



Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Meeting Minutes | February 13, 2025 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

DEP Southcentral Regional Office – Susquehanna Room A/B and Microsoft Teams

Welcome & Introductions – Grant Gulibon, Vice-Chair

Bob Haines conducted a roll call of AAB members; 7 of the 10 voting members were present. The presence of a quorum was noted.

Members present:

Chair Jennifer Reed-Harry, Vice-chair Grant Gulibon, Lynn Dietrich, Matt Royer, Kerry Golden, Lily Guthrie, Bill Evans, Jill Whitcomb*, and Tim Peters*, James Gillis*

Members absent:

Greg Hostetter*, Destiny Zeiders, Brenda Shambaugh, Christopher Uhland

**Non-Voting Member*

Review & Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (Action) – Grant Gulibon, Vice Chair

Lynn Dietrich made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 18, 2024, meeting. Matt Royer seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Legislative Update – Lily Guthrie, Bill Evans, Kerry Golden

House

Kerry Golden informed the Board of her upcoming retirement, and that Nathan Clark has been hired as her replacement and has started in the role.

Senate

Lily Guthrie and Bill Evans informed the Board that the Senate returns to session March 24, 2025, and listed a few upcoming budget hearing sessions.

Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development (SPEED) Act Update (Requested) – Domenic Rocco, Director, Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands, and Krystal Bloom, Environmental Group Manager, Bureau of Clean Water

Domenic Rocco provided a broad overview of the SPEED Act, including eligible DEP permits and key details on the Chapter 105 implementation. Krystal Bloom followed with additional details on the Chapter 102 program implementation. Rocco and Bloom addressed questions and comments from the Board.

Jill Whitcomb inquired about the number of Qualified Professional (QP) proposals submitted to DEP for consideration. Rocco explained the proposal process and reported that, for the Chapter 105 program, nine firms submitted a total of 47 individuals for QP consideration. Of these, 32 have been qualified, while the remaining candidates are either still under review or were not qualified. Nicholas Vivian, Director, Bureau of Clean Water, provided similar information for the Chapter 102 program, stating that 10 firms submitted 44 candidates, with 34 being qualified.

Grant Gulibon asked about the reasons some candidates were not qualified as QPs. Rocco and Vivian both noted that the primary reason was a failure to meet the required experience qualifications.

Rocco added that the SPEED program is expected to open for permit applicants in April-May 2025, following the completion of training and standard operating procedures. Rocco further noted that the program will initially launch as a pilot in one program area.

Rocco directed anyone interested to the FAQs on the DEP SPEED webpage for more information or to reach out directly.

Chapter 102 Pilot Program Update (Requested) – Krystal Bloom, Environmental Group Manager, Bureau of Clean Water

Krystal Bloom updated the Board on the Chapter 102 Pilot Program, including the county location and number of permit applications, and their status. Bloom addressed questions and comments from the Board.

Jill Whitcomb highlighted the opportunity with the Pilot programs for an expedited permit process that the Ag industry can take advantage of but has not done so to date and asked Board members to share this information with their stakeholders.

Grant Gulibon inquired about the breakdown of agricultural permits under the Chapter 102 and 105 programs, specifically the distribution between general and individual permits. Jill Whitcomb answered that individual permits are required for projects that are in Exceptional Value watersheds and there are farms that are in these watersheds, but not aware of any current projects or the exact number of permits issued. Krystal Bloom noted that most agricultural projects likely fall under general permits. Bloom explained that the focus on individual permits in the Chapter 102 Pilot Program was intended to prevent overwhelming permittees during the PAG-02 general permit renewal process and that lessons learned from working with individual permits would later be

applied to general permits. Gulibon suggested that the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau could promote the Chapter 105 Pilot Program to its members in special protection watersheds to encourage greater participation. Bloom mentioned that additional counties may be included in the Chapter 102 Pilot Program in the future based on demand.

James Gillis commented in the chat problems with getting permits for ag projects through a permitting process designed for commercial and residential projects. Gillis added that farmers must obtain a permit for projects intended to address existing erosion issues on their land, even when the project has a positive environmental impact and noted that the agricultural community views the permitting process as requiring unnecessary steps, making it more difficult to implement needed solutions. Gillis welcomed any approach to better tailor the permitting process, not just for the Ag community, but for all, and to get away from the one size fits all approach. Jill Whitcomb informed the Board that DEP has been actively working with the Department of Agriculture and other stakeholders through ongoing Agricultural Permitting Roundtable discussions to address these concerns.

Chapter 105 Pilot Program Update (Requested) – Domenic Rocco, Director, Bureau of Waterways Engineering and Wetlands

Domenic Rocco provided background on the Chapter 105 Pilot program, including eligibility and various requirements. Rocco addressed questions and comments from the Board.

Grant Gulibon stated that the presentations on Speed and Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 Pilot programs will help the Board to do a better job of informing their stakeholders on the permitting opportunities with DEP to increase participation by the ag community in these programs so DEP can better evaluate the success of these programs.

Gulibon asked what criteria DEP will use to determine the success of the Pilot programs. Jill Whitcomb stated that the Pilot programs use voluntary measures to expedite permitting, which cannot be required in the regular permitting process. Whitcomb added that DEP needs more data to determine their success. Krystal Bloom noted that if combining completeness and technical reviews proves successful as required by the Pilot programs, it could be integrated into the regular permitting process, pending a review of the delegation agreement with the districts. Bloom noted that the Pilot programs may also help DEP identify remaining deficiencies despite the required upfront planning. Domenic Rocco added that Pilot programs require more upfront planning, which may not suit all applicants. He asked potential applicants to inform DEP of any barriers to participation.

DEP/PDA Ag Permitting Roundtable Update (Informational) – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Chair

Jennifer Reed-Harry provided an update on the DEP/PDA Ag permitting roundtable meetings from the viewpoint of a stakeholder.

Grant Gulibon echoed the importance of open dialogue with DEP and PDA and industry stakeholders.

Public Comment – Grant Gulibon, Vice Chair

No public comments were offered virtually or in-person.

General Discussion/Agenda Topics Request – Grant Gulibon, Vice Chair

Jennifer Reed-Harry offered to invite an ag industry subject matter expert on biosecurity and suggested scheduling this topic for the August 28, 2025, joint AAB/NMAB meeting.

Grant Gulibon requested an update on the regulation of PFAS, especially with focus on biosolids application.

Bob Haines updated the Board on the status of requested agenda topics from past meetings

Adjourn – Grant Gulibon, Vice Chair

Jennifer Reed-Harry made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Lynn Dietrich. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 2:27 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 1 p.m.