

## 2018 Annual Report

### Awards & Recognition In 2018

Long-time District Board member, Dave Mankamy, left, receives the Mayfly Award for outstanding achievements in abandoned mine drainage (AMD) abatement from Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation Regional Coordinator, Andy McAllister.



District Manager, Len Lichvar, receives a framed print from Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director, John Arway, commemorating Len's 12 years of volunteer service as a state-appointed official serving as the District 4 Commissioner for the Commission.

District Manager, Len Lichvar, left, and District Board Chairman, Roger Latuch, accept the U.S. Department of Interior's Environmental Service Award for the District's long-term successful water quality improvement projects in the Lamberts Run watershed.



District Chairman, Roger Latuch, left, presents Mike Holbay, Farm Service Agency, with a plaque from the District recognizing over two decades of service to the Farm Service Agency and Somerset County. Mike retired in July.

## 2018 Board Members

**Chairman, Roger Latuch**  
**Vice Chairman, Marlin Sherbine**  
**Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand**  
**Commissioner, John Vatavuk**  
**Shawn Saylor**  
**David Mankamyer**  
**Kurt Walker**  
**Sue Saylor**  
**James Ringler**



**Left to Right: James Ringler, Kurt Walker, John Vatavuk, Roger Latuch, Sue Saylor, Shawn Saylor, and Bud Weyand**  
**Absent: David Mankamyer and Marlin Sherbine**

### 2018 Associate Board Members

Jack Tressler, Gary Wetterberg, Greg Elliott, Richard Berkley, Tom Croner, Meade and Mari Meyers

## Remembering John Vatavuk



Somerset County Commissioner and District Board member, John Vatavuk, passed away in early 2019. Among John's many public service endeavors were resource conservation efforts. John served on the board of the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project and was a driving force behind recycling initiatives.

## District Staff

### Len Lichvar

Len Lichvar, District Manager, manages & oversees nine professional staff members of the District. 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 to have a knowledge of all District projects and programs to assist with and be responsible for their timely completion and success.



### Phil Gardner, Danielle Kalp & Phil Wilson



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 office is overseen by Danielle Kalp, Professional Engineer. The Conservation Technicians include Phil Gardner, part-time and Phil Wilson, full-time. The engineering assistance provided 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.



# District Staff



## **Susan Moon**

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. She is responsible for the accounts receivable and payable, processing payroll, submitting withholdings timely, preparing program/project quarterly reimbursement requests. Susan attends and represents the District at local, regional, state, and national meetings. She assists with grant writing and grant budget assistance. She also administers the Somerset County Farmland Preservation Program.



## **Don Williams**

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 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 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 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 Steele is the Conservation Districts 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 in any duties asked.



# Education

## **Rockwood Wins 2018 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 28th Somerset County Envirothon at Laurel Hill State Park. The day-long event is an outdoor, environmental-education competition testing students' knowledge in five general areas: soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and a current environmental issue. Rockwood High School, Team No. 1, captured first place for the 24th time in 28 years. Meyersdale, Team #2, placed second, and Meyersdale Team 1, placed third. There were 7 schools that attended.

The District was assisted in operating the event by Laurel Hill State Park, the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, and the PA Game Commission.

The event was sponsored by Jenner Rod & Gun Club, Sheetz, Fraternal Order of Eagles, EADS, and the Somerset County Sportsmens League.

The PA Game Commission brought in two nuisance bears trapped the night before & the students were able to watch the processing procedure along with helping the PA Fish Commission stock fish.

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

## **Pennsylvania Trout In the Classroom (TIC)**

Greg Shustrick and Aimee Steele assisted Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited with its Trout-in-the-Classroom (TIC) program. Greg and Aimee also participated in the coldwater conservation events and programs with students from participating TIC schools.



**Missy Reckner helps students search for macro invertebrates during a TIC education program.**



***The 2018 Envirothon first place team, Rockwood from left, front: Andy Hay, Josh Knepper Alex Carr, Noah Brougher, & Tyler Hoyman. Second place, Meyersdale: Kyle Sigler, Tim Kretchman, Kahylee Shaffer, Tristan Donica, & Allyssa Long. Third place, Meyersdale: Shana Thomas, Caitie Miller, Calista Shafer, Riley Whitfield, & William Decker.***

Pennsylvania Trout-in-the Classroom is an interdisciplinary program in which students in grades 3-12 learn about coldwater conservation while raising brook trout from eggs to fingerlings in a classroom aquarium. During the year, each teacher tailors the program to fit his or her curricular needs. Therefore, each program is unique. TIC has applications in environment and ecology, science, mathematics, social studies, language and fine arts, and physical education. All classrooms end the year by releasing their trout into a state-approved waterway.

