



MIFFLIN COUNTY

CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2023 Annual Report

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The Mifflin County Conservation District (MCCD) was organized in 1956 as a legal subdivision of state and local government, under the authority of Act 217, to assist the county’s landowners with natural resource related concerns, and to provide technical and financial assistance to implement conservation practices on their land. There are 66 conservation districts in Pennsylvania, representing every county except Philadelphia, and nearly 3,000 nationwide, dedicated to conserving our soil and water resources.

The MCCD continues to administer many state and regional programs for local natural resource conservation. New activities for 2023 included the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) and grant awards from the Growing Greener and Section 319 programs. See all of the accomplishments and activities for each program highlighted in the next few pages of our 2023 Annual Report.

- Trevor Weaver, District Manager

Board of Directors:

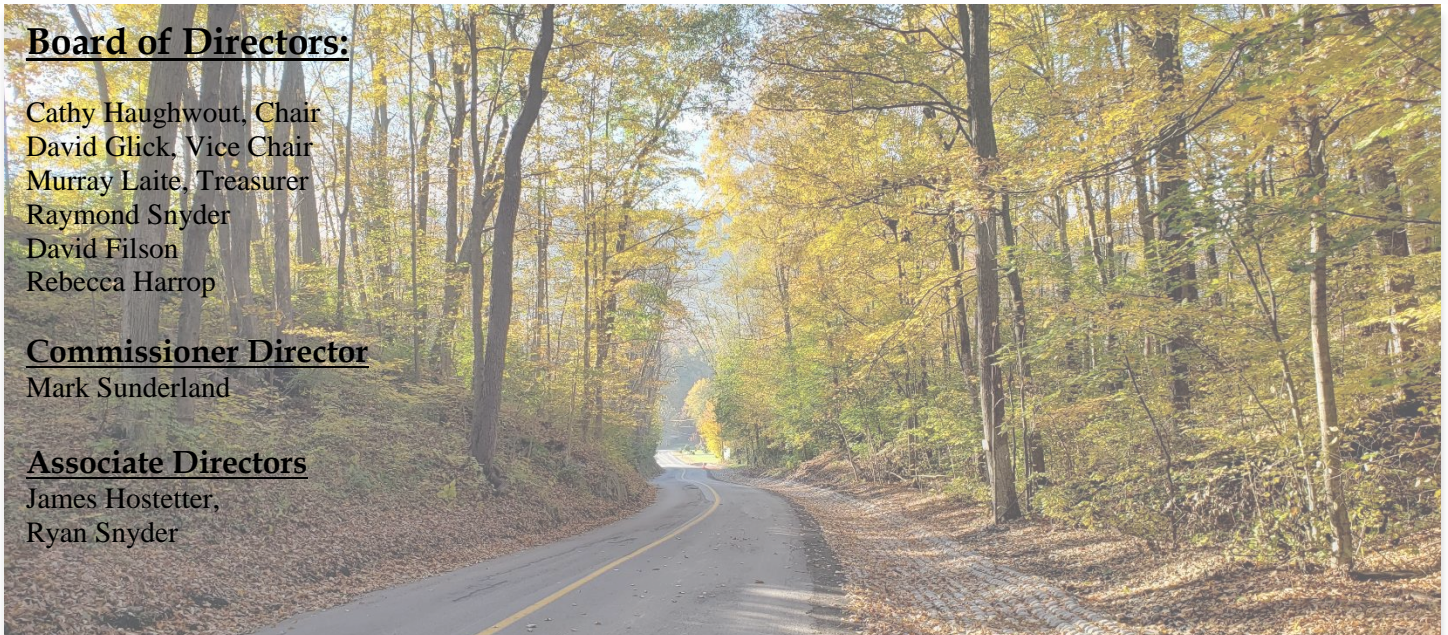
Cathy Haughwout, Chair
David Glick, Vice Chair
Murray Laite, Treasurer
Raymond Snyder
David Filson
Rebecca Harrop

Commissioner Director

Mark Sunderland

Associate Directors

James Hostetter,
Ryan Snyder



Conservation District Mission Statement

The mission of the Mifflin County Conservation District is to conserve the county’s natural resources through coordinated and professional guidance, technical assistance, and education to the landowners, public agencies, and residents of Mifflin County.

Countywide Action Plan

The Mifflin County Conservation District continued progress to realize nutrient and sediment reductions by implementing the Mifflin Countywide Action Plan (CAP). Herbert Roland Grubic (HRG) continued as the CAP Coordinator with grants managed by the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC). Dauphin, Perry, Juniata, and Mifflin (DPJM) counties completed many projects as part of a four county grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) in 2023.

CAP Implementation

The MCCD proposed completing one stream restoration project in 2023 with the US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). The MCCD also proposed continuing a turf conversion program aimed at planting native meadows in replacement of traditional lawns on residential and commercial properties.

