

**WPCAMR**  
**Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation**  
**Quarterly Meeting Minutes**  
**February 19, 2009**  
**Eat N' Park**  
**Indiana, PA**

**In attendance:**

Bob Eppley, President	Bernie Hoffnar, Bedford CD
Dennis Beck, Cambria CD, Vice-President	Dave Steele, Southern Alleghenies RC&D
Greg Phillips, Westmoreland CD, Treasurer	Adam Cotcher, Indiana CD
Bruce Golden (Staff)	Ron Horansky, PA DEP
Andy McAllister (Staff)	Tom Clark, SRBC
Robb Piper, Cambria CD	Jim Resh, Indiana CD
Anne Daymut, Indiana CD	John Stefanko, PA DEP MRM
Bill Doney, Westmoreland CD	Dave Kemp, Somerset CD
Carly Phelps, Armstrong CD	Mark Killar, WPC
LeeRoy Vatter, Indiana CD	Branden Diehl, FPW
Pam Meade, Armstrong CD	Nick Pinizzotto, WPC
David Beale, Armstrong CD	Lisa Snider, Greene CD
Jeff Fliss, PA DEP	Pete Dalby, Mill Cr. Coalition of Clarion & Jefferson Counties
Jim Eckenrode, Blair CD	David Thomas, Broad Top Township
Pam Milavec, PA DEP, BAMR	Carl Undercofler, Clearfield CD
Rachel Kester, Trout Unlimited	Lance Bowes, Venango CD
Tom Clark, SRBC	

**WPCAMR Business Meeting:**

Meeting chaired by Bob Eppley and called to order at 10:15am. Bob welcomed everyone.

**Secretary's Report (Bob Eppley for Jim Panaro):**

Review of past meeting minutes. No comments on the minutes.

**Motion (Vatter/Hoffnar) to accept the minutes. Passed.**

**Treasurer's Report (Greg Phillips):**

Greg gave more information about the various balances in accounts and went over a sheet describing the operational expenses incurred by the general fund. Greg said thank you to Robindale for their donation from the Golf Outing this past fall. Bruce said that now that one of the Quick Response Grants, funded by Growing Greener II is coming to a close soon, WPCAMR will have to take out a line of credit to cover some of the last 15% of the grant that's withheld until we can get that reimbursed. Jeff said that the costs associated with the line of credit may be reimbursable and he'll find out for us. [Jeff later verified this assertion.]

See also treasurer's report.

**Motion (Vatter/Beale) to accept the treasurer's report. Passed.**

Bob asked if there were any questions and then asked everyone present to introduce themselves.

**Presentation "Planning for OM&R Needs"**  
**(Bernie Hoffnar, Bedford Conservation District)**

Bernie presented a spreadsheet for calculating maintenance needs for treatment systems and talked about how Broad Top Township is planning for future OM&R needs.

**Old Business**

**Regional Coordinator's Report** (Bruce Golden):  
See report for details. Report on meeting webpage.

**Watershed Coordinator's report** (Andy McAllister):  
See report for details. Report on meeting webpage. Andy said that the prevailing wage coalition asked for a donation from their participating organizations to help cover the cost of the legislative breakfast this spring. Suggested donation was \$25. Bob asked for a motion to donate \$25 to the Prevailing Wage Coalition for that purpose.

**Motion (Daymut/Meade) to donate \$25 to the Prevailing Wage Coalition's Legislative Breakfast. Passed.**

**WPCAMR AmeriCorps report** (Bruce Golden for Rick Thompson):  
Bruce said that Rick couldn't be here today and directed everyone to Rick's written report. Report on meeting webpage.

**Conservation District/Agency/Watershed Association Reports** (All present):  
Those in attendance reported on current and future activities within their respective organizations

**NEW BUSINESS**

**Draft Employee Handbook—Bob Eppley**  
We have a draft employee practices and policies manual. The executive committee is reviewing it.

**Update: Ad-hoc Citizen Advisory Group for the Set-Aside—Bruce Golden**  
Bruce sits on this committee. He reported at the latest meeting the committee talked about most of the agenda items that are appearing on today's agenda. One thing that's not part of the agenda is the work of a sub-group that's working to establish an overarching goal for the set aside funds. Pam is making progress on that. Pam said that,

after visiting other groups, they've come up with a two tier approach so far with the first tier being restoring as many miles of stream as possible to a "sustainable fishery" (can involve stocking). They're still working on what that will mean and how it ties into in-stream chemistry goals. The second tier is a higher level one where you meet certain criteria for macroinvertebrate recovery, a higher threshold than the first tier. Pam said that this is all still a work in progress. Additionally, Pam said that they're also working on guidelines for project selection for the Title IV funding. She said that the Department will continue to ask for input on that. They'd like to get it wrapped up this year. Hope to have the guidelines finalized in late June and maybe have the final guidelines for the AMR conference in July. Bruce complimented the Department on the monumental task of fashioning the guidelines, it's a very complex thing and the Department is working well on it.

### **FACTS Grant: Chemical Snapshots for PA's Passive Treatment Systems—Bruce Golden**

Bruce said they there's been a bit of a change of direction and decided to do a snapshot for as many systems as we can. Bruce said they're trying to do two snapshot samplings if possible. The first, hopefully coming up in the next month or so and the second close to the closing time for the grant (June). Problems right now include sampling personnel and laboratories that would analyze the samples. Bruce will provide an update at the next WPCAMR meeting.

### **State of the Watershed Movement Survey—Bruce Golden**

WPCAMR has been working with the Foundation for PA Watersheds. We see the need to get a better handle of how well the watershed organizations are working right now. It's been a few years since we all had a handle on that and now's the time to gather comprehensive information on the watershed groups and what their needs are so we can help them out. First thing to do is to fashion a survey to the CD Watershed specialists to get a feel for the watershed groups' needs. We will use strategic planning type questions. We're hoping to get something out to folks in a couple of months.

### **Break momentarily for 15 minutes**

### **Funding is running out for CD Watershed specialists...What do we do?—Andy McAllister (Open Discussion)**

Andy talked about how he's heard from our member districts how they're concerned about the future of the Watershed Specialist position. PACD is putting together a fact sheet about the Watershed Specialists positions. Attendees mentioned that we should find out what the Watershed Specialists have been doing, what they're accomplishments have been. Bernie said that if the Watershed Specialists are benefitting clients, then those clients need to get active about publicizing those benefits, tie those clients to the state representatives who will make the decisions and it comes down to votes. Jeff said that everyone in Harrisburg (Watershed managers, etc) knows the value of those positions. Greg said that considering the fiscal crisis and how the state is looking at only mandated programs, this may not be a mandated program. Jim Resh asked if there's a way to use the SMCRA funds to help watershed specialists who work on AMD issues, even with

OM&R on these AMD systems. Bruce said that his reading on that kind of work is that it could be acceptable only if it had to do directly with those kinds of maintenance activities, but if it's just for general support, no. Bruce said he understands that the set aside basically has to be for on the ground work, not general support.

Dave Beale said that if we could convince the politicians that they'd get enough votes by keeping these positions, those positions will still be around.

Lance said that if the tipping fees for Growing Greener I are still coming in, then there's money. Jeff said that he thinks the tipping fees are still mandated by law and may not have a sunset date. Lance said that getting to the legislators to let them understand the value of the watershed specialists is important and they [the legislators] would not get the service that the specialists provide without those specialists. Lance also said that if we start pushing this on the legislators now, we'll be timely.

Greg added that DEP said that the watershed specialists should start making noise now. Greg also said that the district boards and districts should also be making noise also and it should be a priority for PACD during their "capitol days" but only if district directors say so. Greg said that his district is going to put something on their website, do a news release, put it in their newsletter, and talk to PACD and their local legislators. Bill Doney said that districts should get their local legislators to a breakfast to present a positive picture of what's going on. Bruce said we're asking the board for guidance on how WPCAMR can be of assistance.

Bernie said that we should send a notification to each member district reminding them of this issue and have them put it on their agenda and to send that notification out as soon as possible. Bruce said that's a good thing to do and we'll be glad to do that.

Jeff said that it looks like there'll be some kind of Growing Greener, why not have it go to watershed specialists?

Pam Meade said that having the watershed specialists around is so much better than it used to be before them. Pam said we need to reach out to the districts and their boards, the legislators, and reach down to the other watershed groups and have them send letters or put it on their website. Pam said maybe if we could set up some sort of a central website that everyone could go to and get more information. Pam would appreciate someone to help her to put together a list of influential people to send emails to or write letters to, but she needs instructions on what to do and what to say, make it as easy on the people as you can and they'll rally to the cause.

Greg said that since Abandoned Mine Posts is well done, maybe we could suspend whatever we're doing on AMP and do the next 6 or so issues on nothing but watershed specialists and have it targeted to districts so that they could use the material and WPCAMR is seen as leading the charge to help the districts get the word out. Greg said we need to be seen as a value to the districts.

Bernie is suggesting that anyone with ideas get them to Andy or Bruce. Jim asked Andy and Bruce if they want Watershed Specialists to submit what they've accomplished and

then will put them together. Bruce said to Jim that the districts need to provide us with the bullets so we can fire them. Bruce said if we could get a general statement from the specialists of what they've accomplished then another statement about what AMR accomplishments they've had, that would be great.

Greg suggested that Bruce and Andy E-mail exactly what they need to the District managers, copy their chairman and watershed specialist, but let it go to the manager and chairman so it's orchestrated that way. Greg said to Andy and Bruce that numbers are good, but maybe they could tell a story, find highlights about what the specialist is doing in each area and tell a concise, catchy story, not just all numbers. Bruce said that from a logistics point of view, since we have to collect the information, there'll be a lag time before we start to produce these things.

Jeff said that to try as hard as you can to maintain funding for those positions through Growing Greener I because it'll be hard to get funding from other places. Bruce asked Jeff where to find the language that's created the watershed specialist funding. Greg said Steve Lathrop would know.

Mark said that maybe in this effort we could remind the legislators what the original intent of Growing Greener I was and that there's probably a lot of new legislators that don't know what that legislation was all about. Bruce said that that was a great idea and could be the initial article that sets the stage for the rest of the articles.

Greg said AMP emails should be sent to legislators and to get a list of legislators from the districts.

### **PA's Financial Crunch and Future Abandoned Mine Reclamation—Andy McAllister (Open Discussion)**

Andy explained that with the stimulus money coming, it's not known now as to whether any of that funding could be going to AMR work, also that the Governor's recent press release mentioned over 170 DEP jobs being taken away. Regarding the stimulus funding, John Stefanko mentioned that there's nothing in there about AMD/AMR but there might be categories that those could fit in and that the state is still trying to figure all of this out. Basically shovel-ready projects are being looked at for funding, if it becomes available, because if the money isn't spent, it goes back into the pot. The state isn't sure about how all that will pan out. Nick Pinazzotto said that everyone should have their projects ready to go so they could be ready for funding if/when it comes. Bruce said that if any of the conservation districts have anything ready to be built, it would be good for Bruce to know so that information could be shared with those making the decisions.

### **WV Court Decision—Clouds on the Horizon? –Andy McAllister/Bruce Golden**

Andy explained the genesis of the US District Court's decision in WV regarding how WVDEP was told to have NPDES permits on bond forfeiture sites. Bruce continued on how it could have broader implications for AMD treatment work everywhere. Bernie mentioned that he doesn't think there's anything we could do about this issue except pay attention to it. Bruce said that DEP is well aware of the issue.

### **OSM's Withdrawal of Emergency AML Funding to PA—Bruce Golden**

Bruce explained OSM's proposition is to no longer fund the emergency program for PA and KY, that's separate from the annual SMCRA funding that states receive. That has to do with subsidence issues and mine fires, etc. This emergency funding amounts to about \$3million/year and if we don't have that, it'll mean that PA must use their SMCRA funding for that. Bruce said that we have created a letter to the acting Director of OSM to reconsider this issue (on attendees' packets and meeting webpage). Bruce offered that to the board for its consideration.

**Motion (Hoffnar/Beck) to send the letter about OSM emergency funding to states to the acting secretary of OSM. Passed.**

**Changes to OSM's Watershed Cooperative Agreement Program—Andy McAllister**

Andy explained WCAP and how language in previous appropriations bills allowed WCAP to match other federal funding. If we don't have the language in federal appropriations to allow cash match, a chain of events could occur where fewer people will use it and the appropriators will cut the program entirely. Andy explained the take-action Abandoned Mine Post sent out last week and encouraged the attendees to write a letter to their US Senators and Representatives. Andy will let everyone know the result as the FY 09 appropriations bills get passed in the near future. Bruce said that WPCAMR was able to help keep WCAP alive several years ago due to letter writing and hopes that we can do that again.

**Appointment to Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board—Bruce Golden**

Bruce has been appointed to MRAB and said that Bernie Hoffnar has also been appointed as a member of MRAB.

**Rochester and Pittsburgh Mining Archives—Bob Eppley**

Bob was approached by the PA Mining Professionals to lead the formation of some entity who would be willing to take over the archives, maintain, and catalog the Rochester and Pittsburgh Archives. If anyone is interested, please contact Bob.

**Other New Business**

Bernie invited everyone to a Watershed Festival in Defiance, PA at the last Saturday of April starting at noon.

Branden Diehl said that the Foundation for PA Watersheds is hosting information on their website if anyone wants to publicize events, contact him.

**Motion to adjourn (Vatter). Meeting adjourned at 13:40**

**Minutes taken and prepared by Andy McAllister**