



# Washington County Conservation District Newsletter

Published by The Washington County Conservation District  
February 2018 Volume 47, Issue 1

## Washington County Conservation District 2017 Farmer of the Year



The Washington County Conservation District would like to recognize ————**The Lowden Farm** as the recipient of the 2017 Conservation Farmer of the Year award. This award is presented in recognition of your outstanding commitment to conservation in Washington County.

The Lowden Farm is owned and operated by Dave and Jeff Lowden. The farm is located in Coal Center and consists of a total of 181 acres of which 59 acres are cropland

and 57 acres are pasture. Currently the Lowden's raise beef cattle, and have a current herd size of 36 cattle. The Lowden's also occasionally raise 4H pigs and lambs.

The farm was purchased by Dave and Jeff's parents in 1965. The brothers began farming at a young age after the passing of their father. Dave and Jeff credit help with the survival of the farm, to other local farmers, the NRCS, the FSA and the Conservation District. The Lowden family first began working with the NRCS in 1968.

The Lowden's currently run an all grass operation in which a rotational grazing system is implemented for the cattle, growing rye hay occasionally, which is used for silage and straw. They recently installed an animal heavy use area that includes a manure stacking/storage area. They have also installed stream bank fencing as another conservation effort.

Dave and Jeff have worked with the Conservation Stewardship Program in the past which has es-

tablished pollination habitats on the farm and taking part in mowing for wildlife practices.





# Future Southern Beltway PA Turnpike from Route 22 to Route 79

Section A  
Robinson Twp.



Ariel view provided by and taken by John Diehl with Fey Co.



Section B, Cecil Twp.

## **EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL PROGRAM:**

Our District's largest program is the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program. The program has been delegated to conservation districts by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the State Conservation Commission. The Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program is established under Chapter 102 of the Clean Streams Law of Pennsylvania.

Natural gas exploration, residential and commercial development have continued at a steady pace throughout 2017. Several large transportation projects have started construction as well. The continued economic growth is good news for Washington County. The following was accomplished by the Erosion and Sedimentation Control program during 2017.

*Inspections.....288 site visits*

*Plan reviews.....87 initial reviews and 86 follow-up reviews*



*A restored pipeline right of way in South Strabane Twp.*

*Acres involved..... 6426 total acres of projects with 4826 acres disturbed*

*Complaints.....36 received*

*General NPDES permits.....66 permits processed*

*Individual NPDES permits.....16 permits processed*

*ESCGP-2 permits .....16 permits processed*

*Technical assistance and advice was provided to approximately 1,750 individuals.*

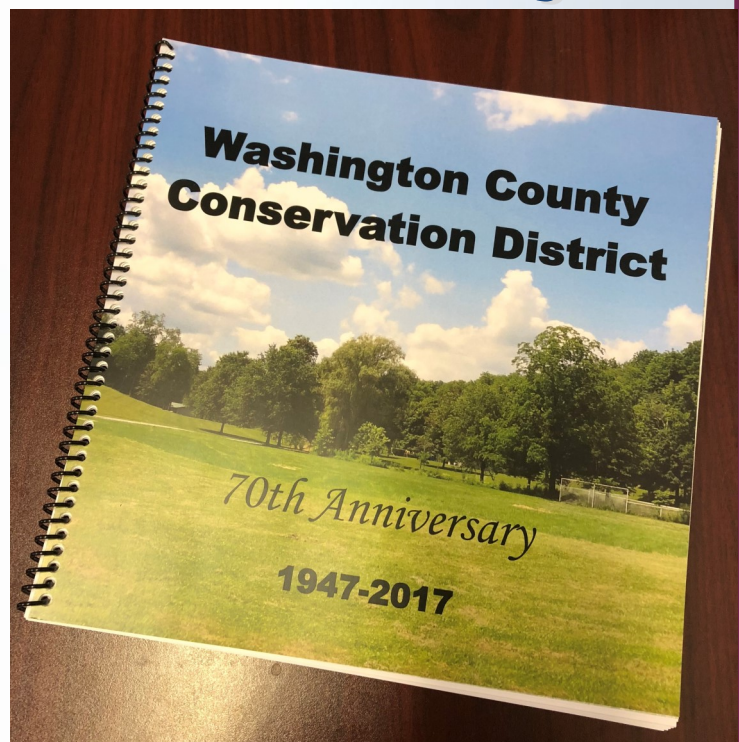
## **Conservation District Celebrates 70 years**

In 2017 the Conservation District celebrated its 70th Anniversary.

