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 Somerset, PA 15501
 814-445-4652 ext. 5
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SOMERSET
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

2019 Annual Report

Education

The District participates in many educational opportunities for the community. On May 9, the District taught a workshop at the Penn State 4H Days held at the USDA Service Center. The students were shown a diagram of how our water all runs downhill. The students set-up a town, spread “pollution” in the yards, roads, etc., then sprayed water on the town to watch where their “pollution” ended up. Over 500 students attended the event.



Agricultural Technical Assistance

The Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) is a Pennsylvania tax credit program for agricultural producers who implement best management practices or purchase equipment that reduces the amount of nutrient and sediment runoff and improves the quality of Pennsylvania’s waters. 2019 marks the 12th year that this program has been available. Many Somerset County producers have utilized this program to acquire no-till or residue management equipment. From 2016-2019, SCD assisted producers with 13 applications of this type. Of those, 9 applications were approved which resulted in \$172,223 of State Tax Credits being awarded to Somerset County Farmers.



Water Restoration

The District completed the reconstruction of Oven Run AMD passive treatment system Site E that will enable the system to treat up to double the volume of water that was previously being treated. Shown here is treated water exiting the system & entering the Stonycreek River.



Dirt & Gravel Roads

In conjunction with Trout Unlimited and Penn State University, the Dirt & Gravel/Low Volume Road Program, administered by the Somerset Conservation District, provides technical and financial support to municipalities to assist them in Erosion & Sedimentation and road drainage problems. Here, first-time program participant, Middlecreek Township, installed a french mattress and auxiliary cross pipes to alleviate roadway flooding and a saturated road base on Fresh Road.



How the District is Funded

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.

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

2019 Board Members

Chairman, Roger Latuch
Vice Chairman, Marlin Sherbine
Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand
Commissioner, Pat Terlingo
Shawn Saylor
Richard Berkley
Kurt Walker
Sue Saylor
James Ringler



Seated Left to Right: Marlin Sherbine, Roger Latuch, Sue Saylor.
Standing Left to Right: Bud Weyand, Jim Ringler, Rich Berkey, & Kurt Walker. Absent: Pat Terlingo & Shawn Saylor



Penn State Extension is a modern educational organization dedicated to delivering science-based information to people, businesses, and communities. We provide access to face-to-face and online education to our customers—when they want it, where they want it, and how they want it—to help them address problems and take advantage of opportunities for improvement and innovation. Penn State Extension educational programs focus on seven subject areas – 4-H Youth Development, Agronomy and Natural Resources, Animal Systems, Economic/Community Development, Food Safety and Quality, Horticulture, and Food, Families, and Health. Extension Educators throughout the state visit Somerset County to deliver programs in these subject areas. Partnering with and funded by federal, state, and county governments, we have a long tradition of bringing unbiased support and education to the citizens of Pennsylvania. We make a difference locally through focused engagement, and more widely to customers connecting in the digital landscape.



Jeff Hackenberg, CRM

4-H

Led by Laurie Hubbard, Extension Educator, 4-H Youth Development, as well as Carol Pyle, 4-H Program Assistant, Somerset County 4-H currently engages approximately 360 Somerset County youths. A major factor contributing to the 4-H youth development program's success is the dedication of its 129 adult volunteers who give their time and energy to the program. Volunteers work closely with staff to ensure both state and program guidelines are followed. Somerset County 4-H also reached third grade students from six county schools with its "4-H Farm City Day" event on May 9, 2019, at the Somerset Education Center. At this event, 4-H County Council youth led 6 workshops – Animal Science, Textile Science, Food Science, Square Dancing, Plant Science, and 4-H Recreational Projects (shooting sports, photography, hiking, biking, etc.). They also partnered with Somerset County Farm Bureau to offer a Safety Workshop, focusing on proper personal protective equipment (footwear choices, helmet selections, etc.), as well as Somerset Conservation District to offer a Watershed Workshop focusing on run-off and conservation practices. The success of Somerset County 4-H is the result of an incredible team effort.

Nutrition and Health

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

Agronomy

Leanna Duppstadt, Field and Forage Crops educator, recently joined Penn State Extension at the Somerset County office. Leanna will begin working with producers in the area while also pursuing her interests in pasture and grazing management, and conservation.

