



**LACKAWANNA COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

Annual Report 2022

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 range 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.

District Acquires a New Home

In September, the District purchased a commercial property at 1027 South Abington Road, South Abington Township. The District was successful in achieving a goal set years ago, to establish operations at a location we own. After a quick conversion of the space within the building, the District moved in early November. The District plans to utilize the building to showcase examples of conservation practices individual homeowners can undertake on their properties. Projects such as porous pavement, rain gardens, rain barrels and establishing pollinator and wildlife habitat are planned.



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.

PA Code 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 2022 calendar year 126 E&S plan reviews were conducted, 149 E&S inspections completed, information and/or technical assistance provided to 694 individuals through meetings and telephone conferences. In addition, 35 NPDES permits were reviewed. The total earth disturbance associated with new E&S plan reviews was 383 acres.



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. These 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 2022, the District and its partner municipalities completed two Dirt & Gravel Road and one Low Volume Road projects in three different municipalities within Lackawanna County. Total value of all projects was \$1,79,437.22. This figure includes both grant funds and in-kind contributions from the municipalities. 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.



2022 Seedling Sale

Our annual seedling sale continued in 2022 with a record number of seedlings sold at the April Sale. We had over 120 orders picked up through our drive thru pick-up. We offered a variety of different plant species. This past year varieties included: apple, peach and plum fruit trees, Concolor Fir trees, blueberry bushes, strawberry plants, Pin Oak and American Arborvitae seedlings, Mini-Cosmo, Dianthus and Impatiens Flowers. This year we also offered deciduous azaleas as well as a Northeast Annual & Perennial Wildflower Mix. The money raised from the seedling sale funds our scholarship program for Lackawanna County high school seniors.





Chesapeake Bay & Agricultural Conservation Programs - Eric Johnson

2022 proved to be an exceptionally exciting, busy year within the Conservation District and our agricultural programs. Thanks in large part to funding received through our 2022 Countywide Action Plan (CAP) implementation grant, we were able to make significant headway with promoting and installing best management practices in Lackawanna County.

Part of the 2022 CAP grant was utilized to plant riparian forest buffers on 2 farms in the Elm Brook watershed of Scott TWP. In partnership with our contractor, Williams Forestry, we planted a diverse mixture of trees and shrubs on approximately 3.5 acres and protected a nearly 2200 foot section of stream. These buffers will help stabilize the banks of Elm Brook, while capturing and utilizing nutrients from upslope areas that would have otherwise entered the watershed.



In addition, we were able to install several “hard” projects through our Ag BMP Program. Our existing County funding was leveraged with additional funding from the 2022 CAP grant. Those BMP’s included a roof over an existing manure stacking area, a spring development that will be utilized for livestock watering, and a stream bank fencing project that included a stabilized animal crossing.

2022 also marked the final year of our “Phase 1” Chesapeake Bay Inspections. 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 (BMP’s) and provide information on other District programs such as Farmland Preservation, No-till and the Lackawanna County Ag BMP Program. In 2022, 50 farm inspections were completed as required by PADEP.

Our Soil Health and Equipment Rental Programs had a busy year. With the addition of our no-till corn planter, purchased with 2022 CAP grant funding, we planted 375.8 acres Lackawanna County. Of those acres, 238.9 acres were no-till cover crops. We also rented our bulk material spreader to 3 farms to spread lime in 2022.



Looking ahead, we are planning for another great year in 2023 for our programs. We will be moving into “Phase 2” of our Chesapeake Bay inspections. The goals of this effort are to take a more in-depth look at manure management and soil erosion plan implementation, as well as gathering data on previously installed BMP’s that could contribute toward our County nutrient and sediment reduction goals. We will conduct 25 such inspections in 2023. We also plan to install several projects through our AG BMP Program including stormwater management, roof runoff control systems, streambank fencing, stabilized animal crossings, fencing for rotational grazing, and more! Additional funding was provided to bolster the program via our 2023 CAP Implementation Grant funding which puts us in a great position to install additional BMP’s in 2023! Stay tuned for more details as we look forward to continuing to do our part to protect water quality here in Lackawanna County and in the Chesapeake Bay!

