



McGuffey FFA members installed new landscaping around the buliding

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

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Washington, PA 15301
www.pawccd.org

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

The Washington County Conservation District (WCCD) had a stellar year in 2023. The WCCD continues to increase our services to Washington County through new programs and opportunities. The WCCD announced a new agricultural program, our Agricultural Enhancement Program (AEP). This program allows the WCCD to assist the agricultural community with funding for practices that improve soil health and quality. The AEP program will be expanded each year to fund various agricultural practices. Stay tuned for what is to come in 2024!

The WCCD also expanded its outreach through the creation of our social media accounts. Accounts are held on Facebook and Instagram both can be found using the @pawccd tag, so follow us to keep up to date with programs and outreach opportunities. The use of social media allows us to expand how we reach the community and provide new forms of education.

WCCD also saw some incredible milestones for staff in 2023. This past year Matt Golden reached his 15-year service milestone with our organization and Tom Ulrich reached 10 years of service with the WCCD. We are so thankful to have such dedicated and experienced staff here in Washington County. There were also 3 staff that reached two years of service with the District – Jordan Whitmer, Jenna Waller, and Alexis Blake. During 2023 the WCCD also brought on a new Administrative Assistant, Kelsey Montozzi.

As we enter 2024 the WCCD will continue to find ways to recognize our long-serving staff while attracting new skilled workers to Washington County. We hope that you will join us at one of our many outreach events in 2024!

Sincerely,



Jennifer Dann

AGRICULTURE

This year was the first application period for the Washington County Agriculture Enhancement program which provides cost share to farmers in the county to implement agricultural best management practices (BMP's). This year the district limit program to applicants requesting the purchase of lime to improve the pH of their crop and pasture fields. The program received 27 applications for a total request amount of \$22,412. All applications were funded this year. In 2024, the program is looking to grow the program. In early 2023, the district signed the delegation agreement to implement the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) which will provide additional funding to farmers to implement BMPs to address animal concentration areas. The district received an allocation of \$3,084,739.92 to use towards implementation of the program. The district promoted the program and received 4 applications totaling \$2,940,154.50. The district approved these 4 projects. Two projects are under construction and the other two projects are in the design phase.

Work continued on the 2019 Growing Greener Grant for the Wherry Farm. With the partnership of California University Partners for Fish and Wildlife, we were able to install 10,697 ft of fence, 6 stream crossings, 2,264 ft of muddill, 39 Log Cross Vanes, 84 ft of Toe Logs, 1 spring development, and installation of a box culvert. Although 2023 was supposed to be the last year of the grant, the landowner asked if we could extend the project to include approximately 600 ft of additional stream restoration. Working with the regional grant coordinator, we were able to apply for an amendment to the grant to extend the completion date and complete the additional work.

This year we utilized the spring and summer interns to conduct a simple research project on 5 local farms in the county. The focus of the project was to evaluate the usage of fertilizer during the growth of corn. The project was broken down into 3 sections, soil testing before planting, pre-side dress nitrogen test (PNST), and the late season corn stalk test. Results from the soil testing showed that 3 out of the 5 farms are over applying phosphorus and potassium. On the other side the test showed that only 2 out of the 5 farms needed to apply lime to adjust the pH of the soil. Results from the PNST testing showed that 2 farms needed to apply more nitrogen than they planned, and 2 farms were over applying. The late season corn stalk test results showed that nitrogen likely limited the yield on 4 farms and nitrogen was in excess on 1 farm. Integrating a research aspect into our internships has been a great experience and we are excited to continue with more projects.

WATERSHEDS



The District continues to support the Washington County Watershed Alliance and its individual watershed association members through the assistance of the Watershed Specialist (the Watershed Specialist position is cost-shared by funding from the DEP). Alliance member associations are the Buffalo Creek Watershed Association, the Upper Chartiers Creek Watershed Association, the Cross Creek Watershed Association, the Independence Conservancy (Raccoon Creek), and the Ten Mile Creek Watershed Association. A summary of the various watershed activities is provided below.

Technical Assistance: Six landowners were provided with technical assistance on their properties. Training was developed for Flow Meter for the Watershed Associations, including the creation of videos for training purposes. Grant writing assistance to the Watershed Associations was provided on several applications in 2023.