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

Leanna Duppstadt
Field and Forage Crops

Jeff Hackenberg
Client Relationship Manager

Laurie Hubbard
4-H Youth Development

Stan McKee
Business Operations Manager

Carol Pyle
4-H Program Assistant

Karen Serball
Nutrition Links

Linda Woods
Administrative Assistant

To contact the Penn State Extension Office: 814-445-8911

Terlingo Honored



Somerset Conservation Board Chairman, Roger Latuch, left, and District Manager, Len Lichvar, right, present a certificate of appreciation to former Somerset County Commissioner, J.Pat Terlingo, center, for his service to the District by willingly and effectively filling a vacancy on the District Board of Directors.

Fun Fact: The District brought in \$1,034,185 of funding into Somerset County in 2019 for natural resource conservation projects.

In 2019 Len Lichvar was recognized by the Somerset County Sportsmen's League for his professional service to the District & his 12 years of volunteer service as a Commissioner for the PA Fish & Boat Commission.

District Staff

Len Lichvar len-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4259

Len Lichvar, District Manager, manages & oversees six professional staff members of the District & the Southwest Technical Assistance Program. He assists with grant writing, pursuing innovative funding methods, writes press releases and media exposure, helps initiate internal and external workgroups, develops projects, attends meetings and events to represent the District, and maintain contact and communication with local, state, and national elected officials and agencies. He has to have a knowledge of all District projects and programs to assist with and is responsible for their timely completion and success.



Phil Gardner, Danielle Kalp & Phil Wilson - PACD Technical Assistance



PACD Technical Assistance Grant Program is a statewide program funded by the PA Growing Greener Program and the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service. The Somerset Regional Technical Office space is provided by the Somerset Conservation District. The office is overseen by Danielle Kalp, Professional Engineer. The Conservation Technicians include Phil Gardner, part-time, and Phil Wilson, full-time. The engineering assistance provided includes surveying and mapping, project designs, project cost estimates, construction oversight, soil investigation, and grant application assistance. Projects include abandoned mine drainage, agricultural best management practices, and stream restoration. The office serves twelve counties in Southwest Pennsylvania. Eligible entities for assistance include county conservation districts, non-profit organizations, watershed groups, counties, municipalities, and educational institutions.

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:
190 direct borrowers with 362 loans for \$31,067,912
31 guaranteed borrowers for \$14,823,172.59
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 2019 there were 217 active contracts, with a conservation plan that helps retain soil in place, maintain water quality and prevent floods. A total of \$326,183 in annual payments were made in 2018 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 2019-2023. Payments were made in 2019 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 (9) month period. A total of \$2272.71 in commodity loans was issued in 2019. 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 Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) was authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill. It replaced the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). Much like the MPP-Dairy program, the DMC program is a voluntary program that provides dairy producers with risk management coverage that will pay producers when the difference (the margin) between the national price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below a certain level selected by the program participants. There were 65 DMC contracts in Somerset County in 2019.

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.



District Staff



Susan Moon sue-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4246

Susan Moon is the Assistant Manager and provides assistance to the manager to achieve the District's mission, goals, and objectives. Susan reviews and prepares policies for Board review and adoption. Assists with personnel such as interviewing, hiring, and training. She is responsible for the District's operations fiscal management and annual audit. Susan prepares the annual budget, reconciles bank accounts, and provides monthly Board reports. Susan attends and represents the District at local, regional, and state meetings. She assists with grant writing. She also administers the Somerset County Farmland Preservation Program.



Don Williams don-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4248

Don Williams is the District's Ag Conservation/Nutrient Management Technician. He provides technical assistance on agricultural issues for Somerset County producers. Don provides technical assistance for the planning, design, and installation of Best Management Practice (BMP's) along with assisting landowners with REAP program applications, Nutrient Balance Sheets, and reviews Nutrient Management Plans. Don conducts public meetings and workshops to educate producers on regulations, manure management, and conservation practices.



Terry Tallion terry-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4251

Terry Tallion started in 2014 as the Dirt & Gravel, Low Volume Road Technician. Terry works with the county townships & municipalities informing them of the programs regulations and grant request deadlines. He assists townships in preparing grant requests and project planning. He then does project inspections and submits final completion reports and payments. Terry also has to enter all project information into the DGLVR GIS system.



Keith Largent keith-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4250

Keith Largent, is the District's Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Technician. The E&SPC program oversees the minimization of accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation as well as post construction stormwater runoff that results from various forms of construction and earthmoving activities. Keith is responsible for reviewing plans, permitting, inspections, and the proper implementation and maintenance of Erosion & Sediment Pollution and Post Construction Stormwater control plans.