To commemorate this occasion a collection of photos and information was made into a book.

This new book highlights the work completed by the Conservation District from its inception on March 25, 1947 through the end of 2017.

Stop by the office to browse a copy in our Conservation Resource Library.



# Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program

## Projects Completed in 2017

During 2017, several projects were completed as part of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission's Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program in Washington County including those listed below:

- ⇒ Borough of Cokeburg – Buchanan Street
- ⇒ Buffalo Township – Gorby Road, Reese Road, Wigington Road
- ⇒ Long Branch Borough – Short Street
- ⇒ West Bethlehem Township – Dutch Glory Slide, Dutch Glory Drainage
- ⇒ Donora Borough – Palmer Park Road lower depression, Palmer Park Road deck hockey area, Upper 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Lower 14<sup>th</sup> Street
- ⇒ Jefferson Township – Walker Road
- ⇒ West Bethlehem Township – Wherry School Drainage
- ⇒ Robinson Township – Racoon Creek

Improvements made to various roads included stream bank stabilization, slide repairs, drainage and road surface improvements. The total program funds expended to Washington County Municipalities in 2017 to complete the projects was approximately \$590,000. The total project costs including the program funds and the in-kind contributions (project costs incurred by the grant recipient that are not reimbursed through the Program grant) exceeded \$750,000.



### West Beth – Wherry School Drainage



Thus, this program made it possible to improve many of our local unpaved and low-volume roads. Additional projects are under contract and expected to be completed in 2018.

Information regarding the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission's Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program can be found on the: Penn State Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies website: ([www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu](http://www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu)) or by calling our office @ 724-705-7098



Borough of Donora – Palmer Park Road – Lower Depression

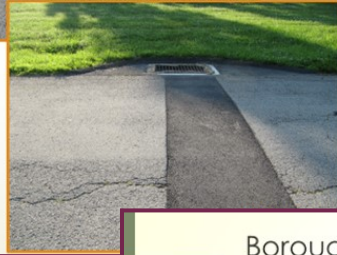


BEFORE

- Drainage Improvements
- \$4,303 funded; \$6,012 in-kind



AFTER



Borough of Donora – Palmer Park Road at Deck Hockey Area



BEFORE



AFTER

- Re-direction of stream water away from a parking lot and walking trail to eliminate hazards created by wet and/or freezing areas.
- \$16,263 funded; \$13,230 in-kind



Buffalo Township – Wigington Road



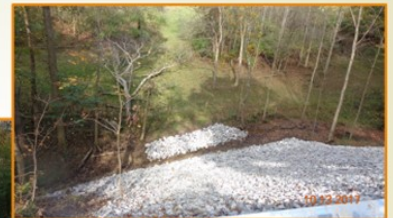
- Major slide repair.
- \$74,350 funded; \$34,816 in-kind



BEFORE



Wigington Road



AFTER





## ***FROM THE WASHINGTON COUNTY WATERSHED ALLIANCE—WINTER 2018***

### **Washington County Watershed Alliance**

**Website:** Visit us at [www.wcwalliance.org](http://www.wcwalliance.org) or our Facebook page for more information on our activities.

**Meetings:** The meetings are the first Tuesday of the month at the Washington Co. Conservation District office - 2800 North Main St., Suite 105, Washington, PA 15301. Meetings are open to the public and begin at 7:00 pm.

**Amazon Smile:** You can now help the WCWA with every purchase you make through [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com). If you use Amazon, you can login through [Smile.amazon.com](http://Smile.amazon.com) to send 0.5% of each of your purchases to the Watershed Alliance. Just log into the smile website and search for Washington County Watershed Alliance, you can use your normal Amazon login to make purchases and we will get the donation—no extra work on your part! Consider signing in to Amazon Smile to help our local waterways!

