



MIFFLIN COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

2020 Annual Report

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District Staff

District Manager:

Dan Dunmire/ Trevor Weaver

Administrative Assistant:

June Morningstar

Ag Conservation Technician:

Erica Smith

Ag Resource Conservation:

Mike Stuck

Resource Conservation:

Floyd Ciccolini

Watershed Specialist:

Trevor Weaver

Part-time Secretary:

Cathy Yohn

The Mifflin County Conservation District 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 provide the 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.

This year was a very different year for everyone. Despite the challenges of 2020, the MCCD continued to deliver on our commitments to local natural resource conservation. See all of the accomplishments and activities of 2020 in the next few pages of our 2020 Annual Report.

- Trevor Weaver, District Manager

Board of Directors:

Cathy Haughwout, Chair

David Glick, Vice Chair

Murray Laite, Treasurer

Keith Spicher

Raymond Snyder

Dave Filson

Commissioner Director

Mark Sunderland

Associate Directors

James Hostetter

Morgan Stimely

20 Windmill Hill #4
Burnham, PA 17009
(717) 248-4695 X 4
www.mifflinccd.com



MCCD staff (l to r): Cathy Yohn, Mike Stuck, June Morningstar, Dan Dunmire, Erica Smith, Floyd Ciccolini, and Trevor Weaver.

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.

Administration Changes

District Manager retires after 22 years!

Thank you to Dan Dunmire for his 22 years of dedicated service and leadership to Mifflin County! Dan was hired as the District Manager of the Mifflin County Conservation District in 1998, after serving as District Manager at the Juniata County Conservation District. Prior to working for the JCCD, Dan worked at Agway (Belleville, PA) and the family dairy farm in McVeytown, PA.

Dan saw many achievements in his time at the MCCD and championed many efforts in conservation that still benefit local residents and landowners today. Some major accomplishments include his persistence in local water quality improvements with the development of 319 Watershed Implementation Plans for two priority watersheds, which opened the door to millions of dollars of funding for restoration projects and best management practice installations. Dan also ensured the successful administration of the Farmland Preservation Program, which has preserved 26 farms to date totaling 2,838 acres in Mifflin County. Dan also encouraged an annual water quality monitoring program to track real water quality improvements and also helped to organize key community events such as educational field days, agricultural meetings, and several Juniata River cleanups!

In addition to his work at the District Dan serves on the Mifflin County Planning Commission, the Planning Commission Subdivision & Land Development Review Committee, and the Mifflin County Solid Waste Authority.

Dan retired in October of 2020. He currently is continuing to administer the Farmland Preservation program through June of 2021 and serves on the District's Personnel and Finance Committee. Thanks Dan!

Pictured: Dan Dunmire receives the NACD District Leader Award in 2005



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 a total of over \$1.1 million for funding, administering, and educational events related to dirt and gravel road

improvement projects in Mifflin County. The District has completed 34 projects involving six different townships, with total project and program costs totaling more than \$900,000, with an additional \$200,000 committed to pending projects. Through the District's Dirt and Gravel Roads Program, more than 24 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. To date, the District has received approximately \$388,000 for low volume road improvements. The District has completed a total of 10 projects and has committed over \$45,000 toward future projects. Projects are being completed in six different municipalities totaling over 3.4 miles of road length.



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 13 initial and 34 follow-up E&S plan reviews encompassing 195 project acres and 94 disturbed acres. Our staff performed 59 site inspections, responded to 276 requests for technical assistance and investigated 2 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 construction 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 or not 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 1 Individual and 0 General NPDES permits in Mifflin County in the last calendar year.

Watershed Assessment and Restoration

Upper Kish & Hungry Run Section 319 Grants

The District has focused on two priority watersheds for water quality improvement in Mifflin County through the EPA Section 319 Funding Program. These watersheds were identified as priority areas after the completion of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protections surface water assessment in 2001. 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 \$2.3 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 2020, the District received a grant to install 2 heavy use protection areas, streambank fencing, and 2 stabilized livestock crossings. Implementation is planned to start in the spring of 2021.

NFWF Chesapeake Bay Stewardship Fund Grant

The MCCD was awarded a \$175,000 grant in October of 2017 from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to continue vital stream and riparian restoration along with funding additional technical assistance and outreach for water quality improvement projects.

The District was given an extensions to continue this grant into 2020. High water levels in 2019 made scheduling and implementation of stream projects difficult to complete. The District completed several projects through this grant in 2020 implementing various stream related improvements. The District installed over 6 fish habitat enhancement structures, regraded and stabilized 250' feet of streambank, installed .5 acres of wet meadow restoration, and planted 2 acres of riparian forest buffer through this NFWF grant in 2020.