Greg Shustrick greg-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4247

Greg Shustrick, the District's Watershed Specialist, is responsible for implementing projects that improve, sustain, monitor, and conserve the water resources within the county which directly benefit the public and all downstream waters. Various projects that have been completed since the development of this program include stream restoration and fish habitat projects, abandoned mine discharge and mine land remediation projects, installation of agricultural best management practices, surface and groundwater monitoring, aquatic life assessments as well as educational outreach programs.



Aimee Steele aimee-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4236

Aimee Steele is the Conservation District's Resource Technician and organizes the District's educational workshops and events such as the yearly Envirothon held for local schools to compete on a county level in current environmental issues. She also works with the Trout-in-the Classroom program with the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Aimee is in charge of preparing the annual report for the District and also works with partnering conservation organizations in preparing their newsletters. She attends and takes the minutes for the District's monthly board meetings and the Quality Assurance Board meetings to type and distribute. Aimee assists the District Manager and Assistant Manager.



Education

Meyersdale Wins 2019 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 29th 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. Meyersdale High School, Team No. 1, captured first place for the 1st time in 29 years. Rockwood, Team #1, placed second, and Shade Team 2, placed third. There were 7 schools that attended.



The 2019 Envirothon first place team from Meyersdale from left: Tom Miller, Karlee Witherite, William Decker, Josh Kretchman, Alyssa Long and Kahylee Shaffer

The District was assisted in operating the event by Laurel Hill State Park, 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.

The event was sponsored by Jenner Rod & Gun Club, Sheetz, Fraternal Order of Eagles, EADS, and the Somerset County Sportsmens League.

The PA Game Commission brought in two nuisance bears trapped the night before & the students were able to watch the processing procedure along with helping the PA Fish & Boat Commission stock fish.

If your school would be interested in attending this event, please contact Resource Specialist, Aimee Steele.

Pennsylvania Trout In the Classroom (TIC)

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



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

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.

Agency Partners



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

The NRCS works with agricultural producers and private forest landowners to address concerns to 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.

Mike Hamilton, Soil Conservationist out of Fayette County, was hired as District Conservationist. Mike began working in Somerset at the end of September 2019. He has been with the Agency for 10 years. Gisela M. Carmenaty, Natural Resource Specialist out of Westmoreland County, was hired as Soil Conservationist. Gisela began working in Somerset mid-September 2019. She has been with the agency for 9 years. Their 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 2019, conservation plans were written to cover about 3,260 acres of agricultural and forest land in Somerset County. Conservation was applied on over 2,109 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, CSP contracts totaled \$125,852 on approximately 1,265 acres of land and EQIP contracts totaled \$191,997 on approximately 362 acres.

2019 Forestry Report for Somerset County

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry has a mission to ensure the long-term health and productivity of the Commonwealth's forests while conserving native wild plants. The Forbes Forest District covers six counties with a large section of the Forbes State Forest system in Somerset County. District-managed state forestland includes several tracts along the Laurel Ridge and over 6,000 acres surrounding Mt. Davis. Other primary functions of the Bureau of Forestry included private forest stewardship, forest health, and wildland fire.

The DCNR Bureau of Forestry is committed to the conservation and sustainable management of privately-owned forestland and community trees throughout Pennsylvania. Forest management information and advice is available to landowners in Somerset County by contacting the district office at (724) 238-1200. Communities or homeowners with yard or street tree questions are encouraged to contact Celine Colbert, the District's Urban and Community Service Forester at the same number.

Encouraging streamside forest buffers was a priority for the Bureau of Forestry in 2019 and will continue to be a priority in 2020. Technical assistance and grant opportunities are available for those interested in planting trees along area waterways.

Celine Colbert - 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 to create 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 inquiries. 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. SCD staff and interns often assist with fish surveys in Somerset County waterways.

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 2019. The 2018 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 statewide media. Len also presented a program at the National Association of Abandoned Mine Land Conference & spoke to other civic and conservation groups on local conservation issues.

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 Landscape Initiative – The Initiative 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. The Initiative secured funding for and chose a consultant to produce a Laurel Highlands Economic Impact study of the value of clean water to determine the positive economic contributions of resource conservation that was completed in 2019.

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.

Cooperative Intern Program

The District's Cooperative Intern Program hosted two college students in 2019. Grace Bell, a Penn State student and Nolan Pritts, a Pitt-Johnstown student. Both assisted the District staff in a variety of resource conservation and education projects including finalizing a county-wide, stream culvert inventory for the county. They also provided support to the Somerset County Conservancy through assisting in a wide array of Conservancy events and projects.

