



Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Meeting Minutes | April 10, 2025 1:00 PM – 3:00 PM

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

Welcome & Introductions – Jennifer Reed-Harry, 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, Lily Guthrie, Bill Evans, Destiny Zeiders, Jill Whitcomb*, and Mark Buckwalter (in for Tim Peters*), James Gillis*

Members absent:

Kerry Golden, Greg Hostetter*, Christopher Uhland

**Non-Voting Member*

Review & Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes (Action) – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Chair

Lynn Dietrich made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 13, 2024, meeting. Destiny Zeiders seconded the motion. Motion approved.

Legislative Update – Destiny Zeiders, Lily Guthrie, Bill Evans

House

Destiny Zeiders informed the Board that Nathan Clark is now the Executive Director for the Republican House Ag and Rural Affairs committee, taking Kerry Golden's place, who is now Director of Research for that committee. Destiny provided an update on the Food Processing Residuals (FPR) Bill (H.B. 587) and companion bill (H.B. 586) will be voted on at the upcoming House session on April 22, 2025.

Senate

Lily Guthrie and Bill Evans informed the Board that the Senate returns to session May 5, 2025.

Chester Creek Stream Redesignation – Proposed Rulemaking (Informational) – Kristen Schlauderaff, Environmental Group Manager, Bureau of Clean Water

Kristen Schlauderaff informed the Board that the water quality standards being amended in this draft proposed rulemaking are the designated uses of surface waters. These regulatory amendments include redesignation recommendations for 16 streams in response to stream evaluations conducted by DEP. These stream evaluations were conducted in response to requests by DEP Regional Programs and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission as well as ongoing statewide monitoring activities performed by the Bureau of Clean Water. The redesignation recommendations include both special protection and non-special protection water uses. Kristen addressed questions and comments from the Board.

Grant Gulibon asked what the sources of impairments are for the streams mentioned in this presentation. Kristen informed that the streams for this redesignation are not impaired but are achieving a higher use than their designated use.

Jennifer Reed-Harry inquired about how DEP's stream redesignation efforts align with the work of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and local Trout Unlimited chapters. Kristen Schlauderaff responded that local Trout Unlimited groups often support DEP's rulemaking process and collaborate with PFBC. Kristen noted that DEP and PFBC work closely together in identifying and communicating Class A Wild Trout stream designations, which serve as one of the qualifiers for a High Quality (HQ) waters designation under DEP's water quality standards.

Reducing Industrial Sector Emissions in Pennsylvania (RISE PA) Grant Program (Informational) – Louie Krak, RISE PA Implementation Lead, DEP Energy Programs Office

Louie Krak provided an informational presentation on RISE PA, which is a \$396 million statewide industrial decarbonization grant program that will be offering grants for small-, medium-, and large-scale projects to reduce greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions at industrial facilities, which include agricultural operations. Louie addressed questions and comments from the Board.

Grant Gulibon asked whether DEP has received the grant funding. Louie responded that DEP has a fully executed grant agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Louie explained that the grant operates on a reimbursement basis, meaning DEP must submit disbursement requests to EPA to draw down the funds. However, the funding is legally obligated to DEP.

Jennifer Reed-Harry asked for clarification on several aspects of the RISE grant program: the applicable NAICS (North American Industry Classification System) codes for agricultural industries, whether the Community Benefits Bonus is related to Environmental Justice, and how the RISE program connects with the Department of Agriculture's Ag Innovation Program. In response, Louie explained that agricultural industries classified under NAICS code 11 are eligible for the RISE program. Regarding the Community Benefits Bonus, he noted that while it is not explicitly tied to Environmental Justice, it includes similar elements aimed at delivering

community-wide benefits. Louie also clarified that funding from the Ag Innovation Program can be used to satisfy the matching funds requirement for the RISE program.

Lynn Dietrich asked whether forestry operators are eligible to participate in the program. Louie responded that forestry is included under NAICS code 11, which pertains to Agriculture, making it eligible. However, Louie advised that applicants should confirm their specific NAICS code to ensure eligibility.

Jennifer Reed-Harry expressed concern that the agricultural industry is at a crossroads with programs like RISE, as they may support projects—such as solar farms—that could lead to the loss of productive cropland. She emphasized the need to balance innovation with the preservation of agricultural land.

In response, Louie acknowledged the concern and shared that, based on his experience with the Department of Agriculture's Farmland Preservation Program, he recognizes the importance of protecting prime farmland. He noted that while solar energy projects can provide benefits to farmers, he would advocate for siting them on marginal or less productive lands to avoid displacing valuable agricultural acreage.

Lynn Dietrich added a similar concern of wind power farm projects to the concern of impacting prime farmland.

Public Comment – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Chair

No public comments were offered virtually or in-person.

General Discussion/Agenda Topics Request – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Chair

Jennifer Reed-Harry suggested organizing a site visit focused on Food Processing Residuals (FPRs) prior to either the June 5 or August 28 meeting, noting the current relevance of the topic due to pending legislation.

Lynn Dietrich expressed concern about Biosolids and FPRs being grouped together as similar materials for regulatory purposes, emphasizing that they are distinct products and should not be treated the same.

Jennifer also requested an update from EPA at a future meeting, particularly in light of the new administration and upcoming CAFO permit renewal.

Additionally, Jennifer requested more information on the concept of a "Common Plan of Development or Sale" as it relates to construction stormwater permitting, and asked how this might impact the agricultural community—especially with regard to farmland development. Jill Whitcomb recommended scheduling a presentation to the Board on Pennsylvania's final Chesapeake Bay Numeric Progress Report later this summer. Jill also informed the Board that

revisions to the onlot sewage regulations (25 Pa. Code Chapters 71–73) are forthcoming and will be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

Lynn Dietrich, responding to Jill’s comments, raised a concern about pollution from the Harrisburg Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) impacting the Susquehanna River and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. Lynn noted that DEP does not allow pollution from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and questioned why such pollution is allowed from the Harrisburg CSO. Jill Whitcomb responded that DEP would provide the Board with additional information regarding this concern.

Jennifer inquired whether DEP is exploring any efficiencies using Artificial Intelligence (AI). Jill responded that the Department is currently in the discussion phase regarding broader modernization efforts, including potential uses of AI, but no implementations are planned in the near term.

Grant Gulibon asked about the situation with PFAS contamination in Columbia County, specifically with North Centre and South Centre Townships drinking water systems. Jill requested more information from Grant and agreed to look into it and get back with an update.

Jill Whitcomb provided an update on DEP’s efforts related to PFAS. Jill informed the Board that DEP has established regulatory limits for PFAS in public drinking water systems, which include requirements for quarterly testing and public notification if the system has a running annual average (RAA) exceedance. Jill added that, beginning in January 2025, smaller water systems serving fewer than 350 users will also be required to monitor for PFAS. Jill concluded by emphasizing that DEP is fully aware of public concerns surrounding PFAS and is actively collecting data and monitoring the issue.

Grant raised a concern about municipalities potentially charging farmers excessive fees—possibly beyond what regulations allow—for the planning and installation of high tunnels. Jill responded that DEP does not have authority over municipal land use or zoning decisions. However, Jill noted that if any relevant guidance on high tunnels exists, DEP will share it with the Board.

Bob Haines provided the Board with an update on coordinating presentation of previously requested agenda items for future meetings.

Adjourn – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Chair

Destin Zeiders made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Grant Gulibon. Motion approved unanimously. The meeting ended at 2:20 p.m.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 5, 2025, at 1 p.m.