

Chairperson Sherene Hess, participating virtually, called the meeting of the Indiana County Conservation District to order on Tuesday, January 17, 2023, at 9:31 am at 435 Hamill Road in Indiana. Other Directors present were Craig Andrie, Janis Long, Barbara Peace, Aaron Simpson and Gregg VanHorn. Directors absent: Richard Stumpf

Also present: Tammie Robinson – Administrative Assistant, Benjamin Wenger – Watershed Specialist, Alexis Shank – Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) Coordinator, Marisa Matlin – Conservation Program Specialist, Monica Lee-District Educator, Larissa Bohn and Emily Rahalla-AmeriCorps, Doyle Freeman, Sarah King, and Hunter Overdorff-Associate Directors, Matt Heffner – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Gerald Hoy and Chris Fatzinger-DCNR Bureau of Forestry, Susannah Harris-DEP Field Representative, and Justin Mansberger-Penn State Extension Educator/Master Watershed Steward Coordinator, participating virtually.

Harris administered the oath of office to Peace and Hess.

PUBLIC COMMENTS - none

Andrie moved to keep the existing slate of officers of Sherene Hess-Chair, Richard Stumpf-Vice-Chair, and Aaron Simpson-Treasurer, second by Van Horn, motion carried.

VanHorn 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 Andrie, motion carried.

VanHorn motioned to pay the bills as presented, second by Andrie, motion carried.

CORRESPONDENCE - none

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DELEGATED PROGRAMS REPORT

One erosion and sediment control plan was reviewed and two Chapter 102 site inspections were conducted.

STAFF/PROGRAM ACTIONS AND REQUESTS - none

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR REPORTS

King reported Stephen Hoven will present a webinar on January 26, 2023, on factors that are precipitating climate change patterns.

Overdorff reported the legislative session has begun and are awaiting swearing in of the Governor and Lt. Governor. Additionally, DCNR has a summer internship position open at Yellow Creek State Park for conservation technicians at a rate of \$16 per hour.

FIELD REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

Susannah Harris reported Growing Greener Abandoned Mine Reclamation (AMR) grants are available via the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) and the application deadline is approaching soon. Abandoned mine drainage and land restoration projects are eligible. An employment law seminar is available for directors and associate directors in State College on February 22 or Pittsburgh/Cranberry on February 21 and will feature how to lawfully and effectively manage staff. The ACAP delegation agreement has been released for execution, however, there are still some program specifics being ironed out. The Clean Water Academy has released new courses on prevailing wage and a legacy sediment. Basic and advanced Ag. Boot Camp is being conducted and Shank will be participating.

## COOPERATING AGENCY REPORTS

Mansberger reported on the Master Watershed Steward program, that operates similar to the Master Gardner program, where volunteers are trained who then do outreach and projects in the community including riparian buffer plantings and educational outreach. Weekly classes will begin in March. Current Indiana County projects include installation of downspout planters in the Blairsville Community Garden, at Aging Services, and Western PA Conservancy sites where water is captured from downspouts and routed to self-water planters to help reduce stormwater runoff. Another project is the live stake nursery in Getty Heights Park where 15 shrubs of 6 different species were planted and will soon be ready to harvest by environmental organizations requesting live stakes for riparian buffer projects aimed at reducing streambank erosion. Mansberger will be partnering with Indiana County Technology Center to do a one-acre lawn-to-meadow conversion to help alleviate stormwater runoff and flooding issues. On January 26 he will be hosting a tap talk at Levity Brewing that includes a water themed trivia game.

Heffner reported NRCS has received 60 project applications and ranking is underway with selections to be made within a few weeks. \$380,000 is available for Environmental Quality Incentives Program projects in Indiana County at this time, which is significantly higher than last year's starting budget, but he feels that could potentially increase to nearly \$1 million in county projects this year. Heffner is assisting the Conservation District with the new ACAP program. The Indiana Field office is still short staffed, and they may be asking the Conservation District for assistance.

Gerald Hoy, the Assistant District Forester, is new to the Gallitzin State Forest office, and attended the meeting to introduce himself to the staff and directors. The Gallitzin office manages 26,000 acres of state forest land from their office in Ebensburg. Hoy noted the public may not be aware of all the services available to them and he encourages the District to forward all forestry calls and concerns to their office.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS - none

## OLD BUSINESS - none

## NEW BUSINESS

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

No monetary donations were received; however, Jack Claypoole has donated a full black bear mount and two mule deer shoulder mounts to the District. Additionally, he has loaned several other specimens for temporary display purposes.

Due to the absence of Executive Director Beri, discussion/action on the agenda item regarding contractors involved in the District's building project was postponed until the February Board of Directors meeting.

Simpson moved to approve entering into a Growing Greener Watershed Protection Grant agreement with the PA Department of Environmental Protection in the amount of \$164,466 to complete the Lower Two Lick Creek Watershed assessment, second by Andrie, motion carried.

2023 committee and voting delegate appointments were reviewed as presented and several vacancies were filled with Overdorff volunteering to serve as the Board Governance and Policy committee chair and Peace volunteering to fill a vacancy on that committee as well as the Facilities committee. Andrie moved to appoint VanHorn as the District delegate alternate on the Dirt/Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program Quality Assurance Board, second by VanHorn, motion carried. Clarification will be obtained from the State Conservation Commission to ensure there is no conflict of interest due to VanHorn being related to a county township supervisor. Following the actions, Long

moved to approve the 2023 committee and delegate appointments as presented, second by Simpson, motion carried.

DISCUSSION

ICCD will host the First Waves Indiana video premiere February 8 at 6:00 in the District's Discovery Center. This will showcase the short films made by the county youth that participated in the three-day program the summer of 2022.

The next Conservation District Board of Directors meeting will be held Tuesday, February 21, 2023, at 9:30 am at 435 Hamill Road, Indiana, PA 15701. The meeting adjourned at 10:22 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Tammie L. Robinson  
Administrative Assistant