

Somerset Conservation District
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Somerset, PA 15501
www.somersetcd.com



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Somerset, PA 15501
814-445-4652 ext. 5
somersetcd@wpia.net



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 Lake Is Back

Current District 4 PA Fish and Boat Commission, (PFBC), Commissioner Don Anderson, left and former Commissioner and District Manager of the Somerset Conservation District and Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) member, Lenny Lichvar, marry the waters of Somerset Lake. The ceremony blended water secured before the lake was drained with the current refilled lake water to unite the past, present and future of the lake.

The ceremony was held as part of a special two-day PFBC sponsored education event at the lake in May of 2023. Several hundred school students assisted with fish habitat structures and stocking along with attending informational sessions from SLAC and other groups.



2024 Board Members

Chairman, Roger Latuch
Vice Chairman, Shawn Saylor
Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand
Commissioner, Irvin Kimmel
Robert Feather
Richard Berkley
Kurt Walker
Glenn Stoltzfus
James Ringler



Seated Left to Right: Vice Chariman, Shawn Saylor; Chairman, Roger Latuch; and Director, Robert Feather.
Standing Left to Right: Director Glenn Stoltzfus; Director, Kurt Walker; Director Jim Ringler; Director Rich Berkley; and Commissioner Irvin Kimmel. Missing from photo is Secretary/ Treasurer, Bud Weyand.

2024 Associate Board Members
Tom Croner, Greg Elliot, & Meade Meyers

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 a knowledge of all District projects and programs to assist with and is responsible for their timely completion and success.



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.



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 Conservation Technician is Phil Wilson. Engineering assistance is provided by Danielle Kalp, from the Clarion TAG which 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 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, 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.

The Somerset Ag Credit Headquarters County covers 6 counties that have 161 direct borrowers with 323 loans for \$28,753,625.20, and 32 guaranteed borrowers for \$14,063,289.49. 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 2023 there were 148 active contracts, with a conservation plan that helps retain soil in place, maintain water quality and prevent floods. A total of \$289,665 in annual payments were made in 2023 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 2018 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. No payments were made in 2023 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. 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. In 2023, we disbursed two separate FSFL loans for a total of \$84,500.00.

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 40 DMC contracts in Somerset County in 2023 with a total of \$1,975,430 in payments issued to participating dairy producers.

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, fertilizer, spray, seed, etc. Measurements by an impartial party can also assist owners, renters, and custom services providers in reaching accord for fair pricing.

The Somerset County FSA Office carries out defense and disaster related duties as assigned.

EMPLOYEES

Robin Foor, Acting County Executive Director
Amanda Mosholder, Farm Loan Manager
Joanne Stoltzfus, Farm Loan Officer
Gillian Shippey, Farm Loan Officer
Sydney Gaydos, Farm Loan Officer
Sherry Lynch, Loan Analyst
Elaine Bocsy, Program Technician
Ashleigh Yates, Program Technician

COUNTY OFFICE COMMITTEE

Charlene McWilliams
Wayne Petenbrink
Bill Hunsberger

Agency Partners



Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (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.

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. Conservation was applied on over 3270 acres of land in the county through the Conservation Technical Assistance program in 2023.

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. In 2023, NRCS obligated 2 CSP contracts totaling \$34,292 and covering 435 acres and 4 EQIP contracts totaling \$157,002 and covering 320 acres in Somerset County. AMA funds were not available for Somerset County for 2023. We contracted 6 new EQIP and CSP contracts this year for projects including improving pollinator habitat, forest management, grazing plans, and cover crop.

Calvin Livengood is the new Natural Resource Specialist in Somerset, PA. He was born and raised on his family's small dairy goat farm near Ohiopyle, PA. He graduated from California University of Pennsylvania with a bachelor's degree in Environmental Science, Fisheries & Wildlife Biology, and Business Management. He was awarded research grants to conduct research work documenting and modeling bird of prey migration along Chestnut Ridge in the Laurel Highlands.