Pennsylvania's statewide TIC program is made possible through a unique partnership between Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (PATU) and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC). This partnership provides curriculum resources, workshops for teachers and program partners, technical support, brook trout eggs and food, and grants.





## **Cooperative Intern Program**

The District's Cooperative Intern Program had another successful year in 2018. Pitt-Johnstown senior, Shane Supanick, pictured on left, served as the summer intern for both the District and the Somerset County Conservancy. Shane's efforts and enthusiasm enabled both the District and the Conservancy to achieve more project goals than would have otherwise been possible.

If you would be interested in working the cooperative intern program, contact the District at 814-445-4652.

*Shane Supanick*

## **PA One Stop Workshop**

On Thursday, March 8, 2018, Somerset CD hosted an Agricultural Erosion & Sediment Control Plan (Ag E&S Plan) Workshop.

The purpose of this workshop is to instruct farm operators on the PA-One-Stop mapping system. The first part of the workshop teaches producers to use the system to create a map of their farm. The second part utilizes this map, takes into account crop rotations and tillage practices, and calculates soil loss on cropland. The program generates an Ag E&S Plan that helps farmers to keep soil loss below tolerable levels.

One Somerset County farm operator attended this event. Bob Neiderer, Penn State Extension, was the instructor for this training. The PA-One-Stop program is continuously being upgraded and there is no cost to use it.



*Don Williams, Bob Neiderer, and Kurt Walker review an AG E&S plan.*

## **Manure Hauler & Broker Meeting**



*Robb Meinen of Penn State explains safety issues associated with manure pumping and application.*

On Tuesday, January 30, 2018, Somerset CD 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 16 haulers, farmers, and agency personnel attended this event. Robb Meinen, Penn State Dept. of Animal Science, was the instructor for this training which focused on manure gas safety, record keeping, soil health, and included a survey of the Manure Hauling industry.

## **Berlin Brothersvalley Community Fair**

The Somerset Conservation District set up a display at the annual Berlin Brothersvalley Community Fair. The community fair is held in the Berlin Brothersvalley School gymnasium and is packed full of displays of canned goods, fresh flowers, fruits, and vegetables along with several business displays. The event is always well attended.



## **Soil Health Workshop**

On Tuesday, March 20, 2018, Somerset CD assisted Penn State Extension with conducting a Soil Health Workshop in Somerset.

This workshop focused on soil quality, no-till equipment, cover crops, and planting green. Approximately 25 farm operators attended this event. Dr. Sjoerd Duiker, Penn State University, and Zach Larson, Penn State Extension, were the instructors for this meeting. Don Williams, Somerset Conservation District gave a presentation on how Manure Management Plans relate to soil health.

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 the end of 2018, 46 Somerset County farm operations have approved nutrient plans which encompass over 23,000 acres.

Beginning in October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. In 2018, Somerset Conservation District assisted 10 farms with obtaining or updating NBS which include over 1100 acres. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted 171 county farms with development of NBS which include over 24,700 acres.

## **Solar Energy**

Long time District Board member, Dave Mankamy, spearheaded an effort in fostering the development of solar energy in 2017. In 2018, the District investigated solar power opportunities that could lead to more sustainable and cleaner energy sources in Somerset County. Renewable energy is the future of energy development as well as employment and the District believes it could assist methods to foster that advancement in Somerset County.

## **Voice of Ag**

The Voice of Ag Workgroup focused on the maintenance of tile drains issue. The workgroup completed a draft guidance document on the subject and met with the PA Department of Environmental Protection to discuss the content. No clear-cut outcome of those discussions forced the workgroup to not proceed any further with the draft proposal at this time or until additional clarifications are determined.

## **Return On Environment Project**

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highlands Landscape Initiative, that the District is part of, secured funding to produce a report and create a document that will place a dollar value and demonstrate economic impacts from natural resource conservation efforts, clean water and improved land resources. District Manager, Len Lichvar, serves on the steering committee that is overseeing this much-needed economic justification for natural resource conservation in the Laurel Highlands.

Key-Log Economics was chosen to create the report and has assimilated large volumes of data to produce a draft document. Public meetings for additional citizen and stakeholder input will take place in 2019 and a final document will be completed by the end of the next year.

# Water Quality

## Soap Hollow Run Project

Soap Hollow Run is a Class A wild brown trout stream that flows into the Stonycreek River at Greenhouse Park in Conemaugh Township Somerset County. The District, along with a young professional organization in Johnstown, identified a potential project on the stream several years ago. The stream was inundated with Japanese knotweed and fish habitat was lacking.

