

Chairperson Commissioner Sherene Hess called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Cindy Rogers, and Aaron Simpson. Directors absent: Gregg VanHorn

Also present: Douglas Beri Jr. – Executive Director, Tammie Robinson – Office Administrator, Brooke Russick – Conservation Program Manager (Dirt/Gravel Low Volume Roads) virtually, Adam Hnatkovich – Conservation Program Specialist (Dirt/Gravel Low Volume Roads), Nathan Edwards – Conservation Program Specialist (ACAP), Blake Mauthe – Conservation Program Specialist (Educator), Tiffany Wirick – Office Administrator, Tom Beresnyak, Doyle Freeman, Nathan McNutt, Alysha Trexler, and John Somonick - Associate Directors, Kaine Diehl – DEP Field Representative, Stephen Campbell – Penn State Extension, Ariel Coleman – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Ned Kimmel – PA Game Commission.

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.

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

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

Three erosion and sediment control plans were reviewed, and six Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

Trexler reported she is happy to meet with landowners to discuss riparian buffers and project funding through Western PA Conservancy, which is secure for the next few years.

Somonick reported planning commission approval was granted for four planned solar farms in the county.

McNutt reported that a new round of Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) applications will be opening in December. August applicants are currently receiving payments. West Central Equipment dealers in the region are planning to meet with him to learn more about the program to better aid their customers through the application/purchase process.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Diehl reported on current educational webinar opportunities.

COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Coleman reported applications will be received through January 15, 2026, for the usual USDA programs including Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), easements, etc.

Campbell reported that Penn State is doing research on See and Spray precision spraying technology from John Deere. Private pesticide applicators' short course will be held in February. Crops day will be held February 4, 2026, in Blairsville. The first 25 Farm Bureau members to register will have their fee paid by the Farm Bureau. Pesticide 2 + 2 program flyers will be distributed soon. The Soil Health Conference is planned for January 27, 2026, at the Fred Rogers Center at St.

Vincent College. Members of the No-Till Alliance are waived from the registration fee. Pesticide license renewal will be going on-line in June. He encouraged anyone wanting the paper form to do so now before on-line is only option.

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

Kimmel reported on this year's hunting season. Sunday hunting on private property seemed to be low but increased on state game lands. Even with a good number of hunters, it appears that there is still a surplus of deer in Indiana County. The public access program is prevalent in Indiana County and is being revised statewide with a launch date of July 1, 2026. With this new program, hunters can locate private lands that are open for public hunting.

Beri reported the Friends of Indiana County Conservation District Thank a Farmer Dash was held with over 70 registered participants, the highest yet. The small farm ag grant application date will be slightly adjusted.

COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

OLD BUSINESS - none

NEW BUSINESS

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

There were no donations received.

The ACAP committee met on December 15 to rank inventory and evaluation grant applicants. The current grant will facilitate development of approximately six plans. The following were ranked and recommended for funding: David & JeanAnn Fulmer, Mindy Fetterman, Luke Golden, Gus Dumm, Tammy DeHaven and Stephen Campbell. After development of the I&E, these landowners can then apply for ACAP project funding. Peace moved to approve December 15, 2025, ACAP committee meeting inventory and evaluation ranking recommendations, second by Simpson, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve an ACAP contract extension for the ACAP 08-2023 Lone Oak Farm project to June 30, 2026, second by Andrie, motion carried with Simpson abstaining.

Simpson moved to approve an ACAP contract extension for the ACAP 12-2024 McCracken Brothers project to June 1, 2026, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve a contract with Young & Associates for engineering and design work for the Dave and Karen Fairman ACAP project not to exceed \$18,700, second by Peace, motion carried.

Simpson moved to approve contributing 10% to the PA Municipal Retirement System employee pension fund for 2026, second by Peace, motion carried with yeas from Andrie, Long, Peace, Simpson, and Rogers, and no nay votes.

Peace moved to approve budgeted salary compensation end of year staff performance payments for full time staff, excluding the Executive Director, of \$2,000; part time staff \$1,000; prorated office admin in training \$667, new Conservation Program Specialist – Dirt/Gravel Roads \$333.50 and new Conservation Program Specialist – ACAP \$333.50, second by Andrie, motion carried.

Beri reported ICCD's 2026 budgeted revenue and expenses are \$8,892,555.64. Simpson moved to approve the 2026 budget as presented, second by Long, motion carried.

Long moved to approve holding 2026 monthly board of directors' meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 am at the ICCD office, with the exception of September which will be held Monday, September 14 due to a conflict with a state-wide ACAP conference being held in Indiana County, with committee meetings held the third Tuesday of each month at 8:30 am and Mondays at 9:00 am and 3:00 pm, second by Andrie, motion carried.

Peace moved to approve the part time Conservation Program Manager job description as presented, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

Long reported the Homer City Generating Plant wastewater and ash removal notifications have been appearing in the local paper. ICCD is not involved with these permits. Our role is only with respect to earth disturbance.

Beri plans to promote the new ag apprenticeship program at the annual farm show.

Hess reported she attended the state Farmland Preservation Program board meeting. Pennsylvania has invested \$6.9 million to preserve over 661,000 acres of farmland. Pennsylvania leads the nation in preserved farms.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. Simpson moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:17 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson
Administrative Assistant