



6024 Glades Pike, Ste. 103
 Somerset, PA 15501
 814-445-4652 ext. 5
 somersetcd@wpia.net



Somerset Conservation District provides all of its services without any monetary contribution from Somerset County tax dollars. The District staff are not county employees. The County supports the District operations through the Somerset County Post Closure Landfill Trust Fund. This Fund is earmarked for conservation-related initiatives and only a portion of the Fund is currently allotted to the District. The District also receives an allotment of funds from the legislative-mandated Act 13 Marcellus Shale Impact Fees. The balance of its operations is funded through the State Conservation Commission's delegated or contracted programs with the PA Department of Environmental Protection and the PA Department of Agriculture, grant writing, public fundraising, and other innovative, fundraising methods.

How the District is Funded

Somerset Conservation District
 6024 Glades Pike Suite 103
 Somerset, PA 15501
 www.somersetcd.com

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Celebrating **60** Years

2017 Annual Report

The District celebrated its 60th Anniversary in 2017. The District is a far different entity than it started out as and has evolved into the most dynamic natural resource conservation organization in Somerset County. The success and projects have been immense and have led directly to the transformation that Somerset County has experienced into an eco-tourism destination point that has created sustainable economic opportunities.



State Senator Pat Stefano addresses the attendees at the District's "Conversation on Conservation" event held at the Somerset Daily American's Press Room to commemorate the District's 60th anniversary.

2017 Board Members

Chairman, Jack Tressler
 Vice Chairman, Roger Latuch
 Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand
 Commissioner, John Vatauvuk
 Marlin Sherbine
 David Mankamyer
 Kurt Walker
 Sue Saylor
 James Ringler



Front Row L to R: **Bud Weyand, Sue Saylor & Jack Tressler**
 Back Row L to R: **Kurt Walker, James Ringler, John Vatauvuk and Roger Latuch**
 Absent: **David Mankamyer and Marlin Sherbine**

District Staff

District Manager, Len Lichvar
 Assistant Manager, Susan Moon
 Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick
 Nutrient Management Technician, Don Williams
 Dirt & Gravel Roads Technician, Terry Tallion
 Erosion & Sediment Technician, Keith Largent
 Resource Technician, Aimee Steele



Front Row L to R: **Susan Moon, Len Lichvar and Aimee Steele**
 Back Row L to R: **Terry Tallion, Keith Largent, Don Williams and Greg Shustrick**

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Susan Moon: 814-289-4246
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Keith Largent: 814-289-4250
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Greg Shustrick: 814-289-4247
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Aimee Steele: 814-289-4236
 Aimee-scd@wpia.net

Don Williams: 814-289-4248
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2017 Associate Board Members

Shawn Saylor, Gary Wetterberg, Greg Elliott, Richard Berkley, Tom Croner, Mike Brendle, Mari and Meade Meyers



Jeff Hackenberg, CRM

Cooperative Extension instituted a new operational model in 2017, with the creation of two new roles replacing the District Director role. These positions are the Client Relationship Manager and the Business Operations Manager. The Client Relationship Manager manages the relationships with County Commissioners, the Extension Board, community organizations, as well as other stakeholders. The Business Operations Manager manages all the functions of the Extension office, such as personnel, administrative duties, and budgetary matters. These changes will help Extension improve delivery of services, increase access to our educational resources, and respond quicker to meet local needs. Extension's new website will also help more people access Extension's resources when it is most convenient for them.

Government support through tax dollars provides the base funds to operate Penn State Cooperative Extension throughout Pennsylvania. County funds help Extension maintain a presence in each county.

4-H

Somerset County saw another successful year in 4-H. With a youth-organized kick-off event held in March, the program acquired over 85 new members while proclaiming, "4-H: Not just a club, It's a way of life." A major factor responsible for the increase in program numbers is the dedication of the 144 adult volunteers giving their time and energy to the program. Volunteers work closely with staff to ensure both state and program guidelines and restrictions are followed. Success in 4-H is the result of an incredible team effort.

Nutrition and Health

Nutrition Links

Karen Serball, Nutrition Education Advisor with Nutrition Links Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), in cooperation other agencies, such as Twin Lakes Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, EARN, Children's Aid Home, and Tableland, helps low income families acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that lead to nutritionally sound diets.

Agriculture Entrepreneurship and Farm Management

Penn State Extension works with farmers to improve profitability and sustainability, teaching through workshops, field days, online courses, and personal assistance. In 2017, Miguel Saviroff retired, and Sarah Farley began serving in a similar role of Agricultural Entrepreneurship Extension Educator. Key educational focus areas are beginning farming, farm management and growth, and transitions.

