

Vice Chairperson Barbara Peace called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 9:31 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Janis Long, Aaron Simpson and Gregg Van Horn. Directors absent: Commissioner Sherene Hess, Craig Andrie, and Cindy Rogers

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Office Administrator, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager (Dirt/Gravel Low Volume Roads), Mackenzie Marbain – Conservation Program Specialist (ACAP), Blake Mauthe – Conservation Program Specialist (Educator), Rebecca Caldwell-Temporary employee, Charles Flinn, Alysha Trexler, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Stephen Campbell – Penn State Extension, Ariel Coleman – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Nathan Edwards – PACD Conservation Planner/Indiana NRCS field office, PA Game Commission Warden Mason Frumkin, PA Fish and Boat Commissioner Waterways Conservation Officer Kyle Wirick, and John Bruner.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Simpson 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 Long, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to pay the bills as presented, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Five erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, and one Chapter 102 site inspection was conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS - none

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

This position is currently vacant

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Edwards reported that the Indiana field office finished up FY 25 with \$1.1 million in 21 contracts. They processed several Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program contract renewals and received several new applications. The field office is in the process of conducting Farm Service Agency compliance reviews. He and Coleman participated in Penn State Ag. Progress Days at the NRCS informational table and Edwards also attended the PACD Joint Annual Conference. Coleman reported she attended a workshop on how to effectively talk with livestock owners.

Campbell reported the Indiana County Manure Management workshop in cooperation with ICCD will be held at the Dustin Heeter farm in Clarksburg on September 5. Campbell is hosting a drone cover cropping workshop in Butler August 26 with drone plantings of three different cover cropping mixes over corn and soybeans, along with a no-till workshop. A private applicators short course will be held September 18 and 19 in Butler and registration fees include the private applicator packet. Field crop recertification school will be September 24 in State College and credits are available for pesticide applicator license holders. The Indiana County Ag Stakeholder meeting will be held on September 23 at Riziki Café. A Farming for Success workshop is planned in Landisville on August 21.

Wirick reported Cold Water Requirements begin November 1 for all small craft. Lack of using life jackets while kayaking citations are on the rise and the PF&BC want to educate folks on the importance of using personal floatation devices. He reported a county commissioner is going to propose a change in the fishing licensing rule to make them valid for one year from date of

purchase, rather than expiring on December 31 of the purchase year. Operation dry water was conducted statewide July 4-6. 2,683 watercraft vessels were contacted with 4,653 boaters. Nine boaters were removed for driving under the influence. 284 citations were issued, and 931 warnings were issued. Brook trout stocking at Blue Spruce Park will take place October 9 at 11:30.

Frumkin reported crop damage complaints are coming in as crops mature. The Certified Hunter Program is a new pilot program being introduced where applicants take a written test on wildlife management, habitat management, and ethics, to become a Certified Hunter. Applicants must also pass a proficiency test for their harvest weapon, and they can then go onto approved farms to harvest deer. Harvested deer are then donated to the Hunter's Share the Harvest program. This program is not yet available statewide. Woodland Owners of the Southern Alleghenies (WOSA) is a program to manage forests, invasives and wildlife. Frumkin asked if there are any projects like this in Indiana County or if ICCD is interested in initiating program. Mauthe reported he has talked with Jeff Osborne DCNR Bureau of Forestry about a similar program. Indiana County now has Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) present in the deer population, and the entire county is considered a Disease Management Area, which means no salt blocks, feed piles, etc. are permitted. This is an attempt to keep deer from congregating and spreading the disease. Hunters are encouraged to have their deer tested for CWD. There are bins available throughout the county that hunters can place the heads in for testing.

Beri reported on the Friends of Indiana County Conservation District awarded two small ag grants to Penn View Farms for fencing and Ethan Hoover Farms for field drains.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

No nutrient management plans are currently under review. No plans were presented for approval, however, Brookside Dairy LLC requested a yearly plan submission extension to September 30, 2026, which was approved.

No donations were received.

Simpson moved to approve the Barry Pugh ACAP contract amendment for an additional \$1,055.24 for manure management plan development and additional animal trail, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve Nathan Edwards, PACD Planner, as the alternate ACAP Committee member for Ariel Coleman, USDA NRCS, second by Long, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve Young & Associates engineering contracts for the Gregg Van Horn farm ACAP project in the amount of \$14,800 and Craig Andrie farm ACAP project in the amount of \$16,700, second by Long, motion carried with Van Horn abstaining. New motion by Simpson, second by Long, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve the annual Agriculture Conservation Technician application for funding in amount of \$20,000, second by Long, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve the annual Nutrient Management Program application for funding in amount of \$40,000, second by Long, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to approve District participation in the first annual Seat-to-Seat Bike Ride on September 20, 2025, and \$100 sponsorship, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Simpson moved to authorize the personnel committee to make the selection decision for the Office Administrator in training position, to be ratified at a subsequent board meeting, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to approve Rebecca Caldwell as the 1700-hour AmeriCorps member, second by Simpson, motion carried. Wittkopp declined the 1200-hour position.

Long moved to approve application to the Pitcairn-Crabbe Foundation for the Indiana County Food Hub Planning and Development Project in the amount of \$20,000, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to approve application to the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies Bork Family Fund for the Growing Together: Indiana County Food Access Initiative in the amount of \$7,500, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Marbain provided a cover crop update. \$4,745 has been allocated to Pine Valley Mills Farm. \$4,700 is still available to the District will continue to take applications past the July 15 deadline.

Mauthe reported Apple Fest planning is underway. Five food trucks, 40 craft vendors, and live music are scheduled. Staff will be pre-making cider and volunteers are needed.

Beri reported the legislative bus tour was well attended by aides of the legislators, who were busy with state budget issues.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. Van Horn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:11 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant