

CAC Members Present: Xavier Brown, John Dawes, Matt Ehrhart, Bill Fink, Brenna Goggin, Donna Harris-Aikens, Verna Harrison, Chuck Herrick, Ann Jurczyk (Vice-Chair), Anna Killius, Esi Langston, Julie Lawson (Chair), David Lillard, Mike Lovegreen, Joe Maroon, Bill Matuszeski, Abel Olivo, Kate Patton, Daphne Pee, Charlie Stek, Dana Wiggins, and CAC Staff: Jess Blackburn and Adam Bray. *(Members who attended the meeting in person were required to follow CDC guidelines and provide proof of vaccination)*

Speakers/Guests: Karl Brown, Alexis Campbell, Andrew Dehoff, Andrew Gavin, Allyson Gibson, Kate Fritz, Amy Handen, Stacey Hanrahan, Mike Hoffman, Adam Ortiz, Mike Rolband, Martha Shimkin, Brenda Lee Sieglitz, Gene Venno, Bo Williams, Kristen Wolf, Joe Wood

Meeting presentations and materials are located at:

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/event/citizens_advisory_committee_quarterly_meeting_december_2021

Wednesday, Dec 1, 2021

The CAC Chair, Julie Lawson, called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM. Julie provided opening remarks about the meeting's goal - to increase understanding of land and water uses in the Susquehanna that impact water quality and the people who live and work in lower Pennsylvania counties.

CAC Business Meeting

CAC adopted the draft Sept 2021 meeting minutes as submitted. Julie updated CAC on the DEIJ Accountability Framework, the Advisory Committees Leadership Meeting, the virtual meeting scheduled with Governor Northam taking place following the next day's adjournment, and the upcoming Executive Council Meeting on Dec 15th. Matt Ehrhart presented the slate of officers to the Committee for officer nominations. CAC unanimously approved the continued service of Julie Lawson as Chair and Ann Jurczyk as Vice-Chair.

Local Watershed Context

Andrew Gavin, Deputy Executive Director, Susquehanna River Basin Commission SRBC

After an introduction and welcome by Executive Director Andrew Dehoff, Andrew Gavin provided an overview and history of SRBC as well as the history, culture, and economy of the Harrisburg area. Andrew explained that since colonization, the Susquehanna has been a major resource for transporting timber, coal, and oil. Despite the environmental impacts of abandoned mines, coal continues to have a place today along with nuclear, hydroelectric, and natural gas. Energy production in the area has quadrupled in the past 40 years. The Susquehanna River Basin Compact was signed into law in 1970 to join the federal government with MD, PA, and VA as equal partners to protect and manage the water resources of the Susquehanna Basin. Andrew briefed CAC on the main issues facing the watershed and the Commission's Comprehensive Plan Framework to address them. Gene Venno, the Commission's Governmental Affairs & Public Advocacy, gave a short presentation on the history of the Susquehannock tribe who once occupied the area, and shared a [new brochure](#) that SRBC is producing on the topic.

Discussion: Members discussed the impact of new federal funding on PA's ability to achieve water quality goals. SRBC staff indicated that they were well-poised to identify opportunities and collaboratively make progress. CAC inquired whether SRBC has been able to equitably dispense funding for flood mitigation projects to communities with language barriers or are lower-income. CAC discussed SRBC's role in the Conowingo WIP Financing Strategy. SRBC described how they have the authority to collect money from different sources, both public and private, to issue grants, pay-per-service and they are able to do it across state lines.

Pennsylvania WIP County Action Plans

Kristen Wolf, Chesapeake Bay Program Coordinator, PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Allyson Gibson, Director of Strategic Partnerships and Programs, Lancaster Clean Water Partners

Kristen provided overarching updates and context on PA's Phase 3 WIP implementation progress and County Action Plans (CAPs). There are 34 PA counties in the Bay watershed that have completed and are implementing their CAPs. Of those, 8 carry 50% of the load to the Bay. Kristen updated CAC on new partnerships that have developed through the Phase 3 WIP process, both with other agencies and with local watershed groups. She explained how DEP emphasized to county partners that WIPs are voluntary and can be modified and adapted to their needs. CAP Coordinators, supported through state funding but hired by the counties, provide progress updates to the DEP Chesapeake Bay Office. Through the CAPs, counties are generating creative and innovative efforts and identifying needs – additional funding, people (technical assistance but also people for things like administration and grant writing), and reporting. DEP is working to accelerate implementation through flexible grants and funding from other partners. Moving forward, DEP plans to expand collaboration and technical assistance, implement BMPs, and continue to share success stories.

Allyson briefed CAC on the work of the [Lancaster Clean Water Partners](#), a group of organizations working together on a shared vision of clean and clear water in Lancaster by 2040. Lancaster County has 21% of the state's Nitrogen goal and she explained how the best opportunities for clean water work and economic support are in agriculture.

