

Inside this Issue:

ECCD Hosts Rain Barrel Workshop	1
Who’s covering that program?	2
ACAP Program Updates	3
All Things Agriculture– Elk County Ag Day and Ag Bootcamp	4
Public Outreach at the Elk Expo and Elk County Fair	5
Learning to Survey and Measure Streams	6
DGLVR Updates	7-8
Education Days with the Youth Conservation Corps	9
Stream Improvements in the Middle Fork Watershed	10
Clarion River Cleanup	11
Acid Mine Drainage Updates	12-13
FM-120 & Weedville Tower	14
Directors and Staff	15

ECCD Hosts Rain Barrel Workshop



St. Marys, PA– On June 20th, the ECCD hosted a rain barrel workshop at the Elk County Community Recycling Center. There were 25 participants who attended the workshop. Stormwater, which is water that runs off of things such as your roof or a parking lot when it rains, was the focus of the workshop. Participants learned what stormwater is, how it impacts our waterways, and what homeowners can do to reduce their stormwater impacts. Each participant took home a rain barrel to install at their home.

Financial and other support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Who's covering that program?

With recent staffing changes some folks may find themselves wondering who is the correct contact for the various programs at the Elk County Conservation District .

Here is a list of staff, their program responsibilities, and contact info.

PAGE 2

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ACAP Program Updates

The Elk County Conservation District had great success in this years' ACAP application round.

ACAP, also known as the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program, is a grant that helps farmers implement conservation practices where needed on their farm. Elk County received dedicated funding for the ACAP program through the end of 2026. In the first funding round, ECCD was able to award \$200,000 worth of contracts. Elk County started accepting applications at the beginning of June, with all applications due by the end of August.



An example of a manure storage area.

The Elk County Conservation District Board of Directors approved funding for four applications, totaling \$200,000. Those applications included funding for spring developments, grassed waterways, grazing plans, heavy use areas, a manure storage area, and much more. The total cost of these projects is \$341,638.89. As you may notice, this is more than the \$200,000 ECCD was able to award.

Some of these projects are able to be completed through the help of EQUIP funding, which is a resource that provides funding and technical assistance to agricultural producers. ECCD's funded projects are located in Ridgway Township, Jones Township, Fox Township, and the City of St. Marys. Keep on the lookout for future updates on these projects!

The Elk County Conservation District is planning to have one more round of funding next year. If you or someone you know may be interested, please contact Alyson at ag-roads@elkconservationdistrict.com

All Things Agriculture– Elk County Ag Day and Ag Bootcamp

Ridgway, PA- The Elk County Conservation District was invited to attend Elk County Ag Day. Elk County Ag Day was held on June 3rd at Big Maple Farm. District staff were there educating the public on the spotted lanternfly and the upcoming round of ACAP applications. Kids participated in a game where they were encouraged to smash the spotted lanternfly to prevent the spread of the invasive insect!



Kids participating in the spotted lanternfly game

Lewisburg, PA- Alyson attended Agricultural Conservation Technical Boot Camp Training – Basic Level this fall. This training was put on by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (also known as NRCS), PACD, and Penn State Extension. Alyson attended a four day in- person training and three virtual days, where she learned about soils, plant identification, biosecurity, and much more.



Ag bootcamp attendees for the fall session. Alyson is standing in the far right of the picture.

Public Outreach at the Elk Expo and Elk County Fair

Benezette, PA- The Elk Expo is an annual event, which takes place in the heart of the Pennsylvania Wilds. During the event, folks from all over make their way to the Elk Country Visitor Center to browse the vendors and enjoy the views.

During the Expo, the District presented on the spotted lanternfly and the impacts the invasive insect has. Currently, 51 counties in Pennsylvania are within the quarantine zone. A county is placed in quarantine when evidence of a reproducing population (egg masses and groups of adults) is found.

People from across the region stopped by the table, asked questions and spoke about their experience battling the pest. Throughout the weekend, spotted lanternfly traps were handed out for people to monitor for the insect within Elk County.

Kersey, PA– The Elk County Fair occurs each year in August at the Elk County Fairgrounds. Food vendors, a petting zoo, carnival rides, and different businesses take part in the fair every year. Families from around the area come out and support the fair. Both events were very busy and provided great opportunities to connect with the public!