2023 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 include 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. The Forbes Forest District is welcoming a new Urban Service Forester, Levi Canon. Levi is available to assist with managing community and street trees. Michael Doucette is the Rural Service Forester and services Somerset, Westmoreland, and Allegheny County landowners. The Service Forester Program is a government service that offers technical assistance, information on managing private woodlands, and advice for municipalities managing trees. Citizens and Municipalities can request assistance by contacting the district office at (724) 238-1200.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission



The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is tasked with protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. The PFBC would be severely hindered in this mission in and around the Somerset County area without the partnership with the Somerset County Conservation District (SCD). The PFBC and SCD work closely together year-round to ensure that environmental complaints and concerns within the Somerset County area are handled efficiently, professionally, and in a timely manner.

Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Tyler Crooks has been covering the Northern Somerset District since the summer of 2021. He looks forward to continued partnership with SCD members. WCO Dina Cable, who has been charged with the Southern Somerset District since the summer of 2020, looks forward to continuing the work that she and the SCD have been involved in to maintain the areas natural resources.

The PFBC would like to thank the SCD for their continued pursuit of clean water in Somerset County. Among many other things, our teamwork in identifying and handling erosion and sedimentation issues in the county continues to be a large benefit to local water quality. The SCDs responsibilities in managing and maintaining local AMD treatment plants has helped to make the Stonycreek River watershed the fishing and boating destination that it is today.

District Staff

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 and provides D&GR Program assistance.



Sandra Schmidt sandra-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4260

Sandra Schmidt became the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) Specialist in 2023. Her role is to solicit, administer and implement agriculture Best Management Practices (BMP's) with the funding created by the Pennsylvania State Legislature and administered by the State Conservation Commission. This is a new and evolving program for the District that has the potential to improve agriculture operations and at the same time enhance the conservation of natural resources.



Cooperative Intern Program

The Cooperative Intern Program between the Somerset County Conservancy and the Somerset Conservation District continued in 2023 with Grace Leiford and Aaron Capouellez serving as interns.

Grace, who attends Cedarville University, assisted on multiple conservation education programs as well as maintenance of AMD treatment systems and trails. Aaron also assisted with AMD system and trail maintenance and provided technical and video production assistance.



Grace Leiford, on the right, shows some children different types of macro's found while using a kick net.

Conservation Education

The District participated in multiple education projects aimed at both youth and adult audiences in 2023. In addition to the annual Envirothon competition, Resource Specialist, Aimee Steele assisted in presenting programs through Penn State's 4H Farm City Days, NatureWork's, Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited's Trout in the Classroom release, Rain Barrel Workshop with Somerset County, Mountain Field & Stream Youth Field Day, and the Somerset County Fair.



From Right, Keith Largent, SCD, 2nd place, Tyler Whipkey, SCTC Chapter FFA; Kevin Spangler, SCTC Chapter FFA; 1st place, Harleigh Shipley, SCTC Chapter FFA; 3rd place, Lillian Spangler, Somerset Chapter FFA; Carly Richard, Somerset Chapter FFA, and Audrey Marko, Rockwood Chapter FFA. Missing from photo is Jackson Will, BBHS Chapter FFA.

FFA Speaking Competition

District staff, Don Williams, Keith Largent, and Greg Shustrick, participated in judging the FFA Speaking Competition in Berlin again this year. The District strives to work with the young Future Farmers of America and the other youth programs in the County.

Public Relations

The **Daily American**, the **Tribune Democrat**, local radio stations, and **WJAC-TV** published news stories on District projects and activities in 2022. The 2021 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.

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.

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](#)).