Grants: Grants written and submitted in collaboration with partner organizations include a grant of \$230,965 which was submitted to the Growing Greener Grant Program for agricultural restoration on Little Chartiers Creek. This grant was awarded in early 2024.

A grant for \$1,000 was also submitted to fund the Envirothon, we await word on awarding of that grant.





Canon-McMillan – 2023 Envirothon winners

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

WASHINGTON COUNTY ENVIROTHON

The 2023 event was held at the Dormont-Mt. Lebanon Sportsmen's Club. Washington County had nine (9) teams from six (6) schools participating. The WCCD purchased prizes for the top team and the five winning students received \$500 scholarships for continuing education. Assistance for the event was provided by the PA Game Commission, DCNR Bureau of Forestry, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and the Dormont-Mt. Lebanon Sportsmens Club.

Top Teams:

- 1st Place - Canon-McMillan
- 2nd Place - Avella
- 3rd Place – California

Participating Schools:

- Avella
- Bethlehem-Center
- California
- Canon-McMillan
- Ringgold
- Washington

Thanks to our sponsors – Dormont-Mt. Lebanon Sportsmens Club, Range Resources, EQT, Laurel Communities, Pennsylvania Envirothon.

DIRT, GRAVEL & LOW VOLUME ROADS

The Washington County Conservation District (WCCD) Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program (DGLVR) completed seven (7) projects in 2023.

Dirt Gravel Roads Completed Sites:

Project	WCCD Payment	In-Kind	Total value
Hull Road, Deemston Borough	\$11,166.34	\$1,240.70	\$12,407.04
Klages Road, Donegal Township	\$121,220.77	\$12,435.10	\$133,655.87
Dutch Fork Lake, PA Fish & Boat Commission	\$49,921.95	\$160,286.96	\$210,208.91
Dunkard Church Road, West Bethlehem Township	\$114,976.63	\$12,775.07	\$127,751.70
Totals:	\$297,285.69	\$186,737.83	\$484,023.52

Low Volume Roads Completed Sites:

Project	WCCD Payment	In-Kind	Total Value
3rd Street, Marianna Borough	\$318,144.94	\$24,763.85	\$342,908.79
Chestnut Street, Beallsville Borough	\$59,774	\$10,548.35	\$70,322.35
Pine Run Road, West Bethlehem Township	\$148,100	\$21,854.63	\$169,954.63
Totals:	\$526,081.94	\$57,166.83	\$583,248.77

DIRT, GRAVEL & LOW VOLUME ROADS

- In total, WCCD spent \$823,367.63 on finished projects.
- Municipalities spent \$243,904.66 as In-Kind Payments on their projects.
- Total Spent on projects \$1,067,272.29.
- The average of In-Kind of all projects is 22.85%.



Indian Camp Road Slide: WCCD funded 3 slide repairs on the roadway with Block wall designs. Drainage was improved on the roadway to prevent road base saturation that will reduce the likelihood of new slides in the future.

Klages Road Drainage Project. The roadway had no road base and limited drainage originally, and the streambanks were eroding into the waterway. Road fill, cross pipes, road side ditches and streambank stabilization were installed.



PERMITTING

CHAPTER 102 & CHAPTER 105: 2023



All earth disturbances, even those that do not require a permit, fall under the scope of Chapter 102, including those associated with agricultural plowing and tilling, timber harvesting, and road maintenance. The District reviews a variety of Chapter 102 permits.

The goal of the permitting program is to protect the soil and water resources of Washington County by reducing the impacts of accelerated erosion and encroachments on water resources. Through our Chapter 102 delegation from PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) we review erosion and sedimentation control plans, conduct routine inspection and complaint investigations. One of the duties we are tasked with is inspections of permitted sites to confirm compliance with the Chapter 102 regulations and the Clean Stream Law. The goal of the program is voluntary compliance.



Best Management Practices (BMPs) are installed at earth disturbance sites to reduce the effects of accelerated erosion and sedimentation. Conservation districts issue NPDES permits and inspect BMPs on construction sites.

The largest program at the District is the Chapter 102/NPDES and Chapter 105 (Water Obstruction & Encroachments).

The Chapter 105 program involves review of General permits, as well as complaint investigations.