A calf found at the Elk County Fair



Above: ECCD staff connecting with an Elk Expo attendee



Left: ECCD set up at the Elk County Fair

Learning to Survey and Measure Streams

State College, PA- Alyson received her Stream Crossing Training Certification after attending four virtual and two field day trainings. This training is required through the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program. In May of 2022, the State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved a new policy to implement better ways to replace stream crossings in PA. As of July 1st, 2023, each county is required to have this certification in order to have stream crossing replacements funded in their county by the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program.

One of the biggest changes to this policy is changing bank-full width from 100% to 125%. What does that mean? It means bigger structures compared to previous requirements.

Alyson learned many skills including surveying a stream, stream stabilization, finding bank-full width of a stream, and more. She is required to get recertified every three years. She is looking forward to implementing her skills in Elk County with future projects.



Stream Crossing Replacement in the City of St. Marys

Cook Forest State Park- Back in June, staff members Micaela, Alyson, and Maddie attended the NRCS Survey Workshop. The workshop consisted of several stations that groups rotated through. Each station involved different equipment and parts of surveying that are commonly used.

Starting with the basics, staff learned how to count paces to estimate distances. From there, staff used a laser to line-up the survey rod from a distance. During this station, staff were able to calibrate the survey laser from their District and learn about the different types of lasers and how to calibrate them.

An optical level was the next stop, where participants learned how to properly read the survey rod and calibrate the lens to see the numbers at certain distances. After learning about the equipment, staff began the math part of the workshop. Various measurements were taken around outbuildings and distances and elevations were calculated.

To add to the challenge, participants headed to the stream, where measurements were taken from different parts of the stream, such as the banks and the stream bottom.



DGLVR Updates

The Elk County Conservation District has had a big focus on dirt roads this year. ECCD is projected to complete five Dirt and Gravel Road projects, with the largest project being on Jackson Road in the City of St. Marys. This road has had many contracts with ECCD including DSA placement, culvert pipe replacements, installation of culvert pipes, and even a stream crossing!



Jackson Road before project

DSA, also known as driving surface aggregate, is a “well-graded, unbound mixture of aggregate designed for use as a wearing course on unpaved roads,” according to the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies. Essentially this means DSA is a very specific mixture of various size materials with a



Jackson Road after DSA Placement



Medix Run Road before project

specific moisture content. DSA is designed to resist erosion and wear from road traffic, allowing road maintenance cycles to be reduced.



Medix Run Road after project

Another project completed this year through the DGLVR program was Medix Run Road in Benazette Township. The project included two culvert pipe replacements and the installation of one additional culvert pipe. Looking at the photos to the left, you will notice Medix Run Road is significantly higher than it was prior to the project occurring. Previously, the road was entrenched, meaning water was trapped within the road corridor. By raising the road profile, water can be shed off of the road and into the ditches. If the water cannot make its way into the ditches, erosion problems occur, causing maintenance headaches and sediment contributions to nearby streams.

Townships had until September 22nd to submit DGLVR applications for the fall round. ECCD received four applications- two dirt and gravel applications and two low volume road applications. All projects were approved for funding by the ECCD Board of Directors on September 25th. \$191,571.05 were awarded for these projects, with an in-kind contribution of \$47,407.80 by the townships. These projects include DSA placement, the installation of cross pipes to improve road drainage, a stream crossing replacement, and the replacement of a culvert pipe.

As mentioned, ECCD will be completing their first stream crossing replacement project under the new guidelines that were implemented July 1st, 2023. This project started with a survey of the stream completed by a member from the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies and Kate and Alyson from ECCD. Stay tuned for more updates on this project in future Elk Bugle issues!



Above: Surveying a future project



Be on the lookout for our signs! These will be placed on completed projects around the county.

Education Days with the Youth Conservation Corps



The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) groups out of the Marienville and Bradford ANF Ranger Districts joined the Conservation District for educational days this summer.

The goal of each field trip was to introduce the students to different career paths within the environmental field. Industry professionals gave insight on their work, what it entails, and how they entered their career field.

The first field day revolved around the forest and timber products industry and included a visit to Domtar and a field tour with LandVest.

During the Domtar tour, students learned about the role of wood in the paper industry, starting with the chips that are initially brought to the mill, the pulp, and the final product: paper.

After the Domtar tour, participants headed to the woods to meet with Mike Hovatter of LandVest.

Mike discussed what his career in forestry is like and talked about the timber market and what brings in revenue.

The second day was focused on water resources, where we visited East Branch Dam and the Saint Marys Municipal Water Authority. During the East Branch Dam Tour, Park Ranger Quinn talked about the history of the dam at their educational center and gave us a tour of the tower out on the water. From there, participants stopped at the Water Authority and toured the facility. Students were able to watch one of the tanks drain and refill, which occurs every 48 hours.

The last educational day began with a field day at Bendigo State Park. Water Conservation Officer Pieper quizzed the students on their knowledge of fish species, and talked about the challenges of his position. Participants wrapped the day up at doTerra Woodside Oils in Kane. Lindsay Novosel headed the tour, where they pulled the birch bark from a still and sampled some of the oils the company makes from around the world.



Stream Improvements in the Middle Fork Watershed

Jones Township— The Middle Fork East Branch Clarion River (Middle Fork) watershed is a high-quality coldwater fishery that contains populations of both brook and brown trout. Work began in the Middle Fork watershed back in 2017, starting with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) and the PA Game Commission (PGC). Initially, a Coldwater Conservation Plan was developed and published in 2020. This document outlines issues within the watershed and how to address them. Following the publishing of that report, the first phase of improvement projects began.

In the summer of 2020, the first habitat improvement projects were completed. These habitat improvements are in conjunction with aquatic organism passage projects PGC is completing. This was the beginning of a three year approach improve fish habitat in Middle Fork, while also stabilizing eroding streambanks along Middle Fork Road and Briggs Hollow Road.

During the summer of 2023, the final phase of stream habitat

improvement was completed. The primary goal of the stream habitat improvement this year was to install two rootwad deflectors, a mudsill, and large wood materials in the stream.

Over the course of the last three years, at least 19 projects have been completed in the watershed. These projects range from removing and installing culvert pipes and bridges, to installing habitat improvements such as mudsills, rootwads, and other large wood materials. These projects were funded by the Coldwater Heritage Partnership, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, and PGC. Materials and time were also donated by Seneca Resources.



In the photo above, a crew can be seen installing a mudsill earlier this summer.

Clarion River Cleanup

Ridgway, PA— On September 8th, the St. Marys Area Ecology Club set sail on the Clarion River for the Clarion River Cleanup. Sixteen students and three chaperones attended the event. Although rain was in the forecast, it turned out to be a beautiful day, with the sun even making its way through the clouds at the end! Along the way, the students also got to see a bald eagle flying over the Clarion River.

Not only does this event allow the students to get out and make a difference in the community, it is helpful for the environment as well. This year, the students collected 840 pounds of trash! A big thank you goes out to the Ecology Club for collecting the trash and the Pennsylvania Game Commission for hauling the trash to the landfill for us!

Turns out, this event was started in 1992. Over the years, some interesting objects have been collected. This year, the students found a bicycle, numerous tires, and an inflatable raft.



Acid Mine Drainage Updates

Here in Elk County, there are a lot of things happening with acid mine drainage. From monitoring discharges and existing systems to rehabilitating systems and working to install new systems, AMD is a hot topic at the District. Last year, a new source of funding opened strictly for acid mine drainage and abandoned mine land projects. This has been a game changer in allowing us to keep critical AMD systems functioning, while also giving us hope in the possibility of being able to treat some discharges that are currently untreated as well.

AMD Snapshot Day

Throughout the month of May, District staff and our local PA Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officers worked to sample ten acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment systems across the county. Every few years, ECCD partners with Stream Restoration Inc. to sample various AMD systems. The purpose of the sampling is to check up on the systems and to see if any maintenance is needed.



ECCD staff taking pH readings

This year, systems were sampled in Benezette



ECCD staff preparing to take flow measurements

Township, Jones Township, Horton Township, and Fox

Township. When these systems are sampled, field and lab measurements are taken. In the field, flow, pH, temperature, and alkalinity are sampled. Bottles are filled with the water and sent to analytical laboratories to get accurate metal concentration measurements.

Johnson Run AMD System Remediation

In 2022, ECCD was awarded a Growing Greener grant for \$138,702 to repair an AMD treatment system in Jones Township. The Johnson Run treatment system was installed in 2002, and worked very well for 20 years thanks to the landowners who completed basic routine maintenance practices on the system during that time. After looking at the system a little more closely, it was determined the system needed maintenance beyond what the landowners could provide. Tasks such as turning the limestone in the bottom of the pond, installing new compost in the pond, and removing unnecessary piping from the pond are currently underway. Once the work in the treatment pond is complete, a new intake structure will be installed, which will help keep the water flowing into the system without the worry of debris, such as leaves, building up. This project was also possible thanks to a grant from the Foundation for PA Watersheds. In the photo to the right, you can see the pond, which is normally full of water, is drained. The old compost is in a pile behind the rock truck, ready to be hauled to the disposal site where it will be seeded and mulched. The limestone, which is making up the bottom of the pond in the photo, will be turned and “fluffed” to ensure water can work its way down through and eventually out of the system.