Farm Management

Farm Financial and Production Analysis Training (Farm\$en\$e) is offered in various locations across Pennsylvania. Producers learn to analyze past performance, complete budgets, analyze the profit potential of partial changes and engage in appropriate record keeping. Financial training is required to obtain a Farm Service Agency loan. Although Farm\$en\$e competes with two other Farm Service Agency authorized vendors, this is the only one of the three vendors that can provide follow-up visits by an Extension educator if a production problem affecting profitability needs to be addressed.

Sarah Farley also collaborates with the dairy and crops teams to offer relevant programs, tours, and recertification trainings.

Commercial Horticulture

The Commercial Horticulture Program in South Central Pennsylvania is multi-faceted, targeting commercial pesticide applicators, property managers, farmers, growers and landscape/turf professionals with non-formal educational programs that improve their capacity to compete in the marketplace, maintain licensure requirements, retain employees, and protect the environment.

Master Gardeners

Master Gardeners provide valuable residential horticulture expertise answering hotline calls at the Extension office. These services are provided during the summer months. In addition, Master Gardeners present educational programs and events to adults and elementary students in the county.

Penn State Extension – Somerset County Staff

Sarah Farley
 Extension Educator Client

Jeff Hackenberg
 Client Relationship Manager

Laurie Hubbard
 Extension Educator

Stan McKee
 Business Operations Manager

Carol Pyle
 Program Assistant

Karen Serball
 Nutrition Links

Kathy Shaffer
 Administrative Assistant

Farm Service Agency

The primary responsibility of the Somerset County Farm Service Agency is to administer locally the farm programs enacted by Congress. This is accomplished under the auspices of the Farmer Elected County FSA Committee. USDA created the Farm Service Agency by merging the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service and the Farmers Home Administration (Farm Division). The Committee's responsibility was expanded by the merge. The programs administered by the FSA were created to help build and maintain family farms by stabilizing production, supporting commodity prices, and encouraging conservation and timber production.

FARM LOANS

Agriculture Credit Loans are the US Department of Agriculture's chief credit source for the farm community. Special emphasis is placed on guaranteed loans in cooperation with area lenders. Local lenders make these loans: FSA guarantees to limit potential loss incurred by the lender. This allows a farm family to receive credit that would not otherwise be available from private lenders.

These funds can be used to purchase feed, livestock, and equipment, spring planting needs, etc., either directly or by refinancing debts. Farm ownership loans may be used to buy farmland and to construct or repair buildings.

Somerset Ag Credit is the Headquarters County for 5 counties have:

189 direct borrowers with 433 loans for \$30,080,223.53

38 guaranteed borrowers for \$15,123,452.63

These are supervised credit loans.

THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM

Encourages farmers to stop growing crops on highly erodible cropland, keeping it in a grass or tree cover throughout the 10-year or 15-year contract. During 2017 there were 158 active contracts, with a conservation plan that helps retain soil in place, maintain water quality and prevent floods. A total of \$235,103 in annual payments were made in 2017 to participants in Somerset County.

Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) & Price Loss Coverage (PLC)

The Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) and Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs authorized by the 2014 Farm Bill combine provisions from previous programs delivered by the Farm Service Agency (FSA) (the counter-cyclical portion of the Direct and Counter-Cyclical Program, the Supplemental Revenue Assistance Payments Program and the Average Crop Revenue Election Program) with revenue insurance delivered by the Risk Management Agency. Owners made a one-time election to reallocate crop bases, update program payment yields and producers select the type of coverage (price protection, county revenue protection, and/or individual revenue protection) for crop years 2014-2018. Payments were made in 2016 to participants in Somerset County.

PRICE SUPPORT PROGRAM

The MAL (Marketing Assistance Loan) program provides commodity loans to eligible grain producers, to allow them to meet obligations as they market or use farm production to their best advantage over a nine month period. A total of \$43,290.87 in commodity loans was issued in 2017. Another option for producers is the FSFL (Farm Storage Facility Loan) Program. This program provides low-interest financing for producers to build or upgrade farm storage and handling facilities. The Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy) was authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill and continues through December 2018. The MPP-Dairy program offers protection for dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT DISCLOSURE ACT Requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings, acquisitions, dispositions, leases of 10 years or more, and land-use changes to FSA.

The Somerset County FSA Office completes paid measurement services for county farmers. This service provides accurate acreage figures to assist in properly applying lime, fertilizers, spray, seed, etc. Measurements by an impartial party can also assist owners, renters and custom service providers in reaching accord for fair pricing.

THE CROP DISASTER PROGRAM: Assists County farmers in recovering from crop losses.

LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Assists County farmers in recovering from feed losses.

OILSEED PROGRAM: Assists County farmers in recovering from poor prices on Oil Seeds.

NON-INSURED ASSISTANCE PROGRAM: Assists County farmers in recovering from losses on non-insurable crops.

Awards and Recognition



District Assistant Manager and Financial Administrator, Sue Moon, was recognized by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and by the Somerset Conservation District for her 30 years of dedicated service to the District.

John Vatauvuk, Commissioner; Jack Tressler, SCD Chairman; Susan Moon; Jim Ringler, SCD Director; and Marlin Sherbine, SCD Director.

District Manager Len Lichvar was selected as one of the ten finalists from 50 nominees from around the country for National Conservationist of the Year for 2017 by Fly Fisherman magazine. Len has been actively involved in countless natural resource conservation initiatives and projects as both a volunteer and professional at the local, state, and national level for over 30 years.

Len is also a professional freelance outdoor writer who has been published in local, state, and national publications. He also writes a monthly outdoor feature for the Somerset Daily American and was one of the co-authors of the book "Keystone Fly Fishing" that was published by Headwater Books in 2017. The book covers angling destination points across the entire state including many in Somerset County. The book also serves as an outstanding marketing tool that showcases to the world the outdoor recreational opportunities in southwestern PA.



Len Lichvar autographs a book

District Funding – Reality vs Perception by Len Lichvar

The District staff and board work extremely diligently to be as efficient and transparent as possible in all we do including finances. All District budgets are public information and can be examined any time by anyone.

A portion of our funding comes from legislatively approved dedicated sources of funds from the state budget as well as bond issues such as Growing Greener that go directly to fund the District in order that it can sustain its staff and maintain all the diverse supplies and equipment to perform its conservation projects that return that investment many times over to the local, regional, and state economy in countless ways.

In 2017 those state dedicated sources of funds were under an intense spotlight as legislative inquiries attempted to challenge their validity and portray them with such terms as "budget surpluses" or a "shadow budget" that were not being spent and therefore could be usurped to fill the huge funding gaps in the overall state budget. Those claims were responded to by PA Association of Conservation Districts, PA Department of Environmental Protection, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and others who used factual data to prove the point that these funds are legitimate, utilized, and needed to sustain the natural resource conservation efforts that benefit every citizen of the Commonwealth.

Education

Rockwood Wins 2017 Envirothon

One of the best investments for our future environmental integrity is to work with youth through educational programs, and the Envirothon is the District's most notable such endeavor. The District hosted the 27th Somerset County Envirothon at Laurel Hill State Park. The day-long event is an outdoor, environmental-education competition testing students' knowledge in five general areas: soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and a current environmental issue. Rockwood High School, Team No. 1, captured first place for the 24th time in 28 years. Meyersdale, Team Raiders 1, placed second, and Rockwood Team 2, placed third. There were 9 schools that attended.



The 2017 Envirothon first place team, Rockwood High School.

The District was assisted in operating the event by the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, and the PA Game Commission.

Pennsylvania Trout In the Classroom (TIC)



Missy Reckner helps students search for macro invertebrates during a TIC education program.

Greg Shustrick and Aimee Steele assisted Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited with its Trout-In-the-Classroom (TIC) program. Greg and Aimee also participated in the coldwater conservation events and programs with students from participating TIC schools.

Pennsylvania Trout In the Classroom is an interdisciplinary program in which students in grades 3-12 learn about coldwater conservation while raising brook trout from eggs to fingerlings in a classroom aquarium. During the year, each teacher tailors the program to fit his or her curricular needs. Therefore, each program is unique. TIC has applications in environment and ecology, science, mathematics, social studies, language and fine arts, and physical education. All classrooms end the year by releasing their trout into a state-approved waterway.

Pennsylvania's statewide TIC program is made possible through a unique partnership between Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (PATU)

and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). This partnership provides curriculum resources, workshops for teachers and program partners, technical support, brook trout eggs and food, and grants.

Cooperative Intern Program

Tristan Gelvin served as the District intern for 2017. Tristan assisted with many on-the-ground District projects and provided numerous support services to the District staff. Tristan learned how to download and interpret data from the data loggers and report findings to the SCD. He also participated in a stream side riparian buffer planting within the corridor of North Fork golf course. Tristan helped implement the "County Wide Stream Culvert Assessment" – where all stream crossings within Somerset County that cross a "wild trout stream" are visited and you record data following North Atlantic Aquatic Connectivity Collaborative protocol. The goal is to compile a list of steam culverts that may act as a barrier to fish passage and fragment a watercourse into small isolated segments.

If you would be interested in working the cooperative intern program, contact the District at 814-445-4652.

Agency Partners

Natural Resources Conservation Service



The Natural Resources Conservation Service works with agricultural producers and private forest landowners to address concerns of our natural resources. Maintaining the sustainability of and promoting wise use of working lands and their natural resources is at the heart of the agency's mission. NRCS provides conservation planning and technical assistance, as well as, information on soils, agronomy, engineering, wildlife, and land use management.

Rhandee Weicht, Soil Conservationist from Bedford County, was hired as District Conservationist after Joel Elder's retirement. Rhandee began working in Somerset in the end of May 2017. She has been with the Agency for 14 years and her goal is to expand the number of producers and landowners that NRCS works with in Somerset County, as well as, increase the number of acres in which conservation measures are applied.

Conservation Technical Assistance is the program that provides the framework for sound conservation on agricultural operations. Assistance in the form of conservation planning and inventory and evaluation of resource concerns, is provided at no cost to ag producers and private forest landowners. NRCS soil conservationists can provide guidance on alternative management for pasture, cropland, barnyard, woodland, and wildlife land uses to solve resource concerns. In 2017, conservation plans were written to cover over 700 acres of agricultural and forest land in Somerset County. Conservation was applied on over 350 acres of land in the county through the Conservation Technical Assistance program.

NRCS administers several programs that are funded by the Farm Bill. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and the Agricultural Management Assistance program (AMA) are the different programs that producers can participate in to implement conservation measures on their operations or to further enhance conservation systems they have in place. Last year, 11 new contracts were developed enrolling just over 760 acres of land in programs promoting conservation.

2017 Forestry Report for Somerset County

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Bureau of Forestry has a mission to ensure the long-term health, viability, and productivity of the Commonwealth's forests. The Forbes Forest District covers six counties, with a large section of the Forbes State Forest system in Somerset County. Managed state forestland includes several tracts along the Laurel Ridge and over 6,000 acres surrounding Mt. Davis.

The DCNR Bureau of Forestry is also committed to the conservation and sustainable management of private forestlands throughout Pennsylvania. Service Forester, Jessica Salter, worked with Somerset County forest landowners, organizations, and partner agencies with the planning and management of the forested lands in their care.

The Forbes Forest District also considers community trees an important asset to our region. Service Forester, Celine Colbert, assisted communities with managing public trees, such as those along streets, in parks, and in right-of-way areas.

Other efforts in Somerset County include encouraging the development of healthy riparian buffers and connecting Forbes State Forest users to landowner resources.

Forestry and tree assistance is available to anyone in Somerset County by contacting the Forbes Forest District office in Laughlintown.

-Jessica Salter, Service Forester for Somerset, Westmoreland, and Allegheny Counties

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) has worked in partnership with the District and the wide range of representatives on the Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) to successfully secure a lease agreement with Somerset County for the uplands region of the Somerset Lake property owned by the Commission. This agreement has created the Somerset Lake Nature Park.

The Commission's Bureau of Engineering has provided the professional services that have enabled the design component of the Somerset Lake project to be completed.

The Commission's Bureau of Habitat Management Lake Division coordinates and assists with the Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat project. They will also be developing a Habitat Management Plan for Somerset Lake.

The local Somerset County Waterways Conservation Officers, Pat Ferko and Dan McGuire and their deputies, also work closely with the District to investigate citizen complaints in regard to water quality and assist in determining the validity of those inquires. This is in addition to their many and varied law enforcement and public relations responsibilities.

The headquarters of the Southwest Regional Office of the PFBC is located at Somerset Lake. This location houses, not only law enforcement, but also the Area 8 fisheries biologists and managers that make important decisions regarding how warm-water and cold-water fisheries are conserved and improved throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania.

By Len Lichvar – District 4 Commissioner, PFBC



Public Relations

The *Daily American*, the *Tribune Democrat*, the *Meyersdale Republic*, local radio stations, and *WJAC-TV* published news stories on District projects and activities in 2017. The Somerset Daily American also produced and published a full-color page on the Districts events, programs and projects. The 2016 Annual Report was sent to over 500 cooperators, agencies, organizations, and governmental agencies. District Manager, Len Lichvar, published numerous editorials and articles on subjects related to the District in local and state wide media.

Somerset County Fair—The District distributed information and demonstrated a functional rain barrel at its Somerset County Fair booth.

Website – The District's website is updated to reflect the District's articles and ongoing projects and initiatives. The site now includes the ability to view and download the numerous project reports and other data-rich information that has been assembled and completed by the District in recent years. Information on all phases of the District's involvement in the conservation of natural resources can now be found on the site at www.somersetcd.com.

Facebook—You can find and “like” the Somerset Conservation District on Facebook.

Laurel Highlands Conservation Coalition – The Conservation Coalition is a consortium of organizations, agencies, non-profits, and other stakeholders in the Laurel Highlands region. This organization has set specific agendas on crucial natural resource and economic topics to assist all partner organizations achieve their individual goals while also creating an impact collectively. In 2017, the Coalition secured funding for and chose a consultant to produce a Laurel Highlands Economic Impact study to determine the positive economic contributions of resource conservation. District Manager Len Lichvar serves on the steering committee of this important new initiative.

Somerset Conservation District History

The Somerset Conservation District was organized at the request of county citizens interested in soil and water conservation, land use planning, and flood prevention. The county was declared a Conservation District on March 22, 1957, in accordance with the provisions of the "Soil Conservation Law" of 1945, Act 217, of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

The District was organized to provide for the conservation of soil and water resources, assist in watershed protection and flood prevention, prevent damage to dams and reservoirs to help in maintaining the navigability of rivers, preserve woodland and wildlife, protect public lands, preserve the tax base, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people. Today, the Somerset Conservation District activities serve a broad range of interests from tree planting to environmental education in schools.

During the 1950s and 1960s there were modifications to state laws governing conservation districts that allowed districts to expand their services to meet emerging resource needs. This increase in responsibility caused district officials to assume a greater leadership role in resource use and development in their communities.

The Somerset Conservation District is a member of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) and the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).



The Somerset Conservation District (SCD) is one of 66 Conservation Districts statewide and nearly 3,000 nationwide dedicated to conserving our soil and water resources.

We are part of county government and a sub-unit of state government working closely with the USDA agencies to promote soil and water conservation and economic development in the county.

Our adopted strategic plan provides the framework to achieve our goals and objectives.

If you have a problem or question regarding conservation issues and do not know whom to contact, your Conservation District is a good place to start.

Solar Energy

Long time District Board member, Dave Mankamyer, spearheaded an effort in fostering the development of solar energy in 2017. The District investigated solar power opportunities that could lead to more sustainable and cleaner energy sources in Somerset County. Renewable energy is the future of energy development as well as employment and the District believes it can find methods to foster that advancement in Somerset County.

Farm Bureau / DEP / CD Meeting & Tour

On Wednesday, July 26, 2017, Somerset County hosted the annual Pennsylvania Farm Bureau/DEP/Conservation District Southwest Regional meeting and farm tour.

The purpose of these tours is to acquaint regional DEP Staff and Conservation Districts with progressive farming operations and highlight conservation and environmental farm management practices. In addition, the tours provide farmers, DEP Staff, Conservation Districts, and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau with an opportunity to interact and build strong, clear channels of communication.

Approximately 25 Farm Bureau members and agency personnel attended this event. In the morning the group met at Beachdale Farms, where Greg Croner gave a tour of the swine finishing barn which is currently in operation. He also showed reduced tillage equipment and spoke about GPS guidance systems for planting and spraying. Later that morning, the group traveled to the Keith Leydig farm to see a swine finishing barn that is under construction. Keith spoke about his use of poultry litter as a soil amendment, no-till planting equipment, and the benefits of cover crops.



Greg Croner of Beachdale Farms explains the management and operation of a swine finishing facility.

Manure Hauler & Broker Meeting

On February 14, 2017, the Conservation District hosted a Manure Hauler & Broker Workshop.

The purpose of these workshops is to provide attendees with the latest information on regulations and manure industry issues. In addition, commercial manure haulers and brokers earn continuing education credits towards maintaining their certification.

Approximately 16 haulers, farmers, and agency personnel attended this event. Robb Meinen, Penn State Department of Animal Science, was the instructor for this training which focused on manure application setbacks, manure gas safety, and record keeping.



Robb Meinen of Penn State explains safety issues associated with manure pumping and application.

Water Quality

2017 Bens Creek Watershed Projects

In 2017 multiple restoration and implementation projects were completed within the sub-basins of Bens Creek. The District Watershed Specialist designed, permitted and oversaw construction of these projects. There were two stream projects completed on the South Fork of Bens Creek, the Gilliland project and a Penn DOT mitigation project, both of which focused on fish habitat and bank stabilization. Additionally a stream side buffer project was installed along the North Fork of Bens Creek on the North Fork Country Club grounds.

North Fork of Bens Creek

This project site was identified during the data gathering for the 2014 “North Fork of Bens Creek Cold Water Conservation Plan”. The site was lacking quality stream side buffering and there was a need to re-establish riparian vegetation along the North Fork of Bens Creek and Heckman Hollow, throughout the corridor of North Fork Golf Course, Somerset County, PA. Both streams hold populations of wild brook and brown trout and are important tributaries the main stem of Bens Creek. The North Fork of Bens Creek Buffer Project consisted of planting trees, shrubs, and wildflowers along 1440 linear feet of stream bank and total of .6 acres of streamside buffer was re-vegetated. The volunteer group planted 36 shrubs, 66 trees and installed .2 acres of a wildflower buffer. Sites for tree plantings were selected so they would not interfere with the golf course and benefit the stream with shade and buffering capacity at the same time.



Volunteers plant dogwoods and mountain laurel along the banks of the Heckman

Penn DOT South Fork of Bens Creek Mitigation

Sixteen stream structures were installed in an 1100 foot section of the South Fork of Bens Creek along SR 985, approximately twelve miles north of Jennerstown. This project was funded by Penn DOT and was a mitigation requirement for the PA 219 extension. This section of stream has historically been altered which has caused stream widening and eroded banks. The stream channel was in need of stabilization and enhanced fish habitat. The segment of stream within the work site supports a population of reproducing wild brown trout and receives an annual stocking of adult trout by the state. The South Fork of Bens Creek is a popular county stream for recreational fishing. In 2018 an additional 300’ of in-stream restoration work will be added to this site to meet additional Penn Dot mitigation requirements.



A newly constructed log and rock cross vane, in the South Fork of Bens Creek mitigation site

Quemahoning Trust Fund

The Quemahoning Trust Fund enabled initial projects in the Quemahoning Creek watershed to be completed in 2017. The watershed enhancements included a stocking of advanced fingerling trout in the Quemahoning Tailwater, a major fish habitat and bank stabilization project at Orenda Park in Boswell and a Phase III fish structure habitat project in the Quemahoning Tailwater.

The Trust Fund was established by the PA DEP through a consent agreement with a private company. The District develops and designs the projects, administers the funds and puts the projects on the ground. Plans for additional projects in 2018 are underway.



Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, supervises the Orenda Park project

Dirt & Gravel/Low Volume Road Program

The Somerset Conservation District is working closely with Somerset County’s Townships and Municipalities to identify potential problem areas and to provide technical support using Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance Practices (ESM) and funding to remediate the problems. The program is managed through the State Conservation Commission and the individual County Conservation Districts. With the increase in funding by the Commonwealth of PA, the amount of funds available to the individual Conservation Districts has increased considerably. The 2016-2017 allocations to Somerset County were \$292,407 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$180,054 for Low Volume Roads. The proposed 2017-2018 allocations for Somerset County have increased by about \$12,000 for each program.

The District’s county-wide program is overseen by the locally led Quality Assurance Board (QAB). Members of the QAB are Terry Tallion, Chairman, and voting members Marlin Sherbine, Somerset Conservation District Board member, Rhandee Weicht, NRCS, and Dan McGuire, PA Fish and Boat Commission. The QAB meets as needed to set policies for the program, evaluate the merits of each application for funding, and recommends projects for the District Board to formally approve. The QAB met once in 2017, to review and approve revised and new DGLVR policies, to review and recommend project requests to the Somerset Conservation Board for funding, and to review and approve project amendments and final project payments.

2016-2017 projects that were funded, started and/or completed are:

Dirt & Gravel Road projects:

County Bridge Road, Northampton Township
 West Mineral Street, Southampton Township
 Swamp Hollow Road Phase II, Stonycreek Township
 State Line Road, Wellersburg Borough
 Conestoga Road, Jefferson Township
 Snake Path Road, Black Township

County Bridge Road, Northampton Twp.

Installation of mine belt diverters to control storm water runoff



Low Volume Road projects:

Hickory Hollow Road, Brothersvalley Township
 Flick Hill Road, Lincoln Township
 Wood Duck Road, Somerset County
 Petenbrink Road, Summit Township
 Hexie Road, Upper Turkeyfoot Township
 Barkley Road, Allegheny Township

At the QAB meeting on January 17, 2018, the QAB approved five Dirt & Gravel Road projects and five Low Volume Road projects to be funded for the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

To review the DGLVR Program, the Administration Guidelines, the Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) procedures, and other aspects of the program go to www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu.