Farmland Preservation Program

2022 was another great year for the Farmland Preservation Program. The majority of the workload involved completing all the steps required to prepare farms from our 2021 application round for State Board approval and closing. In 2022, we preserved 2 tracts totaling 163.87 acres in Benton and Greenfield Townships. Funding for these purchases was provided through the Commonwealth of PA. One of those easements, the Maria #1 farm in Benton TWP, was the first preserved in Lackawanna County partnering with the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (NRCS-ACEP). With these easements, we now have preserved a total of 6253.17 acres on 77 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 2022 program applicants. We received 4 eligible applications for the 2022 program year. While one farm opted not to move forward, funding was offered to the remaining 3 parcels, in addition to a 4th parcel that will be donated to the program! Since then, 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. Funding for the easements will come from both State and County purchase funds.

The District continued to provide technical assistance and guidance to several interested landowners looking to apply for the program in 2023. With no current "wait-list" for the program, all applications received will be new landowners for our 2023 funding round. Our application period closes on March 1st, 2023. In order to preserve additional acreage in, we again will be looking into potential partnership with the NRCS-ACEP program and we have secured additional funding from Lackawanna County towards future easement purchases.

Last but not least, we spent time completing biennial easement inspections on our program farms. This included the inspection of 38 easements under the control of 33 different landowners. Due to the continued effort to minimize direct contact (where applicable), these inspections were completed without landowner contact via "drive-by" inspections. While it didn't allow for the normal opportunity to meet with all our landowners, we were still able to safely meet our program obligations and see how properties have changed or progressed over the years.



Given all of this, we consider 2022 a very successful year and look forward to continued pursuit of our goals of protecting farmland for future generations in Lackawanna County in 2023 and beyond!

Watershed News

Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan



LCCCD was awarded \$55,000 through the Pennsylvania Community Clean Water Implementation Grant to complete two riparian buffer projects. Approximately 7.7 acres of buffer were planted across three properties to support the Elm Brook and Leggetts Creek initiatives of our County Action Plan (CAP). A rain garden was also established in Olyphant using a \$2,500 grant award from PACD.

2022 Lackawanna County Envirothon

The 2022 Lackawanna County Envirothon competition was held in-person at the Joe Terry Civic Center in Scott Twp. after having taken place virtually over the past two years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Seven local schools were represented across nineteen teams of students on competition day. Lakeland #2 took 1st place, the Riverside Rhodade Warriors came in 2nd, and Abington #2 came in 3rd. Congratulations, Lakeland #2!



USGS Stream Data Field Training



In May, LCCCD attended a three-day stream channel data collection field training hosted by USGS on the West Branch of the Lackawanna River. Participants learned how to select and establish channel reference sites, measure sediment deposition in a floodplain, and to collect data on several key characteristics of a stream.

Staffing Change - Watershed Specialist

After 12 years of dedicated service toward conserving our waterways and educating our community, long-time LCCCD Watershed Specialist Cheryl Nolan retired this fall. Katie Gray was hired to fill this role. Hailing from northwestern Pennsylvania, Katie is excited to do her part to protect our water resources and to educate and connect with the local community!



LACKAWANNA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

1027 South Abington Road

S. Abington Twp, PA 18411

PHONE: 570-382-3086

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

Commissioner – Chris Chermak

Chairman - Jay Clymer

Vice-Chairman - Thomas Milewski

Treasurer - George Sheypuk

Farm Director - Lewis Peregrin

Urban Director - Frank Kozik

Urban Director – Alana Roberts

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Edward Sokoloski

John Howanitz

Daniel Naylor

Sally Corrigan

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 – Katie Gray