FFA Speaking Contest

The Somerset Conservation District has assisted with and provided judges for the County FFA speaking contest for over 25 years! Public speaking is a very important part of education and helps to hone a student's communication skills. An average of 7-9 students prepare conservation related speeches and present them individually to the Conservation District panel of judges. Their speeches are judged based on pre-determined FFA speaking criteria and ranked accordingly. In addition to providing students valuable feedback, the Somerset Conservation District awards the top 3 speakers with a monetary prize. The 1st place speaker earns \$25, 2nd place \$15 and 3rd place \$10. The Somerset Conservation District is a proud sponsor of our Future Farmers of America and continues to support its members by participating in this event every year.



Front Row (L to R): Wyatt Dermer (SCTC), Tanner Rhodamer (SCTC), Eliot Walker (Turkeyfoot), Mckenzie Mahler (Somerset), Josh Deeter (Berlin), Rebecca Johnson (Rockwood)



Somerset County Legislative Farm Tour

Tom Croner, Pat Terlingo, and Don Williams participated in the discussion on local/county issues at the 2019 Somerset County Legislative Farm Tour held at Laurel Vista Farms in Somerset on August 2. Local and state elected officials and their representatives met with local farmers and Farm Bureau board members to discuss the current issues facing agriculture.

Manure Hauler & Broker Meeting

On Tuesday, January 29, 2019, Somerset CD 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 & Brokers earn Continuing Education Credits towards maintaining their certification.

Approximately 17 haulers, farmers, and agency personnel attended this event. Robb Meinen, Penn State Dept of Animal Science, was the instructor for this training which focused on manure gas safety, manure application setbacks, winter application concerns, and status of the Spotted Lanternfly in Pennsylvania.



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

Farm Bureau/DEP/CD Meeting & Tour

On Thursday, July 25, 2019, 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 the Rhoads Farm. Above, Scott Rhoads gave a tour of the roofed heavy use area that is used to feed beef cattle and store manure. He also displayed a no-till planter and spoke about its benefits for conserving soil, fuel, and time. In the afternoon, the group traveled to the Lynch Farm to see a rotational grazing system that is under construction. Mike Lynch spoke in detail about the fence, water system, and rock-lined stream crossing. Mike also gave a tour of their maple facility and explained the equipment used for the production of maple syrup.



Voice of Ag

The Voice of Ag Work Group continued to identify and discuss important agricultural issues specific to Somerset County and identify potential partnerships and assistance opportunities.

Combined Board Initiative

This effort includes board members of both the District and the Somerset County Conservancy as well as District staff, continued to inform and educate citizens and elected officials regarding the need for a long-term trust fund for future AMD system operation and maintenance. The District is legally responsible for the perpetual maintenance of four of the five Oven Run passive treatment systems and has also taken on that same responsibility for several other orphan systems as well.

There are 23 passive treatment systems and one lime doser in Somerset County that all require ongoing maintenance and eventual reconstruction in order to continue to improve and maintain the water quality that have secured eco-tourism and economic opportunities for Somerset County and the entire region. That continuing huge responsibility falls upon a very small, professional staff and local watershed organization volunteers to accomplish.

Value of Clean Water

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highlands Landscape Initiative, which the District is a part of along with other regional partners, completed the "Value of Clean Water" Report that puts an economic value on ecosystem services in the Laurel Highlands. District Manager, Len Lichvar, serves on the Steering Committee for the project that oversaw the creation of the report completed by Key-Log Economics. The report documents that watersheds in the Laurel Highlands produce \$3.7 billion a year in economic impact. The report will be officially introduced to citizens, elected officials, and conservationists in 2020 as a tool to use to understand the economic impact of clean water and natural resources in the Laurel Highlands.

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 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 2018-2019 allocations to Somerset County were \$293,636 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$174,212 for Low Volume Roads. The 2019-2020 allocations for Somerset County are \$463,417 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$178,010 for Low Volume Roads. The increase in Dirt & Gravel Road funding is due to a re-evaluation of dirt & gravel roads and potential work sites within the county.

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 Board member; Michael Hamilton, NRCS; and Pat Ferko, 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 to the District Board for approval. The QAB met once in 2019, to review and recommend project requests to the Somerset Conservation Board for funding, and to review and approve project amendments and final project payments.

