

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ADVISORY BOARD

DEP – Northcentral Regional Office
208 West Third Street, Suite 101
Goddard Room
Williamsport, PA
August 28, 2018

Voting Members Present:

Eli Brill
Adam Cutler
Clea Hollis
Gary Horton
Carol Parenzan
Allison Robinson
Tom Torres
John Waffenschmidt

Members Present Via Phone:

Jerome Shabazz
Emily Collins

Non-Members Present:

Allison Acevedo – DEP
Nora Alwine – DEP
John Brakeall – DEP
Megan Lehman – DEP
Marcus Kohl – DEP
Jared Dressler – DEP
Randy Farmerie – DEP
John Ryder – DEP
Josie Gaskey – PACA
John Lavelle – LCPC
Jim Welty – MSC
Laura Thompson – University of Pittsburgh

Jon Bogle – RDA
Alice Trowbridge – SGP
Matt Henderson – ETP
Daria Fish – Chief Oil and Gas
Nick Troutman – Sen Yaw’s Office
Michael Heyd – LCDC
Michael Reuther – Sun-Gazette
Mike Ochs – PA Green Party
Rob Cooley – Penn College
Renee Carey – Northcentral Pa Conservancy
Harvey M. Katz – Riverkeeper
Pat Henderson – MSC

Call to Order:

Chairman Adam Cutler called the meeting to order at 1:30 P.M.

OEJ Program and Planning:

Allison Acevedo, Director of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), detailed at length OEJ’s objectives: minimizing adverse environmental impacts, empowering communities, and fostering economic development. The primary objective is to engage communities so everyone has equal access to the environment, the ability to enjoy the environment, and are not disparately impacted

by environmental impacts. Allison Acevedo described how OEJ intends to focus on engaging communities and encouraging public participation beyond the permitting context.

Approval of Minutes:

Chairman Adam Cutler solicited additions or corrections to the meeting Minutes of May 29, 2018 and July 10, 2018. Hearing none, Chairman Cutler requested a motion to approve those Minutes.

John Waffenschmidt moved to approve the meeting Minutes of May 29, 2018 and July 10, 2018. Allison Robinson seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

Draft EJ Policy Comments and EJ Viewer Update:

The public comment period on the draft EJ Policy is open to the public until 11:59 PM, August 28. Currently, 141 comments have been received, 105 of which are oil and gas concerns. The comments will be reviewed and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will respond to those comments.

Allison Acevedo provided a quick overview of the initial version of the EJ Viewer. The board members provided feedback and comments about the mapping tool.

Presentations:

“Brownfields to Playfields Initiative”

Kim Hoover and Randy Farmerie from DEP’s Environmental Cleanup and Brownfields program delivered a presentation on DEP’s Brownfields to Playfields Initiative. Kim Hoover described how the initiative is a partnership with DEP, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) in the restoration and repurposing of brownfields, abandoned mine lands, and other damaged lands for recreation and conservation purposes through pilot projects. There are currently seven Brownfield to Playfield pilot projects in the state, including one in Williamsport. Randy Farmerie described the project in Williamsport and how the project seeks to connect the existing River Walk to Susquehanna State Park, which has been identified as one of Pennsylvania’s TOP 10 Trail Gaps in the state. Randy Farmerie informed everyone that the 2018 Pennsylvania Brownfield’s Conference will be held in Bethlehem, PA from October 1 – 3, 2018.

Board Strategic Planning

Chairman Adam Cutler requested to review the top 5 initiatives outlined in the Delphi report that had been compiled by previous Chairman Arthur Frank in 2016. The Board acknowledged that the issues outlined in the Delphi report are being addressed, but identified additional needs.

- Communications and tracking tool subcommittee – Allison Robinson, John Waffenschmidt, Eli Brill and Clea Hollis volunteered to join the subcommittee. This subcommittee will report out their initial plans on the October 9th call.
- Health Data – The Board identified the need to assess and evaluate additional health data.

