

**MINUTES OF
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
September 9th, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER:

Trisha Salvia, CAC Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 12:34 PM.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) MEMBERS PRESENT:

Robert Barkanic, Chairperson	Dwayne Mowry
Trisha Salvia, Vice-Chairperson	Jerome Shabazz
George Ambrose	Thaddeus Stevens
Jacquelyn Bonomo	James Welty
Carol Collier	Timothy Weston
Katherine Heatherington Cunfer	Jessica Shirley
John St. Clair	John Walliser

DEP STAFF PRESENT:

Ian Irvin, Executive Director
Casey Damicantonio, Policy Office
Joshua Neyhart, Policy Office

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

Chairman Barkanic solicited additions or corrections to the July 14, 2025, Minutes. Hearing none,

Tim Weston moved to approve the Minutes of the July 14, 2025. Carol Collier seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

DEP UPDATE:

Jessica Shirley, Secretary gave update on budget. The budget is two months overdue from June 30th deadline, and conversations are still progressing. The Department has been shifting fundings and limiting staff participation in conferences and travel to only mission critical items. The Secretary visited Santa Fe, NM for the Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) meeting all 50 states and Washington, D.C. Environmental state heads from 49 states met (Hawaii and Ohio were not present). ECOS processes and develops resolutions that are sent to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) and Congress and lobbies on behalf of ECOS, which has been successful. ECOS educates federal representatives on state issues. Much of the discussion at ECOS was on environmental agencies modernizing and collaborating on lessons learned.

Permitting, Licensing, and Certification (PLC) Platform - The Department is developing an entire system to replace E-Fax and work with Code PA and IT. This process is to get internal

workings in order by adapting and keeping up with the DEP vision, which is to move at the speed of business.

The Department rolled out SPEED for Chapter 102 permits in July and others in August. 3 applicants we are working through the 102 process. 229 professionals have been approved for 102, 104 have been approved for 105, 7 for dam safety, and 4 for air quality. There are 0 overdue authorization and, therefore, no refunds.

Climate change – DEP released the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory for 2022. The net emissions decreased 1.5% in 2022 from 2021, and statewide emissions decreased 21% since the 2005 baseline.

The Department has plugged 325 wells during Shapiro administration and rolled out the Methane Emissions Reduction Program. Reducing Industrial Sector Emissions in Pennsylvania (RISE PA), is a \$396 million program from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, which was part of the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. RISE PA is focused on decarbonization projects at industrial facilities to reduce greenhouse gas and co-pollutant emissions and grant application closed on September 5th with 66 applications.

Secretary Shirley also introduced the new Policy Director, Lauren Imgrund

Questions:

Is the Department still hiring despite the budget not being passed - Yes, but it depends on the federal funding line. The Department must go through an evaluation process first to make sure they are funded correctly. DEP is very much impacted by federal funding with approximately 1600 of 2600 positions receiving some level of federal funding.

PRESENTATION:

Delaware River Basin Commission-

Elizabeth Koniers Brown- Director, External Affairs and Communications

Delaware River Basin Commission

Presentation

The Delaware River Basin Commission was founded in 1961 and is a federal-interstate government agency which address water quality and flow collectively by Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and the federal government. There are 40 members on staff. The Delaware River is the largest undammed river east of the Mississippi, with a free flowing main stem for opportunities for fish migration, recreation, fishing, oyster harvesting, manufacturing, energy generation, snow making, drinking water, etc. 14 million people rely on the Delaware River Basin. DRBS addresses two main topics: adequate and sustainable supply of water and clean and healthy water resources.

Dissolved oxygen in Delaware River is a topic of interest. Fish need oxygen, dissolved in water, and levels have dropped with industrialization, improved wastewater treatment needed. Shad has returned to the basin and sturgeon have been reproducing. With the passage of the Clean Water Act and the establishment of U.S. EPA, over \$1 billion has been spent on improving wastewater treatment technology in the Delaware River Basin. However, can water quality be further improved to support fish propagation, including sensitive species and the now designated endangered Atlantic Sturgeon.

Another issues is tracking water resources considerations for data centers, including their rapid deployment, cooling water (consumption), the indirect water footprint, and do we have enough water. Some of the considerations are surveying existing centers, dialogue and outreach, tracking policy developments. To date, there are no permit applications before DRBC.

