

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

October 16, 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
John Tebbs, Vegetable Producer
Hannah Smith, Pennsylvania Farmers Union
J. V. Lamb, Pennsylvania State Grange
Doug Beegle, 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
Robert Maiden, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

John Balay, Susquehanna River Basin Commission
Jeff Zimmerman, Susquehanna River Basin Commission
Susan Richards, Capitol RC&D
Matt Royer, Penn State Agricultural Extension
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
Denise Coleman, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Greg Robertson, Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association
Glenn Rider, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Sean Gimbel, DEP Office of Water 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

This 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.

The minutes for the June 19, 2013 meeting were approved.

Legislative Update – PA Dept. of Agriculture, Deputy Secretary Jay Howes, mentioned a bill on turf grass fertilization that is supported by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and has provisions for slow release nitrogen use and no phosphorus use. Deputy Secretary Howes said that Senator Brubaker is working on revising the bill. Another bill, SB 994, involves

modification of the calculations for nutrient credits and is the topic of a CBF meeting the day of this meeting. The nutrient credit changes are being advocated by Bion Corporation, which works on building large, integrated treatment systems. DEP Deputy Secretary Kelly Heffner noted that an operation must be in water quality compliance prior to receiving nutrient trading funds and that use of the funds received are not limited. It was suggested that nutrient trading could be a subject in a future meeting.

SRBC Cumulative Water Use & Availability Study - John Balay, Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC), provided an overview of its survey work. SRBC's latest survey and report is planned to be completed in 2016. Mr. Balay's agency looks at all big withdrawals and works to maintain sustainable water level in the river basin. SRBC is working with a Water Analysis Screening Tool covering four areas: 1 – consumptive use, 2 – water availability, 3 – GIS assessment, and 4 – protection, mitigation, and enhancement. The SRBC maintains a data library that utilizes the current record systems. The survey also draws upon the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service Agricultural Census for farm information. For agriculture, water use is small except for operations that extensively irrigate, and the study estimates water use by smaller farm and non-farm users. Deputy Secretary Heffner said DEP is very interested in water conservation to assist in handling drought situations.

Soft Run Watershed Review - Andrea Blosser, DEP SouthCentral Regional Office, reviewed the current status of the Soft Run targeted small watershed agricultural compliance effort. DEP and the Mifflin Conservation District have been working in this small watershed with state and federal grant funds. After an initial round of information letters, all 19 farms in this watershed were inspected. Only two of the farms had the required manure management and erosion and sedimentation plans. Thirteen of the farms had no obvious water pollution problems; six had water quality issues. Four of the farms addressed water quality concerns, but two of the farms made no effort at compliance. Field orders were issued for these two farms. One of these two farms continued to make no effort to address its water quality problems. This farm received a Consent Order and Agreement and a \$500 fine. The overall success of this cooperative approach of letters, assistance, inspections, and compliance is being extended to targeted watersheds in the other regions of the state.

2013 Tillage Survey Report - Susan Richards, Executive Director of the Capital RC&D Area Council, went over the latest Conservation Tillage Information Center information for Pennsylvania from the 2012/2013 survey. The survey worked to assess over 50,000 cropland acres in at least 15 counties. Retired NRCS State Agronomist Joel Myers assisted with the surveys. For the 2012 year, acres with over 30% residue ranged from 26% to 74%; for the 2013 year, the range was 12% to 80%. Some of the problems with retaining residue were the use of corn stover for fodder and remnants of Tropical Storm Lee affecting harvest in 2012.

EPA CAFO questionnaire, review and visits - Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration, provided an overview of agricultural compliance activities. DEP has significantly increased its compliance activities, which includes working towards addressing all farms in the state. New staff has been put in place to directly address agriculture. Over the past year there were 9,678 education and outreach visits, 798 inspections, and 354 enforcements.

On the EPA visits, five conservation district offices were selected to review their CAFO, Act 38, and animal feeding operation efforts (i.e., this includes both directly regulated operations and those that are not CAFOs or required to have Nutrient Management Act 38 plans) and the related administration and filing for these operations and program areas. Also, the DEP offices will be visited by EPA to have their administration and files reviewed. This is part of a court settlement that EPA agreed to with the CBF.

Additional Discussion - Several topics that were suggested for future meetings: legacy sediments and legacy groundwater; dealing with plant diseases such as Boxwood Blight; the Nutrient Trading Program; technical service providers; and the Conewago Creek Watershed Initiative.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 18 at 10 a.m. at the DEP SCRO. There being no additional discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m.