**20th Anniversary Celebration:** On June 9th we will be holding a fun trivia competition at Mingo Creek County Park to celebrate 20 years of water quality improvement and education in Washington County! Join us for our “Envirothon” event. You can either register a team of 5 trivia competitors or just join us to learn more about the WCWA and our member Watershed Associations. More details will be available on registration and attendance on our website in the coming months.

**Annual Meeting:**

## **Washington County Watershed Alliance 20th Anniversary!**

### **➤➤ 2018 WCWA Annual Meeting**

Tuesday March 6<sup>th</sup>

- Friends, come as you are for a friendly environmental evening!
- Enjoy a light dinner, great conversation, and a night full of environmental inspiration!



➤ Members- Vote for At-Large Board positions for 2018!

➤ Raffles & Refreshments!

**Get your free watershed roadmap with membership**

(dues will be accepted at the event)



### **Location:**

Washington County Conservation District Office  
2800 N. Main St., Suite 105  
Washington PA, 15301

### **Please RSVP by February 26th:**

Jennifer Dann  
Phone: 724-705-7098  
Email: [jdann@pawccd.org](mailto:jdann@pawccd.org)

\*RSVP is requested but no monetary reservation is required – though a \$10 donation will be welcomed at the event to cover the cost of food.  
(Cash or check only)

## [Chartiers Creek Watershed Association](#)

[www.upperchartierscreek.org](http://www.upperchartierscreek.org); email: [chartierscreekwa@pawccd.org](mailto:chartierscreekwa@pawccd.org); [facebook.com/upperchartierscreek](https://www.facebook.com/upperchartierscreek)

**Meetings** - The ChCWA meets at 7:00 pm on the second Wednesday of each month at the WCCD Office- 2800 N. Main St., Room 105, Washington, PA.

**Stream Monitoring:** Chemical and macroinvertebrate stream monitoring was completed at our four standard sites in October. If you would like to assist in the spring please contact us.

**December Pot Luck Dinner Meeting:** On December 13th the ChCWA met and enjoyed a pot luck dinner with its members and supporters. At the meeting Board members and Officers were also elected.

**Art Contest:** During January and February 2018 the ChCWA is holding its second annual Art Contest for Canon-McMillan high school students. The theme this year is "Water: Can Science Save It?" Check out the entries at the Frank Sarris Public Library.

## [Buffalo Creek Watershed Association](#)

[www.buffalocreekwatershed.org](http://www.buffalocreekwatershed.org); email: [buffalocreekwa@gmail.com](mailto:buffalocreekwa@gmail.com)

**Meetings:** BCWA meetings are held the second Thursday of each month, 7:00 pm at the Buffalo Twp. Municipal Bldg.

**Streambank Restoration:** BCWA's partner, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy completed work at the ball fields in Taylorstown to lessen erosion and sedimentation into Buffalo Creek. Trees and shrubs were planted along the restored bank at the end of October.



## [Ten Mile Creek Watershed Association](#)

[www.tenmilecreekwatershed.org](http://www.tenmilecreekwatershed.org)

**Facebook:** The TMCWA has created a Facebook page, find us and keep up to date with volunteer items and meeting dates.

**Natural Gas Educational Event:** On October 16, 2017, the TMCWA and Log Cabin Fence Company hosted a presentation by EQT about the state of the industry and its local business presence in the region. The presentation by Nathaniel Manchin, Manager, Local Government & Community Affairs, and Stephanie Paluda, Local Government & Community Affairs Specialist, included a general overview of EQT and its well development process, an update on the proposed Rice Energy acquisition, impact fees in surrounding townships, and EQT's local giving in the region.



## [Upper Wheeling Creek Watershed Association](#)

[www.upperwheelingcreek.org](http://www.upperwheelingcreek.org)

**Upcoming Meetings:** The upcoming April meeting will be held on April 4th. The Upper Wheeling Creek Watershed Association meets quarterly on the first Wednesday of January, April, July, and October at 10 AM at the East Finley Township Building, 1394 East Finley Drive (Rt, 231).

**Educational Events:** On **April 4th at 10:00am**, the UWCWA will be hosting a **free event** with Resource Environmental Solutions (RES) to discuss their Robinson Fork project (shown at right). This is the largest restoration project in the Northeast U.S. according to the company. Please join us for an overview of the project and a site visit to discover how and why this project was completed in the Wheeling Creek Watershed. Join us for coffee, donuts, and learn about what is going on in your local region.



# Improving Soil Health in Field and Forage Crop Production

**Soil health** is the continued capacity of soil to function as a living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. Viewing soil as a living ecosystem that has 'health' reflects a fundamental shift in the way we think about soil. Soil isn't an inert growing medium that needs to be filled up with water and nutrients when it runs out. Rather, if the soil is healthy, it is teeming with large and small organisms that live together in a dynamic, complex web of relationships. Farm crops and animals become part of this unique 'cycle of life.'

A healthy soil enables a cropping system to run smoothly, just like the well-oiled hub of a wheel. In contrast, a 'sick' soil has an ecosystem that is out of balance, lacks certain key organisms, or lacks the food these organisms need. This results in problems such as low yield, increased runoff, soil moisture deficits, pest and disease problems, and nutrient deficiencies. In the past, it was common to treat the symptoms of poor soil health with temporary patches. For example, runoff problems might be dealt with by tilling the soil to increase pore space, not realizing that the fundamental problems were lack of soil armor (i.e., cover) to protect the soil from raindrop impact, absence of continuous living vegetation to capture solar energy to feed soil organisms which create spongy soil structure, and a living root system that stimulates aggregation!

Lack of soil health is usually the reason farmers, researchers, and policy makers struggle with no-till. If soil is healthy, success with no-till is achievable and problems such as the excessive use of pesticides or nutrient runoff are avoided. Considering the negative impacts of tillage on soil health continuous no-till is recommended to achieve optimal soil health. Continuous no-till is planting all crops without the use of any prior tillage.

## Continuous No-Till for Soil Health

No-till is a powerful tool to combat erosion. It increases residue cover and creates firmer soil and better soil structure. No-till reduces erosion by more than 80 percent versus chisel plowing in a corn-soybean rotation where crop residue is left after harvest.

Soil health is like the hub of a wheel, while continuous no-till is the rim.

When spokes are missing, the wheel starts to weaken and malfunction, but when they are present, the system is highly productive, profitable, environmentally sustainable, and stronger. Let's explore into how to build soil health, increase profit from a diversity of enterprises, reduce risk by weather-proofing crops against extremes in rainfall and temperature, protect crops from pests and diseases, and utilize animals as an integral part of the farm.

Soil health is like the hub of a wheel and continuous no-till is the rim. When all 14 spokes connecting hub and rim are present, the system is highly productive, profitable, and environmentally sustainable. Over the course of the next few months we will be discussing each of the topics on these spokes in more detail. Stay tuned!!!







*Farm Service  
Agency*



2800 North Main Street, Suite 1  
Washington, PA 15301

Phone: 724-222-3060 Ext. 2 Fax: 855-847-3602

## **2018 Livestock Losses**

The Livestock Indemnity Program (LIP) provides assistance to eligible producers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather and attacks by animals reintroduced into the wild by the federal government or protected by federal law. LIP compensates livestock owners and contract growers for livestock death losses in excess of normal mortality due to adverse weather, including losses due to hurricanes, floods, blizzards, wildfires, extreme heat or extreme cold.

For 2018, eligible losses must occur on or after Jan. 1, 2018, and no later than 60 calendar days from the ending date of the applicable adverse weather event or attack. A notice of loss must be filed with FSA within 30 days of when the loss of livestock is apparent. Participants must provide the following supporting documentation to their local FSA office no later than 90 calendar days after the end of the calendar year in which the eligible loss condition occurred.

- Proof of death documentation
- Copy of growers contracts
- Proof of normal mortality documentation

USDA has established normal mortality rates for each type and weight range of eligible livestock, i.e. Adult Beef Cow = 1.5% and Non-Adult Beef Cattle (less than 400 pounds) = 5%. These established percentages reflect losses that are considered expected or typical under "normal" conditions. Producers who suffer livestock losses in 2018 must file both of the following:

- A notice of loss the earlier of 30 calendar days of when the loss was apparent
- An application for payment by March 31, 2019.