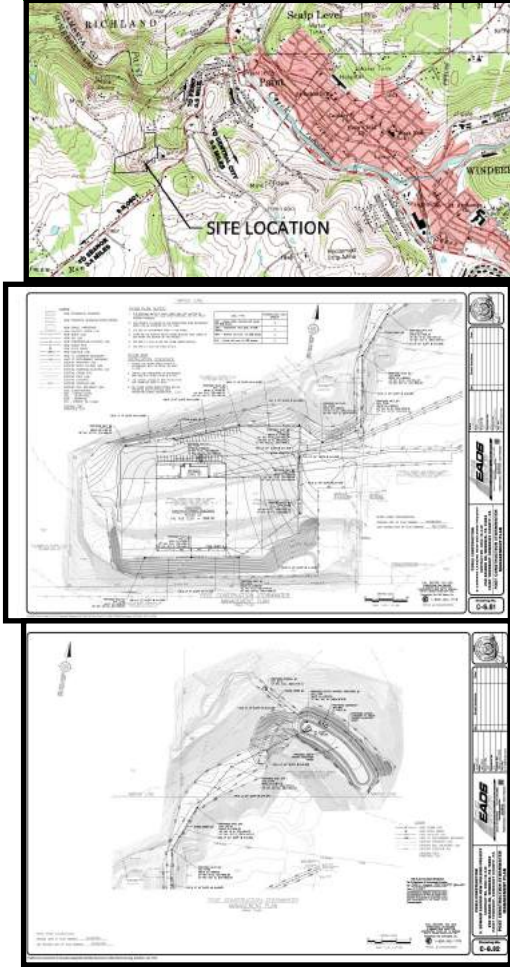
The Somerset Conservation District (SCD) is one of 66 Conservation Districts statewide and nearly 3,000 nationwide dedicated to conserving our soil and water resources.

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.

Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control & Stormwater Mitigation



Pictured is the recently completed D. Edward Building project near Windber in Paint Twp. From start to finish, see its location, completed structure, E&SPC/PCSM design, final stormwater control basin and discharge outlet, all required as part of the NPDES construction permit PAC560055 processed, reviewed, authorized and inspected by the SCD.



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 2023:

- E&SPC BMP's/controls were applied to minimize erosion on 743 disturbed acres
- 16 stand-alone E&SPC plans were processed, reviewed and approved
- 13 General NPDES/PCSM construction permits/E&SPC/PCSM plans were processed & approved
- 18 earth disturbance assessments/inspections were conducted
- 10 final EDI/PCSM reports and NPDES permit terminations were completed
- 44 Ch. 102 E&SPC/NPDES/Ch. 105 technical & informational assists were provided
- Handled & processed 3 citizen complaints



Somerset County Envirothon champions, Shade High School, competing at the State Envirothon.

County Commissioner Municipal Summit

Terry Tallion and Aimee Steele attended the County Commissioner Municipal Summit at the Sipesville Firehall where Terry gave a presentation on the Dirt and Gravel Roads Program.

Somerset Lake

Somerset Lake returned in 2023 and began its second life as a fishing, boating and recreation destination point in Somerset County. The fishery will be returning gradually as the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission stocks bait fish and fingerling gamefish. This, coupled with the multiple new fish habitat structures, as well as the woody growth that expanded while the lake was drawn down, will enable angling opportunities to return and potentially be better than in the past.

In addition, a walking trail, pavilions, handicap fishing facility, benches, shade trees, an island, birding peninsula, and more have been added. An improved Wood Duck Road access, thanks to the District’s Dirt and Gravel Road Program, are also among the many improvements and additional amenities at the lake making it a significantly improved outdoor recreation destination point for local citizens and out of town visitors.



Fish habitat structures being loaded prior to placement in Somerset Lake.

2023 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 33rd Somerset County Envirothon this year. The day-long event is an environmental-education competition testing students’ knowledge in five general areas: soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and a current environmental issue.