During 2023, the District installed the following BMPs through the 2023 CAP implementation grant:

- **Project #1:** 1,800 linear feet of stream restored on Strodes Run. Rock and log structures were installed and vertical banks were re-graded to direct flow, mitigate streambank erosion, and help with floodplain connectivity while providing habitat for aquatic organisms. The project has also proposed the installation of a native meadow with an emphasis on wildflowers for pollinator species.
- **Project #2:** The MCCD completed approximately 2 acres of turf conversion projects at two sites in Mifflin County. These projects

were also considered pilot projects in an effort to convert traditional lawn or pasture into native meadow. These projects were planted in the fall of 2023 with additional acres to be planting in the spring on 2024.

Additional site assessments and evaluations for future projects were completed with hopes of future CAP implementation funding. Major planning was completed at the Lewistown County Club in partnership with HRG for turf conversion, stream restoration, and green stormwater infrastructure (bio-swales, rain gardens, wet meadows, etc.).



Dirt & Gravel Roads Program

The Dirt and Gravel Road (D&GR) Program was created in 1997. The purpose of the program is to provide training and funding to local road owning entities to mitigate stream pollution from dirt roads. To date, the District has received and administered as grants a total of over \$1.4 million for funding, administering, and educational events related to dirt and gravel road improvement projects in Mifflin County. The District has completed 41 projects involving 7 different townships, with an additional \$90,000 committed to pending projects. Through the District's Dirt and Gravel

Roads Program, more than 18 miles of Mifflin County's dirt roads have been improved to demonstrate the use of environmentally sensitive road maintenance practices.

In 2015 the traditional D&GR Program was expanded to include some low volume, paved and/ or tar-chip roads under the Low Volume Roads (LVR) portion of the program. The purpose and mission of the Dirt, Gravel, Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program remains the same: provide training and funding to local road owning entities to mitigate stream pollution from dirt and low volume roads. To date, the District has received approximately \$560,000 for low volume road improvements. The District has completed a total of 17 projects and has committed over \$45,000 toward future projects. Projects have been or are being completed in 7 different municipalities totaling over 5 miles of road length. *(Cover Photo is a LVR Project)*

Erosion and Sediment Control Program

The District, under delegated authority from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the State Conservation Commission, administers the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Program at a Level II authority under the Chapter 102 regulations and the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law. This involves technical review of erosion control plans for earthmoving activities, project inspections, compliance activities, complaint response and public education. The purpose of this program is to protect our land and waters from accelerated erosion and resulting sedimentation during any earth disturbance. The scope of

projects reviewed by the District can range from single building construction disturbing a minimal area to massive highway projects involving hundreds of acres of disturbance.

In the past year the District performed 25 initial and 59 follow-up E&S plan reviews encompassing 516 project acres and 206 disturbed acres. Our staff performed 61 site inspections, responded to 243 requests for technical assistance and investigated 3 E&S related complaints.

Construction sites involving more than 1 acre of earth disturbance must apply for and receive a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit prior to commencing any earthmoving activities for the discharge of stormwater from those sites. Anyone that expects to begin a project that may involve more than 1 acre of earth disturbance over the life of the project is urged to contact the Conservation District to determine whether NPDES permit coverage is required.

The Conservation District is delegated to administer the NPDES program for construction sites in Mifflin County. This includes processing and technical review of applications and accompanying E&S plans, and regular inspections of permitted sites to ensure compliance with permit conditions. Individual NPDES permits are issued for those sites located in Special Protection watersheds, and General Permit coverage is given to all other sites. The District processed 5 Individual and 3 General NPDES permits in Mifflin County in the last calendar year.

Watershed Assessment and Restoration

Upper Kish & Hungry Run Section 319 Grants

The District continued to focus on two priority watersheds for water quality improvement in Mifflin County through the EPA Section 319 Funding Program. Watershed assessments and restoration plans were completed for both the Upper Kishacoquillas Creek watershed and Hungry Run watershed in Mifflin County.

The Upper Kishacoquillas (Kish) Creek watershed includes the main stem of Kish Creek from Belleville to Allensville and all of the tributaries in-between. The Hungry Run watershed, a tributary of Kishacoquillas Creek, flows through the village of Vira and meets the Kish below Burnham. Each watershed contains a majority of streams with an aquatic life use impairment. Sediment and nutrients are the cause of impairment in both watersheds and the implementation plans addresses reductions of both agricultural and urban sources of sediment and nutrients.

