

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess (virtually) called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 9:32 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Aaron Simpson (virtually) and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: Cindy Rogers

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Office Administrator, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager (Dirt/Gravel Low Volume Roads), Benjamin Wenger – Conservation Program Specialist (Watersheds) (virtually), Mackenzie Marbain – Conservation Program Specialist (ACAP), Rebecca Caldwell and Hailey Wittkopp, Charles Flinn, Nathan McNutt and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Stephen Campbell – Penn State Extension, Dorothy Pierini-Rodgers, Bill Rodgers, and Commissioner Bonnie Dunlap.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Andrie moved to approve consent agenda items including accepting minutes of the previous meeting as presented, treasurer's report to be filed subject to audit, correspondence, DEP delegated programs reports and staff reports, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Peace moved to pay the bills as presented, second by Long, motion carried with Andrie abstaining.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Nine erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, and two Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Flinn reported Ag. Progress Days is August 12, and he encouraged everyone to attend.

Somonick reported the recycling center is struggling with low rates received for materials. For example, plastic is 2 cents per pound, glass 1 cent, newspaper 5 cents. Bi-metal cans are still profitable, and the composting program is very successful.

McNutt reported that the Indiana County Farm Bureau is holding their annual legislative tour on August 7 at his farm and the Conservation District is invited. The Resource Enhancement & Protection Program application period is open, and they are busy assisting producers with applications.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT – this position is currently vacant.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Campbell reported 50 attended the equipment demonstration in Rock Springs. The Indiana County Manure Management workshop in cooperation with ICCD will be held at the Dustin Heeter farm in Clarksburg on September 5. Rob Meinen and Charlie White will be in attendance to talk about managing manure and safety. A diagnostic clinic on crop diseases and insects is planned for July 23. A no-till alliance meeting/field day is planned for July 22 in Butler. Ag. Progress Days is set for August 12-14. A Farming for Success workshop is planned in Landisville on August 21. Campbell is hosting a drone cover cropping workshop in Butler August 26. Indiana Count Crops Day will be held February 4, 2026, at Blairsville Presbyterian Church. Lastly, Extension is having a wheat competition at ag progress days and Campbell has prepaid shipping envelopes for anyone who wants to enter.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

No nutrient management plans are currently under review. No plans were presented for approval.

Andrie moved to accept a \$160 donation from the public during the mental health carnival to be placed in the CFA Environmental Education Center fund, second by Long, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve ACAP contract extensions to December 31, 2025, for the Michael and Angel McCracken and Lone Oak Farm projects, second by Long, motion carried with Simpson abstaining.

Long moved to approve the job description as presented, and authorize advertising for an Office Administrator in training, second by Peace, motion carried.

Beri reported on the PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) needed for the Tide Trail project. Initial plans were for Center Township or their Recreation Authority to apply for the HOP permit, but it has not moved forward to date. The HOP is a requirement of the existing project grants to complete the project. Beri will continue to work with Center Township toward having them apply for the HOP permit. If ICCD must be the applicant to keep the project moving forward on the necessary timeline, this would cause ICCD to be responsible for line painting maintenance at the intersection. A HOP comes with liability protection from PennDOT. If the intersection is not improved and the Tide Trail ends without crosswalks, it would expose ICCD to liability. Beri is in talks with the Homer City Water Authority to potentially enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to fund the painting maintenance costs at the intersection.

Peace moved to approve the ICCD apply for a PennDOT Highway Occupancy Permit (HOP) for the Tide Trail project, pending Center Township's decision if they will proceed as the applicant, second by Andrie, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to approve the ICCD Executive Director to review, select, and subscribe to an appropriate third-party processing platform for taking electronic payments, second by Andrie, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to approve the opening of a dedicated bank account with First Commonwealth Bank for deposits of electronic payments, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve the updated ICCD Fee Schedule/Policy document that addresses the word "review" in response to the new DEP SPEED requirements, and adds a processing fee for minor NPDES permits, and updated the timber harvest erosion and sediment control reviews to be based on project acreage size, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Peace moved to enter executive session at 10:14 am to discuss personnel matters, second by Andrie, motion carried. Peace moved to resume the regular meeting at 10:18 am, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

Peace moved to apply for 2025/2026 PMSC AmeriCorps member positions, second by Long, motion carried.

Peace moved to table a decision on extending existing temporary employee contracts until ICCD has a decision on the AmeriCorps applications, second by VanHorn, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Beri reported there have been issues raised by Gibson-Thomas staff with respect to some of their engineering services for our ACAP program projects. District staff and directors will meet with the company leadership to discuss the project/program challenges.

VanHorn reported there are runoff issues from gas well roads at Blue Spruce Park. District staff will look at the site.

Long reported Firepoint Energy attended a planning commission meeting regarding planned rare earth elements mining in Tunnelton.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. Van Horn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:49 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant