

NORTHAMPTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Minutes for Monthly Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, September 9, 2025, 7:00 PM (In-Person & Virtual)

Joel Geiger, Chairman, called the Board meeting to order at 7:09 PM with the following Board Members, staff, and guests in attendance:

Joel Geiger, Chairman
Rich DiFebo, Director
Nate Pritchard, DM
Jon Fox, Staff*

Brian Fulmer – Vice Chairman
Rich Budihas, Director
Caitlin Skibiel, DEP Field Rep*
Jim Lawrence, Staff*

Will Carpenter, Treasurer
Jeffrey Keifer, Director
Carrie Cevicelow, Staff

Virtual*

Introduction of Guests

None

Additions to Agenda

None

Invitation for Public Comment

None

Acceptance of Minutes

Jeffrey Keifer made a motion to accept the August 12, 2025 minutes with the amendment that the section titled Pennsylvania Fish and Boat (PGC) be changed to Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), 2nd Rich Budihas. Motion carried. 6/0

Treasurer's Report

Will Carpenter provided an overview of the Treasurer's Report for August 2025. Discussion ensued.

Brian Fulmer made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report for August 2025 as presented; 2nd Rich DiFebo. Motion carried. 6/0

Payment of Bills

The District Manager provided a summary of the bills for approval. Rich Budihas made a motion to approve the payment of the bills as presented, 2nd Will Carpenter. Motion carried 6/0

Correspondence

Nate Pritchard presented the correspondence to the District, including a letter from Sean Furjanic at DEP confirming the reinstatement of the PCSM program effective August 15, 2025, allowing the District to resume collecting fees with engineering reviews handled in-house. Nate also reported receiving notice of the property tax appeal hearing scheduled for September 25, 2025, at 9:10 AM before the County Tax Appeal Board, with documentation proving government entity status to be submitted. Additional correspondence included a draft policy from the State Conservation Commission

regarding per diem payments to board members, which may be revisited once finalized, and finally an invitation to the PACD Southeast Region Meeting on October 30, 2025, in Harleysville, which Nate and Jeffrey Keifer are planning to attend.

Reports From Cooperating Agencies – (NCRS)

None

State Conservation Commission Report – (DEP)

Caitlin Skibiel (DEP) provided the State Conservation Commission report. The State Water Plan Regional Advisory Committee meetings will be held throughout October, covering topics such as drought management, flooding resilience, Chesapeake Bay planning, PFAS concerns, county success stories, and new planning tools. She announced that the new SOP for agricultural routine inspections, complaint investigations, and follow-up has been finalized, with training available through the Clean Water Academy. Board members were reminded to monitor email notifications, newsletters, webinars, and trainings for Chapter 102 updates. Caitlin also highlighted a draft district board per diem policy under review by the State Conservation Commission and noted that the Dirt and Gravel Low Volume Road Program's updated administrative manual is nearing final draft. The Dirt and Gravel Low Volume Road Program Annual Conference will be held September 23–25 at the Wyndham Gettysburg Conference Center. She also shared upcoming Clean Water Academy courses and webinars, including sessions on MS4, legacy sediment removal, floodplain restoration, permitting, and constructing and restoring wetlands in agricultural landscapes.

Old Business

A. 2023 Audit Update - Nate reported that Paul Mack from CR&Y conducted two site visits in August to review invoices, permit files, and interview staff, confirming that collected fees were tied to valid permits. Draft audit documents are expected by the end of September, with the 2024 audit scheduled to begin immediately afterward and anticipated for completion by year-end. The audit will include some qualifications noting limitations in county records, but these are expected to diminish in future audits as the District now maintains its own financial records.

B. PMRS Updates & 2026 MMO Approval – Nate reported on updates from PMRS, including the 2026 Minimum Municipal Obligation (MMO) worksheet, which provides an estimate of the District's pension contribution for the coming year. Based on projected payroll growth of 6%, the District's portion and the total plan cost including employee contributions were reviewed. An additional annual administrative fee per employee was noted but not yet reflected on the auto-generated form. The MMO must be filed with PMRS by September 30, 2025. Nate also shared that employee enrollment forms are being finalized, with the District preparing to fund contributions for the current year, reflecting both withheld employee contributions and the District's portion. Going forward, the District expects to make an annual payment for its contribution and quarterly payments tied to payroll for the employee portion.

C. NCCD Office Construction Updates - Nate reported that a notice to proceed was issued to Alfaro Company at the end of last month, and initial submittals such as fixtures and doors have been provided and reviewed by the architect. A pre-construction meeting is expected soon, after which work should move quickly, with substantial completion scheduled for December 27, though the contractor hopes to finish earlier. Staff will temporarily shift workspaces as needed during construction, including a period of remote work while carpeting is installed upstairs. To ensure database access during this time, the District will purchase a VPN service through TechStarters, allowing staff to work remotely as needed. Construction payments will be billed monthly on a percentage-of-completion basis and reviewed by the architect, with board signatures required for payments exceeding \$10,000.

D. NCCD Committee Notifications & Scheduling - Nate presented a discussion on NCCD committee notifications and scheduling. He reviewed Sunshine Act considerations and shared that most districts do not publish committee meetings (often under quorum or staff-led). The board discussed options to improve transparency and practicality, including setting up virtual committee meetings roughly two weeks prior to the board meeting and advertising public access (e.g., posting committee information and directing interested members of the public to contact the office for meeting links). Each committee will prepare a draft 2026 meeting schedule for review at the next board meeting; no action was taken at this time.