- Education and environmental literacy – The Board identified the need to evaluate the environmental literacy of community groups and local governments and facilitate or provide access to education to improve environmental literacy.

New/Unfinished Business:

None.

Public Comment:

Alice Trowbridge of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership (SGP) described the need for community outreach from OEJ and expressed that some of the strategies discussed earlier in the meeting were excellent approaches. Alice Trowbridge named several organizations throughout the northcentral region of the state that are seeking to address similar issues as OEJ and encouraged OEJ to collaborate with them.

Jon Bogle from Responsible Drilling Alliance (RDA) stated that the Oil and Gas industry is destroying sustainable ecotourism of the PA Wilds throughout the state and northcentral PA. Several photos, charts and figures were referenced to demonstrate the environmental impact from the Oil and Gas industry, volatility of jobs in the industry's job market and the success of jobs in travel and tourism in PA because of our natural resources in the PA Wilds. Jon Bogle stated that we could lose our forests and rich natural resources from the Oil and Gas industry.

Michael Ochs provided comments on the communications issues ahead of the meeting and during the meeting, including not having hardcopies of the EJ Public Participation Policy available and poor acoustics in the room that made it difficult for participants to hear. Michael Ochs expressed concern over the severity of climate change, rising temperatures and disproportionate impact on low-income and minority communities. Michael Ochs stated the need for the Office of Environmental Justice to consider this in their work.

Robbie Cross from Responsible Drilling Alliance (RDA) described the degradation by the drilling industry on the LT trail in Williamsport. The speaker explained that this trail used to be a very pristine destination.

Vincent Phillips of Pennsylvania State Grange provided a letter that Chairman Adam Cutler read. PA State Grange stated their concern with biosolids and Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) permit applications identified as trigger permits and asked that they be removed from the draft policy. The permit review process by DEP ensures the proposed activity would not pose a threat to public health and safety, which is based on science. PA State Grange believes additional public participation is redundant and could compromise the science-based approach to permit reviews.

Geisinger Medicine Take Back Program:

Eric Wright, Director of Center for Pharmacy Innovation and Outcomes at Geisinger, delivered a presentation on Geisinger's Medicine Take Back Program. Eric Wright provide figures for overdose deaths in the U.S. and Pennsylvania. Drug-related deaths in PA continue to rise, but

there is a multi-angle approach to fighting the opioid epidemic which includes the Medicine Take Back Program. The Medicine Take Back Program seeks to keep unused medications from un-prescribed users and also address water quality issues, and aquatic ecosystem concerns from improper disposal of drugs. Geisinger intends to expand its Medicine Take Back program to continue addressing these issues.

Carol Parenzan introduced herself as a member of the EJAB and Geisinger. Carol described her intersection of thoughts regarding environmental justice and the opioid crisis. Carol provided some figures and then framing questions regarding the intersection of overdose deaths, water contamination from medications, and Environmental Justice Areas in northcentral PA.

DEP Program Discussion:

John Brakeall, Regional Coordinator, introduced Marcus Kohl as the Regional Director for DEP's Northcentral Regional Office and John Ryder as DEP's Bureau Director for Oil and Gas Operations to have a discussion on DEP's Oil and Gas Program.

Marcus Kohl described the programs under his purview and the programs that are involved in oil and gas development, which also includes the Bureau of Oil and Gas Planning and Program Management. John Ryder provided a comprehensive overview of the Bureau of Oil and Gas Operations including the number of permits received and inspections conducted and staff complement. John Ryder also provided updates on the ePermitting system and other technologies that are allowing the program to work more efficiently.

The Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) staff asked how their office could better engage communities around concerns related to oil and gas development. John Ryder explained how OEJ could facilitate discussions between operators and communities. Marcus Kohl encouraged OEJ to be a liaison between DEP and communities in order to provide information on the basics of what DEP does including regulatory requirements and DEP outputs.

Adjournment:

Chairman Adam Cutler requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Eli Brill made a motion that the meeting be adjourned, which was seconded by Clea Hollis. The meeting adjourned at 7:03 P.M.