



LACKAWANNA COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Annual Report 2018

What is a Conservation District? What does a Conservation District Do?

The Lackawanna County Conservation District is a legal subdivision of state government, established by Lackawanna County Commissioners in 1958. The District is responsible for conservation work within the County's boundaries. These efforts are intended to improve the health of the soil, water & other natural resources.

The District is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. Members of the Board are responsible for setting long term goals & objectives, as well as prioritizing District efforts. Conservation District staff have expertise in a diverse area of conservation topics such as: stream health, soil & water conservation, dirt & gravel/low volume road maintenance, environmental education, agricultural land preservation, nutrient management & agriculture best management practices.

Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control Program

Administration of the Chapter 102/NPDES Permit Programs continues to be one of the District's cornerstone programs. Required activities within this program are: Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Plan (E&S) reviews, earth disturbance site inspections, (NPDES) National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit processing, and complaint investigation.

PACode title 25 Chapter 102 requires the development and implementation of an E&S plan for all earth disturbance activities in special protection watersheds and for earth disturbance activities of 5,000 sq ft or larger in non-special protection watersheds.

These regulations also require stormwater discharges during construction activities to be authorized under an NPDES permit. General NPDES permits can be authorized in non-special protection watersheds (Chapter 93 classification of (CWF-MF) cold water fishes-migratory fishes or lower) and by an Individual NPDES permits in special protection waters (high quality or exceptional value). Projects in Special Protection Watersheds have additional requirements to help protect and maintain the existing water quality.



During the 2018 calendar year 125 E&S plan reviews were conducted, 182 E&S inspections completed, information and/or technical assistance provided to 822 individuals through meetings and telephone conferences. In addition 31 NPDES permits were authorized. The total earth disturbance associated with the permits was 462 acres.

Chesapeake Bay & Agricultural Conservation Programs - Eric Johnson

2018 proved to be a challenging year for our agricultural programs and producers. With wet weather throughout the majority of the growing season, many agricultural projects were delayed. However, we still were able to accomplish a lot in 2018.



The District began construction on a Chesapeake Bay Special Project for a large animal heavy use area protection and manure storage project on a livestock operation in Scott Township. The goal of this project is to eliminate several unimproved animal concentration areas and allow for the efficient collection and storage of manure to reduce runoff and surface water pollution in the South Branch of Tunkhannock Creek.

Construction will wrap up early in 2019, and we look forward to the local benefits to water quality!

In addition, a significant portion of time was spent completing farm inspections and providing technical assistance in all facets of agricultural production to our County farmers and landowners. The purpose of these farm inspections is to: 1) verify the existence of required manure management and erosion and sedimentation control plans, 2) identify any significant resource concerns on farms, and 3) promote the installation of agricultural best management practices (Ag BMP's) and provide information on other District programs such as Farmland Preservation, No-till and the Lackawanna County Ag BMP Program. In 2018, 50 farm inspections required by DEP were completed.

In our first planting season with the new, no-till drill, we planted a total of 215 acres in Lackawanna County. While this is well below our program average, we were encouraged by the positive feedback from producers who took advantage of the new equipment, and we look forward to a busy 2019 planting season!

Also, through funding from our District's No-Till Program, we are excited to announce the purchase of a bulk material spreader for rental and use by our agricultural community! While the main goal of promoting the application of agricultural lime, this equipment can assist landowners with all manners of soil health and fertility whether it be application of compost, wood ash, lime, gypsum, or a host of other materials.



Looking forward, we anticipate a very busy 2019 for our programs. In addition to completing farm inspections and wrapping up our Chesapeake Bay Special Project, we have Ag BMP's planned through our Conservation District Ag BMP Program. With tough conditions from 2018 planting and harvest seasons, we anticipate a high demand for both our no-till drill and bulk material spreader. Last but not least, we are planning the rollout of a new Soil Health Enhancement Program to provide further technical and financial assistance to our Lackawanna County producers. Stay tuned for more details, and we look forward to continuing to do our part to protect water quality here in Lackawanna County and in the Chesapeake Bay!

Conservation District Scholarship Program

The Conservation District continued its Scholarship Program in 2018. As in past years the District provided scholarships to selected high school seniors from Lackawanna County planning to major in an Environmental or Agricultural field in college. We awarded 5 scholarships this year. This years' recipients of the William & Nancey Lange Memorial Scholarship were Beck Chickillo, Carolyn Mack and Aleah Snedeker. This years' recipients of the William Popovich Memorial Scholarship was Marilyn Bollard and Mark Melesky. We wish them all the best of luck with their future plans.



2018 Seedling Sale

Every year the District has an annual seedling sale offering a variety of different plant species. This past year varieties included: apple, peach, paw paw and plum trees, rhododendron, Eastern White Pine, beebalm, Coreopsis - Tickseed, Beardtongue, blueberry bushes, strawberry plants and Golden Raintree. The money raised from the seedling sale funds our scholarship program.

Dirt & Gravel Road/Low Volume Road Program

The goal of the Dirt & Gravel Road/Low Volume Road Program is to create a more environmentally & economically sustainable low volume network through education & project funding. The Lackawanna County Conservation District in partnership with local municipalities has undertaken many road improvement projects since the beginning of the program in 1998. The Lackawanna County Conservation District has allocated over \$ 1.2 million for grant funds on 47 projects throughout the County. The projects address the stabilization of road surfaces, drainage swales and road banks. The installation of cross pipes, drain tile and outlet protection are examples of practices eligible for funding under the program. The low volume road component was added to the program in 2015. In 2018 the District has contracted 7 Dirt & Gravel Road Projects and 3 Low Volume Road Projects. Dirt & Gravel Road Projects include High Street & Margaret Street in Dickson City, Bowen Road, Ash Gap Road and Watres Road in Spring Brook Township, Line Road in Jefferson Township and Stanton Road in Benton Township. Low Volume Road Projects include West Mountain Road in Blakely Borough and Orchard Drive & Fords Pond Road in Newton Township. Municipalities interested in qualifying for the D&G/LVR Program must have a representative attend special training. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the District.