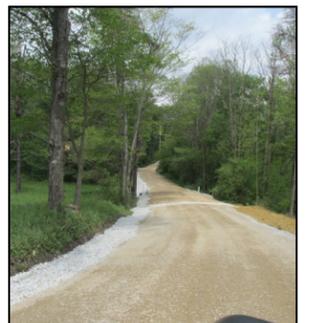


Swamp Hollow Road, Stonycreek Township

Inlet of New 21' Metal Arch Pipe in Stonycreek

Conestoga Road, Jefferson Township

Addition of Road Fill, Grade Break and Seeding & Mulching



Agricultural Programs

Conservation Planning and Nutrient Management

Because water quality is an important resource concern, the District encourages proper nutrient management on Somerset County farms. A nutrient management plan (NMP) considers existing soil nutrient levels and nutrients needed for achieving crop yield goals. The NMP accounts for manure generated on the farm and determines a proper application rate. The NMP calculates the quantity and location of additional nutrients needed. The NMP may also recommend practices to reduce soil loss and prevent nutrients from contaminating surface and ground water. Through the end of 2017, 48 Somerset County farm operations have approved nutrient plans which encompass over 23,300 acres.



Vegetative buffers such as this one, help to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that reach surface waters.

Beginning October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. In 2017, Somerset Conservation District assisted 4 farms with obtaining or updating NBS which include nearly 450 acres. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted 161 county farms with development of NBS which include over 23,600 acres.

Project Grass

This program promotes conservation through proper pasture management. The District supports the Southwest Project Grass Chapter to achieve its goals of improving the economic position of local farmers, increase production, energy efficiency, and utilization of resources while improving soil and water quality.

In August 2017 Project Grass conducted Advanced Grazing School in Fayette County. This educational event was attended by approximately 90 people which included many Somerset County Farmers.



Farmland Preservation Program

The District administers the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Easement Purchase Program (ALPEPP). The program promotes the protection of valued agricultural land to ensure continued production of local crops and economic growth. Landowner participation in the program is strictly voluntary and the landowners must realize that their development rights are purchased in perpetuity. Any parcel to be considered for the purchase of development rights must be part of an Agricultural Security Area. Once the development rights for a tract of land are purchased, the landowner still maintains ownership of the land and may continue agricultural practices while following a conservation

plan. The purpose of this program is to strike a balance between development and agriculture. To date, there are 12 easements perpetually preserving 1,618 acres in Somerset County.

Strategic Planning Process

The District Board members, staff, and partners met in early 2017 and revised and updated the District's Strategic Plan. The plan is the guiding document directing the overall priorities of the District. The plan reflects the resource conservation needs of Somerset County and sets the direction for District projects into the future. The plan is available on the District's website, www.somersetcd.com.

Barron Farm Project



Left: eroded streambanks along Laurel Hill Creek before the project.

Right: stabilized and vegetated streambanks of the completed project.



The District completed the Barron Farm project in 2017. The project included 21 stream bank stabilization structures, stream bank grading, 10 acres of pasture management, 3 cattle crossings, an equipment crossing, 2 animal watering systems and 6 acres of stream side buffer plantings. The project worksite is located on the Keith Barron Farm in the headwaters of Laurel Hill Creek. The entire project was designed by District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, and District Nutrient Management Technician, Don Williams. The project was funded by Penn DOT Transportation funds as part of a highway mitigation project for the 219 extension to Meyersdale.

The District's Voice of Ag Work Group, in cooperation with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Somerset County Farm Bureau hosted a field day in October to showcase the project to the public. Despite challenging weather the project drew interest from the local farm community and included a visit from State Representative Matthew Dowling. The event also drew media coverage that helped spread the word that agriculture and conservation can work together to protect the environment and also improve agricultural sustainability.

Somerset Lake Action Committee

The Annual Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) sponsored LakeFest was held in 2017 to provide a last chance to see the lake as it was. A few days later the anticipated drawdown of the lake began.

In October the PA Fish and Boat Commission conducted a four-day extensive and labor intensive fish salvage to recover and transfer fish to other impoundments. The effort was assisted by local sportsmen and citizens.

There were several thousand fish that were salvaged including muskie, walleye, bass and a variety of panfish. Fish were transported to the Quemahoning Reservoir and several other impoundments outside of Somerset County.



Fish being relocated to the Quemahoning Reservoir



Somerset Lake largemouth bass

After completion of the salvage the lake was allowed to rise a few feet and the exposed shoreline was seeded all of which is intended to reduce soil erosion from the exposed land surface.

The re-construction of the dam breast and spillway will take place over the next two years. If the predicted schedule is able to be followed, the lake will be refilled, restocked, and reopened in late 2020.

SLAC continues to raise funds for further development of the Somerset Lake Nature Park and future fish habitat enhancements.

