**PAT Meeting**

**Minutes**

**April 23, 2014**

Matt Royer

Kristen Kyler

Susan Marquart

Matt Kofroth

Mike Langland

Chuck Wertz

Rebecca Nissley

Jenna Mitchell

Rugh Henderson

Michelle Powl

**NFWF Final Report**

Matt Royer has been working to compile the final report for the NFWF grant and presented on his findings. The extended deadline is fast approaching so partners are encouraged to submit comments to Matt by Friday, May 2. The draft will be emailed to partners.

**Coordinator’s Report**

* The first rail trail sign is going to be installed in the next few days, depending on weather, at the Colebrook Trail Head of the Lebanon County Rail Trail. South Londonderry Township will be conducting the install.
* A “You Are Now Entering the Conewago Watershed” sign has been installed on Mt Wilson Rd. Several more are in the permitting and landowner permission stage and should be installed this spring. We are still searching for other willing landowners for the remainder of the signs.
* The Conewago Initiative Facebook page now has 79 likes.
* Two volunteer livestake events have been held so far this year. One at Ivan Hanson’s farm where the planting extended on what was accomplished last spring. The second planting was on Gallagher Run. Local volunteers and students from Matt Royer’s Penn State University Park Chesapeake Bay class worked together on this project.
* The Conewago Earth Day Event will be held on Saturday, May 3 starting at 9:00 AM. All partners are invited. Please bring tables and information for attendees. The focus of this year’s event will be on the forest restoration project that the Neale’s planted last fall.
* On Saturday, May 17 a rain garden workshop will be held at Londonderry Township.
* The booklet “Stories from the Conewago: The Value of Conservation to Landowners, neighbors, community, and Society” has been printed by the Initiative. This booklet satisfies the grant requirement of educating landowners about the importance of ecosystem services. We have lots of copies, so partners are encouraged to utilize these booklets. A pdf version is available on our website.
* Juniata College may be interested in conducting some thorough monitoring of the Hershey Meadows site. They had done some pre-project assessments and would like to follow those up with post-project studies.
* As part of the Greening the Lower Susquehanna NFWF grant that was awarded to Penn State, free native trees will be available again this spring/fall to interested and eligible landowners.
* The Lower Susquehanna Land and Water Conservation Summit was held on March 31 on the Penn State Harrisburg Campus. Over 90 professionals working on local water issues were in attendance. Evaluations from the day showed that attendees really appreciated the opportunity to network and find new partners. The Summit model will be used by the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay to hold similar sessions throughout the Bay region.

**WIP Update**

Jenna Mitchell, a Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center intern, has been working throughout the school year to write an amendment to the Conewago Creek’s Watershed Implementation Plan. The plan originally only listed agricultural projects, so the amendment will add urban stormwater projects to the list. Updates on expected load reductions will be included as well as prioritization strategies. Jenna is still wrapping up some of the model runs but will be looking for partner comments in the coming weeks.

**Partner Updates**

Matt Royer, Agriculture and Environment Center- He will soon be working to reinvigorate the TCCCA. Matt Kofroth offered his help along with the other county watershed specialists.

Mike Langland, USGS- USGS has money coming in next year and brainstorming is being done for how it could be used. Some ideas Mike mentioned are isotropic N research (may be too expensive) and sediment fingerprinting. There is also a draft report on the Showcase Watersheds anticipated to be released at the end of June.

Michelle Powell, Elizabethtown Water Authority- Mentioned interest in the upcoming rain garden workshop and hopes to encourage more rain barrels and raingardens in the Elizabethtown region.

Susan Marquart, NRCS- We now have a Farm Bill. She mentioned that many of the programs have been consolidated. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) has a budget of a billion dollars per year nationally. The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will fund about 10 million acres per year nationally. The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) will fund about 24 million acres per year nationally. Susan also mentioned a new agriculture conservation easement program that consolidates previous grazing programs and the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP). There is also a new regional conservation program that is in the works but they are still waiting on the designation of 8 priority areas. Within the regional conservation program, some money will be available nationally and other money will be given specifically to the state. This program consolidated the Chesapeake Bay and Great Lakes Programs and provides money nationally now. The final program she shared related to additional funding that is becoming available to support veterans and new farmers.

Chuck Wertz, Lebanon CCD- The district has been working more with municipalities on their MS4 requirements. Penn State’s Greening the Lower Susquehanna grant has been working with the Creekside Community in Lebanon County. He mentioned that the VA hospital in South Lebanon is making changes to their current stormwater management system and the district has been working closely with them to make these changes cost effective. Also the Lebanon Agricultural Center is holding two safe drinking water sessions on June 18th. Lastly, he discussed a little about the first bog turtle easement in the County.

Rugh Henderson, South Londonderry- Rugh shared about the upcoming Lawn Park meadow planting. He also mentioned recent urban interest being generated due to the pipeline and how their interest could be directed to TCCCA.