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



The refilling of the lake began in summer 2022 and was completely full in 2023. Lake Somerset has been stocked by PFBC with the following:

Year Stocked	Fish Species	Life stage	Number Stocked
2022	Fathead Minnow	Adult	38,000
2022	Golden Shiner	Fingerling	5,050
2022	Walleye	Fingerling	19,700
2023	Black Crappie	Fingerling	12,650
2023	Bluegill	Fingerling	12,650
2023	Channel Catfish	Yearling	1,250
2023	Fathead Minnow	Adult	38,000
2023	Golden Shiner	Fingerling	5,050
2023	Largemouth Bass	Fingerling	7,600
2023	Walleye	Fingerling	5,100

Proposed stocking in 2024:

Year Stocked	Fish Species	Life stage	Number Stocked
2024	Black Crappie	Fingerling	12,650
2024	Bluegill	Fingerling	12,650
2024	Channel Catfish	Yearling	1,250
2024	Largemouth Bass	Fingerling	7,600
2024	Walleye	Fingerling	5,100

Water Quality



Sludge is removed from Oven Run AMD Treatment System Site F (Hawk View) as a part of the District's perpetual responsibility for operation and maintenance of the Oven Run treatment systems on the Stonycreek River.

AMD Treatment Manufactures Clean Water

The District is currently responsible for manufacturing over 3 billion gallons a year of clean water in Somerset County through its ongoing oversight and operation and maintenance of nine AMD passive treatment systems which are in reality essential infrastructure factories that take a raw material, known as polluted water and manufacture a useable and essential life giving product known as clean water.

These infrastructure facilities include the Oven Run Sites A, D, E and F on the Stonycreek River, Rock Tunnel on the South Fork of Bens Creek, Boswell and Jenners systems on Quemahoning Creek, Heinemyer and the Lamberts Run Anoxic Drain on Lamberts Run. With the recent reconstruction of the Oven Run projects accomplished by the District, these facilities are now producing more clean water, removing more toxic metals and acidity and adding more alkalinity than ever before. The District has confirmed this data through contracted professional sampling of the water by InnoH2O Solutions.

There are 15 other infrastructure treatment facilities in the Stonycreek River watershed that are overseen and maintained by either the PA Department of Environmental Protection or local volunteer watershed organizations. The cumulative past and current efforts of both professionals and volunteers in these water quality improvement efforts have enabled recreational opportunities in the County to greatly expand which has created ever growing eco-tourism and the resultant documented economic growth throughout the Cambria-Somerset region.

SCRIP

The Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) has been the essential networking and water quality improvement project development organization for the upper Conemaugh River watershed for over three decades. SCRIP is a consortium of conservation volunteers, professionals representing agencies, non-profits and watershed groups all focused on AMD abatement and improved water quality enhancement efforts. The Somerset Conservation District, along with the Cambria County Conservation District, were the foundation upon which SCRIP was originally organized in 1991. Just a few of the significant achievements of SCRIP and its partners are:

- The planning and coordination of the Oven Run AMD abatement systems on the Stonycreek River which were the beginning of the many additional and historic AMD initiatives in the watershed.
- The confirmation that because of the AMD abatement, efforts spearheaded by SCRIP, the water quality of the Stonycreek River had altered from net acidic to net alkaline which led to the naming of the Stonycreek River as Pennsylvania's River of the Year in 2012.
- The process that eventually led to the public acquisition of the Manufacturers Water Company properties in Cambria and Somerset Counties, that include the Quemahoning Reservoir, had its start at SCRIP which created the plan and developed the process that led directly to the successful acquisition.
- The analyzing of the data that proved the injection of sludge into the Reitz #4 mine pool was being misinterpreted which led to a successful court case that proved it, enabling the planning and design of an active AMD treatment facility in the Shade Creek watershed to proceed.

District Manager Len Lichvar is a founding board member of SCRIP and served as its Chairman for 24 years and now serves as SCRIP's Vice Chairman.

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 2022-2023 allocations to Somerset County were \$458,079 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$180,579 for Low Volume Roads. The 2022-2023 allocations for Somerset County are to be \$466,899 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$184,051.

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 Richard Berkley, Somerset Conservation Board member, Calvin Livengood, NRCS, and Tyler M. Crooks, 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 2023 to review and recommend project requests to the Somerset Conservation Board for funding, and to review and approve project amendments and final project payments.