2018-2019 projects that were funded, started and/or completed are:

Dirt & Gravel Road projects :

- Peaceful Valley Road, Stonycreek Township
- Fresh Road Middlecreek Township
- Davis Road, Elk Lick Township
- Ream Road, Lincoln Township
- Colflesh Road, Lower Turkeyfoot Township

Low Volume Road projects :

- Brehm Road, Jenner Township
- Commissary Road, Allegheny Township
- Clinton Road, Lincoln Township
- Pine Tree Road, Somerset Township
- Romania Road, Summit Township (delayed)
- Old Bethel Road, Upper Turkeyfoot Township



**Dirt & Gravel Road Project
Colflesh Road, Lower Turkeyfoot
Township**

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.



**Low Volume Road Project
Brehm Road, Jenner
Township
Completed Retaining Wall**



**Dirt & Gravel Road Project
Davis Road, Elk Lick Township
Cross Pipe & Road Fill
Installation**

Agricultural Programs

Conservation Planning and Nutrient Management

Because water quality is an important resource concern, the Somerset Conservation 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 a delegation agreement with the State Conservation Commission, SCD is tasked with the review and approval of NMP's. Currently Somerset County has six Concentrated Animal Farm Operations (CAFO) with approved nutrient management plans.

Beginning in October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted 174 county farms with development of NBS which include over 25,300 acres.

Project Grass

Southwest Project Grass is a cooperative effort by local farmers, County Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS, and other partners. This program promotes conservation through proper pasture management in 14 counties in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The SCD supports the Southwest Project Grass Chapter to achieve its goals of improving the economic position of local farmers, increasing production, energy efficiency, and utilization of resources while improving soil and water quality. Don Williams, SCD, serves on the Project Grass Executive Committee.

2020 will mark the 40-year anniversary of Project Grass which had its beginnings in Somerset County. Plans are in the works for a bus tour of progressive grazing farms and a publication highlighting the accomplishments of the past 40 years.

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.

Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Prevention

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 2018:

- E&SPC BMP's/controls were applied to minimize erosion on 95 disturbed acres
- 10 stand-alone E&SPC plans were processed, reviewed and approved
- 13 General NPDES/PCSM construction permits/E&SPC plans processed & approved
- 56 earth disturbance assessments/inspections conducted
- 92 Ch. 102 E&SPC/NPDES/Ch. 105 technical & informational assists provided
- handled & processed 13 citizen complaints

Water Quality

Soap Hollow Run Project

Greenhouse Park, located in Conemaugh Township Somerset County, is a well known and popular, outdoor recreational destination point. The park is used for a variety of organized as well as everyday public, low-impact recreation. Aside from the green space, pavilions and other amenities, the major draw is the Stonycreek Whitewater Park on the Stonycreek River that attracts countless kayakers and other boating and white water enthusiasts to the man-made rapids. It is also a staging point and put in area for float tubers and others who want to enjoy a fun float to takeouts in Johnstown a few river miles away.

The primary reason that the park can attract outdoor users is the historic improvements to the water quality of the Stonycreek River over the last 20 years. A principal organization that has been responsible for that improvement, the SCD, is now leading the enhancement efforts of the other waterway in the park, Soap Hollow Run.

The small stream, which flows alongside State Route 403 before entering the Stonycreek, is inconspicuous and often goes unnoticed. However, only a few years ago the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, under its unassessed waters initiative, surveyed the stream and confirmed the existence of a wild reproducing brown trout population that made the Commission's Class A listing that signifies the resident trout population is at a high level and that the water quality is also cold and clean.

Despite this positive data, SCD Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, noted that the waterway in the park was choked with knotweed and also held minimal holding water for the trout. The SCD discussed the issue with some young leaders out of the Johnstown Chamber of Commerce, the Conemaugh Township Supervisors and then brought the need for a potential improvement project to the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU).

The result has been the formation of a partnership of these local entities to improve Soap Hollow Run in and near Greenhouse Park. Over the past two years the SCD, Natural Biodiversity, MLTU, and other volunteers physically cut and then sprayed the knotweed along the banks several times successfully reducing its growth and survival.

Also during that time Shustrick, through his role with the District, designed a habitat improvement project and also applied to numerous funders to implement the in-stream projects and replant with native vegetation. The success of that Conservation District led effort secured funding from National Trout Unlimited's Embrace –A Stream Grant Program, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Forever Wild Mini Grant Program, Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highlands Landscape Initiative Grant Program. Additional funds were also provided directly from MLTU and from the Johnstown Vision 2025 River Capture Team initiative.