New Business

A. Teacher Workshop – Budget Request - Nate presented a request for a budget increase for the annual teacher workshop. He proposed amending the budget by increasing Marketing & Outreach by \$1,000, offset with reductions of \$500 from Paper & Supplies and \$500 from Apparel & PPE (both lines have ample balances). Donations will further lower costs (rain barrels from Coca-Cola and six rain-barrel kits from Home Depot), and the District will pursue future funding through the DEP Environmental Education Grant and the Watershed Specialist Nonpoint Source Grant. Jeffrey Keifer made a motion to increase the Marketing & Outreach budget as presented, 2nd Brian Fulmer. Motion carried. 6/0

B. QAB Board Appointment - Nate introduced the QAB Board appointment to fill the vacancy left by John Mauser. On Jim Lawrence's recommendation, Rich DiFebo made a motion to appoint Rich Budihas to the QAB Board, 2nd Brian Fulmer. Motion carried 5/0 (with Rich Budihas abstaining). Jim noted the ESM training (Oct. 7–8 in Berks County) is strongly recommended for QAB members and offered to coordinate registration. Caitlin will provide new QAB board orientation materials, and NCCD staff will connect Rich with Jim for program onboarding.

C. Expedited Review Policy - Nate brought forward for discussion the Expedited Review Policy for Chapter 102 applications, now that PCSM delegation has been restored, noting the past practice of allowing applicants to pay an additional fee for faster reviews conducted outside normal hours and at the manager's discretion, with seasonal limits likely (e.g., excluding Nov–Dec). He will review the overtime and expedited-review policies for consistency with staff roles, work with John on language, and bring a draft to the Executive Committee for consideration at a future board meeting. Discussion ensued

D. NACD TA2022 Close Out Status - Nate updated the board on the NACD TA2022 grant close-out and noted that three advance disbursements were made by NACD: \$10,875 (Sept. 18, 2023), \$21,750 (May 6, 2024), and \$10,875 (June 2024). Because NACD sent payments to the bank account on file, some 2024 funds were deposited to the county's account while the district was incurring eligible expenses. The board's guidance to Nate was to ask NACD to directly contact the county and press from their side for the return of funds, and secondly, correspond with county contacts to coordinate return of the applicable payments within a clear timeline. Nate will continue working with NACD and the county and report back at the next Finance Committee meeting.

Activity and Committee Reports

- A. Executive Committee – Joel Geiger reported that the committee did not meet. The next meeting is scheduled for 9/25/25 at 2:00.
- B. Finance Committee – Will Carpenter reported the committee did not meet. The next meeting is scheduled for 9/25/25 at 1:00.
- C. Education / Outreach Committee – Carrie Cevicelow reported that the committee met on Friday, September 5th, to review several upcoming projects; including the fall newsletter, teacher workshop preparations, social media updates, new outreach materials, and county events. For the October teacher workshop, registration closes September 30th, with 11 teachers already registered out of 15 available spots. Planning for the 2026 Envirothon (4/16/26) is also underway, with save-the-date information expected to go out in late November. Overall, the committee reported steady progress and positive momentum, with the next meeting scheduled for Friday, October 3rd, at 2:00 PM
- D. Resource/Facilities Committee – Rich DiFebo reported that the Committee met virtually last month, with three members in attendance. The committee discussed scheduling priorities for the year, including reviewing service contracts for boiler and air conditioning maintenance, ensuring emergency plumbing availability, and tracking septic system maintenance. Snow removal was also a key topic, with emphasis on securing proper insurance certification from contractors and considering improvements to salting

and walkway clearing. The committee agreed that alternative contractors or equipment may need to be explored for better service in the future. The next meeting is scheduled for September 18th at 1:00 PM.

- E. DG&LVR QAB – Jim Lawrence reported, the QAB meeting scheduled for September was canceled for the first time due to a lack of agenda items and pending state budget funding. The annual workshop will take place September 23–25 in Gettysburg, with Alexis and Jim attending. The next meeting is scheduled for January 2026.
- F. Karst Geology Advisory Council – Nate Pritchard reported there will be a meeting held in October, and he will provide updates and the next board meeting.

Conservation District Staff Reports

The staff reports were emailed prior to the meeting. During the staff reports discussion, it was noted that reports are currently used both for board updates and as reporting for grant requirements. The board discussed potential improvements to the format, including the possibility of moving reports into Excel to allow sorting by staff, program, and project, which could make the information more useful and easier to compile annually. It was acknowledged that some reporting formats are dictated by state requirements, so any changes would need to be balanced with those obligations. The board agreed this is something to revisit, with ideas to explore further improvements in the future.

Announcements

- A. Annual Mangers Summit – September 16-18, State College – Nate will attend

Set time, date, and place of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10/14/25, 7:00PM, Lower Nazareth Township Building, Suite 110, Conference Room, 623 Municipal Dr, Nazareth, PA (In-Person & Virtual (check website agenda for Zoom Link)).

Adjournment

Rich DiFebo made a motion to adjourn the meeting; 2nd Rich Budihas. Motion carried. 6/0

Submitted by Carrie Cevicelow, Recording Secretary to the Board