

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, September 16, 2025, at 9:31 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: 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), Ben Wenger – Conservation Program Specialist (Watershed Specialist) Tiffany Wirick – Office Administrator in training, Tom Beresnyak, Doyle Freeman, Nathan McNutt, and John Somonick-Associate Directors, Ariel Coleman – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kyle Wirick – PA Fish and Boat Commission, Mason Frumkin and John Walker – PA Game Wardens, and Jeff Osborn – DCNR Bureau of Forestry.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Peace 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 Simpson, motion carried.

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Five erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, and 12 Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Somonick reported plastic is currently \$20/ton. The cost is so low if it can’t be sold it will go to the landfill. The AWARE watershed organization is holding an open house on October 18.

McNutt reported that REAP has a 60-day review period this year instead of the typical 30-day period.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE’S REPORT

This position is currently vacant.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Coleman reported Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and Conservation Stewardship Program CSP applications are due November 1 and eligibility determination is due January 1. There are approximately one half the funds available this year which will make the program very competitive this year.

Beresnyak reported on available Penn State Extension on-line webinars.

Frumkin reported he’s received calls regarding Chronic Wasting Disease in white tailed deer in Indiana County. Regulations are in place to try to manage the disease.

Wirick reported October 9 is annual fall stocking at Blue Spruce Park. 400 trout from the Blackleggs Nursery will be stocked in the Little Mahoning Fly Fishing area once stream levels improve.

Osborn reported on a cost-share program titled PA Woodland Resistant Enhancement Network. This program is for public and private landowners owning between 10 and 2500 acres for forest management practices that include invasive species control, brush management, crop tree release, and more.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Beri reported the Personnel Committee met to conduct interviews for the Office Administrator in Training position.

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

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

Simpson moved to accept a \$10.00 donation from Joe and Arlene Yackuboskey for the Envirothon Education Grant fund and a \$400 donation from Barbara Peace for Apple Fest cider apples, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve a contract with Pine Valley Fencing not to exceed \$36,580 for fencing installation (phase II) at the McCracken ACAP project site, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Van Horn moved to ratify the personnel committee selection of Tiffany Wirick for the Office Administrator in Training position starting at Track C, Advanced Level, Tier 1 of the salary structure, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Peace moved to enter executive session at 9:49 am, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Peace moved to return to the regular meeting at 10:03 am, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to accept the resignation of Mackenzie Marbain effective October 17, 2025, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve Brooke Russick's request to reduce employment from full-time to part-time effective January 5, 2026, second by Peace, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve advertising for a Conservation Program Specialist position and to delegate the hiring decision making authority to the Personnel Committee, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Mauthe reported Apple Fest planning is progressing, with approximately 7 non-profits, a petting zoo, 4 food trucks and 22 craft vendors scheduled to attend. Live music will be funded by Friends of the Parks. Mauthe is working with a mini-cooper car club on a potential car show. Currently 3,200 people have indicated interest on social media.

Mauthe reported that Jr. Envirothon planning is well underway. 23 teams are registered to complete from every school district in the county, as well as the Homeschoolers for Christ.

Beri reported that the Thank a Farmer Dash will be held November 22 to generate revenue for the ag small grant program.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. Van Horn moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:16 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant