

WPCAMR

*Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
November 18, 2021 @ 10:00 AM ET
Indiana County Conservation District, Indiana PA*

In attendance:

Denny Beck, President
Jared Zinn, Vice President, Greene CD
Delegate
Amy Miller, Secretary, Allegheny CD
Delegate
Chelsea Walker, Treasurer, Westmoreland
CD Delegate
Andy McAllister, Staff
Anne Daymut, Staff
Cliff Denholm, SRI and BioMost
Bob Onyshko, Harsco Minerals
Evan DeLong, Jefferson CD

Jackie Ritko, Cambria CD Delegate
Tom Malesky, PA DEP BAMR
Robbie Fulton, OSMRE
Rob Cronauer, Westmoreland CD and
Sewickley Creek Watershed Association
Jon Smoyer, PA DEP BAMR
Pat Webb, PA DEP BAMR
Maria Sorce, Armstrong CD Delegate
Brian Bradley, PA DEP BAMR
Janis Long, Indiana CD
Kelly Williams, Clearfield CD Delegate

WPCAMR BUSINESS MEETING:

Meeting called to order at 10:03 am.

Secretary's Report (Amy Miller):

Review of past meeting minutes from August 2021.

Motion (Williams/Miller) to accept the August 2021 minutes. Passed.

Treasurer's Report (Andy McAllister):

See report for details.

Motion (Williams/Zinn) to accept the treasurer's report. Passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Staff Reports

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

Watershed Coordinator's report (Anne Daymut): *See report for details. Report on meeting webpage.*

Special Presentation: Brian Bradley, PA DEP BAMR Director.

Brian started by giving an update on AMLER. They are done with projects of 2016. They have active grants for 2017-2019. They are at vetting stage with 2020 grants. They have not yet applied for the 2022 funding. They are seeing significant cost increases which will impact past projects. They request patience from all partners in working through this challenge. We do not have an official federal budget for 2022, so we don't know where AMLER stands but this funding was included in drafts. Brian discussed that AMLER is subject to the Justice 40 Initiative, which states that 40% of program benefits are in disadvantaged communities. There is a possibility that Justice 40 will some day be applied to all federal programs.

The regular 2022 AML grant is the last grant through the 2006 reauthorization. They have applied but have not heard back. They do expect a reduction in the grant and there may be a gap in the collection of the fees.

Sequestration has continued to impact the annual grants and at this point has accumulated to be worth an entire year's grant.

BIF is a huge win for AMR. It did include reauthorization. There was a 20% reduction in fees, we only got a 13 year extension. In exchange, the administration is contributing \$11.3 billion into the fund. For PA, we should get \$3.8 billion over the 15 year life of the program. This could be \$250 million annually to PA plus another approximately \$25 million of regular AML grant. There are still a number of unknowns with BIF such as when we'll start getting grants and when will fed transfer money into the AML fund? Money will be subject to Davis Bacon. Robbie has heard that it could be 90 days until the money is released into the treasury.

Pat talked a little more about Justice 40 and AMLER. There is a lot to work out. PA's EJ areas are based on census.

Brian added that set-aside is not specifically addressed in BIF. We can do some P3 work, but it is unclear if we can do AMD work or to make a trust fund for OM&R. Brian urged us all to advocate for AMD treatment given that the \$11.3 billion is taxpayer money. Pat noted that there are additional hoops to jump through for a lot of this money with deadlines.

Andy asked about the subrecipient issue. Brian feels the approach is that the grants going forward can be handled as subrecipients. DEP is working through how to manage subrecipients.

Robbie noted that OSMRE is interested in expanding the WCAP funding to include OM&R but they will need a push.

Current Strategic Planning Update: (Andy McAllister) WPCAMR should have a draft in February 2022.

Conservation District/Agency/Watershed Association reports (All present):

- Amy Miller is operating the Milk Run system. She is also contributing to Gladden Infiltration concerns due to subsidence and new development. She is also working on storm water. Allegheny CD is now implementing a new strategic plan
- Maria reported that Dave Rupert is retiring and Holly Laird will be the new District Manager. Maria is working on the Hulling Run Phase 2 AMD project and has just awarded a construction contract. She is selling calendars.
- Janis shared that Blacklick did an assessment of Yellow Creek and is hoping to get upper assessed next year. They have a lot of projects needing maintenance. One thing they will focus on is the Tide pile.
- Rob reported that Turtle Creek Watershed Association is purchasing the Irwin discharge. Rob suggested that DEP staff-up in regards to helping subrecipients answer questions and manage grants.
- Jared is doing stream bank stabilization with farmers and is seeing the stream rebound. He is also looking at some AMD projects where planning is happening.
- Cliff noted that SRI still has the technical assistance grant and is hoping for another Growing Greener round. They released a new version of Datashed. There will be more updates in the future. They are helping with rehab of Slippery Rock Creek Coalition systems. He is also helping Blacklick with Richards, Laurel Run #1 and others.
- Bob talked about Harsco's new initiatives to treat and collect Iron. They have a AMD silt sock prototype that they are researching. They will approach CDs and watershed groups soon to test.
- Kelly got 319 funding for an Anderson Creek discharge. She also doing county-wide action planning that is more sediment and nutrients. Moshannon Creek Watershed Association started with new leadership, completed an assessment and wrote a conservation plan. AMD work has not yet begun there.

- Jackie noted that they have also been working on a CAP. She is helping a watershed group monitor and maintain a system. She has done some streambank stabilization through Growing Greener. Pat and Jon gave Jackie an update on the Portage plant. They have acquired the property but there are a lot of hurdles with Army Corps.
- Evan is maintaining a system at Conifer. He is also doing streambank stabilization with Growing Greener. They held a contractor workshop.

NEW BUSINESS

2022 Budget (Andy McAllister)

Motion (Miller/Williams) to approve the budget as presented. Passed.

Staff Merit Raise for Andy McAllister (Dennis Beck)

Motion (Zinn/Sorse) to provide Andy McAllister with a staff merit raise of 2%. Passed.

Bylaw Review Committee (Andy McAllister)

ARIPPA Award Presentation (Anne Daymut)

Discussion of Potential Role for WPCAMR (Board Discussion)

Andy discussed there are options for WPCAMR to consider with regards to BIF. We have already proven through Quick Response what we can do. Brian noted the money is not in hand but they are internally discussing WPCAMR's capacity and interest in "supersizing" Quick Response. They can't fund a separate "trust" with federal funding. Discussions between DEP and WPCAMR will continue.

2022 Meeting Schedule:

February 10, 2022

May 12, 2022

August 11, 2022

November 10, 2022

Meeting adjourned @ 12:26 pm

Minutes taken and prepared by Anne Daymut

Approved by Amy Miller on 1/3/2022