

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

April 28, 2016

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

In Attendance – Members

William Neilson, PA Farm Bureau
Jennifer Reed-Harry, Penn-Ag Industries
Judi Radel, PA Farmers Union
JV Lamb, PA State Grange
Walt Moore, Dairy Industry
Matt Royer, Penn State University
Darwin Nissley, Livestock Farmer
Nelson Heagy, Fruit Grower
Brenda Shambaugh, PA Association of Conservation Districts
Destiny Zeiders, House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Lisa Long, House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee
Susan Marquart, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Ann Roda, Director, Executive Deputy Secretary Deputate

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

William C. Fink, CVVF
Mike Langland, USGS
Tammy Zimmerman, USGS
Curtis Schreffler, USGS
Gregg Robertson, PA Landscape and Nursery Association
William Angstadt, Angstadt Consulting
Kelly O'Neill, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Marel King, Chesapeake Bay Commission
Peter Vanderstappen, NRCS
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
Hayley Jeffords, DEP Policy Office
Andrea Blosser, Environmental Group Mngr., DEP South-Central Regional Office
David Gates, Water Quality Specialist Supervisor, DEP South-Central Regional Office
Steven Taglang, 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.

Legislative Update – Ms. Zeiders mentioned that Senate Bill 50 and House Bill 967 are in the General Assembly to carry-out details of industrial help that can go with the medical marijuana law that was recently passed and signed by the governor. These bills cover parallel aspects of production, research, and enforcement. Ms. Long said that House Bill 99 is already in place to initiate the passage process for the state budget.

Election of Chair and Vice-chair for the Board – William Neilson and Christopher Uhland were nominated and then approved to be the chair and vice-chair of the board for 2016.

Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes for December 16, 2015 and February 25, 2016 were approved by the board as presented without amendment.

Susquehanna River Monitoring Station Water Quality Trend Data – Mike Langland, with the US Geologic Survey, Pennsylvania Water Science Center, covered details of the data that has been collected at non-tidal network stations that relate to Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay water quality efforts. Mr. Langland highlighted trends that include a major increase in monitoring sites for the Chesapeake Bay Basin. There were 15 monitoring sites in 1985; now there are 117 sites. The monitoring data shows that Pennsylvania has done better than what the Chesapeake Model shows and that the monitoring and data serve as an important tool to understand program efforts.

Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Effort – Steve Taglang, Chief, Division of TMDLs and Stream Restoration, DEP Bureau of Clean Water, gave an overview and update for the board on developments for extending farm inspections. Broadly, the new Chesapeake Bay effort is to reduce pollution, document BMPs, improve record-keeping, identify changes, establish a Chesapeake Bay Office, and seek new resources. A major part of this effort is Conservation District inspection of 50 farms per Chesapeake Bay Program funded position. These inspections will focus on manure management plans, erosion and sedimentation plans, and significant water quality problems. For consistency, these inspections will occur under a standard operation procedure that has been reviewed, commented on, and tested with the districts. DEP will augment these efforts, which are in addition to the existing Act 38 and CAFO efforts. Comments on this were: resources are needed to go with this to install BMPs; districts have good relationships with farmers that need to be maintained to continue building on existing work with farmers; and, there could be more focus and training for sedimentation plans. Mr. Taglang noted that a grant has been given to add barnyard runoff control and sedimentation plan components to the PA One-Stop program that can help with this.

Winter Manure Application Reports for 2015-2016 – Steve Taglang reviewed the third year of winter period manure application notices that were submitted under the CAFO program. These notifications were instituted for permits issued after March 31, 2013 and provide information on winter manure application frequency and location. Improvements were made to the form for this last season and 35 farms (9% of all CAFOs) submitted forms for 94 occasions in 15 counties. Larger storages and less rain may have led to fewer applications.

Chapters 91 and 92a Fee Updates – Steve Taglang presented preliminary information on increasing fees for Chapter 91 Water Quality Management Permits and Chapter 92a Individual NPDES Permits to cover a shortfall of positions to address this permit program. The goal is to generate funding to restore 65 positions by increasing the current fees and instituting annual fees. General NPDES Permits may also have fees when that permit is renewed in two years. These fees are planned to be on the agenda for a fall 2016 Environmental Quality Board meeting; to be published as draft in the PA Bulletin in February 2017; and then published as final in September 2017. Comments on this included that: higher fees would put pressure on medium sized operations that had to have Individual Permits due to being located in Special Protection Waters; that it is hard for farms to recover costs; and, that this would not generate much money. JV Lamb said that consumers and the legislatures should provide more funding support to help with processing these permits. The board moved to cover this more at the next meeting and requested information on other states.

Board/Public Comments/Concerns – Matt Royer provided a summary of the responses to the Cooperative Extension survey of farmers on the plans and BMPs at their operations. He said that surveys were sent to about 20,000 addresses. About 6,000 came back completed and 1,000 surveys went to duplicate or bad addresses. In addition, he anticipated more surveys would come back beyond these preliminary numbers, as surveys could come in until the April 30th deadline.

William Angstadt said that the USGS data presented earlier in the meeting was a good representation and was not reflected in the Chesapeake Bay Model. He strongly advocated that it needs to be better included in the watershed planning, targeting, and program policies.

Gregg Robertson recommended that input should be provided on Senate Bill 563 sponsored by Senator Alloway on the regulation of fertilizer application to turf. Marel King said that this may be combined with another bill.

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

The next meeting is set for Thursday, June 23, 2016, in Susquehanna Room A of the DEP South-Central Regional Office.