Discussion: CAC members discussed the ways DEP relies on county partners to work with local community groups and coalitions and ways Lancaster County conducts outreach and communicates with Hispanic communities and refugee populations.

Pennsylvania Agricultural Approach

Karl Brown, PA State Conservation Commission, PA Department of Agriculture

Karl updated CAC on the overall progress of implementing farm practices. The Ag Conservation Partnership is moving forward despite the challenges of COVID and supply chain issues and they are finding new funding opportunities. The biggest challenge is developing dedicated, predictable, and adequate funding. As federal and state funding increases significantly, the need for additional technical assistance funding is necessary in order to make projects happen. Karl described funding programs available through the Commission - Conservation Excellence Grants, the REAP Tax Credit Program, the AgriLink Low-Interest Loan Program, and the Farmland Preservation and Regional Conservation Partnership Program. He noted that CAC could help by advocating for dedicated, consistent funding and ensuring that technical assistance funding is also included.

Discussion: Members discussed the challenges of implementing federally-funded practices on Amish farms. Karl shared that not all Amish refuse funding and that word of mouth, along with assurances from the Social Security Administration that they would not lose social program exemptions, have helped make progress in their communities. CAC discussed the implications of new and upcoming federal funding, which programs it can be applied to, and if it can help meet increased technical assistance needs.

[Freshwater Mussels and Water Quality](#)

Joe Wood, VA Senior Scientist, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Mike Rolband, President, Resource Protection Group

Joe briefed CAC on freshwater mussels and how they relate to the Bay Partnership effort. Throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed, there are 28 different species. They can filter water faster than oysters and, like oysters, can remove nitrogen from the water. Joe explained the life cycle of freshwater mussels and how mussels depend on native symbiotic host fish to reproduce. Since the pre-Columbian era, there has been an estimated decline of 90% of freshwater mussels and close to 70% of the nation's species are now vulnerable to extinction due to water quality issues, dams, and disease. Joe expressed optimism for future mussel restoration efforts because it is possible to quickly propagate mussels and restock waterways. There are also potential funding opportunities in the Chesapeake WILD Program. Mike described how his nonprofit has been studying how mussels can live in two streams in Northern Virginia. They are now conducting studies to see whether they can populate the streams and will measure the effect on water quality and habitat improvements.

Discussion: CAC members discussed mussel restoration efforts outside the Bay watershed and efforts taking place in DC with the Anacostia Mussel Power program. CAC discussed the next steps for the STAC report on Mussels and how mussels can be incorporated into the Bay Program framework. Members discussed using mussels as an indicator tool and using citizen water quality programs to help monitor their health. CAC discussed how mussels have traditionally been left out of restoration considerations because, compared to oysters, there has been no commercial value for them.

[Chesapeake Bay Program Updates](#)

Martha Shimkin, Deputy Director, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office

Martha briefed CAC on the [recent Principals' Staff Committee \(PSC\) meeting](#): the DEIJ Implementation Plan was approved; the PSC offered comments on the Conowingo WIP (CWIP) which the CWIP Steering Committee will incorporate into their draft milestones due in January; the Outcome Attainability Team presented a [new dashboard](#); and the PSC received an update on funding needs for monitoring.

Martha described the four focus areas of the [DEIJ Implementation Plan](#) and updated CAC on the results of its public comment process.

Martha updated CAC on the recently signed Infrastructure Bill that will deliver \$238 million of funding to the Chesapeake Bay Program Office over 5 years. She invited CAC to share ideas for how the bill can help meet Chesapeake Bay restoration goals.

The EC meeting agenda will include reports from the Advisory Committees and the DEIJ Implementation Plan. EPA Administrator Regan may be nominated as Chair by the EC and he will most likely accept the nomination.

Thursday, Dec 2, 2021

CAC Member Discussion

CAC reconvened at 8:30 AM and members reflected on the previous day's meeting topics. Members mentioned that they enjoyed the mussel presentation and wanted to hear more details about PSC meetings in the future. A motion was made to write a letter addressed to the Executive Council that a) conveys concern about meeting the 2025 meeting goals, b) acknowledges PA's approach in having a structure that goes beyond 2025, c) supports additional funding for technical assistance, d) requests additional metrics, and e) states that CAC will want others jurisdictions to deliver similar presentations in the future. CAC also discussed the need to have a mechanism to hold jurisdictions accountable for how they use infrastructure spending. It was agreed that this would also be added to the letter and Julie would raise the topic at the EC meeting when she shares our recommendations.

Subcommittee Chairs reported back to the group about their meetings. The Emerging Issues Subcommittee recommended hosting a meeting panel session about solar farms and inviting LGAC to partner. The panel, which could be open to the public, would focus on issues of stormwater, location, land-use conversion, and could provide an opportunity to learn more about how states organize local governments. They also requested having a presentation during February's meeting to learn more about sources of funding that can be used for Bay restoration and workforce development.

