

MINUTES

AGRICULTURAL ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

April 15, 2015

DEP SouthCentral Regional Office
Susquehanna Room A
Harrisburg, PA

In Attendance – Members

William Neilson, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
J.V. Lamb, Pennsylvania State Grange
Matt Royer, Penn State University
Jennifer Reed-Harry, PennAg Industries
Walt Moore, Dairy Industry
Kelly Jean Heffner, Deputy Secretary, Office of Water Management, Department of Environmental Protection
Susan Marquart, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Gregory Hostetter, Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture
Larry Kehl, USDA, Farm Service Agency

In Attendance - Agencies, Advisors, and Guests

Dan Dostie, PA USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Lisa Jo Suhr, Pa. Association of Conservation Districts
Bill Angstadt, Angstadt Consulting
Kelly O'Neill, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Grant Gulibon, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau
Don McNutt, Center for Dairy Excellence
Betsy Huber, Pennsylvania State Grange
Gregg Roberson, Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association
Frank Schneider, State Conservation Commission
Laura Henry, DEP Policy Office
Hayley Jeffords, DEP Policy Office
Steve Taglang, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Ryan Kostival, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration
Tom Juengst, DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration

The meeting of the Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) was called to order by the new Board Chair 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 voting on the previous minutes and election of a Vice-Chair did not take place.

Legislative Update – Gregory Hostetter said that with the new legislative sessions just starting that the only bill being discussed was Senate Bill 563 on the topic of Lawn Care Fertilizer.

New Administration Update

Agriculture Deputy Secretary, Gregory Hostetter said that there were the new appointments of Acting Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding; Michael Smith, as Executive Deputy Secretary;

himself, as the Deputy Secretary for Animal Health and Food Safety; Hannah Smith-Brubaker, as Deputy Secretary for Market and Economic Development; and, Brandi Hunter-Davenport, as Press Secretary.

DEP Deputy Secretary Kelly Heffner noted the appointments of: John Quigley, as Acting DEP Secretary; Denise Brinley, as Executive Deputy Secretary of Programs to cover big issues, such as the task force and best management practices for gas pipelines and handling external and internal DEP advisory groups; Darrin Bodner, Executive Deputy Secretary of Administration and Management; and, Patrick McDonnell, as Policy Office Director.

Soil Health – Daniel Dostie, State Resource Conservationist, PA-USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, featured NRCS efforts in the area of Soil Health. The practice of Soil Health includes intensive No-till and cover crop management system to improve the health and function of soil. He noted that the system greatly reduces the amount of field runoff and increases soil stability and biological diversity. NRCS includes Soil Health in its financial assistance programs.

Center for Nutrient Solutions – Matt Royer, Director of the Agriculture and Environment Center, Penn State University, covered the activities of the “Center for Nutrient Solutions: An Innovative Approach to Exploring Nutrient Pollution Solution Scenarios,” which is one of 4 centers funded by EPA-STAR Program for “Innovative and Sustainable Water Research Incorporating Systems View of Nutrient Management.” An aspect of this project addresses economic and higher-level system views and engagement approaches to work with the traditional farm level BMPs. The program is in three medium-sized watersheds in Pennsylvania and one on Maryland’s Eastern-shore. It is a multi-year project that has detailed information and presentations at its Website: <http://agsci.psu.edu/aec/research-extension/research-centers/center-for-nutrient-solutions>. This effort helps in identifying hotspots by using the “Penn State Integrated Hydrologic Model” and “Soil and Water Assessment Tool” to target and compare efforts and BMPs, and it is being coordinated with Gary Shenk with the large-scale Chesapeake Bay Model and its year 2015 goals.

Regional Ag Watershed Assessment Program Initiative Update (RAWAPI) - Steve Taglang, DEP, Bur. of Conservation and Restoration, provided details on current activities in this effort. He said that this program is part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Improvement Plan and addresses nutrients and sedimentation. The review and compliance efforts that started in a pilot on the Soft Run watershed are being continued to six small watersheds. Water quality monitoring was included for these six watersheds to determine “before” and “after” water quality. Funds are provided for manure management and E&S planning and BMP installation. Six additional small watersheds are planned to be added to this effort in 2015. Kelly Heffner said that both Department Secretaries are interested in the RAWAPI effort and that the farm-level approach and follow-up has generated serious interest in gaining compliance beyond just these watersheds. Larry Kehl said that having Manure Management Plans more easily done through the revision of the Manure Management Manual has helped with this.

Board/Public Comments/Concerns

William Neilson indicated that future meetings include a discussion of the Chesapeake Bay Model and the new DEP GP-17 permit for cleaning out flood debris.

Bill Angstadt provided some comments on Pennsylvania’s efforts for reaching the Chesapeake Bay year 2025 goals. He said we should continue these efforts and offered the RAWAPI as a good example of combining compliance with outreach. He also said Chesapeake Bay modeling efforts should completely flip from identifying and proving which areas are already in

compliance to identifying areas that are not in compliance. He said that this would take much less effort and would more directly focus modeling on the problems, since he said that USDA data shows 20 – 25% of the farms could be focused on as pollution problems, instead of reviewing the bulk of farms with better practices.

There being no additional discussions, the meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

The next meeting is set for June 18, 2015, at 9 AM, at the DEP South-Central Regional Office, Susquehanna Room A.