Porcupine Hollow Lime Dosers



In Benazette Township, there are two active treatment systems known as lime dosers (photo left). These systems use hydrated lime to raise the pH of the stream, which allows metals, such as iron, to “drop out” of the water. These active treatment systems require significantly more maintenance than passive systems like Johnson Run above. A contractor checks on these systems three times a week! In addition, lime deliveries are necessary once a month. As a result, ECCD was recently awarded a \$418,507 grant from the AML/AMD grant program to maintain these systems for the next three years.

FM-120 & Weedville Tower

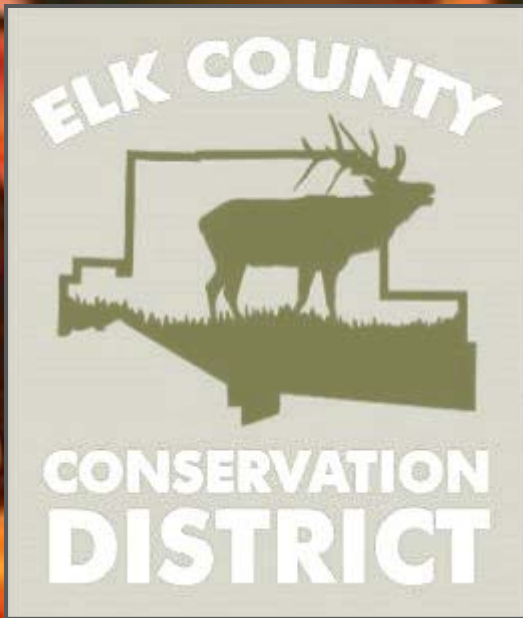
The National Fuel FM-120 Insertion project came full circle in 2023. Starting in 2022, the pipeline broke ground. Stretching across McKean, Elk, and Cameron County, the project goal was to replace 12.5 miles of an existing 12-inch diameter, 1950s vintage bare steel pipeline.

The new pipeline is a 6-inch diameter FlexSteel composite pipeline, which was inserted into the existing pipeline. This method significantly reduced the amount of excavation and earth disturbance needed to update the pipeline.

Have you noticed better cellular reception in the Weedville area? Thanks to the new cell tower off of Bennett's Valley Highway, the community is benefitting from better service in an area that lacked it for a long time.

RLS Towers began the project in 2020, and the site was finalized and closed in 2023. The overall impact of the project was just over two acres of earth disturbance, which included road access up to the tower.





Elk County Conservation District
Elk County Community Recycling Center

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Directors

Mike Hovatter- Chairman

Russ Braun- Vice-Chairman

Joe Dagher- Commissioner

Ray McMinn- Farmer Director

Andy Sorg- Farmer Director

Joe Labant- Public Director

Tom McMann- Public Director

Jerry Olson- Associate Director

Jim McCluskey- Associate Director

Chris Smith- Associate Director

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Alyson Bevacqua—Resource
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Maddie Stanisch—Resource Conservation
Technician

Micaela Lefever—Watershed Technician

David Stubber—Solid Waste Enforcement

Carole Johnson—Secretary



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Elk County (PA) Conservation District





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This webinar series will provide plain-language examples of how five Pennsylvania laws - the Agricultural Area Security Law; the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program; Clean & Green Taxation; Right to Farm Law; the Agriculture, Communities and Rural Environment (ACRE) law; and the Agritourism Activity Protection Act - can help you preserve and protect your farm's economic vitality and viability. Each of these very important laws contains legal protections that reduce risks and liabilities threatening your business plans and success. Join us to begin applying the potential benefits of these legal tools to reach your business goals in 2024 and beyond.

Co-sponsored by The University of Scranton SBDC, the PA SBDC Agriculture Center of Excellence, the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Business Development Center, and the Penn State Center for Agricultural and Shale Law, these two-90-minute educational sessions are designed to provide information to producers who may be contemplating using the provisions of Pennsylvania law to gain greater farm sustainability. It will equip you to evaluate if, and how, specific laws and programs might work as risk management steps on your farm.

Part 1: Ag Security Areas, Farmland Preservation, and Clean & Green

Monday, 11/6/23 | 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

[Register Here](#)

Part 2: Right to Farm, ACRE, and the Agritourism Activity Protection Act

Monday, 12/11/23 | 12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.

[Register Here](#)

CONTACT

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