The Water Quality Subcommittee recommended a meeting panel of the jurisdictions to address their plans for infrastructure funding and anticipated water quality impacts. They also requested a meeting panel on Conowingo to increase CAC's understanding but that focuses on a path forward to success. Additionally, they want to focus on ways to more effectively blend WIPs with climate resiliency issues.

The Stewardship & Engagement Subcommittee recommended a meeting panel that could critically look at the Bay Program's capacity building and would focus on equitable funding distribution, technical competence, cultural competency, leadership development, metrics, and evaluation systems.

Keystone 10 Million Tree Partnership

Brenda Lee Sieglitz, Senior Manager, Keystone 10 Million Tree Partnership, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Alexis Campbell, Executive Director, Horn Farm Center for Agricultural Education

Brenda briefed CAC on the Keystone 10 Million Tree Partnership, a campaign launched by Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) in 2018. They currently have 203 partners in Pennsylvania and work Commonwealth-wide, not just in the watershed. Brenda described the campaign's strategic roadmap that includes direct investments in trees, supplies and matching the grants that partners can apply for. She explained how the maintenance of trees is actually their number one priority in order to ensure trees survive. By partnering with 10 Million Trees, organizations receive free trees, help with volunteer recruitment, access to GIS tree planting reports, and other benefits. Their priority planting areas are riparian buffers, cities and towns, and abandoned mine land areas. Brenda explained how CBF is able to provide down payments to local nurseries to grow native trees specific for the project. This increases tree supply, helps support nurseries in the watershed, leads to cost effective bulk pricing, keeps money in the watershed, and increases biodiversity. Brenda also briefed CAC on the partnership they have with PennState Health to explore the intersection between trees and public health and the Patient Tree Giveaway program.

Alexis presented information about the [Horn Farm Center](#), a local partner of the 10 Million Trees Initiative that focuses on regenerative agriculture and ecological education. They are a nonprofit that includes a

CSA, farm stand, training programs, and classes. With the help of the 10 Million Tree Partnership, they have planted 16,000 trees on their property and are creating multifunctional riparian buffers with trees that can be agricultural products. Alexis shared how they are implementing erosion mediation techniques, in-stream restoration, and building dense native forests using the Miyawaki technique.

Discussion: CAC discussed deforestation that is caused by development and how it affects tree planting goals. Members asked about how the 10 Million Tree Partnership is tracking native tree plantings with a tracker tool and is sourcing trees from seeds in the watershed. Brenda said that the campaign is established enough now that they are poised to start working with up-and-coming growers and are seeking women and minority-owned businesses in their RFPs. CAC discussed the breakdown of public and private lands involved in the Partnership and how they are trying to increase the amount of private land over time in order to reach their goals.

Discussion with newly appointed EPA Region 3 Administrator

Adam Ortiz, EPA Region 3 (Mid-Atlantic) Administrator

CAC members went around the room and introduced themselves to Administrator Ortiz and CAC's Subcommittee Chairs shared recommendations from the [2021 Annual Recommendations to the Executive Council](#): (1) Ensure state policies are aligned with the Partnership's climate goals and to access agency capacity to deliver climate-resilient programs, (2) Expedite federal funding for implementation of prioritized practices, and (3) Review and simplify grant programs to make sure they are as accessible as possible for disadvantaged communities. CAC members also brought up abandoned mine land reclamation, increasing the flexibility for states to use revolving funds for non-gray infrastructure, and capacity concerns for civil engineers to implement infrastructure projects.

Adam discussed how the EPA, and the Administration as a whole, will have a strong emphasis on climate change and environmental justice and will work with the states to identify distressed areas and communities that may need help but do not know how to get it.

Members discussed how the EPA can help jurisdictions with capacity and technical assistance as they receive additional infrastructure funding. Adam said the government has the power to convene and can be creative in helping find contractors, engineers, local firms, and small businesses. CAC discussed engagement and outreach methods and ways to get communities part of the process. Adam said that the goal is to identify communities in ways that do not further stigmatize them and raised up the Equity Map in Montgomery County as an example of engagement. He said that it is important that the EPA work with local validators, actually listen to the community, and have an ongoing relationship and that measures of success could include the amount of engagement, grant funding, technical assistance, visits, and environmental measurables. Adam said that they will reach out to other federal agencies, especially Ag partners, to be more involved in the Bay Program to help meet 2025 goals.

Action Items, Next Steps, and Closing Remarks

Jess outlined the action items discussed earlier in the day, including the letter to be written to the Executive Council. Additionally, she will follow up with Subcommittees to prioritize panels for 2022, identify panelists, and articulate problem statements and solutions sought by the panelists and discussion. There will also be an anonymous survey in January to collect members' opinions, preferences, and access for future meetings.