

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

April 16, 2014

DEP South Central 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
Walter Moore, Dairy Producer
Christopher Uhland, Ornamental Horticulture
Duane Hobbs, Ag Chemical Manufacturer
Mary Bender, Policy Director, Department of Agriculture
Kerry Golden, House Agriculture Committee Staff
Destiny Zeiders, House Agriculture Committee Staff
Laura Brenner, Senate Agriculture Committee Staff
Michael Rader, Senate Agriculture Committee Staff
Susan Marquart, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

Grant Gulibon, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
Kelly O'Neill, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Sara Miller, Pennsylvania Builders
Kim Snell-Zarcone, Conservation Pennsylvania
Dana Rhodes, PDA, Bureau of Plant Industry
Jeff Hartranft, DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands
Kathenne Hetherington-Cunfer, DEP Office of the Secretary
Michele Tate, DEP Citizens Advisory Council
Laura Henry, DEP Policy Office
Susan Despot, DEP Bureau of Regulatory Counsel
Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
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 10:05 a.m.

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

The minutes for the October and December meetings were approved with two small changes from Kerry Golden.

Legislative Update – Michael Rader said that working on the state budget for this year would be more difficult. Regarding legislation, he said that SB 1149, the lawn fertilizer bill, has issues to be worked out, such as the certification of applicators and ability for enforcement.

Mary Bender said that a three bill package introduced by Senator Yaw – SB 1236, 1237, and 1238, is under consideration that relates to royalty payments/protections for landowners having Marcellus shale leases. For the Dirt and Gravel Roads Program, efforts were being made to provide funds for low-volume roads. Also, Ms. Bender mentioned that Michael Pechart has left his position as the Executive Deputy Secretary with the PDA to instead work with a potato production company.

Legacy Sediments – Jeff Hartranft, a Water Program Specialist with the DEP Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands, had an extensive presentation on the history and practice of addressing legacy sediments in Pennsylvania. The history review began with a graphic showing the 65,000 water-powered mills that existed along streams in the eastern U.S. in the year 1840. As a local example, he pointed out that 346 of those were in Lancaster County, 301 were in York County, and 206 in Huntingdon County. With an average dam height of ten feet, all of the back areas of these dams filled in with sediment in a relatively short period of time. The ongoing loss of nutrients and sediment from these existing or deteriorated dams and filled-in areas is a major pollution problem. The filled-in areas are extremely loaded with nitrogen and phosphorus. The only remedy has been to completely remove these low-head dams and sediment-filled areas, and then to reestablish the original conditions. Restoration to original conditions has been resilient and remains stable, flooding and pollution control benefits return, and bridges and pipelines near streams are better protected. DEP has been assisting with these low-head dam removals for the last eight years. Analysis has shown that 33 to 63% of stream sediment is not from the present-day agricultural areas. Mr. Hartranft is working to have this latest information published in a research journal and also to get recognition of this practice by the Chesapeake Bay Program modeling. The practice does not fit every situation and has significant costs and public, scientific, and regulatory perceptions limit its use.

Dealing with Boxwood Blight and Other Plant Diseases – The two presenters on this subject were Dana Rhodes, a plant inspector with PDA, and Christopher Uhland, the board's Horticulture Representative. Ms. Rhodes said that the boxwood blight disease was found in Pennsylvania in 2012 and is thought to have come from Connecticut. The spores of the disease can last in the soil for seven to ten years. Practices to address this include: deep burial, total removal of all infected plants from the site, no composting of those materials, and not planting into the soil at the infected site. Also, the boxwood material or other plant material can be burned. When burning infected plant materials, DEP, county and municipality rules for air pollution and fire must be followed. For activities that handle boxwood plants, a practice is that workers, tool, and vehicles are to be cleaned. Mr. Uhland said that boxwood is a very common nursery plant and widely used in flower arrangements. This outbreak has had a major negative affect on boxwood orders and sales. Extra effort should be made to have reliable sources and to follow the Boxwood Clean Program. For another serious plant disease, a multi-year effort has resulted in eliminating plum pox virus from Pennsylvania.

Regional Watershed Assessments – Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration, provided an update on extending the Agriculture Watershed Assessment Program to targeted small watersheds in all six DEP regional office areas of the state. These efforts will be patterned after the pilot project in the Soft Run watershed in Mifflin County. This involves coordinating with the local conservation districts and also assessments of all the farms in the selected watersheds. Stream monitoring of each watershed will be conducted by DEP biologists.

Also, DEP has provided funding to the six conservation districts for technical and financial assistance for the farms that need assistance.

CAFO Winter Spreading Letters – Ryan Kostival, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration, reviewed the results from the first season of CAFO winter manure spreading notifications. Information on this is now required prior to manure application from all CAFO operations. This came about as a result of negotiations during the EPA approval process for the current CAFO General Permit. This new notification provides general information on amounts, frequency, and locations. There were 156 reports of spreading, on 55 CAFOs in 19 counties; 128 of the 156 reports were in the South Central DEP Region.

The following topics were suggested for future meetings: Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea Virus; and Waters of the United States and Jurisdiction Areas.

The proposed date for the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 18 at 10 a.m. at the DEP SCRO.

There being no additional discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.