Encroachments are “any structure or activity that in any manner changes, expands, or diminishes, the course, current, or cross-section of any watercourse, floodway, or body of water” and obstructions are “structures located in, along or across or projecting into a watercourse, floodway or body of water.” Chapter 105 General permits are needed for any work that creates an encroachment or obstruction of waterways, wetlands or floodways. This type of work could include construction of roadways, utility line crossings or fish habitat structures.

Permitting staff participated in several outreach events in 2023. We continued our partnership with Allegheny, Beaver & Butler Conservation Districts for the Joint Workshop hosted virtually each February. We hosted our second fall permitting workshop at the fairgrounds for engineers and consultants, We had 48 in attendance, an increase from the previous year.



Chapter 102/105 Summary Report

January 2023- December 2023

Chapter 102

Total Review fees	\$247,250
Total Permit Appl. Proc. Fees Collected	\$47,425
Initial Chapter 102 Plan Reviews	86
Follow-up Chapter 102 Plan Reviews	52
NPDES General Permits Authorized	63
NPDES Individual Permits Authorized	10

Inspections

Project Sites Inspected	121
Routine Inspections	87
Follow-up Inspections	130
N.O.T. Inspections (final)	26

Complaints

Received and Inspected	32
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Chapter 105

Total Review Fees	\$7,900
Total Permit Appl. Proc. Fees Collected	\$16,100
Incomplete Applications	37
Chapter 105 GP Permits Acknowledged	54

Complaints

Received and Inspected	33
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WCCD PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH:

PROGRAMS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Staff members continually work to promote environmental education by instructing at various programs for schools, municipalities, civic groups, and scout organizations.

- Rain barrel workshop~25 participants
- Trout in the Classroom - Trinity
- Elementary ~250 students
- Girl Scout Badge Day ~200 participants
- Meaningful Watershed Educational Experience ~12 educators
- Soil Health Field Day
- Equine Field Day ~ 20 participants
- Forage Workshop ~ 14 participants
- Cover Crop Field Day ~12 participants
- Livestock Health Meeting ~ 18 participants
- Washington & Jefferson Agriculture Field Trip
- Washington & Jefferson Rural Water Presentation



“TOMORROW” NEWSLETTER:

Our District newsletter is in the 50th year of publication, and the mailinglist exceeds 1,500. The District’s Associate Directors, staff, cooperating agencies, and other sources provide all the articles for the newsletter. Our Administrative Assistant assembles the newsletter three times a year. The Washington County Watershed Alliance’s “Watershed Connections” continues to be a part of our newsletter, which helps cut costs and provide additional support for the Alliance.

WCCD PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH:

WEBSITE:

The District website, www.pawccd.org, was created in 2008. The site contains information, resources, and downloadable forms for public use, as well as an online version of the “Tomorrow” newsletter and links to partnering organizations. Throughout 2023, the site received 6,319 visits to the website. Of those visits 82.8% were new visitors to the site. The average visitor to the website clicked on 4 pages and stayed for more than 1.5 minutes browsing the site. This is a good retention rate for viewers. The most popular pages for people to view on the website were the home page, the contacts page, and the agriculture page.

LITTER CLEAN-UPS:

On April 6, 2023 the WCCD along with Range Resource, Marianna Borough, and Washington & Jefferson College conducted a trash cleanup along Horne Valley Road and Cemetery Road in the Borough. Over 15 tons of trash and tires were collected and disposed of properly. We are thankful for all the help and support of our local organizations.

As part of this clean-up effort, the WCCD won the PA Association of Conservation District “Trash Champion” award for largest clean-up.

This WCCD also continues to clean Old Hickory Ridge Road from where it joins with North Main Street until past our office twice a year as part of our adopt-a-roadway clean-up program.



DISPLAY OPPORTUNITIES:

The WCCD was able to set up a display at the 2023 Ag Days and the Washington County Fair.

COUNTY FAIR:

In 2023 the WCCD set up a display with agricultural information, including information on our new Ag Enhancement Program (AEP) highlighted rain barrels as a way for residents to reduce their stormwater flow off their property.

AG DAYS:

A District display was setup at the 2023 event. Including the participation as one of the booths for the scavenger hunt.