DCNR Multifunctional Riparian Buffer Grant

In 2017 the MCCD received a \$50,000 grant to install multifunctional riparian buffers throughout Mifflin County as part of a

renewed effort to increase riparian forest buffer adoption by the Pennsylvania DCNR. This buffer initiative focuses on riparian forest buffers that can produce alternative uses or income for landowners.

Examples of multifunctional buffers are tree crops (fruits, nuts, syrup), firewood, woody florals, or recreation.

The MCCD installed 9 additional acres of riparian forest buffer in 2020 through the DCNR grant. Five additional acres were planted at Kish Park in Derry Township and 1.2 acres of riparian buffer were planted at Brown Township parks along Honey Creek in the fall of 2020. Three additional acres were also planted at a property in Decatur Township. All of these plantings are expected to improve water quality, fish and wildlife habitat, and improve the aesthetics of local recreation places.

Riparian Buffer Management

In 2017, the MCCD received a \$25,000 grant to maintain and revive existing riparian forest buffers in Mifflin County. In 2019 this grant funded the installation of 2,000 feet of livestock exclusion fencing and 1 stream crossing. This grant also supported interns, purchased equipment, and contracted services to complete supplemental management of riparian buffers (mowing, trimming, mortality planting, etc.). In 2020, the District was able to continue assisting multiple landowners in maintaining over 25 acres of riparian forest buffers. This maintenance and management is vital to long term project success!

Surface Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Monitoring

In light of the extensive work the District and its partners have done in the Upper Kish & Hungry Run watersheds, the possibility of removing these waters from the 303(d) list of impaired waters is a distinct possibility in the future. The District has been sampling water quality in these watersheds since 2014 and was able to extend their current grant into 2020 to complete another year of sampling. Surface water assessments are conducted each year during the month of May and collect a snapshot of water quality conditions through biological, physical, and chemical data. Samples taken in May of 2020 showed water quality improvement across many sites, most notably in the Hungry Run watersheds. Improving waters data was submitted to the PA DEP for further consideration.

Chesapeake Bay Program

2020 marked the 31st 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 required Ag Erosion & Sediment Control (E&S) and Manure Management plans and are in compliance with relevant environmental regulations. The

District also assisted 15 farmers develop Manure Management Plans totaling 1007 acres and assisted 39 farmers with the development of Ag E & S plans totaling 1,479 acres.

Nutrient Management Program

2020 completed the 23rd year of the conservation district's delegated agreement with the State Conservation Commission to administer Pennsylvania's Nutrient Management Law (Act 38). 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.

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, USDA.

In order to be eligible, a farm must meet the following minimum criteria: (1.) be located within a duly 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 then 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 5,843 farms preserved in 59 counties totaling 594,457 acres for a purchase price of over \$ 1.5 billion. In Mifflin County, there are now 26 farms preserved totaling 2,838 acres at a cost of \$3,254,142.

Environmental Education

Even though 2020 sent us a curve ball, the District still completed a few outdoor education activities. MCCD staff completed a healthy streams presentation to the 3 year old and 4 year old preschool classes of the Juniata Valley YMCA. Due to the pandemic, the Pennsylvania Envirothon also did not happen in the traditional way. The 2020 Envirothon was held as a virtual mini competition for the entire state and gave out small prizes to contest winners.



In addition to outdoor education activities and the Envirothon the MCCD maintains a library of environmental education resources. The Enviroscape model is available for teachers and other educators to check out of our environmental lending library. The district also has an assortment of field guides, fact sheets, and other materials for

education purposes. If you would like more information about what is available in our library, please contact the District office.

Woodland Owners' Association

The Conservation District played a supporting role in the Mifflin-Juniata-Perry County Woodland Owners' Association, which was formed to provide education and a means of networking to owners of private forestland in Mifflin, Juniata and Perry counties. District staff, along with DCNR Bureau of Forestry service foresters Jeff Osborne and Luke Book, serve in an advisory role on the association's steering committee, which meets regularly to plan educational programs. Several public programs and field days were planned for 2020, covering topics such as maple syrup production and products, tree identification, and invasive plant management. Only one event was able to be held in 2020 due to the pandemic. M-J-P Woodland Owners association meetings and events are planned to continue in 2021.

Other District Activities in 2020

District personnel also participated in the following resource-related activities: the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD), PACD Legislative Committee, PACD Conservation Committee, the Chapter 102 Erosion & Sediment Control Advisory Committee, PA Cleanways of Mifflin County, the PA Envirothon Board of Directors, the PA Agroforestry Brain Trust, PA Riparian Forest Buffer Advisory Committee, the Mifflin County Planning Commission, the Planning Commission Subdivision & Land Development Review Committee, PSU Extension's Water 4 Ag workgroup, and the Mifflin County Solid Waste Authority. The District welcomes these 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.

