



Agricultural Advisory Board (AAB) Meeting Meeting Minutes | April 2, 2026 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

DEP Southcentral Regional Office, Susquehanna Rooms A/B and Microsoft Teams

Welcome & Introductions – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Vice-Chair

Bob Haines conducted a roll call of AAB members; 5 of the 10 voting members were present. A quorum was not established.

Members present:

Chair Grant Gulibon	PA Farm Bureau
Vice-Chair Jennifer Reed-Harry	PennAG Industries Assoc.
Matt Royer	Penn State University
Destiny Zeiders	Rep. Eddie Day Pashinski
Lily Ott	Sen. Elder Vogel Jr.
Jill Whitcomb*	PA Dept. of Environmental Protection
Greg Hostetter*	PA Dept. of Agriculture
Pete Vanderstappen (in for Tim Peters*)	USDA, NRCS

Members absent:

Lynn Dietrich	PA State Grange
Nathan Clark	Rep. Dan Moul
Bill Evans	Sen. Judith Schwank
Amy Brown	PACD
Christopher Uhland	Ornamental Horticulture
James Gillis*	USDA, Farm Agency Service

**Non-Voting Member*

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

A quorum was not met, so the minutes from February 5, 2026 were not approved.

Legislative Update – Destiny Zeiders and Lily Ott

Destiny Zeiders reported that there have been no significant developments since the previous Board meeting. She noted that House Bill 586 remains awaiting consideration on the House floor, while House Bill 587 is currently pending in the Senate. Destiny also informed the Board that the House is scheduled to be in session during the week of April 13, followed by a one-week recess, with members returning to session on April 27.

Lily Ott informed the Board that she had no additional legislative updates to report. Lily noted, however, that the Senate is scheduled to return to session on April 20.

Public Comment – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Vice-Chair

No public comments.

2024-2025 Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspections Annual Summary – Krista Crone, Environmental Group Manager, Bureau of Watershed Restoration and Nonpoint Source Management

Krista provided the Board with a summary of the 2024-2025 Annual Report for the progress that was made for the Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program.

Vice-Chair Jennifer Reed-Harry commented on the significance of the inspection heatmap and emphasized the importance of the reported decrease in acres inspected, noting that the loss of farmland contributes to this trend. Jennifer asked Krista and Jill Whitcomb about staffing vacancies within conservation districts and whether DEP is taking steps to proactively address those vacancies.

Krista responded that DEP is working to provide new technicians with the resources and training necessary to become effective more quickly. Krista noted that ongoing staff turnover, both within DEP and the conservation districts, continues to present challenges.

Jill added that Karen Books, Chief of the Conservation District Support Section, has been collaborating with staff from the Clean Water Action Group and engaging with the Department of Labor & Industry to promote conservation district employment opportunities through the CareerLink system. Jill also reported that DEP is pursuing increased support for conservation districts through additional funding. Jill noted that Governor Shapiro's proposed budget includes a 13% increase in DEP's Conservation District Fund Allocation Program, reflecting a deliberate effort to align state funding levels with rising operational costs.

Jennifer raised concerns regarding biosecurity planning within the dairy industry, noting that only two dairy operations currently have approved biosecurity plans through the Department of Agriculture. Jennifer asked whether there may be an opportunity to connect funding or grant programs administered by the Center for Dairy Excellence to the development and implementation of biosecurity plans. Krista sought clarification on whether the intent of the suggestion was to encourage collaboration with milk purchasers or processors. Jennifer responded that requiring biosecurity plans through buyers may be challenging, as purchasers could choose to source milk from producers who are not subject to such requirements rather than work with producers operating under more stringent standards.

Jennifer asked whether Krista or Jill had any information regarding cases being pursued through enforcement actions. Jennifer noted that publicizing enforcement cases and establishing precedent through a visible example could encourage greater compliance among regulated entities. Krista

responded that no cases have progressed to the point of requiring testimony. Krista explained that all cases referred for enforcement or requiring petitions for enforcement through Commonwealth Court have been resolved through settlement. Krista noted that the prospect of a case advancing to that stage has served as a deterrent to noncompliance.

Krista then asked Jill whether there were any current plans to pursue additional enforcement actions. Jill responded that there were not. Jill commended Krista's team for the quality of its referrals and for ensuring that inspection reports contain the necessary documentation and details. Jill further noted that the program has demonstrated incremental improvements over time, highlighting that, out of several thousand inspections conducted, fewer than 500 referrals have been issued. Jill added that most compliance issues are resolved shortly after a Notice of Violation is issued.

Jill highlighted the growth and success of the inspection program since its inception, noting that estimated nitrogen reductions demonstrate the program's progress. Jill added that this progress should be considered in the context of the EPA's midpoint assessment, which indicated that additional efforts are still needed.

Pete Vanderstappen expressed concern about declining ACA training participation and the number of vacant positions that may be difficult to fill. Pete noted that falling milk prices are creating significant financial challenges for dairy producers and asked about the process and costs associated with developing required plans. Jennifer Reed-Harry explained that plans may be developed by consultants or through templates provided by the Department of Agriculture, which may be available at no cost. Jennifer further noted that the agricultural sector is facing challenging economic conditions and anticipated a depressed farm economy over the next several years. Pete agreed, stating that many farmers may need to rely on personal resources to sustain their operations.

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

Jennifer discussed potential topics for upcoming meetings, including the Chesapeake Bay, CAFO permitting, and potential legislative actions related to requirements for land application of food processing residuals.

Jill Whitcomb provided an update on PAG-07, PAG-08, and PAG-09 biosolids permits, noting that staff are actively preparing draft revisions and expect to provide them to the Board by mid-April.

Destiny Zeiders raised a potential scheduling conflict for the next meeting due to the Animal Health Diagnostic Commission meeting occurring on the same date, which would also affect several Board members. Jennifer noted that rescheduling or canceling the meeting may need to be considered.

Robert Haines and Jill also discussed a tentative presentation by Melissa Harrison at the August 6 meeting on water quality monitoring activities.

Adjourn – Jennifer Reed-Harry, Vice-Chair

Due to a quorum not being met, there was no motion for adjournment for this meeting.

Next Meeting: Thursday, June 4, 2026, at 1 p.m.

DRAFT