Grant money is available to projects in impaired watersheds that have EPA approved Watershed Implementation Plans through the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Program. To date, the District has received more than \$3 million in 319 and Growing Greener funds for agricultural BMPs and watershed restoration efforts in the Upper Kish and over \$1.4 million for the Hungry Run Watershed. The MCCD submitted an updated Watershed Implementation Plan to the US EPA for the Upper Kish Watershed in

2019. This update included new cost estimates, updated watershed modeling and reduction estimates, and included an expanded area of the impaired watershed (extended downstream to Applehouse Road). The updated plan was approved in February of 2020.

During 2023, the District installed the following BMPs in cooperation with local landowners:

- **Project #1:** Decommissioning of earthen manure lagoon
BMPs: 1-50 ft. x 144 ft. Roofed Heavy Use Area and Manure Stacking Structure, 338 ft. of roof gutters and 600 ft. of outlets. In addition, 2400 sq. ft. of Animal Trails and Walkways, 3500 sq. ft. of Access lanes, 2 watering facilities, 280 ft. of waterlines, and 1354 ft. of pasture fence. Other BMPs: 1 stream crossing, 900' livestock exclusion fence, 500 feet of stream habitat improvement, and 1 acre of tree planting.

Town Run Alternative Restoration Plan (ARP)

The MCCD met with staff from the PA DEP to discuss future watersheds for focus under the 319 program. PA DEP has completed an Alternative Restoration Plan for Town Run in McVeytown. This watershed is an ideal size for restoration efforts since it only involves a few tributaries and landowners. It is expected that this plan will take 2-3 years to complete. The MCCD plans to start baseline sampling in the spring of 2024.

Riparian Buffer Management

In 2023, the District was able to continue assisting multiple landowners in maintaining riparian forest buffers. The MCCD replanted trees, removed tree tubes and stakes, completed establishment mowing, and assisted with invasive species control.

The MCCD was also able to assist landowners with herbicide application for select sites and was also able to provide trees through the Keystone 10 Million Trees Partnership program and install live stakes through the Chesapeake Conservancy's Live Stake Co-op. Maintenance and management is vital to long-term project success!



Surface Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Monitoring

In light of the extensive work completed by the District and its partners in the Upper Kish & Hungry Run watersheds, the possibility of removing these waters from the 303(d) impaired waters list is a key goal and distinct possibility in the future. The District has been sampling water quality in these watersheds since 2014. Surface water assessments are conducted each year during the month of April or May and collect a snapshot of water quality conditions through biological, physical, and chemical data. Samples taken in April of 2023 continued to show water quality improvement

across many sites, most notably in the Hungry Run watersheds. Improving waters data was submitted to PA DEP for further consideration. Sampling in 2023 completed a 10-year data set in these watersheds.



Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)

Created through the Clean Streams Fund, ACAP will fund projects that reduce sediment and nutrient pollution in streams, rivers and waterbodies through implementation of agricultural best management practices (BMPs). It is a statewide program, implemented primarily by County Conservation districts.

In 2023 ACAP partially funded 2 projects with the following BMPs:

Project #1: 1- 50 ft. x 128 ft. Roofed Heavy Use Area and Manure Stacking Structure, 1- 48 ft. x 80 ft. Roofed Heavy Use Area and Manure Stacking Structure. Additional BMPs included 416 ft. of roof gutters, 619 ft. of underground outlets, 564 ft. of subsurface drainage, 542 ft. of Access Roads, 562 ft. of Animal Trails & Walkways, and 2 watering facilities.

Project #2: 1-50 ft. x 144 ft. Roofed Heavy Use Area and Manure Stacking Structure, 338 ft. of roof gutters and 600 ft. of outlets. In addition, 2400

sq. ft. of Animal Trails and Walkways, 3500 sq. ft. of Access lanes, 2 watering facilities, 280 ft. of waterlines, and 1354 ft. of pasture fence

Chesapeake Bay Program

2023 marked the 34th year for the Conservation District's administration of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The Bay Program is a unique regional partnership leading and directing restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. The program works with landowners who would like to reduce sediment and nutrient runoff from their farms.

District personnel performed 63 farm inspections as part of a new requirement with the "reboot" of the Chesapeake Bay Program. The purpose of these visits was to ensure that Mifflin County Ag producers have the required Ag Erosion & Sediment Control (E&S) plans and Manure Management plans to be in compliance with relevant environmental regulations. The District also assisted 19 farmers in developing Manure Management plans covering 2,283.83 acres and assisted 16 farmers with the development 21 Ag E&S plans covering 1,451.58 acres.

Nutrient Management Program

2023 completed the 26th year of the conservation district's delegated agreement with the State Conservation Commission to administer Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management (Act 38) Program. The District's primary responsibility is the technical review and approval of nutrient management plans that are prepared and submitted by

commercial or individual planners for farms that are considered Concentrated Animal Operations (CAOs). A concentrated animal operation is a farm with more than two animal equivalent units (AEU's) per acre of land suitable for manure application (animal equivalent unit defined as 1,000 pounds of animal weight). In addition, farms that are not legally required to comply with Act 38 may do so voluntarily. Nutrient management planning is done with nitrogen and phosphorus as the nutrients of concern. Other features of the program include odor emission regulations for certain size livestock operations and a certification program for commercial manure haulers.

