

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

December 16, 2015

DEP Bureau of Labs Building
2575 Interstate Drive, Harrisburg, PA

In Attendance – Members

William Neilson, PA Farm Bureau
Christopher Uhland, Ornamental Horticulture
Jennifer Reed-Harry, PennAg Industries
J.V. Lamb, PA State Grange
Nelson Heagy, Fruit Producer
Matt Royer, Penn State University
Matt Matter, Grain Producer
Walt Moore, Dairy Industry
Shannon Wehinger, PA Association of Conservation Districts
Gregory Hostetter, Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture
John Stefanko, Executive Deputy Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection
Susan Marquart, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lawrence Kehl, USDA, Farm Services Agency

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

Kelly O'Neill, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
William Fink, Country View Family Farms
William Angstadt, Angstadt Consulting
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
John Bell, PA Farm Bureau
Grant Gulibon, PA Farm Bureau
Susan Despot, DEP Bureau of Regulatory Counsel
David Jostenski, DEP Division of Planning & Conservation
Gary Walters, DEP Bureau of Clean Water
Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Clean Water
Ryan Kostival, DEP Bureau of Clean Water
Tom Juengst, DEP Bureau of Clean Water

The meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) was called to order by Board Chair William Neilson at 9:05 a.m.

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

There was a meeting quorum and the minutes were approved for August 19, 2015. Also, the Board meeting dates for 2016 were approved as presented. They are semi-monthly starting in February on the fourth Thursday of the month.

Update on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza – Gregory Hostetter, Deputy Secretary for Animal Health and Food Safety, PA Department of Agriculture, has been on the team, leading efforts on this. Mr. Hostetter highlighted that there are currently no cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in this state, but that the recommended bio-security methods should be

maintained or instituted throughout the state as normal and continuous practices for the future. For the cases that did occur in other states, they suffered lost business and product sales, disposal costs, unemployment, and some operations have gone out of business. Wild bird migrations can increase the chances for these infections occurring or spreading.

Ag Impaired Water – Gary Walters, Water Quality Assessment Section Chief, DEP Bureau of Clean Water, covered methods for delisting agriculturally impaired surface waters from the Federal Clean Water Act, Section 303d list. Mr. Walters said TMDLs are developed for impaired waters. He indicated that improving slightly impaired waters is the most productive approach, as seriously impaired waters are very difficult to improve to the point where they can be delisted. Improvements directly related to agriculture are hard to detect and biological improvements usually have lag times of several years. Major pollutants from agriculture are sediment and nitrogen. Some other issues from agriculture are atrazine herbicide use, hormone loads from poultry manure, and endocrine disruption with some fish. Mr. Kehl asked whether groundwater effects are looked at. Mr. Walters said that groundwater is not looked at unless a specific problem is identified. Data from conservation districts or other groups can be used to trigger delisting efforts.

Several of the Board members commented on a need for better promotion of positive actions and improving water quality results. The Board approved looking at further action on this subject.

DEP Non-CAFO Ag Inspection Form – Ryan Kostival, Nutrient Management Section Chief, DEP Bureau of Clean Water, covered development of a non-CAFO Ag Inspection Report and an update to the CAFO Winter Period Application of Manure Notification. The inspection form was developed to more efficiently, uniformly, and accurately review operations, and to clearly identify to the operator any observed compliance issues or recommended actions. Jennifer Reed-Harry emphasized that the inspection form could have been reviewed by the Board earlier. The Board approved that there should be non-CAFO inspection and form use training and instructions.

Mr. Kostival also reviewed changes to the winter application form that should improve its use and provide better information.

Chesapeake Bay Program Update – Steven Wm. Taglang, DEP Bureau of Clean Water, briefly covered some efforts including: the Remote Sensing Pilot project by NRCS; the Capital Rural Conservation & Development collection of no-till and cover crop information; and the Self-Reporting Information effort being led by Penn State. This Penn State effort is a large confidential survey that will greatly expand the number of BMPs being collected. In conjunction with the survey, 10% of the data will be verified. DEP will only get county-level data for use with the Chesapeake Bay Model.

Executive Deputy Secretary John Stefanko briefly reviewed a DEP reorganization, which includes a new DEP Chesapeake Bay Program Office. The reorganization also includes creation of a Water Resources Planning Special Deputate and shifting of some programs to the newly named Bureau of Clean Water. Formal announcement of the Chesapeake Bay Program upgrades and strategy will be made shortly.

Mr. Royer provided some details on the Penn State Self-Reporting Survey. This included: reporting BMPs that meet current standards as part of the survey; the Penn State Survey Center will use a mailing list with about 30,000 addresses; each survey will have a unique number that separates name and address information; Cooperative Extension will help in leading the 10% inspection effort with conservation districts; the effort will be part of a research project; and there will be a state-of-the art website or a print and mail option for the eight-page survey.

Mr. Royer also said there would be an Ag in the Balance Conference on March 1 - 3.

Board/Public Comments/Concerns

Ideas for future meetings were provided: USGS Monitoring; Success Stories and/or lists of Positive Actions; Develop Positive Media Items; Phosphorus Index Status by Dr. Beegle; Chesapeake Bay Commission Phosphorus White-paper Review; Drones and Agriculture presentation by Greg Williams; and the Penn State Self-Reporting Survey.

There being no additional discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

The next meeting is set for Thursday, February 25, 2016 in Susquehanna Room A of the DEP South-Central Regional Office.