The District continues to assist SLAC in achieving its goals of adding amenities to the Somerset Lake Nature Park on the county-owned land around the lake and in planning for fish habitat improvements while the lake is drawn down.

Hawk View Upland Restoration Project

In late 2017, the PA DEP awarded the District a federal AML funded Growing Greener Grant for the Hawk View Upland Restoration Project. The grant submitted by District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, outlines a plan to improve the land at one of the Oven Run AMD passive treatment sites. This site, over the years, has evolved on its own into a marginal area that harbors deer, turkey, and other game and non-game species. The location is owned by the Somerset County Conservancy and is open to public access.

However, due to the poor soil quality of the former industrial coal cleaning site, the current land conditions limit its ability to grow quality vegetation to support a diverse wildlife population.

This project is in cooperation with the Conservancy, Somerset County Pheasants Forever, and the PA Game Commission. The project scope of work involves importing soil, adding soil amendments, and planting a variety of native wildflowers, grasses, and shrubs to create a multifaceted habitat landscape. This project will increase wildlife habitat and reduce runoff into the Stonycreek River and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2019.

Oven Run Rehab Project

The Oven Run Rehabilitation Project made progress in 2017 toward its goal of upgrading and reconstructing four AMD treatment systems that maintain the water quality of the Stonycreek River.

A contract was signed with Earthshapers and work has begun on Site E near Wilbur. The final design for Site A has been completed and a component of that rehab will get underway in early 2018. Site D-Oaks Trail and Site F-Hawk View, will be designed by the PA Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance Group and construction will be complete prior to the end of 2018.

Complete operation and maintenance documents and guidelines will also be developed so that routine maintenance can be accomplished at each site in the future.

All of these systems were completed over 20 years ago and have reached the end of their effective lifespan. The District secured a PA DEP Growing Greener grant to fund the rehab project. Without this project the water quality of the Stonycreek River will degrade to the point that the current recreational and economic attributes it provides will be lost.



The District will work with its partners to establish a trust fund for future operation & maintenance and rehabilitation so these systems will continue their effective functions.

A similar study, requested by the District, was completed through a National Trout Unlimited Technical Assistance Grant on the Metro Passive Treatment System.

A water control structure being installed at Oven Run Site E.

Shaw Mines and Metro Site Studies

The District, in cooperation with the Casselman River Watershed Association (CRWA), have put together an effort to reduce abandoned mine drainage (AMD) still impacting the Casselman River near Meyersdale. The history for the Shaw Mines complex is long and involved. Currently iron staining still occurs in the Casselman coming from this abandoned mine source. Heritage Coal also holds an active mining permit in this same area as well.

The District, in order to determine what type of effort and project could be implemented to reduce the AMD impacts, contracted with Hedin Environmental to conduct an analysis of the complex and make recommendations for methods to reduce the AMD impacts. The cost to cover the study were acquired from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Mountain Watershed Association, Somerset County Sportsmen's League, CRWA, Somerset County, and the Somerset Conservation District.

The completed study outlined several potential methods of reducing the AMD. The District and the CRWA are currently working in cooperation with PA DEP and Heritage Coal in regard to the feasibility of constructing and funding one of the abatement methods detailed in the study.

Quemahoning Lake Habitat

The on-going Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat project continued in 2017 with 40 fish habitat structures constructed and placed in the reservoir. The project was initiated in 2006 by the District and continues to significantly enhance the fishing opportunities in the reservoir. The PA Fish and Boat Commission Bureau of Habitat Management Lake Division again coordinated the project. Donations from Shaffer Block and volunteer assistance from the Cambria-Somerset Authority, Met Life, Somerset County Sportsmen's League, The EADS Group, Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project, and the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited enabled the project to once again be successfully completed.



Volunteers construct fish habitat structures

Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Prevention



E&SPC stable lined channel at the Leydig Swine Barn in Berlin

Earth disturbance caused by human activities creates the potential for accelerated soil erosion. The Conservation District's E&SPC technician works with contractors, developers, engineers, timber harvesters, and a host of others to develop and implement plans to minimize the impacts of accelerated soil erosion caused by earthmoving. The Conservation District handled the following in 2017:

- E&SPC BMP's/controls were applied to 496 disturbed acres
- 13 stand-alone E&SPC plans processed, reviewed and approved
- 13 General & 3 Individual NPDES/PCSM construction permits/E&SPC plans processed & approved
- 34 earth disturbance assessments/inspections conducted
- 94 Ch. 102 E&SPC/NPDES/Ch. 105 technical & informational assists provided
- handled 11 citizen complaints