*Additional Information about LIP is available at your local FSA office or online at: [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov).*

## **Breaking New Ground**

Agricultural producers are reminded to consult with FSA and NRCS before breaking out new ground for production purposes as doing so without prior authorization may put a producer's federal farm program benefits in jeopardy. This is especially true for land that must meet Highly Erodible Land (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions.

Producers with HEL determined soils are required to apply tillage, crop residue and rotational requirements as specified in their conservation plan.

Producers should notify FSA as a first point of contact prior to conducting land clearing or drainage type projects to ensure the proposed actions meet compliance criteria such as clearing any trees to create new cropland, then these areas will need to be reviewed to ensure such work will not risk your eligibility for benefits.

Landowners and operators complete the form AD-1026 - Highly Erodible Land Conservation (HEL) and Wetland Conservation (WC) Certification to identify the proposed action and allow FSA to determine whether a referral to Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) for further review is necessary.

# Farmland Preservation

Pennsylvania leads the nation in permanently preserving 544,892 acres on 5,242 farms for future agriculture production. Washington County is one of 59 counties participating in this program and has helped to preserve 5,911 acres on 38 farms.

## What are the benefits of Farmland Preservation?

- Makes farming more affordable for future generations.
- Assures affordable and accessible food and energy supplies while simultaneously helping to protect our national security.
- Keeps the demand for public services and the taxes needed to support these demands lower.
- Encourages soil and water conservation of Washington County's natural resources.
- Preserves farm culture.
- Preserves quality of life through protection of open space, aesthetics, watershed, recreation and wildlife.

## Does my farm qualify?

- Must be enrolled in your township's agricultural security area consisting of 500 acres or more.
- Must be contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres in size unless the tract is at least 10 acres in size and is either used for a crop unique to the area or is contiguous to a property previously preserved with an agricultural conservation easement.
- Must contain at least 50% of soils which are available for agricultural production and are of Land Capability Classes I through IV, as defined by the Soil Surveys published by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.
- Must contain the greater of 50% or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture or grazing land.

**The property must meet all four requirements to qualify. If you are not clear about any of these factors, please call for clarification.**

## **How long will my farm be preserved?**

The farm is preserved through a **perpetual** agricultural conservation easement. Simply put, the preservation is permanent.

## **When my farm is preserved, does the county own my farm?**

**No**, you still have all the rights as the property owner to sell, lease, or manage your land as you see fit, as long as the terms of preservation (Deed of Easement) are being followed.

## **How do I sign up for the program?**

Qualifying farms can apply by filing an application obtained from the Washington County Planning Commission. Applications are accepted until September 30<sup>th</sup> of any given year.

Caroline Sinchar, Planning Administrator  
Washington County Planning Commission  
100 West Beau Street, Ste. 701, Washington, PA 15301  
724-228-6811  
[sincharc@co.washington.pa.us](mailto:sincharc@co.washington.pa.us)

# Hibernation

## Where do animals go during the winter?

Some animals cannot survive winter so they have to adapt. Winter is too harsh on some animals due to the freezing cold and lack of food. These animals have adapted to sleep during the winter so they do not have to go out into the freezing cold. This adaptation is called hibernation. Animals prepare for the winter by eating a lot of food during the fall so they can have enough energy to survive. The animals' metabolism works to burn this energy while the animals are dormant, or inactive. During hibernation, an animal's heart and breathing patterns begins to slow down. This keeps the animal alive during its long nap.

Before falling asleep, and after they ate all the food they can, they find a nice cozy cave or underground tunnel to spend their winter in. They make sure their new home is safe and away from predators so they can have a peaceful sleep.



There are two types of hibernators. There are the "deep hibernators" who can sleep for many days or weeks, and then there are "torpor hibernators". Torpor hibernators are not true hibernators because their body is only inactive for a few hours a night instead of a few weeks.



## Animals That Hibernates in Pennsylvania

- Woodchucks
- Bats
- Snakes
- Toads
- Jumping Mice
- Chipmunks

## Hibernation Search



bear



snake



turtle



bat



mouse



frog

h	f	r	o	g	y
s	n	a	k	e	p
z	m	o	u	s	e
t	u	r	t	l	e
x	n	u	b	a	t
z	b	e	a	r	m

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