DRBC is undertaking Water Resource Resilience Planning, which focuses on climate change and extreme weather impacting the Delaware River Basin. DRBS is seeking input from the public during Phase 1, and Phase 2 begins in 2026 by focusing on tracking flood loss, water quality, and more and additional public input.

One final issue that DRB is working on managing is freshwater salinization, increased monitoring, partnering with local municipalities, tracking data, and funding.

Several questions focused on the impacts from Federal budget, including a significant portion of DRBC's monitoring budget from a U.S. EPA Section 106 program. DRBC hopes that the budget will pass, including resolution to programmatic uncertainty. Additional questions were about water infrastructure and the need for DEP to address water issues in western Pennsylvania. Another question was about the moratorium on water for hydraulic fracking, which there is no conversation to change course about.

William McMahon- York Energy Storage Project.

Civil Engineer

The need for the York Energy Storage Project started in the 1970's due to fast-growing nuclear power plants needing to put reserve electricity and began looking for an ideal location for pump storage at a low cost. Studies by BG&E and PPL identified a location on the Susquehanna River, between York and Lancaster County . Initially planning for the project at this location began more than 30 years ago. Cuffs Run has big cliffs on the western side, making it ideal for a pump storage project – one of the best locations on the East Coast. Pump storage projects use excess electricity to pump water to an upper reservoir for a time when electricity is needed. Mr. McMahon identified that the project is only about 80 percent efficient. The water comes from the upper reservoir, through turbine generators, and sends electricity to the grid. Mr. McMahon

provided greater detail of the York Energy Storage Project size, turbines, location, time frame to build the project, dealings with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the dislocation of about 50 families. Several Environmental Reports were done about 30 years ago.

This project would build increase electricity capacity for data centers and other electricity needs, build up the tax base for the area, work with local companies, upgrade residential areas and trails, be pro-technology, and 100% green.

Members had questions about water usage from the Susquehanna, including discussions with the Susquehanna River Basin Commission. Mr. McMahon responded that an analysis of water fluctuations from extraction and release was completed prior and would be held in a 24-hour cycle, but they had not discussed with SRBC as of the time of the meeting. Other questions were about Muddy Run and other similar projects on the Susquehanna. Members raised concerns locals farms and homes; with Mr. McMahon responding about the cost-benefit to tens of thousands of people and help re-locate displaced families. Other questions revolved around the projects business model and environmental studies, location to distribution lines.

Environmental Updates and Initiatives of PACD-

Amy Brown- Executive Director

PA Association of Conservation Districts

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) has a mission statement that it is responsive to conservation districts so that they can conserve natural resources for our future. PACD will be holding its annual conference in Philadelphia in July 2026. One of the, programs and grants that PACD has is the Building for Tomorrow Leadership Development program, which provides non-technical training and support to district board members, managers, and staff. Additionally, PACD provides technical training, including working with DEP for Chapters 105 and 105 training for newer technicians.

Previously, PACD was focused on legislative and advocacy work. However, PACD is in the midst of going through an extensive and resource-heavy strategic planning, including hiring a lobbying firm to represent PACD at the capital.

Ms. Brown described various other programs that PACD participates in, typically grant funding programs for Conservation Districts with monies from state agencies like DEP and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. These programs also include a Conservation planner Program and an Engineering Assistance Program.

Questions were about federal budget issues potentially effecting about 20 employees, Philadelphia County starting a Conservation District by July 2026,

Public Comments

Harry Campbell, PA Science Policy & Advocacy Director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

- Written Comments are available [here](#).
- Presentation is available [here](#).

Nathan Eachus

- Written Comments are available [here](#).
- Supporting material is available [here](#) and [here](#).

Karen Feridun, Better Path Coalition

- Written Comments are available [here](#).

Committee Reports:

- Strategic Issues: Discussion of topics to focus on in 2026
- Legislative: budget updates and bills of interest
- Public Participation: Finalization of “Guide to Present Public Comments” and “Public Comment Thank You”
- Upcoming meetings:
 - o LLW: September 26
 - o Legislative: October 2
 - o Public Participation: October 3
 - o RPAC: October 15
 - o MRAB: October 23

Nominations discussed unanimously approved, nominated by George Ambrose and seconded by Tim Weston and board

ADJOURNMENT:

George Ambrose moved to adjourn the meeting. Tim Weston seconded the motion, which was unanimously approved.

The Sept 9th, 2025, meeting of the CAC was adjourned at 3:43pm.