Before



After

Farmland Preservation Program

2018 proved to be another busy year for the Farmland Preservation Program. The majority of the workload involved completing all the steps required to prepare farms from our 2017 application round for State Board approval and closing. In 2018, we preserved 3 tracts totaling 222.63 acres in Scott, Greenfield, and Benton Township. Funding for these purchases was provided through the Commonwealth. With these easements, we now have preserved a total of 5222.76 acres on 65 parcels in Lackawanna County since the program preserved its first farm in 1996!

In addition, the District spent a large portion of time working with 2018 program applicants. We received 6 eligible applications on 5 farms for the 2018 program year. Funding was sufficient for us to accept all 6 parcels into the program. Since that time, a large block of time has been spent gathering the required forms and information, completing farm appraisals/surveys, and other steps in the process to purchase easements on those properties. We are working towards State board approval and closing for these farms in 2019. As part of this process, we also spent time completing the Commonwealth's requirements to encumber remaining 2017 program funding. This process ensures that funds provided in that year will not expire and are "ear-marked" to be spent on 2018 farms.



Also, the District continued to provide technical assistance and guidance to several interested landowners looking to apply for the program in 2019. Currently, we have no wait-list for the program, so all ranked farms for 2019 will be new applicants to the program. Our application period runs through the end of February 2019 and we expect several eligible applications prior to this deadline in addition to those already received before the end of 2018.



Last but not least, we spent time in 2018 completing biennial easement inspections on our program farms. This included the inspection of 30 easements under the control of 26 different landowners. This effort is always welcomed as it gives us the opportunity to meet with all our landowners and see how properties have changed or progressed over the years. We put great value on these relationships and look forward to continue work with them in the future.

Given all of this, we consider 2018 a very successful year and look forward to making a big difference in protecting farmland for future generations in Lackawanna County in 2019 and beyond!

Watershed News

2018 Lackawanna/Susquehanna County's 2nd Annual Jr. Envirothon

The Lackawanna/Susquehanna County Conservation Districts held their 2nd annual Jr. Envirothon event in 2018 at the Lackawanna County Conservation District office and grounds. Seventh and eighth grade students competed in Wildlife, Aquatics, Forestry and Soils. Fourteen teams from six school districts participated and eight of the 14 teams took home prizes and medals. **Blue Ridge Freshwater Fenoms** took home **1st Place** in the overall competition. This program helps prepare junior high students for the senior high event helping to make our schools more competitive while fostering a passion for the environment and our natural resources.



Biological Assessment of the Lackawanna River

The Lackawanna County Conservation District partnered with Trout Unlimited beginning in 2017, to assess the Lackawanna River and resumed the attempt in September of 2018. We were excited about what we found; many native brook trout including young-of-year in the headwaters. However, we were unable to check populations further downstream due to the volume and velocity of the river.



Precipitation throughout the year has hindered more than a few projects. The equipment was not able to handle the volume of water. This is the second year that we've had similar conditions.

PACD Mini-Grant Rain Barrel Workshop

LCCD conducted a rain barrel and stormwater management workshop in August of this year. We will be holding another workshop in the spring of 2019 to complete the agreement per PACD's Mini Grant for adult education, non-point source pollution. A total of twenty rain barrels were purchased with the District contributing approximately 30% of the cost in matching funds. The first twenty people to sign up received a free rain barrel. The District



will offer another workshop in the spring.



Chesapeake Bay Regional Engineering Assistant

The Lackawanna County Conservation District hosts a Regional Chesapeake Bay Engineering Assistant position covering a seven county area in Northeastern Pennsylvania within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. The position is responsible for the design & inspection of Agricultural Best Management practices intended to minimize sediment & nutrient pollution within the Bay Watershed. Below is a brief synopsis of the projects completed in 2018.

Luzerne County:

Matt & Becky Lipka-Roofed Dry Stack Manure Storage Facility / Heavy Use Area Protection plus supporting BMP's

Funding Source - Growing Greener Grant

Martin Smith - a)Roofed Dry Stack Manure Storage Facility, the decommissioning of an existing earthen lagoon & supporting BMP's

b) Roofed Animal Mortality Facility & Waste Transfer Scrape Lane.

Funding Source - Growing Greener Grant

Lackawanna County:

Allen Miller-Roofed Manure Storage Facility / Heavy Use Area Protection plus supporting BMP's

Funding Source - NRCS-EQIP



Richard Tratthen-Roofed Dry Stack Manure Storage Facility / Heavy Use Area Protection plus supporting BMP's

Funding Source-Chesapeake Bay Special Project Grant & NRCS-EQIP

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DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Commissioner - Laureen Cummings

Chairman - Jay Clymer

Vice-Chairman - Thomas Milewski

Treasurer - George Sheypuk

Farm Director - Lewis Peregrin

Urban Director - Frank Kozik

Urban Director - Ronald Phelps

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Edward Sokoloski

John Howaritz

Charles Charlesworth

Alana Roberts

DISTRICT STAFF

District Manager - Jerry Stiles

Administrative Assistant - Lois Sherman

Erosion & Sedimentation Control Technician - Tim Matechak

Erosion & Sedimentation Inspector - Kim Nagle

Chesapeake Bay Technician/Farmland Preservation - Eric Johnson

Chesapeake Bay Engineering Assistant - Bill Zavislak

Watershed Specialist - Cheryl Nolan