



Elk Bugle

Volume 10 Issue 2 Summer 2022

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Northwest PACD Region will test new pilot invasive species program

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) was awarded a Landscape Scale Restoration Grant from the USDA Forest Service for a pilot PRISM program in Northwest PA. PRISM stands for Pennsylvania Regional Invasive Species Management.

The presence of invasive species is becoming more and more prevalent across PA. These invasive species are not native to the area and by having no natural predators are able to outcompete native species and take over. The presence of invasive species poses a threat to Pennsylvania's economy, natural resources, and quality of life.

The PRISM program allots funding for the removal and treatment of invasive species, as well as, educational programming to teach the public and businesses about this threat. PRISMs such as this have been implemented in other states for years with great success. We hope that the implementation of this program in Pennsylvania will help us reclaim the wild areas of our state and keep invasive species at bay!



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.

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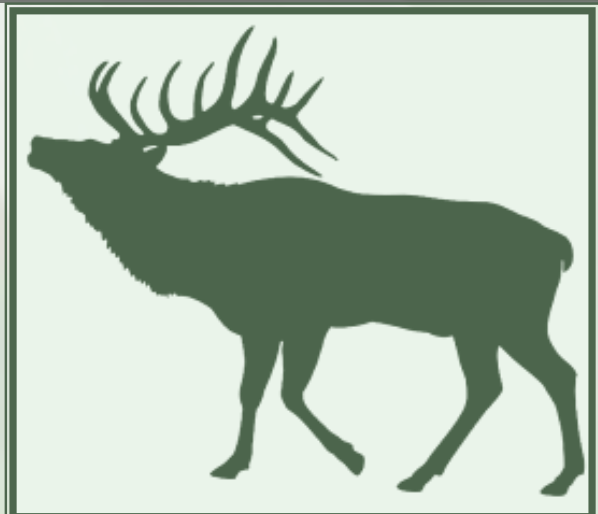
Resource Conservation Technician

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program, Agriculture Activities
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Victoria Challingsworth

Resource Conservation Technician

Environmental Education, West Creek Wetland Learning Center Activities, Pollinator Programs, Chapter 105 Stream and Wetland Permitting
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HAPPY RETIREMENT, TO A DEAR FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE

St. Marys, PA— Retirement, something we all look forward to one day. Well, that day has come for Officer Tom McMann. Serving as Elk County’s Fish and Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer for over 17 yrs, Tom’s retirement this spring was bittersweet. An amazing asset to Elk County, Tom has been both a friend of the District and a valued colleague.

Over the years Tom has assisted us with everything from education programs to enforcement. He’s been running the aquatics station at the county Envirothon competition for as long as we can remember and the students will surely miss seeing him there.

After years of service we can think of no one who deserves an amazing retirement more than him, but he will certainly be missed. Though we still fully expect him to visit us at the office from time to time!



Above: Tom and his grandchildren slice the cake at his surprise retirement party

Below: Tom, District staff and other cooperating agencies gather for a picture after the 2022 Senior Envirothon



2022 Senior Envirothon

Current Environmental Issue: Waste To Resources

April 28, 2022-

Three schools, with a total of 45 students, participated in the Elk County Senior Envirothon Competition which was held at the St. Marys Sportsmen's Club. These schools were St. Marys Area High School, Elk County Catholic, and Ridgway Area High School. The students were tested on aquatics, forestry, soils, and wildlife topics. The students were also tested on an environmental issues category, which is changed yearly. This year's current issue topic was "Waste to Resources." This topic allowed students to explore information on landfills and recycling, which are two things that are present here in Elk County! A Study Day was held April 26th at the Elk Country Visitor Center, where local industry professionals instructed students on the topics mentioned above.

St. Marys-1 won the county competition, moving on to represent the county in the 38th annual state event. The group of young men representing Elk county at the state competition have won the county competition since they were freshmen. At the State Competition, they placed 11th out of 62 teams.

Congratulations!



Elk County Envirothon First Place Team— St. Marys 1

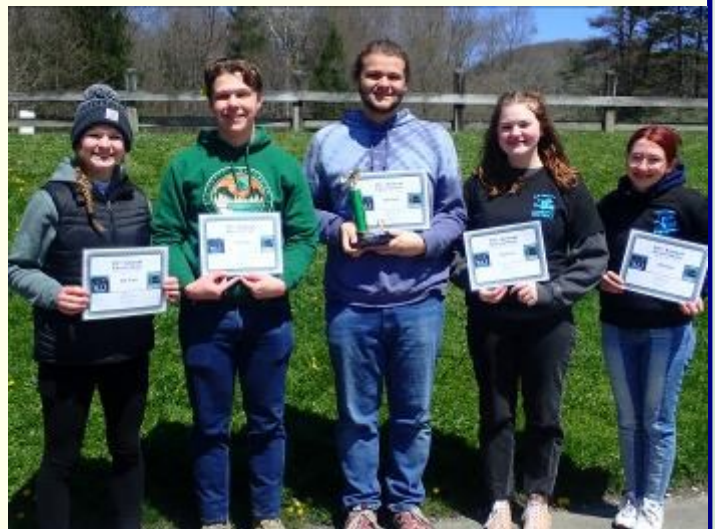
1st Place Team: St. Marys 1 (SMAHS)



Caleb Mattiuz, Zack Mosier,
Andy DePrater, Luke Gutowski
and Collin Kline

2nd Place Team: St. Marys 2 (SMAHS)

KJ Ramsey, Jenna D' Amore,
Matthew Wehler, Rosa DePrater and Caitlin Blessel



Elk County Envirothon Second Place Team— St. Marys 2



Students learn about this year's current issue (top left), soils (top right), forestry (right) and aquatics (below) at Envirothon Study Day.



Thank you to everyone who helped to support this year's Envirothon!



2022 Jr. Envirothon

Bendigo State Park— On May 10th students from Elk County schools met to challenge one another during the Junior Envirothon Competition. This local competition was created by the Elk County Conservation District to help prepare students in grades 6-8 for the Senior Envirothon completion which they can participate in during high School.

This year Junior Envirothon students were tested on the topics of Aquatics, Forestry, Wildlife, and the current issue, Waste to Resources.

Overall, 29 students from St. Marys Area Middle School and Elk County Catholic Middle school participated in the event. Team Fruit Salad from SMA Middle school took first place, winning by one point in a tie breaker! Second place was awarded to team Lorax, also from SMA Middle School.



Congratulations to our winning teams!



Above: (1) Students work hard to complete an envirothon exam

(2)After the competition, AHUG representative Jody Groshek, provides a lesson on Forestry.

Left: Participating students and staff gather for a picture along the banks of the East Branch of the Clarion River.



Forestry Days for Districts



Elk County, PA—Districts from across the region came to Elk County on June 28th for Forestry Days! Staff from Elk, Cameron, Potter, Armstrong, and Jefferson Counties participated in the day's activities. With representatives from LandVest as our guide, the group toured several types of logging operations and discussed the various harvesting methods being implemented.

Over the course of the day, topics such as haul road installation, site access, stream crossing requirements and tree identification were discussed. Partnerships and educational opportunities such as this are so valuable to Districts. Especially for Districts in areas such as ours, which are heavily forested and see a large number of timber harvest sites.

Knowing how to work with loggers and understanding how the harvest is laid out makes it easier for everyone to work together seamlessly.



Thanks to all the District staff who made the drive up to Elk County and
Thank You to LandVest for showing us around your harvest sites!



West Creek Wetland Learning Center Worknight

St. Marys, PA—A crew of staff, board members, and volunteers put in the work at the West Creek Wetlands! On May 11th, the group gathered for Wetland Work Night to kick off the summer season at the West Creek Wetland Learning Center on West Creek Road in St Marys.

The group hung 5 new bird houses donated by local Girl Scout Troop 36887. They also collected several bags of trash from along the walking trail and driveway and installed butterfly houses in the pollinator gardens.

While all that was happening, volunteers spruced up the parking lot gravel, weed-whacked and mowed the trail, and cut back brush which had grown in along the trail.

The 1/4 mile walking trail is ready for the summer guests who will enjoy this beautiful place to walk and picnic.



Above: Volunteers hang new bird houses along the trail to increase habitat
Below: Volunteers weed-whack high weeds starting to grow up around the trail edges.



Increasing habitat at the wetlands!

Along with all the other wonderful work that was completed during wetland work night, we also installed new habitat structures! We installed new bird boxes and butterfly houses.



These were placed in or near the pollinator gardens we planted in 2020 to increase the available habitat at the wetland learning center!

We're excited to see what kind of new birds and insects will make use of these homes!



Planting Trees- an Effort to Reclaim Abandoned Mine Lands

Force, PA– Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) staff, Elk County Conservation District staff, and volunteers worked to plant hundreds of trees at WPC's Cherry Run Mine Reclamation project. Tree and shrub species were planted on coal refuse material. A variety of species were planted as part of this project, such as dogwood, willows, and hemlock. Planting these trees and shrubs provides many benefits to the area. These trees will help to reduce erosion, create wildlife habitat, and increase biodiversity.



TAKING THE CLASSROOM OUTDOORS!

St. Marys, PA– On May 11th, the Advanced Biology class at St. Marys Area High School got some hands-on experience collecting macroinvertebrates and conducting water chemistry tests on Iron Run, which runs through the school property. You might be wondering, “what are macroinvertebrates?” According to *Aquatic Macroinvertebrates*, an article written by Utah State University, “aquatic” means water, “macro” means big enough to see without a microscope, and “invertebrate” means without a backbone. This means that macroinvertebrates are bugs that live in the water that are big enough to see with our eyes.

The students collected macroinvertebrates using nets. The nets are placed on the bottom of the stream. Someone stands upstream of the net and kicks the rocks on the bottom of the stream, allowing the macroinvertebrates to float into the nets. The nets were then emptied into trays, where the students sorted the macroinvertebrates by species. The students then tallied how many of each species were present, which gives us a good insight into water quality. The students compared the macroinvertebrates from Iron Run to a sample collected from Bendigo Run, which helped us to determine which stream we would expect to be healthier.



Sometimes, the best classrooms don't always have four walls!

DEP HOSTS CHAPTER 102/105 BASIC TRAINING

Harrisburg, PA— In early May of 2022 the Elk County Conservation District sent Resource Conservation Technicians, Maddie Stanisch and Victoria Challingsworth, to statewide 102/105 Basic Training. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in conjunction with Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts hosted this training which was designed for new staff. The training provided an introduction to regulations, overview of paperwork and forms, as well as information on conducting inspections and completing inspection reports.



Above; Maddie and Victoria representing Elk County at training

PA Dep provides the Clean Water Academy as an online, virtual option for reference and training, which is invaluable, but staff were excited to participate in an in-person training. This was the first in-person training of this type to be offered since Covid-19.

While at training, attendees were able to tour a large construction site, with over 50 acres of disturbance, and learn what erosion and sediment controls should typically be installed and what to look for when conducting an inspection on such a large area. Elk County Conservation Staff were raving about how valuable this training was when they came back and are excited to put what they learned to use here in Elk County!



Above: Participants tour a large construction site. The slopes were freshly hydro-seeded, making the area look otherworldly.

DGLVR UPDATE- QAQC

Every three years the Elk County DGLVR program has a QAQC (Quality Assurance/ Quality Control) visit from members of the SCC and Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads. The QAQC looks at the entirety of the program from financial tracking to project implementation. The SCC and the Center both have standards each program in the state must follow, and it is the QAQCs job to report on how well each county is doing adhering to those standards.

Financial records and book keeping methods were provided to the QAQC members before we visited a few predetermined project sites. We visited the Church Run stream crossing project pictured below (Millstone Twp), Gardner Hill storm water improvement project (Fox Twp), Big Run Rd Bridge (PGC), and Hunter Creek stream crossing replacement project (Highland Twp). Although the official report wont be released for a month or two, it was an expressed mutual feeling between the Elk County staff and QAQC members that the visit went really well.



Yeah, We Recycle That!

People are always amazed to find what a large and diverse number of items the **Elk County Community Recycling Center** takes for recycling. With such a wide variety, aside from the traditionally thought of plastics and aluminum, we want to feature an item each edition to educate our community about all the incredible services available to them!

2022 Household Hazardous Waste Collection

It's the 20th Year!