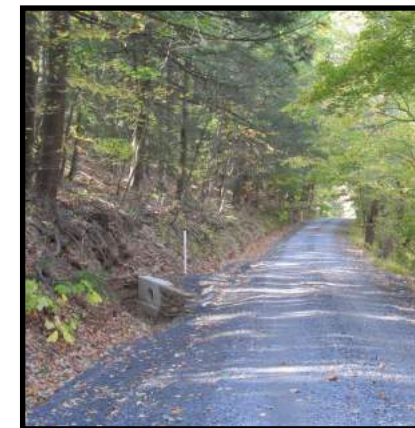
2022-2023 projects that were funded, started and/or completed are:

Dirt & Gravel Road projects:

Saw Mill Road, Ellick Township
Town Hill Road, Allegheny Township
Conn Road, Lower Turkeyfoot Township
Enoch Road, Lincoln Township
Round Hill Road, Brothersvalley Township
Kendallwood Road, Phase II, Greenville Township
Mountain Road, Greenville Township

Low Volume Road projects:

Gary Road, Phase I, Middlecreek Township
Sand Rock Road, Stonycreek Township
Dodson Road, Lincoln Township



***Town Hill Road, Allegheny Township
Cross Pipe Installation with pre-cast
headwall, Dirt & Gravel Road***

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.



***Before and After
Yonai Road, Stonycreek Township
French Mattress & Relief Pipe Installation, Dirt & Gravel Road***



***Sand Rock Road, Stonycreek Township
Parallel Road Drains, Sub-Base
Rehab. & Installation of Cold Pave
Asphalt, Low Volume Road***

Agricultural Programs, continued

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 eight CAFO farms with approved nutrient management plans.



Farmland Preservation Program

The District administered the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Easement Purchase Program (ALPEPP) in 2023. 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 14 easements perpetually preserving 2,000.96 acres and \$3.3 million into Somerset County.

Twilight Pasture Walk at Ghlasbrae

On Wednesday, September 6, 2023, Somerset County hosted a field day entitled, *Twilight Pasture Walk*, which was held at Ghlasbrae Farm in Brothersvalley Township.

The purpose of these events is to bring people with various levels of grazing management experience together for information sharing, education, and networking. Approximately 22 landowners, farm operators, and agency personnel attended this pasture walk.

On this very warm evening, the group met at Ghlasbrae Farm, owned and operated by John Hellard and Anne Podplesky. The owners rotationally graze a flock of sheep, and part of the farm is utilized by a neighbor for grazing beef cattle. John led a walking tour of their grazing system. Field demonstration and discussion focused on conversion of cropland to pasture, parasite control for grazing sheep, and the effects of clipping pasture. Attendees also heard presentations on Risk Management, USDA programs, and Manure Management Plans.

Somerset County Conservancy Partnership

The Somerset Conservation District has partnered with the Somerset County Conservancy to coordinate and track the dues and membership for the SCC, format, publish, and mail the semi-annual SCC newsletters, pick up and distribute bills, invoices, and other mail, plan and coordinate, in cooperation with SCC volunteers, public conservation-oriented youth and adult education programs. The District also provides grant writing assistance as needed.

The SCC has several events already planned for 2024 such as snowshoe, ski, hiking, frog walks, nature walks, and the Earth Day event in uptown Somerset.



South Fork Bens Creek

District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, along with District Manager, Len Lichvar, in partnership with Adam Cotchen of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) and members of the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, organized an electro-fishing survey demonstration on the South Fork of Bens Creek in Somerset County. The location was within the now Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's (PFBC) designated Class A wild trout section at a location that is privately owned, but open to public fishing due to the generosity of the landowner.



A wild stream bred brown trout captured during the survey of the designated Class A wild trout section of the South Fork of Bens Creek.

The survey was conducted by staff and students from Garret College of Maryland which the District has utilized multiple times before to gather data on water quality improvement projects. The survey documented a healthy population of streambred wild brown trout of multiple age classes.

The survey was conducted for a number of reasons. The WPC has applied for a PA Department of Environmental Protection Growing Greener grant to construct a fish habitat project on the property which has been designed by the PFBC Bureau of Fisheries Management Habitat Section. This project, when completed, is expected to even further increase the wild trout population.

