The background of the entire page is a photograph of a large, calm lake. The water is a deep blue-grey color with gentle ripples. In the distance, a line of trees with autumn foliage in shades of yellow, orange, and brown stretches across the horizon. The sky is a vibrant blue, filled with soft, white, puffy clouds. The text is overlaid on this scene.

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2019 ANNUAL REPORT

**WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S
ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2019**

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Reports from the following cooperating agencies

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (USDA) NATURAL
RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE (NRCS)**

WASHINGTON COUNTY AGRICULTURAL LAND PRESERVATION

DIRECTORS

Bill Iams, Chairman, Farmer Director
Bob Lusk, Vice Chairman, Farmer Director
Richard Mowl, Secretary / Treasurer, Farmer Director
Larry Maggi, County Commissioner Director
Jose' Taracido, Public Director
John Hunter, Farmer Director
Jan Marchezak-Tomsic, Public Director

DIRECTOR EMERITIS

Eugene Painter
William Slosky

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Georgianna Griffith
Kathy Hixenbaugh
Joan Daley
Keith Small
Don Gardner
Mark Fickley
Jessica Ullom
Tom Sierzega

DISTRICT STAFF

Todd Thornburg, District Manager
John Hewitt, Agricultural Administrator
Matt Golden, Erosion and Sedimentation Technician
Lyndsey Burton, Erosion and Sedimentation Technician
Emily Murray, Erosion and Sedimentation Technician
Audrey Sykes, Erosion and Sedimentation Technician
Emily Wise, Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Technician
Jennifer Dann, Watershed Specialist
Mike Martin, Agricultural Technician
Tom Ulrich, Agricultural Technician
Clarice Munk, Secretary
Interns: Sarah Dugan

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WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT'S 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION:

The Washington County Conservation District (WCCD) remained busy throughout 2019. A new district manager, Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road (DGLVR) Technician, and Erosion and Sedimentation Technician, kept the steady employees busy with constant internal training on top of their regular duties. The district employees created and implemented a new vision and mission statement for WCCD and are living up to the challenge.

The slowdown from 2018 halted with the beginning of 2019. Most programs saw an increase of events, permits, projects, and other job-related duties in 2019. Fortunately for the district, many employees remain in the district as the backbone of the organization. They continue to carry the load for training the new employees, answering questions, and be the go-to individuals for district, USDA, and state entities. Recognized this past year from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) for years of service were Matt Golden (10 year recognition), Jennifer Dann (5 year recognition but will get the 10 year this upcoming year), Clarice Munk (15 year recognition) and Tom Ulrich (5 year recognition). John Hewitt held down the fort as the Interim District Manager and remains a key element to the new district manager.

Furthermore, WCCD implemented multiple new Information Technology capabilities to continue to move the district in a forward direction. Finally, the district and USDA employees settled into the new conservation center, built for the District and the USDA agencies, in 2018.



PROGRAMS:

The Washington County Conservation District continues to manage and offer the following programs to serve Washington County citizens:

Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program, Chapter 102 of the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits for Stormwater discharges from construction sites.

Chapter 105 General Stream Encroachment and Obstruction Permits

Nutrient Management Program

Manure Management Planning

Agricultural Conservation Technician Program

Farmland Preservation Level 1 Program Delegation

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Program for municipalities

No-till seeder rental for farm operations

Abandoned Mine Reclamation programs

Environmental Education Programs that include:

School Programs

County Envirothon Competition

Watershed Support Programs including the Washington County Watershed Alliance

The "TOMORROW" conservation newsletter and District Website.

DIRECTORS:

The Conservation District Board of Directors experienced no changes in 2019 and continue to provide oversight of the staff and operations of the Washington County Conservation District. Bob Lusk and Jose Taracido were reaffirmed for another four-year term.

All Conservation Districts in Pennsylvania are governed by Act 167, the Conservation District Law. Act 167 requires that all Conservation Districts have a minimum of a seven-member board, with one County Commissioner representative, four Farmer Directors, and two Public Directors. The Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission oversees all Conservation Districts in Pennsylvania including director appointments to ensure that they adhere to Act 167.

DISTRICT STAFF:

We did experience staff changes in 2019. As most would know, Gary Stokum, the long-time District Manager (32 years), retired in December of 2018. The new District Manager is Todd Thornburg who began the role in February. The District's Agricultural Administrator and Assistant Manager, John Hewitt, has 23 years of employment with the District. The District's Erosion and Sedimentation Control Technicians are Matt Golden with 11 years of experience, Lyndsey Burton (3 years), and Audrey Sykes (2 months). Audrey was hired toward the end of the year and continues to learn every day. With a degree in Environmental Stewardship and Education and nearing completion of a Master of Science in Biology. Emily Murray was also an E&S Technician in 2019 until resigning in March. The District Watershed Specialist is Jennifer Dann with 9 years of experience. WCCD had two Agricultural Technicians to begin the year; Tom Ulrich has been with us for 6 years and Mike Martin with 2 years of service. Mike resigned from WCCD in July. Tom continues his duties as the Agricultural Conservation Technician and Nutrient Management Technician while also assisting the Chapter 102 program. WCCD hired a new District Dirt & Gravel Road, and Low Volume Road (DGLVR) Technician, Emily Wise. Emily comes to us from Allegheny County Conservation District where she served as the DGLVR Coordinator and Agricultural Technician. Emily also assists in Chapter 105 duties. Emily continues to impress and learn in both. Clarice Munk, our District Secretary for the past 19 years, remains with the district and continues to be part of the backbone of the organization.

The District also provides support and office storage space for the Washington County Watershed Alliance. Presently the Alliance has no active employees.



During 2019 the District employed a single intern from Washington and Jefferson College. Her name is Sarah Dugan. Sarah is from Cheswick, PA and was selected to study abroad after her internship with W&J College.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Not only was there a new building to break in this past year but staff turnover also created challenges. The district hired a new district manager as long serving and dedicated, Gary Stokum, retired at the end of 2018. Emily Murray and Mike Martin started the year with the district but chose different career paths in their young adult lives and we wish them nothing but the best.

In 2019, WCCD continued to move forward. WCCD implemented multiple Information Technology software changes to ensure the employees had a shared understanding and were able to work more efficiently. The employees are embracing the change and continued to learn every day. WCCD also began building a five-year Strategic Plan. It started with an updated Vision and Mission Statement for the district. Planning will continue into 2020 due to a shift in priorities at the end of the year. With the new technology, WCCD is creating Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for all programs. The SOPs will assist the district in training new employees, understanding our own internal processes, and becoming even more efficient and effective than before.

Overall, the WCCD conducted 6 management plans covering 900 acres, one (1) conservation plan, ten (10) best management practices (BMPs) on farms, 354 erosion and sedimentation inspections with 167 plan reviews and 86 permits, and they processed 89 Chapter 105 permits with a total of 722 impacts. Furthermore, the Dirt and Gravel Roads and Low Volume Roads currently have seven (11) contracts and ten (10) projects completed in 2019 for Washington County.

Finally, the WCCD continues its efforts to reach out to the citizens of Washington County about conservation efforts with events such as the Envirothon with 11 teams from seven (7) different school districts and conducting presentations at local schools and events. The district also hosting training for local municipalities on Agricultural and E&S training. Additionally, a local farm, Iam's Farm, won the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) Clean Water Farm Award while WCCD also recognized the Conservation Farmer of the Year to The Ashby Farm in 2019.





WCCD VISION: Assisting the community to conserve and improve the natural resources through promotion and innovation

WCCD MISSION STATEMENT: Washington County Conservation District coordinates and implements state-wide and local programs to conserve soil health and water quality for the community through three (3) key components: outreach, education, and technical assistance

Outreach: The district conducts outreach through information technology and social media, participation in key events in the county and state, and interactions with legislators

Education: The district conducts education through Envirothon competition, school visits, municipality training, information briefings, and events such as Field Days and Crop Days.

Technical Assistance: The district provides technical assistance based on delegated responsibilities from DEP, PDA, and SCC. These responsibilities include review of permit applications, inspections of best management practices (BMPs), complaint site inspections, and outreach and education for each program responsibility.

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS:

NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM: Nutrient Management funding provides approximately 25% of one full time position. In addition to the Nutrient Management funding provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) for conservation districts, the PDA also made funding available in 1999 for the hiring of Agriculture Conservation Technicians. This funding consists of approximately 25% of one full time position as well. The purpose of these funds is to provide technical time to promote the Pennsylvania State regulations requiring Manure Management plans for all agricultural animal operations and where the animal numbers warrant, to promote the Nutrient Management regulations. We continue to employ staff that are Nutrient Management certified and also qualified as Agricultural Conservation Technicians, to provide service to Washington County agricultural operations. We received funding in 2019 for approximately 50% of one full time position to perform these duties.

During 2019 our agricultural division completed the following agricultural work:

Nutrient Management Plans:

Total Number of farm acres in Washington County (as of December 2019) planned under Nutrient Management Act (NMA): Acres = 900

Number of Concentrated Animal Operations in Washington County: 2

Number of Volunteer Nutrient Management Plans: 4

Number of people reached through outreach efforts in 2019 that the District participated in and/or helped sponsor:

Through news articles: 2 articles with a readership of approximately 3,000

The staff also participated in public events such as the County Fair

There were 24 farm visits made during 2019

CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE: In 2019, the Agricultural Technicians were able to write 1 conservation plan. Our technicians also assisted 4 farmers in laying out contour strips. The technicians also worked on the follow designs:

2 – spring developments

2 – stream crossings

1 – dripline drain

1 – gutters and downspouts

AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION TECHNICIAN (ACT): In 2019, we continued to receive funding under the ACT program to assist with the cost of providing technical assistance to area farmers. These duties, along with those of the Nutrient Management Program and Manure Management, are all part of our agricultural division.

SOUTHWEST PROJECT GRASS (SWPG): SWPG is a cooperative effort by local Farmers, County Conservation Districts, and other Industry Partners with assistance from the United States Department of Agricultural Agencies, to improve pasture and rotational grazing systems in Southwest PA. Technical assistance for SWPG is provided by our Ag Staff, NRCS and other cooperating agencies. Tom Ulrich, one of our Agricultural Technicians serves on the executive committee for the organization. The district hosted the Southwest PA Grazing Field day at the Iam's Family Farm, which was also awarded the PA

Cleanwater Farm Award this year. Continued support and promotion of rotational grazing systems is planned.

SOUTHWEST PA SOIL HEALTH CONFERENCE: The event supports the district outreach effort by promoting no-till techniques and improving soil health. The event is held yearly at Saint Vincent College. The district assists in this event by having our Agricultural Staff serve on the conference committee.

NO-TILL SEEDER: The District's No-Till Seeder program has been a very successful program since we purchased our first seeder in 1993. The John Deere 1590 ten-foot-wide no-till seeder has been holding up well with little maintenance required. During 2019, the seeder was used on 351 acres of farmland by 12 farmers. This was a slight increase in usage over the 2018 planting season.



Farmer reseeding pastures in spring

GROWING GREENER GRANT PROGRAM: The district selected the Raccoon Creek Watershed as a priority watershed for the Growing Greener Grant Program in 2015. The District has been focusing on installation of stream bank fencing, stream crossings and improving grazing systems. By implementing these best management practices (BMPs), soils and excess nutrients are kept out of the stream, thereby improving the health of the water downstream of these farms. The district received funds through the grant in 2016 to install BMPs on 3 farms. The district applied for and was awarded additional grants in 2017 and 2018 to install BMPs for two additional farms.

In 2019, due to lack of interest in the current watershed, the district focused its attention to submitting a grant for agricultural BMPs without a focus on one particular watershed. Additionally, the District determined that working with one project per application allows for better management of the program. The grant submitted, will be a first that incorporates in-stream habitat restoration with agricultural BMPs such as fencing and stream crossings. The district will continue to grow this program by submitting additional grants in the coming years.

The district was able to complete installation of BMP's on two farms this summer and fall. The installation consisted of 2 stream crossings, 2 animal trails, 2 spring developments, dripline drain, 2 drop boxes, and 2,600 feet of fencing. The work was completed by the Partners for Fish & Wildlife out of California University of Pennsylvania and other contractors. These grants will also install stream crossings, animal trails, watering facilities, and fence at two more farms in the Raccoon Creek Watershed next year.



Newly installed animal trail

EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL PROGRAM:

Our District's largest program is the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program. The program is delegated to conservation districts by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the State Conservation Commission (SCC). The Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program is established under Chapter 102 of the Clean Streams Law of Pennsylvania. DEP, through the SCC, provides funding to conservation districts to administer the program. Districts are also able to retain the permit fees for all of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. We are also permitted to charge a plan review fee for the review of the erosion and sediment (E&S) control plans required under Chapter 102. E&S review fees and permit fees are used solely to fund the implementation of the Chapter 102 program. The Erosion and Sedimentation Program staff are funded by a combination of funding from the DEP, permit fees, and plan review fees.

In order to keep up with the plan review and inspection requirements, WCCD hired a new full time E&S technician. This brings the total staff to 3 full time technicians dedicated to E&S review and inspection and one technician who splits their time with another program.

Sediment caused by accelerated erosion has always been and continues to be the largest single source of pollution by volume. We all contribute to this source of pollution through earth moving activities; residential, commercial and industrial development, coal mining, oil and gas drilling, driveways, dirt and gravel roads, poor farming practices, and roadway construction. Based on these earth disturbance activities, the Erosion and Sediment Control Program and the NPDES permitting systems are extremely important to Washington County.



Sediment covers the natural rocky bottom of our streams and destroys the habitat that the aquatic insects need to survive. These insects are a food source for many fish species. Various birds, animals and reptiles rely on fish as food and then there are the folks that enjoy fishing. Sediment adversely affects the entire food chain. From an economic standpoint, increased sediment deposition adds to the cost of maintaining bridges, culverts and other instream structures. The backwaters of Canonsburg Lake are a prime example of the effects of sedimentation.



The following work was accomplished by the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Technicians during 2019:

<i>Inspections</i>	354 inspections
<i>Plan reviews</i>	88 initial reviews and 79 follow-up reviews
<i>Acres involved</i>	1903 disturbed acres with 2912 total acres
<i>Complaints</i>	34 investigated
<i>General NPDES permits issued (non-special protection watersheds)</i>	66 permits were processed
<i>Individual NPDES permits</i>	18 permits were processed
<i>ESCGP permits for Oil and Gas Transmission Lines</i>	2 permits were processed
<i>Total staff time for all permits</i>	1330 hours

*Outreach: Technical assistance was provided to approximately **1,200 individuals**.
 During 2019 there were **3 media events**.
 Outreach efforts accounted for **1,070 hours** of staff time.*

The District collected **\$242,370** in plan review fees and **\$54,000** in permit fees in 2019.



Chapter 105 Delegation:

Since 1995, our District has accepted limited responsibilities for Chapter 105 of the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law. Chapter 105 deals with stream and wetland encroachments and obstructions. In 2013, our district accepted full delegation for Chapter 105 general permits one through nine. The DEP allows delegated districts to keep the permit fees associated with this delegation agreement. During 2019, our district collected a total of \$10,775.00 in review fees and \$29,100.00 in permit fees for a **total of \$39,875.00 in Chapter 105 fees received for the year**. This amounted to \$4,675.00 less income in 2019 compared to 2018. During 2019, the following work was accomplished:

A total of 89 Chapter 105 General Permits were processed. The total number of permits included:

# of Permits	Type of General Permit
0	GP 1 Fish Habitat Enhancement Structure
1	GP 2 Small Dock and Boat Launching Ramps

9	GP 3s Bank Rehabilitation/Protection
8	GP 4s Intake and Outfall Structure
38	GP 5's Utility Line Stream Crossings
3	GP 6 Agricultural Crossings and Ramps
11	GP 7s Minor Road Crossings
18	GP 8s Temporary Road Crossings
1	GP9s Agricultural Activities

PADEP Chapter 105 Related Impacts

A total of **722** single and complete impacts such as a stream crossing, wetland crossing, outfall structure, etc...were associated with GP Permits that were approved in 2019.

Our office processed **30** complaints associated with Chapter 105 for 2019.



The Chapter 105 regulations were instituted by the Pennsylvania State Legislature many years ago to prevent damage to the environment through illegal activities such as illegal boat ramps such as the one to the left.



Also to prevent activities such as placing fill in floodways, streams, and wetlands such as those pictured to the left, and activities such as creating more riverfront property for yourself as in the picture below.



Failure to maintain culverts as shown in the picture to the left not only backs up water onto property owners upstream but also can cause safety hazards on roads and railways from water backing up and flowing over them. The undersizing of culverts can cause the same flooding and safety concerns.

DIRT, GRAVEL and LOW VOLUME ROADS PROGRAM:

For the past 23 years, the Washington County Conservation District (WCCD) has been administering the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program (DGLVRP) within Washington County. This is a state program that is funded through the Motor Vehicle License Fund and provides \$35 million to Pennsylvania counties to reduce sediment pollution from local roads into our waterways. The funding is distributed through grants to eligible municipalities who help to plan, oversee, and construct the projects at a local level.

Since 1997, Washington County has received \$3.4 million in funds for the Dirt and Gravel portion of the program, providing resources for 71 projects around the county. The Low Volume portion was instated in 2015 and has provided \$1.1 million to help address 28 problematic roads. Of these funded projects, municipalities and hired contractors have completed 10 projects this year: three (3) Dirt and Gravel and seven (7) Low Volume.

With the 2019/2020 funding allocation, WCCD was able to commit money to ten (10) new projects in five (5) townships: Hopewell, North Franklin, Amwell, Blaine, and Jefferson. Keep an eye out for projects happening in your municipality and welcome to construction season in southwestern PA!



Klages Road (Before): A 3-foot culvert in Donegal Township that carried the North Prong of Castleman Run under Klages Road. The stream widened to over 15 feet wide downstream of this culvert, and rains frequently caused the stream to overtop the road.



Klages Road (After): The culvert was replaced with a streambank-full structure with a width of 15 feet, 10 inches. For just under \$60,000, the township was able to significantly reduce future maintenance on this road and decrease the amount of erosion and sediment near the crossing of this High Quality stream.



2019 In-Progress Projects:

- Hoop Lane – Mt. Pleasant Township (DG)
- Carter Lane – Mt. Pleasant Township (DG)
- Pogue Road – Donegal Township (LV)
- North Adams Street – Houston Borough (LV)
- Frederick Terrace Road – East Bethlehem Township (LV)



2020 Projects:

- McCready Road – Jefferson Township – 3 Project Sites (DG)
- East Crossroads Road – Hopewell Township – 3 Project Sites (2 DG, 1 LV)
- Possum Hollow Road – Hopewell Township (DG)
- Walker Hill Road – Blaine Township (LV)
- McElree Road – North Franklin Township (LV)
- Ridge Church Road – Amwell Township (LV)

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION:

DISPLAY OPPORTUNITIES: The District continues to prepare and maintain informational displays for environmental outreach at various events throughout the year. These events included Washington County Ag Days, the Washington County Fair, and the Washington County Sportsmen’s Show.

WASHINGTON COUNTY ENVIROTHON: The District continues to host the Envirothon annual study session and competition for Washington County high school students. The 2019 competition was held on May 1st at the Dormont-Mt. Lebanon Sportsmen’s Club for the 26th year in a row. Fourteen teams from seven different school districts



competed to determine whose knowledge of environmental science was the most extensive. Canon-McMillan School District Gold Team took the top spot with the score of 379 out of 500 points. The second-place team was from Avella School District Blue Team with a score of 336. Third place went to the Canon-McMillan Blue Team with 334

points. The five students from the Canon-Mac Gold team each received \$500 scholarships provided through the Conservation District. The Canon-Mac Gold team went on to represent Washington County at the Pennsylvania State Envirothon, held at the University of Pittsburgh - Johnstown.

The 2019 top three Envirothon teams are pictured with their Advisors, Commissioner Larry Maggi, and Bill Iams (WCCD Chairman).

First place – Canon-Mac Gold (Above Left)
Second place – Avella Blue Team (Above Right)
Third place – Canon-Mac Blue (Right)



PROGRAMS AND PRESENTATIONS: Staff members continually work to promote environmental education by instructing at various programs for schools, municipalities, civic groups, and scout organizations. Some of the programs presented in 2019 included:

- Presentations for PA Master Naturalist Program on Watersheds and Wetlands
- Trout in the Classroom, Macroinvertebrate presentation to all Trinity Elementary School Fifth Grade Students (2-day event)
- Camp Agape presentation on water quality and macroinvertebrates
- Participated in the Allegheny & Washington County Junior Envirothon, conducted the Wildlife Station
- Non-point source pollution presentation at the County-wide Gifted student day at Mingo Park
- Washington County Envirothon Study Session and school visits to prepare
- Trinity High School Environmental Science class presentations on Watersheds
- Tour of Abandoned Mine Drainage Treatments site with Washington & Jefferson College Students

Several thousand individuals from both inside and outside the county were reached through displays, programs, and presentations.

WATER RESOURCES:

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 Chartiers Creek Watershed Association, the Cross Creek Watershed Association, the Independence Conservancy (Raccoon Creek), the Ten Mile Creek Watershed Association, and the Upper Wheeling Creek Watershed Association. A summary of the various watershed activities is provided below.

WASHINGTON COUNTY WATERSHED ALLIANCE

The Washington County Watershed Alliance serves the local member watershed associations by acting as the fiscal agent for grants and assisting them with projects throughout the county. The Alliance is also active as an organization with its own county-wide water-monitoring projects and educational programs.

Our District plays a major role in the operation of the Alliance. In 2019, our District held active membership in the Alliance with our Watershed Specialist as the Treasurer and advising coordinator for the member associations. The District provided office space and storage, and offered task support from the District Summer Intern.

The Alliance held its seventh Annual Membership Meeting and Banquet on March 5, 2019 at the Washington County Conservation District Office. The event promoted the Alliance and the Watershed Associations by highlighting activities during the 2018 calendar year and discussing upcoming events in 2019. Attendees viewed displays of the activities of the Alliance and member associations before entering the event. A light dinner was followed by a presentation from Greg Schaeztle of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC). Greg highlighted the work that WPC had completed in the county and upcoming projects for 2019. The event was well attended, and the feedback was positive.

The Alliance continued its surface water and groundwater monitoring projects in 2019. The summer marked the start of the 9th consecutive year of the stream monitoring project, with 14 sites in 9 county watersheds being monitored continually. Among the streams being monitored are main stems of Raccoon Creek, Chartiers Creek, Buffalo Creek, Pigeon Creek, Wheeling Creek, Ten Mile Creek, Harmon Creek, Two Mile Run, and Cross Creek.

The Alliance also continued to publish their “*Watershed Connections*” newsletter, which is part of our District’s “Tomorrow” newsletter.

In addition to the Alliance Twitter feed (@thewcwalliance) with 230 followers and Facebook page (www.facebook.com/WashingtonCWA) with 167 followers, the Alliance also has an Instagram account (wcalliance) to reach more community residents in Washington County with information and upcoming events. The Instagram had 92 followers at the end of 2019 with hopes to grow more during the upcoming year.

BUFFALO CREEK WATERSHED:

On September 12, 2019 the group held a fish collection event using electro-shocking at the Santiago Sportsmen’s Club. The fish collection conducted by Greg Schaeztle of the Western PA Conservancy was enjoyed by all in attendance. There were eleven species of fish collected during the event.



During 2019 the BCWA erected an Osprey Nesting Platform near Dutch Fork Lake in partnership with the Meadowlands Sportsmen’s Club. The hope is to have an osprey nest in the spring.

Other outreach events hosted by the BCWA include, *The Underground Railroad in The McGuffey and Neighboring Areas* presented by local historian and retired educator, Patricia Maggi and Meadowcroft Rock Shelter and the history of Watershed Use by Andrew Donovan from the Meadowcroft Rock Shelter and Historic Village.

At the end of 2018 and through 2019 the BCWA entered into an exciting new venture with the Center for Coalfield Justice, Washington County Watershed Alliance, and West Liberty University. Through this collaborative undertaking the group will be conducting a comprehensive, physical, biological and chemical one-year assessment of water quality within selected streams in and around public lands in

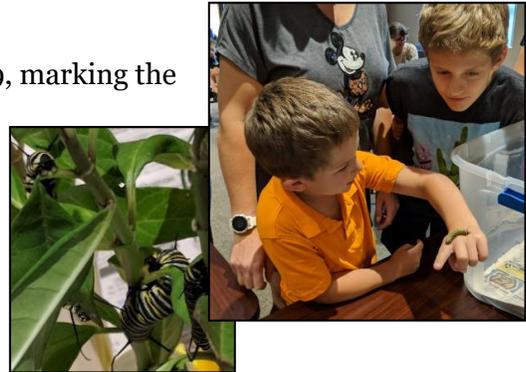
Washington and Greene Counties to determine how current and proposed changes in land use affect the health and diversity of ecosystems, stream flow, water quality and wildlife habitat. This project will be continued through 2020.

CHARTIERS CREEK WATERSHED:

Spring and fall stream monitoring of was completed during 2019, marking the 19th year of sampling done along the sites in the watershed. Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted.

On September 11, 2019 the ChCWA hosted a talk on Monarch Butterflies and raising milkweed by Lisa Wheeler. The event featured live monarch caterpillars and provided information on the monarch life cycle and the various kinds of milkweed that can be grown to provide food for the caterpillars.

The 2019 Annual North Franklin Wetlands Walk was again led by Dr. Jason Kilgore of W&J College. This year featured a fall wetland walk! Eighteen attendees enjoyed walking through the wetlands while learning what wetlands are and how to identify them through soil structure, plant types, and presence of water. The participants learned to identify wetland plants and animals, and the kids were able to dig in the mud while assisting Dr. Kilgore.



CROSS CREEK WATERSHED: The Cross Creek Watershed Association continues to promote their Watershed Assessment, Restoration and Protection Plan and Membership Action Plan. Their representative is also a very active member of the Alliance Board.

INDEPENDENCE CONSERVANCY (RACCOON CREEK WATERSHED):

Over the summer, Independence Conservancy (IC) and Potter Township made progress on their joint project, "Rocky Bend Nature Preserve." With a small grant from the Hillman Foundation through RiverWise, the Conservancy improved accessibility on a section of trail leading to Raccoon Creek. Brighton Township donated 50 cubic yards of mulch from its municipal composting program to dress up a muddy, rutted stretch of trail leading to the creek. Volunteers from Beaver County Jail's Community Service Crew spread the mulch and made a quiet, level path for visitors of all abilities to enjoy.



Volunteers from the Conservancy, BioMost, Shell, and Potter Township planted over 1,500 trees and 900 live stakes at a created wetland site at the Rocky Bend Nature Preserve. This wetland, created in 2018, is part of an ecological restoration for a low impact recreation area, the project was funded by a donation from Shell Pennsylvania Chemicals.

On May 22nd, the IC, Range Resources, and the Washington County Conservation District worked together to clean up an illegal trash dump along Bertha Road in Smith Township. Two roll-away dumpsters were filled with trash, and there is more to collect. The eager volunteers have agreed to return to finish the collection. This proper disposal of the trash will reduce the pollution entering the Harmon Creek Watershed.



TEN MILE CREEK WATERSHED:

Ten Mile Creek Watershed in coordination with the Upper Wheeling Creek Watershed Association hosted an event about the Natural Gas Extraction Industry on October 7th. EQT representatives in attendance were able to answer many questions. It was well attended with around 30 residents coming out to hear the information. (See photo on the next page).

WHEELING CREEK WATERSHED:

As above, in coordination with the Ten Mile Creek Watershed Association the group co-hosted an event on Natural Gas Extraction on October 7th.

The UWCWA also has secured funds to continue the datalogger program in their watershed through the end of 2020.



WCCD PUBLIC RELATIONS AND OUTREACH:

“TOMORROW” NEWSLETTER: Our District newsletter is in the 47th year of publication, and the mailing list exceeds 1,800. The District’s Associate Directors and staff, cooperating agencies, and other sources provide all of the articles for the newsletter. Our Secretary assembles the newsletter. The Alliance’s “*Watershed Connections*” continues to be an integral part of our newsletter, which helps cut costs and provide additional support for the Alliance. It also demonstrates the working relationship between our District the Watershed Alliance and all of the Watershed Associations within Washington County.

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. Statistics show that the website has proven worthwhile and is being used by the public. Throughout 2019, the site received 6,546 visits to the website. Of those visits 53.45% were new visitors to the site and 46.55% are return users. The average visitor to the website clicked on 5 pages and stayed for more than 3 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 Erosion & Sedimentation page.

AG DAYS: For the second year Ag Days was held at the Washington County Fairgrounds, April 5-6, 2019. The event grew in its second year at the Fairgrounds with new activities, contests, and demonstrations. The attendance was high over the two-day period and the Ag Days Committee is already planning for the 2020 event to be held on April 17 & 18. The Conservation District plays an active role in planning the event, with the District Manager and Watershed Specialist both serving on the Committee. The District also continues to be a sponsor of the event each year.



COUNTY FAIR: Annually our District participates in the Washington County Agricultural Fair. This year the District's theme for the event was "Backyard Homeowner Conservation," which featured information on pollinators, bird boxes, rain barrels, and more. During this event we also promoted riparian corridor protection and restoration, watershed associations, conservation BMP's (Best Management Practices), manure management, and nutrient management. As usual we had our stream bank erosion simulator on display all week and we handed out hundreds of educational items to children and their parents. Our District display was in conjunction with the Washington County Watershed Alliance display and various Watershed Association displays.



ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP

Our Conservation District continues to hold membership or partnership with the following organizations:

- Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD)
- National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
- Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- Soil Conservation Society of America
- South West Project Grass Steering Committee
- Pennsylvania Forage and Grassland Council
- Washington County Farm Bureau
- Pennsylvania Forestry Association
- Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council
- Penn's Corner Conservancy Charitable Trust, Inc.
- Washington County Watershed Alliance
- Washington County Agricultural Awareness Committee

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION:

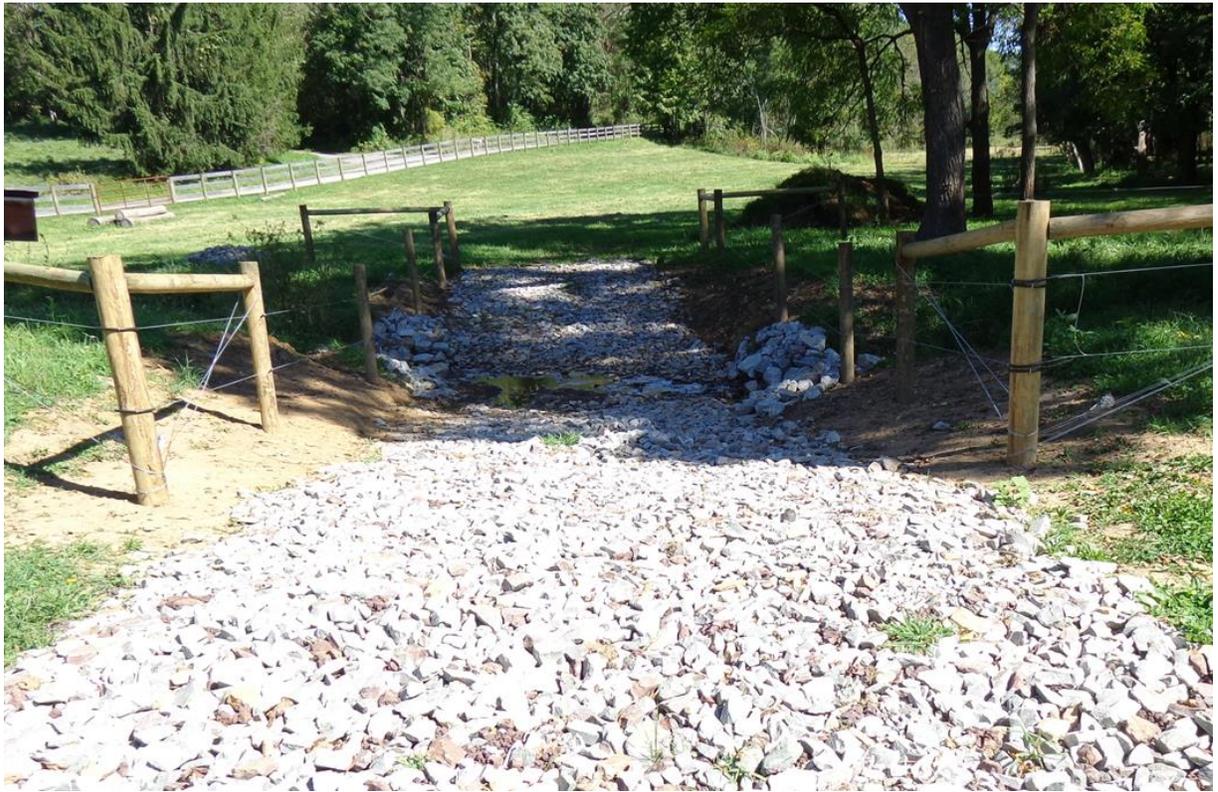
The Washington County Conservation District awards committee reviewed multiple farms in the fall for the 2019 Conservation Farmer of the Year award. This award is presented in recognition for outstanding commitment to conservation in Washington County. The Washington County Conservation District would like to recognize the Ashby Farm as the recipient of the 2019 Conservation Farmer of the Year award.

The Ashby Farm located in Amwell Township is owned by Dave and Chrystal Ashby, who also have two children, Ethan and Tara. Currently, the entire farm consists of 125 acres, of which 32 acres is cropland and 79 acres is dedicated pasture. The farm is entirely a grass-based operation upon which they operate a beef cow – calf operation on a rotational grazing system. The current grazing system consists of 26 paddocks with multiple temporary cross fences.

The Ashby's have worked closely with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and their programs since 2007. Through the help of NRCS, California University of Pennsylvania Partners for Fish and Wildlife, as well as doing projects on their own, the Ashby's have been able to install and implement many practices to help with their conservation efforts. They have installed 10,000 ft of fence, 5 stream crossings and 6 spring developments. The farmstead has a covered heavy use feeding pad and manure storage which was installed in 2015. Other best management practices that were implemented include wildlife habitat, animal trail and walkway, and pressurized watering system.



The Washington County Conservation District would like to congratulate Dave, Chrystal and family as the recipient of the 2019 Conservation Farm of the Year award.



SUMMARY:

The year of changes. As you can see throughout the report, 2019 was the year of changes and settling in. The Conservation District's new building saw some ups and downs during the year break-in period. Continuing to manage small maintenance and up-keep issues and looking at some future changes for the building, it continues to be autonomous and having similar agencies in the same building for one stop location for farmers.

As the district saw personnel changes in 2018, 2019 was no different. With a new manager, the departures of Emily Murray and Mike Martin, and hiring two new replacements with Emily Wise and Audrey Sykes, the continuity of employees like John Hewitt, Clarice Munk, Matt Golden, Jennifer Dann, Tom Ulrich, and Lyndsey Burton, have the office and sections continuing to conduct the heavy workload and make everything run smoothly.

With permits increasing in 2019, both for Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 and an increase in Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads program, the structure of WCCD had to change the placement of employees. The DGLVR position is now a full time and they conduct Chapter 105, as a back-up. WCCD reduced the agricultural positions from two to one and converted the one position to another Erosion and Sediment Control position to keep up with the increase in Chapter 102 permit submissions. The watershed specialist continues to monitor the quality of the waters in the county, is working with outside non-profit organizations on the way forward to better or water quality, and continues the education and outreach of WCCD and the community. She started an internal work group to utilize other capabilities in WCCD to work on education and outreach.

Finally, the staff continues to adjust to the new manager and changes in data management. The staff is handling it very well and continue to shine everyday. The new informatin technology systems increased share understanding between staff, created a more efficent and effective process and will continue to improve on procedures into the next year. I personally could not ask for a better staff to accept a new leadership approach, changes to IT and data management systems, improve on the processes and procedures created, and conduct their daily duties in a more professional manner. Furthermore, to have a Board of Directors that are supportive and provide guidance when needed, has been an uplifting experience.

Thank You,
Todd Thornburg
WCCD Executive Director/District Manager



Natural Resources Conservation Service Washington County 2019 Summary

Meadowlands NRCS Field Team committed monies to 9 new EQIP contracts in 2019. These contracts combined for just under 2000 acres and Program funding amounting to over \$218,000. Another 6 contracts reached completion.



Photo of tree planting completed with funding for Forest Management Implementation

Some practice highlights for 2019: 3 stream crossings were installed, 165 acres of cover crop planted and over 12,773 feet of fence was installed. 4 Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plans were completed, and one high tunnel installed. Tree and Shrub planting was completed, as well as 35 acres of brush management; access control totaling 50 acres was installed and 75 acres of prescribed grazing reported. We recorded 520 Brief Technical Assists.

Under CTA (Conversation Technical Assistance) over 2,256 acres of conservation practices were planned and 4,256 acres applied in 2019.

Despite the unusual weather, the NRCS field kept busy throughout 2018. Moving the office from space it occupied for over 30 years to newly renovated space offered by WCCD was a daunting task. It took a few months of planning and weeks to execute. It was well worth the effort; the team is comfortably settled into its' new space. NRCS joined with the WCCD to provide outreach throughout the year, from helping with the annual Envirothon to providing informational pamphlets for several events.

Washington County Agricultural Land Preservation Program 2019 Summary

The Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program was developed in 1988 to help slow the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses. The program enables state, county and local governments to purchase conservation easements – often called development rights – from farm owners. A Resolution was duly adopted on December 1, 1994 by the Washington County Commissioners, establishing the county program. Since then, Washington County has worked with over 40 farm families preserving farmland in perpetuity.

The Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program works by paying the farmer to place certain restrictions upon the land to maintain and permanently preserve high quality, functional farmland. The land continues to be the farmer’s private property and the farmer retains all privileges of land ownership, except the ability to sell the land for non-agricultural development or to develop the land for non-agricultural purposes.

Participation in the program is voluntary and very competitive. Applications are accepted on an annual basis from January 2 – September 30. Farms are then evaluated using a two part system called a Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) System to determine order of farms pursued. The LESA system evaluates soil quality, stewardship, and development pressure. Out of the five applications received in 2019, Washington County is pursuing the top two ranked farms.

In 2019, Washington County’s allocation totaled \$658,325. The sources of funding are as follows:

- \$627,313 - PA Department of Agriculture – Bureau of Farmland Preservation annual allocation.
- \$31,012 - Interest collected by Washington County from Clean and Green rollback tax penalties in 2018.

Since inception of the program, 6,531 acres of farmland have been preserved in perpetuity in Washington County through 41 easements. An additional three easements, containing 318 acres of farmland, are pending approval. A total state and county investment of over \$14.6 million were utilized to purchase these easements as well as the pending three easements.

Municipality	Acres Preserved	Acres Pending
Amwell Township	508.602	
Canton Township	446.94	52.89
Chartiers Township	241.308	178.6
Cross Creek Township	529.2577	
Cross Creek/Jefferson Townships	96.23	
Cross Creek/Smith Township	117.85	
Deemston Borough	170.426	
Hanover Township	327.21	
Hopewell Township	2040.0378	
Independence Township	550.9646	
Mt. Pleasant/Hopewell Townships	499.75	
Mt. Pleasant Township	390.87	

North Bethlehem Township	274.328	
Somerset Township	47.177	
South Strabane Township		86.53
West Bethlehem Township	262.12	
West Pike Run Township	146.827	

The Washington County Farmland Preservation Board voted to approve changes to the bylaws after the passing of Act 33 of 2019 on July 1, 2019. The proposed changes were sent to the state for approval. The state intends to perform a blanket approval at the February 2020 board meeting. Act 33 of 2019 amends the Agricultural Security Area Law as follows:

- a. Allows the landowner to relinquish the right to the additional residential structure by recording as affidavit.
- b. Allows for the existing residential structure to be subdivided in lieu of the additional residential structure (still limited to two acres or less).
- c. Clarifies that the residential subdivision may be for the landowner, immediate family member, or employee of the farm.
- d. Clarifies that the county board shall allow for the one-time residential subdivision.

Lastly, former Governors’ Executive Order 2003-2 directs all agencies to seek to mitigate and protect against the conversion of prime agricultural land from irreversible conversion to uses that result in its loss as an environmental and essential food and fiber resource. Preserved Farmland is the highest priority, Farmland in Agricultural Security Areas as second highest priority, and continuing in order of priority Farmland enrolled in Clean and Green, Farmland Planned for Agricultural Use and Subject to Effective Agricultural Zoning and Land Capability Classes I, II, III, and IV Farmland and Unique Farmland. Therefore, Commonwealth funds and Commonwealth-administered federal funds shall not be used to encourage the conversion of “prime agricultural land” to other uses when feasible alternatives are available.

Farmland Preservation Boards are responsible for reviewing projects applying for Pennvest funding and provide comment. The Washington County Farmland Preservation Board reviewed a total of three projects in 2019 for Chartiers Township and Union Township for prime agricultural land considerations.