In 2023, the Conservation District reviewed and approved 6 nutrient management plans. Additionally, the District completed 23 annual status reviews of previously approved nutrient management plans.

Farmland Preservation

The Conservation District serves as the administrator of the Mifflin County Agricultural Conservation Easement Program. This program preserves the future of productive farmland in the county by purchasing the development rights to participating farms. Farm owners are paid a percentage of the easement value, or difference between the agricultural and market values of the land, to keep their farms in productive agriculture. Funding for easement purchases is provided by the PA Department of Agriculture, the Mifflin County Commissioners, and in some cases, United States Department of Agriculture.

In order to be eligible, a farm must meet the following minimum criteria:

(1.) be located within a recorded Agricultural Security Area that has at least 500 acres enrolled, (2.) contain at least 50% of soils which are available for agricultural production and are Capability Classes I through IV, (3.) contain the greater of 50% or 10 acres of harvested cropland, pasture, or grazing lands, (4.) be contiguous acreage of at least 50 acres, unless the tract is at least 10 acres and is utilized for a crop unique to the area or is contiguous to a property which has a perpetual conservation easement in place. Farms that meet this criteria are competitively ranked according to the Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) process. The LESA assigns points to each farm according to soils, farm productivity, development pressure, and clustering or proximity to other farms in the program. Depending on funding available, the highest ranked farm(s) receives an offer for easement purchase based on certified appraisals of the farm's agricultural and market value. Once the easement is purchased, that farm must remain in agricultural production in perpetuity.

Statewide, there have been 6,314 farms preserved in 59 counties totaling 632,856 acres. In Mifflin County, there are now 31 farms preserved totaling 3,434 acres at a cost of \$3,877,116.

Environmental Education

Envirothon

The District continued its sponsorship of the Envirothon, an environmental education competition for senior high school students that tests their knowledge of natural resource issues. The 2023 Mifflin/Juniata County Envirothon

was held at Kish Park. Two teams from Mifflin County High School attended the event. The winning team went on to represent Mifflin County at the Pennsylvania State Envirothon held at Camp Mounty Luther.



2023 Mifflin County Envirothon winning team

Field Days and Events

The District participated in several other youth education events. The MCCD staffed a stream health station at the Reeds Gap Fall Fest (Reeds Gap State Park) in October. MCCD staff also led a healthy streams presentation to the Project YES summer camp, helped with the Mifflin County School District (MCSD) Eco Day, presented to Belleville Mennonite School (BMS) Earth Science and Environmental Science classes, hosted a planting event with the MCJHS Conservation Club, and assisted with the Farm Bureau 3rd grade ag tour.

Education was not limited to youth. The MCCD assisted with and/or participated in several educational and outreach meetings for the Ag community and the general public. Mike Stuck and Erica Smith did one on one Manure Management manual trainings at the MCCD district office.

Other District Activities in 2023

In 2023, the MCCD continued their annual tree seedling sale. The 2023 sale included evergreens, shade trees, flowering trees and shrubs, and wildflower seed. The MCCD sold 842 trees/shrubs. Proceeds from the annual seedling sale fund environmental education efforts in Mifflin County. The MCCD also adopted planters in downtown Lewistown as part of the Downtown Lewistown Adopt-A-Planter program. Planters were planted with native flowers and perennials to help display plants that are native to our region.

District personnel also participated in the following resource-related activities: PA Envirothon Board of Directors, the DG&LVR Quality Assurance Board, Mifflin County Farm Bureau Nominations Committee, Mifflin County Solid Waste Authority Advisory Committee, the Juniata Watershed Management Plan Update Committee, and Downtown Lewistown Inc.

The District welcomes opportunities to form partnerships with local agencies, organizations, and governments to further promote conservation, and ensure the protection of our natural resources for future generations.



MCCD staff (l to r): Floyd Ciccolini, June Morningstar, Mike Stuck, Trevor Weaver, Bailey Coder, Erica Smith, (Missing from photo: Cathy Yohn & Olivia Graham)

District Staff

District Manager:
Trevor Weaver

Administrative Assistant:
June Morningstar

Ag Conservation Technician:
Erica Smith

Ag Resource Conservation:
Mike Stuck

Resource Conservation:
Floyd Ciccolini

Watershed Specialist:
Bailey Coder

Resource and Agriculture
Conservationist:
Olivia Graham (March-Aug)

Part-time Secretary:
Cathy Yohn

Mifflin County Conservation District

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