The District took the project to the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU) for support and assistance. District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, successfully secured a National Trout Unlimited Embrace – A- Stream grant and MLTU also committed funds from the chapter. The Johnstown Vision 2025 Initiative also contributed some funding. Greg also submitted a PA Council of Trout Unlimited Project Wild grant for yet additional funding.

Over the last two years the District, in cooperation with Natural Biodiversity and with assistance from the Conemaugh Township Supervisors and volunteers, cut and sprayed the knotweed that has drastically reduced its impact. The District also designed the stream improvement project and native vegetation riparian planting, but because of high water levels the project was postponed in 2018 and will be implemented in 2019.



*Soap Hollow Run Project site at Greenhouse Park*

## Somerset Lake Action Committee

The Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) continues to move forward with a better future of Somerset Lake and the Somerset Lake Nature Park. In 2018 the District contributed to the effort through its Dirt and Gravel Road Program that funded a much-needed resurfacing of Wood Duck Road, which is the primary access to the lake and Nature Park.

In addition, in cooperation with the County Parks and Recreation Board and the Somerset County Commissioners, along with grant funds from PA DCNR, the North Parking Lot on the lake was resurfaced and improved. A final design for a pavilion at the site was also initiated and construction is set for early 2019. Planning and design for a walking trail initially around a portion of the lake is also underway.

SLAC also secured grant funds for fish habitat structures and enhancements for Somerset Lake. The PA Fish and Boat Commission is formulating a fish habitat and management plan for the lake while the lake is drawn down as well as for continuation of installation of fish habitat structures after the lake is refilled. Reconstruction of the dam breast and spillway is set to begin in 2019.



*The reconstruction of the North parking lot is one of the first visitor improvements to the Somerset Lake Nature Park with more to come*



*The creation of Somerset Lake Nature Park is a positive step forward generated by SLAC in cooperation with the County of Somerset and the PA Fish & Boat Commission*



## **Oven Run Rehab Project**

The Oven Run Passive AMD Treatment System Rehabilitation Project saw progress in 2018. Oven Run Site E was 95% completed by the end of 2018 and the long-time troublesome water intake at Oven Run Site A was completely reconstructed.

The result is that Site E will be able treat twice as much water as in the past. The pH level of the water exiting the system is now nearly 8 as opposed to 6 in the past.

Water is also now continually reaching the Site A system which was a major issue with the system in the past.

Oven Run Site D, Oaks Trail, and Oven Run Site F, Hawk View, will be addressed in some capacity with remaining funds in 2019. The extent to which these systems will be upgraded and rehabbed will be contingent on how far the remaining PA DEP grant funds allow.

The District created the Combined Board Initiative that is a partnership of District Staff, District Directors, and Board members of the Somerset County Conservancy to pursue additional funds for the complete rehab of Oven Run as well as a trust fund for long-term sustainability of the systems around the County.



***Stone washing at Oven Run Site E***



***Clogged limestone being removed and replaced at Oven Run Site E***

## **Lamberts Run**

The District submitted a PA DEP Growing Grant request for a Phase 2 Lamberts Run AMD treatment project. The \$551,391.00 grant was approved in 2018. The District will now embark on implementing the project that will complement the District's already constructed Anoxic Limestone Drain treatment system that was completed near the village of Lambertsville in 2014.

The District's involvement in AMD abatement in the Lamberts Run watershed dates back almost 30 years. The District has worked in partnership with the federal Office of Surface Mining, PA DEP, Somerset County Conservancy, the Flight 93 Memorial, and landowners over the decades to reverse the major water quality impairments in Lamberts Run and negative impacts it has historically had on the Stonycreek River.

The Lamberts Run Phase 2 project will effectively restore the 1.3 miles of Lamberts Run before its confluence with the Stonycreek River. The project will essentially complete the restoration of Lamberts Run to the largest degree possible in conjunction with the PA DEP pump and treat system at the headwaters and the Hinemeyer and Somerset County Conservancy's treatment systems further downstream.

The District had previously secured a National Trout Unlimited Technical Assistance Grant that enabled Hedin Environmental to create a conceptual plan for the project that was an essential component of the project to secure the grant funding.

The project permitting and final design will begin in 2019 and it may take two years to complete the project.



## **Hawk View Upland Restoration Project**

In late 2017, the PA DEP awarded the District a federal AML funded Growing Greener Grant for the Hawk View Upland Restoration Project. The grant submitted by District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, outlines a plan to improve the land at one of the Oven Run AMD passive treatment sites. This site, over the years, has evolved on its own into a marginal area that harbors deer, turkey, and other game and non-game species. The location is owned by the Somerset County Conservancy and is open to public access.

However, due to the poor soil quality of the former industrial coal cleaning site, the current land conditions limit its ability to grow quality vegetation to support a diverse wildlife population.

This project is in cooperation with the Conservancy, Somerset County Pheasants Forever, and the PA Game Commission. The project scope of work involves importing soil, adding soil amendments, and planting a variety of native wildflowers, grasses, and shrubs to create a multifaceted habitat landscape. This project will increase wildlife habitat and reduce runoff into the Stonycreek River and is expected to be completed by the fall of 2019.

## **Shaw Mines Study**

The District, in cooperation with the Casselman River Watershed Association (CRWA), have put together an effort to reduce abandoned mine drainage (AMD) still impacting the Casselman River near Meyersdale. The history for the Shaw Mines complex is long and involved. Currently iron staining still occurs in the Casselman coming from this abandoned mine source. Heritage Coal also holds an active mining permit in this same area as well.

The District, in order to determine what type of effort and project could be implemented to reduce the AMD impacts, contracted with Hedin Environmental to conduct an analysis of the complex and make recommendations for methods to reduce the AMD impacts. The cost to cover the study were acquired from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Mountain Watershed Association, Somerset County Sportsmen's League, CRWA, Somerset County, and the Somerset Conservation District.

The completed study outlined several potential methods of reducing the AMD. The District and the CRWA are currently working in cooperation with PA DEP and Heritage Coal in regard to the feasibility of constructing and funding one of the abatement methods detailed in the study.

## **Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat**

The District sponsored Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat project saw 40 more fish structures built and placed in the Quemahoning Reservoir in 2018. The project, initiated in 2006, has been instrumental in improving the recreational fishery in the public accessible lake.

The PA Fish and Boat Commission's Bureau of Habitat Management Lake Division designs and oversees the construction and placement of the structures. The Cambria-Somerset Authority provides support and Shaffer Block of Somerset provides material for the project. Volunteers from the District, Somerset County Sportsmen's League, Jenner Rod and Gun Club, Met Life and the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) provide the hands-on work to construct the structures.



***Volunteers construct fish habitat structures***

## Agricultural Programs

### 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 the end of 2018, 46 Somerset County farm operations have approved nutrient plans which encompass over 23,000 acres.



*Vegetative buffers such as this one, help to reduce the amount of sediment and nutrients that reach surface waters.*

Beginning in October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. In 2018, Somerset Conservation District assisted 10 farms with obtaining or updating NBS which include over 1100 acres. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted 171 county farms with development of NBS which include over 24,700 acres.

### Project Grass

This program promotes conservation through proper pasture management. The District supports the Southwest Project Grass Chapter to achieve its goals of improving the economic position of local farmers, increase production, energy efficiency, and utilization of resources while improving soil and water quality. Don Williams, SCD, serves on the Project Grass Executive Committee.



### Farmland Preservation Program

The District administers the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Easement Purchase Program (ALPEPP). 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 12 easements perpetually preserving 1,618 acres in Somerset County.

## Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Prevention

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 2018:

- E&SPC BMP's/controls were applied to 287 disturbed acres
- 11 stand-alone E&SPC plans processed, reviewed and approved
- 12 General & 1 Individual NPDES/PCSM construction permits/E&SPC plans processed & approved
- 30 earth disturbance assessments/inspections conducted
- 86 Ch. 102 E&SPC/NPDES/Ch. 105 technical & informational assists provided
- handled & processed 6 citizen complaints



## 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 2017-2018 allocations to Somerset County were \$305,096 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$191,876 for Low Volume Roads. The proposed 2018-2019 allocations for Somerset County have decreased by about \$ 13,000 for each program.

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 Marlin Sherbine, Somerset Conservation Board member, Dave Steele, NRCS, and Dan McGuire, 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 2018, to review and recommend project requests to the Somerset Conservation Board for funding, and to review and approve project amendments and final project payments.

2017-2018 projects that were funded, started and/or completed are:

### Dirt & Gravel Road projects :

Swamp Hollow Road, Phase III, Stonycreek Township

Birdman Road, Phase III, Quemahoning Township

Shaffer Run Road, Jefferson Township

Albright Road, Greenville Township

Carolus Road, Black Township

Application of  
Emulsion &  
Chip Surface on  
Wood Duck Road  
at the Somerset  
Lake Nature Park



### Low Volume Road projects :

Carter Hill Road, Northampton Township

Tunnel Road, Allegheny Township

Baer Ridge Road, Lincoln Township

Yoder Road, Summit Township

Old Mill Road, Brothersvalley Township

The QAB approved five (5) Dirt & Gravel Road projects and six (6) Low Volume Road projects to be funded for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

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](http://www.dirtandgravel.psu.edu).



