

# **MINUTES**

## **AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**February 25, 2016**

DEP South-Central Regional Office  
909 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg, PA

### **In Attendance – Members**

William Neilson, PA Farm Bureau  
Christopher Uhland, Ornamental Horticulture  
Chris Houser, Penn State University  
Matt Matter, Grain Producer  
Walt Moore, Dairy Industry  
Lisa Jo Suhr, PA Association of Conservation Districts  
Destiny Zeiders, House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee  
Kerry Golden, House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee  
Gregory Hostetter, Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture  
Ken Reisinger, 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**

Lamonte Garber, Stroud Water Research  
Barry Frantz, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service  
William Angstadt, Angstadt Consulting  
Lynette Gelsinger, Lebanon Conservation District  
Mark Richards, S. R. Wojdak & Associates  
Marel King, Chesapeake Bay Commission  
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission  
Lee McDonnell, Director, DEP Bureau of Clean Water  
Hayley Jeffords, DEP, Policy Office  
Andrea Blosser, Environmental Group Mngr., South-Central Regional Office  
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 William Neilson at 9:05 a.m.

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

There was not a quorum, so approval of minutes and board officer elections were deferred.

**Legislative Update** – Ms. Zeiders said that a House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, Joint Informational Meeting on the Chesapeake Bay Re-boot is set to be held in Room 60 of the Capitol East Wing at 12 p.m. on February 29<sup>th</sup> and this would be a Web-Cast. The Agriculture and Environmental Protections Secretaries would be presenters along with others. Ms. Golden said that Lisa Long would be their primary House Agriculture committee staff board member after this meeting. She also mentioned that House Bill 1036 with Hi-Tunnels and storm-water control was under consideration and that the Dept. of Agriculture had provided its comments.

Deputy Secretary Hostetter added that the secretaries were interested in input on all aspects of the Chesapeake Bay Re-boot and followed-up with recent Hi-pathogenic avian influenza information. A different strain – H7N8 – was found with turkeys in Indiana and that about 16,000 birds were destroyed. Low-pathogenic avian influenza can be found in Pennsylvania and that they closely monitor the markets for find problems.

**Pennsylvania’s Chesapeake Bay Re-boot** – Lee McDonnell, the Director of the DEP Bureau of Clean Water, first utilized webinar points on the Chesapeake Bay Re-boot that were given to DEP staff and then the Conservation Districts. This effort enables Pennsylvania to better satisfy federals obligations with the 2010 Chesapeake Bay TMDL and its 2017 goals for nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment. It also allowed EPA to release \$3 million of funds to Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania has already established discharge caps on about 183 sewage and 20 industrial facilities, but more efforts are to be focused on storm-water and agriculture. Specifics on the Re-boot include: inspections of all farms in the watershed over a 10 year period; documentation of BMPs; improved record keeping and conservation district data management; establishment of a more robust Chesapeake Bay Office and program engagement; and, development of more resources through the EPA and the General Assembly. One aspect of this involves each Chesapeake Bay conservation district conducting 50 farm inspections to help with BMP information collection and compliance. Mr. McDonnell noted that these efforts also have important local benefits.

**Upcoming Proposed Rulemakings Affecting the Ag Community: Triennial Review and Chapters 91 and 92a Fee Updates** – Mr. McDonnell covered that DEP is undergoing a Triennial Review of its water quality standards under Chapter 93. This review is required by EPA and works to update and match these standards with current practice. Examples he mentioned were that human loads were being changed to match with the increased average weight of humans; ammonia level tests would match those being used for mussels; and, that e-Coli tests would be used in place of fecal coliform.

Also, Mr. McDonnell reviewed a memo that was provided to the board on redesignation of six stream reaches.

Lastly, Mr. McDonnell mentioned that increases in NPDES permit fees are being considered to make these DEP programs more self-supporting and that a full presentation on this will be given to the board in the future.

**NRCS Program Funding and Targeting Update** – Susan Marquart and Barry Frantz, with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, recapped the recent priorities of their programs and discussions on them at their January NRCS State Technical Committee meeting. For targeting and priorities they draw from USDA Ag Census data and their own sources plus others, such as the USGS Sparrow Model results, to have high and medium priority geographical and watershed areas. Their presentation covered specific details on the priorities, programs and funding, and those would again be reviewed at the next State Technical Committee meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup>.

In response to a question, Mr. Frantz said that preliminary results on the Pennsylvania Potomac Watershed BMP Remote Sensing project indicates that about twice as many of the BMPs that can be remotely sensed were found, and that results could be presented at a future meeting.

**Buffers/CREP** – Lamonte Garber, a Watershed Restoration Coordinator at the Stroud Water Research Center, covered their research on the environmental benefits of forested stream buffers. They found that forested stream buffers are a powerful tool to achieve full stream restoration and to maximize environmental benefits, especially at 100 feet in width. Stream corridors can be

changed more quickly and easily than for most other BMPs in other areas of the landscape. The pollution and ecological benefits become self-maintaining and permanent, such as removing 2 to 8 times more nitrogen than other practices and enabling fully restored stream areas. Mr. Garber offered to return to cover specifics of the stream buffer programs and implementation.

**Pennsylvania Farm Practices Survey** – Chris Houser, who is the Interim Assistant Director: Agronomy and Natural Resources Programs for Penn State Extension, covered the current status of the “PA Farm Conservation Practices Inventory.” He said that already about 1,000 farmers had responded to the survey on-line, and that the about 19,000 of the remaining addresses were being sent the survey via the U.S. mail. The survey is being mentioned at the various Spring Season extension meetings that reach about 12,000 farmers. The survey response deadline is set as April 30<sup>th</sup>. In August and September about 50 Extension staffers would conduct verification for 10% of the surveys. The results will be reported cumulatively and identification information will be removed from the results.

### **Board/Public Comments/Concerns**

William Angstadt presented comments and a paper to the board on a different “approach to ‘reboot’ progress towards 2015 Bay water quality goals.” He said that documenting all practices on all PA farms would not be a good focus of limited resources and that continued focus by programs and conservation districts on meeting farm baseline practice levels and county level nutrient reduction goal amounts would be a more productive use of resources.

Also, a copy of the document “Phosphorus Management Tools in Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania” published by the Chesapeake Bay Commission dated December 2015 was provided to the board. Marel King, the Pennsylvania Director for the Commission, said that the report describes areas that have done well and some that could have more work.

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

The next meeting is set for Thursday, April 28, 2016 in Susquehanna Room A of the DEP South-Central Regional Office.