In addition, due to the PFBC Class A designation in 2018, stocking of hatchery trout on this three mile section of the South Fork has been eliminated which has caused some concerns among the local angling public. However, the results of the survey verify and confirm that the Class A designation is justified and that the stocking of water containing a population of trout that already creates a viable recreational fishery is no longer required.

The wild trout population in the entire South Fork of Bens Creek, including much of the mainstem of Bens Creek, has greatly increased in the last several decades as a direct result of the water quality and habitat improvements created by two AMD passive treatment systems and multiple fish habitat projects implemented by the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Somerset Conservation District.

The District's intern also filmed and produced a video that visually documents the survey and its results. The District has and continues to use this as an educational tool to inform and educate anglers and others of the positive impacts of the area's improving water quality.



District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick is interviewed by a First Waves videographer for an upcoming video program on the District's long time AMD abatement efforts and ongoing operation and maintenance of AMD treatment systems.

Oven Run Trust Fund

The Oven Run Sites A, D, E and F Trust Fund continues to grow. The Fund, initiated by the District and held at the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, is intended to secure long term funding for the future essential operation and maintenance of the Oven Run AMD passive treatment infrastructure facilities on the Stonycreek River which the District is legally responsible for the perpetual and forever operation and oversight.

A QR Code was created to make contributing to the fund simpler and easier. Plans to elevate the interest in and hopefully increase contributions to the fund by individuals and organizations, is set to occur in 2024. To donate use the QR Code or contribute online at cfalleghenies.org/oven-run or call 814-536-7741.



Agricultural Programs

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.

ACAP

In 2023 the District signed a Delegation Agreement with the State Conservation Commission to administer the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) in Somerset County. This program, funded through appropriations from the state legislature, will enable the District to fund agriculture Best Management Practices (BMP's) in Somerset County that can include everything from cover crops to manure storage facilities. The goal of the statewide program is to assist farmers in sustaining their operations and improving protections to land and water resources.

The District created a new staff position to implement the program and Sandra Schmidt is now the ACAP Specialist for the District.

The program has the potential to fund several million dollars worth of BMP's in Somerset County. The greatest challenge is that the all the funds, in order to be used, must be committed within a three year time frame which presents special challenges that the District continues to address. The District has received significant assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Somerset Field Office and the State Conservation Commission.



District Nutrient Management Technician Don Williams inspects a fencing project funded by through the District's Agriculture Conservation

R.E.A.P

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. 2023 marks the 16th year that this program has been available. Many Somerset County producers have utilized this program to have Manure Management Plans or Agricultural E&S Plans written, acquire no-till equipment, and install Best Management Practices. During fiscal year 2022-2023, SCD assisted 4 producers with REAP applications. During that time 4 county producers had applications approved which resulted in \$231,215 of state tax credits being awarded to Somerset County Farmers.

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.

Agricultural Programs, continued

Penn Woods Farm Ag Career Day

On Friday, May 12, 2023, Somerset County Ag Career Day was held at Pennwood Farms near Berlin. Over 700 eighth grade students attended this event.

Somerset Conservation District staff members, Aimee Steele and Sandra Schmidt, served as presenters. They explained in detail the goals and job duties of working for a conservation agency. Students learned about the importance of water pollution and used an EnviroScope to demonstrate how water infiltrates and moves.

District Ag Technician, Don Williams, assists a student with soil sampling.



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 yielded 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 eight CAFO farms with approved nutrient management plans. These NMP's encompass over 9,200 animal units and over 7,600 acres.

Beginning in October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted many county farms with development of these NBS which include over 8,900 acres.

Manure Hauler & Broker Meeting



On Tuesday, February 7, 2023, Somerset 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 & Brokers earn continuing education credits towards maintaining their certification.

Approximately 14 haulers, farmers, and agency personnel attended this event. Robb Meinen, Penn State Department of Plant Science, was the instructor for this training which focused on Manure Management Plans and Nutrient Balance Sheets. It also included a discussion on the land application of Food Processing Residuals.