related to the EPA settlement of its CAFO activities. He noted that for the EPA visits of selected conservation district and EPA offices, only files and matters that relate to CAFOs and CAOs were reviewed. Also, a recently implemented CAFO over-view item was covered. This involves the mailing of notification letters to CAFOs informing them of a new responsibility to file report forms with DEP for all instances of manure application that occur during the winter period. EPA has been actively carrying out its review option for all CAFOs that are issued or reissued Individual Permit coverage. On DEP’s more general animal agriculture compliance, Steve reported that there have been 10,842 educational outreach visits to animal farms in Pennsylvania, which goes towards a goal of visiting all animal farms in the state. Also, agricultural E&S activities are now part of the Chesapeake Bay improvement efforts.

Meeting Dates for 2014 – Meeting dates were offered for 2014. It was proposed that the first meeting be on Wednesday, February 25, and that the remaining meetings will continue the

pattern of the third Wednesday of every other month. Since there was no quorum for this meeting, the dates were not officially adopted.

Member Nomination Letters – The organization members of the board were reminded to have nomination letters submitted to DEP.

The following topics were suggested for future meetings: tracking of non-program BMPs; and from the previous meeting, dealing with plant diseases such as Boxwood Blight.

The proposed date for the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 25 at 10 a.m. at the DEP SCRO. The remaining meetings for the year were presented for being the third Wednesday of April, June, August, October, and December.

There being no additional discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.