The funding combined with in-kind contributions from the Conemaugh Township Supervisors, enabled the stabilization of the streambank and created habitat for the trout with the construction and placing of log vanes, muddills, root wads, j-hooks and random boulders.

Native species vegetation in the form of live stakes and trees will be planted to restore the streambank to a more natural state and the wild trout population should prosper even more from the habitat created.

Volunteers from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, under the direction of, Greg Shustrick, work on Soap Hollow Run.

Oven Run Rehab Project

In 2019 the Oven Run Rehabilitation Project, funded by a PA Department of Environmental Protection Growing Greener Grant, saw the completion of the Oven Run Site E passive treatment system. Earthshapers of Ebensburg was the contractor for the project. The system is now fully functioning and will actually treat nearly twice as much water as it did in the past.

Also the District awarded a contract to Whitehorse Excavating LLC for the rehab of Oven Run Site F, also known as Hawk View, and owned by the Somerset County Conservancy. This project is expected to be completed in April 2020.

The PA DEP, through the initiatives of SCRIP and Stream Restoration Inc., now plans to design and implement a reconstruction of Oven Run Site B, which has not functioned to its full capacity for many years. Oven Run Site A and Site D, also known as Oaks Trail, are also catastrophically failing. However, no funding has yet been secured for reconstruction of these two important systems.

Lamberts Run

The District submitted a PA DEP Growing Grant request for a Phase 2 Lamberts Run AMD treatment project. The \$551,391.00 grant was approved in 2018. The District will now embark on implementing the project that will complement the District's already constructed Anoxic Limestone Drain Treatment System that was completed near the village of Lambertsville in 2014.

The District's involvement in AMD abatement in the Lamberts Run watershed dates back almost 30 years. The District has worked in partnership with the federal Office of Surface Mining, PA DEP, Somerset County Conservancy, the Flight 93 Memorial, and landowners over the decades to reverse the major water quality impairments in Lamberts Run and negative impacts it has historically had on the Stonycreek River.

The Lamberts Run Phase 2 project will effectively restore the 1.3 miles of Lamberts Run before its confluence with the Stonycreek River. The project will essentially complete the restoration of Lamberts Run to the largest degree possible in conjunction with the PA DEP pump and treatment system at the headwaters and the Hinemeyer and Somerset County Conservancy's treatment systems further downstream.

The District had previously secured a National Trout Unlimited Technical Assistance Grant that enabled Hedin Environmental to create a conceptual plan for the project that was an essential component of the project to secure the grant funding.

A final design from Hedin Environmental & initial construction of the Phase 2 project is anticipated in 2020.



The reconstruction of Somerset Lake began in 2019

Somerset Lake Action Committee

The Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) continued to move forward in 2019 on its involvement with the Somerset Lake Nature Park in developing a plan with the PA Fish and Boat Commission on fish habitat improvement projects to be implemented while the lake is drawn down and after it is refilled as well.

A pavilion was designed by the PACD Technical Assistance Group and constructed at the north parking lot making it the first new visitor attraction at the park. Work on designing and constructing a trail around a part of the lake saw progress in cooperation with the Somerset County Parks and Recreation Board, and Somerset County Rails and Trails Committee and the Somerset County Commissioners.



Rehab and reconstruction at Hawk View Oven Run Site F.

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, adjacent to the AMD treatment system, 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. Soil was imported to the site in 2019. Planting a variety of native wildflowers, grasses, and shrubs to create a multifaceted habitat landscape will occur in 2020. This project will increase wildlife habitat and reduce runoff into the Stonycreek River.

Shaw Mines Study

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. Additional permitting issues must still be resolved in order for funding to be secured for the implementation of the proposed project & the District will continue to work with PA DEP & the CRWA to attempt to resolve these complicating issues.

Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat

The District sponsored Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat project saw 40 more fish structures built and placed in the Quemahoning Reservoir in May & August 2019. The project, initiated in 2006, by the District, has been instrumental in improving the recreational fishery in the public accessible lake.

The PA Fish and Boat Commission's Bureau of Habitat Management Lake Division designs and oversees the construction and placement of the structures. The Cambria-Somerset Authority provides support and Shaffer Block of Somerset provides material for the project. Volunteers from the District, Somerset County Sportsmen's League, Jenner Rod and Gun Club, Berlin-Brothersvalley High School, the maintenance students from the Commonwealth Technical Institute of the Hiram G. Andrews Center, and the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) provide the hands-on work to construct the structures.



Volunteers construct fish habitat structures