The Elk County Community Recycling Center has been providing this amazing service for 20 years now! On **Saturday August 27th** bring your Household Hazardous Waste to the Elk County Community Recycling Center from **9am-12pm** for disposal. The collection is free but donations are always appreciated and help make this service possible.

What to Bring:

Wood and Metal Finishing Products
Drain Cleaners
Mercury Thermometers
Pool Chemicals
Herbicides
Anti-Freeze
Water Sealers
Deck Stains



What **NOT** to Bring:

Explosives
Radioactive Materials
Ammunitions
Tires
Latex Paints
Appliances
Medical Wastes
Commercial Wastes



Monday: 10-2

The **Elk County Community Recycling Center** is located at:

850 Washington Street

St. Marys 15857

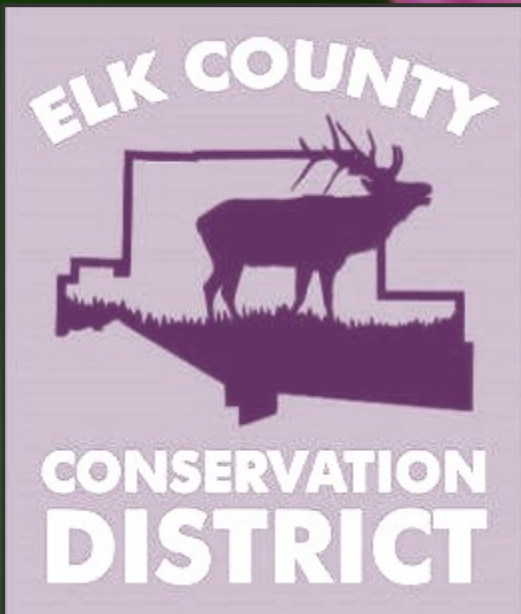
Ph.: (814) 776-5373

Hours of Operation:

Wednesday: 12-7



Friday: 10-2



Elk County Conservation District
Elk County Community Recycling Center

850 Washington Street

Saint Marys, PA 15857

(814) 776-5373

Directors

Russ Braun- Chairman

Mike Hovatter- Vice-Chairman

Joe Dagher- Commissioner

Ray McMinn- Farmer Director

Andy Sorg- Farmer Director

Joe Labant- Public Director

Chris Smith— Public Director

Jerry Olson— Associate Director

Jim McCluskey- Associate Director

Staff

Kate Wehler, CPESC —District Manager

Ryan Grimm—Resource Conservation
Technician

Maddie Stanisch—Resource Conservation
Technician

Victoria Challingsworth—Resource
Conservation Technician

Micaela Lefever—Watershed Technician

David Stubber—Solid Waste Enforcement

Carole Johnson— Administrative Assis-
tant



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Elk County (PA) Conservation District



3RD ANNUAL
**CONSERVATION
CUP**

July 30th

**BAVARIAN HILLS
GOLF COURSE**

4 PERSON SCRAMBLE

\$70 :NONMEMBER

 **\$50 :MEMBER**

REGISTER BY JULY 22 TO GUARANTEE MEAL AFTERWARD

REGISTRATION: 8:00 AM
SHOTGUN START: 9:00 AM

CASH PAYOUT, SKILL PRIZES,
50/50, AND RAFFLE ITEMS

MAIL REGISTRATION TO

**850 WASHINGTON ST
ST MARYS PA 15857**

EMAIL REGISTRATION TO

RGRIMM@COUNTYOFELKPA.COM

814-776-5388

All proceeds benefit Elk County Conservation District Scholarship and environmental education

Elk County Conservation District Arrows For Education

What: 3D Archery Shoot

When: Sunday July 24th, 2022

Registration will be from 7am-2pm.

Shooters may enter the course after registering.

No pre-registration required.

Where: Fox Township Sportsman's Club

203 Ridge Rd, Kersey, PA 15846

Cost: \$15 per round

- All Ages Welcome (children under 12 shoot for free)
- Prizes for Top Youth, Women, and Male Shooter
- Novelty Shots, with the chance to win prizes!

Breakfast, lunch, and refreshments will be sold.

All proceeds help fund the Elk County Envirothon Competition. The Envirothon is offered to all High School and Middle Schools in Elk County.

Questions? Contact Victoria Challingsworth at
vchallingsworth@countyofelkpa.com or (814) 776-5373