Rip-rap outlet of 18" cross pipe  
at Shaffer Run Road, Jefferson  
Township

Assembly of plated arch pipe  
on Birdman Road Phase II,  
Quemahoning Township



## Public Relations

The *Daily American*, the *Tribune Democrat*, the *Meyersdale Republic*, local radio stations, and *WJAC-TV* published news stories on District projects and activities in 2018. The 2017 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 state wide 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](http://www.somersetcd.com).

**Facebook**—You can find and “like” the Somerset Conservation District on Facebook.

**Laurel Highlands Landscape Initiative** – The Landscape Initiative is a consortium of organizations, agencies, non-profits, and other stakeholders in the Laurel Highlands region. This organization has set specific agendas on crucial natural resource and economic topics to assist all partner organizations achieve their individual goals while also creating an impact collectively. The Initiative secured funding for and chose a consultant to produce a Laurel Highlands Economic Impact study to determine the positive economic contributions of resource conservation. The study will be complete by the end of 2019.

## 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.**



# Agency Partners



## Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

In 2018, service to the Somerset Conservation District and Somerset County landowners and residents was provided by a full-time NRCS staff consisting of Rhandee Weicht – District Conservationist and Dale Kriner – Soil Conservationist. The Somerset Field Office staff provides information on soils, agronomy, engineering, wildlife, land use, soil and water conservation Best Management Practices as well as general information regarding agriculture and various USDA programs.

District Conservationist, Rhandee Weicht, left her position with NRCS at the end of September 2018 to accept a position with the Farm Service Agency in Huntingdon County. A new District Conservationist is expected to be hired in early 2019. Dale Kriner has been covering most of the day-to-day administrative responsibilities of the field office until a new District Conservationist is hired. Dave Steele, the District Conservationist in Cambria County has been serving as acting District Conservationist for Somerset County on an interim basis until a new District Conservationist is on board.

Conservation Technical Assistance, regardless of program participation, is offered to landowners for such things as conservation planning and inventory and evaluation of resource problems along with alternatives for pasture, cropland, barnyard, woodland, and wildlife land uses. Maintaining the sustainability of and promoting wise use of these working lands and their soil resources is a major part of the agency's mission.

USDA programs, from application to contracting, administered by the NRCS office included Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Agricultural Management Assistance Program (AMA), Wetland Reserve Easement Program (WREP), and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Other programs for which NRCS provides technical assistance include; CRP, CREP, Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and Project Grass.

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

## 2018 Forestry Report for Somerset County

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's 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.

There were no major forest pest outbreaks reported in 2018, though the consistently wet weather did promote an excess of foliar fungal diseases. Luckily, most of these fungal diseases should not have long-term impacts on tree health.

The DCNR Bureau of Forestry is committed to the conservation and sustainable management of privately owned forestland and community trees throughout Pennsylvania. Forest management information and advice is available to landowners in Somerset County by contacting Service Forester, Jessica Salter. Communities or homeowners with yard or street-tree questions are encouraged to contact Celine Colbert, the district's Urban and Community Service Forester. Both foresters are located at the district's main office in Laughlinton.

Encouraging streamside forest buffers was a priority for the Bureau of Forestry in 2018 and will continue to be a priority in 2019. Technical assistance and grant opportunities are available for those interested in planting trees along area waterways.

Jessica Salter - Service Forester for Somerset, Westmoreland, and Allegheny Counties

## Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) has worked in partnership with the District and the wide range of representatives on the Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) to successfully secure a lease agreement with Somerset County for the uplands region of the Somerset Lake property owned by the Commission. This agreement has created the Somerset Lake Nature Park.

The Commission's Bureau of Engineering has provided the professional services that have enabled the design component of the Somerset Lake project to be completed.

The Commission's Bureau of Habitat Management Lake Division coordinates and assists with the Quemahoning Reservoir Fish Habitat project. They will also be developing a Habitat Management Plan for Somerset Lake.

The local Somerset County Waterways Conservation Officers, Pat Ferko and Dan McGuire and their deputies, also work closely with the District to investigate citizen complaints in regard to water quality and assist in determining the validity of those inquires. This is in addition to their many and varied law enforcement and public relations responsibilities.

The headquarters of the Southwest Regional Office of the PFBC is located at Somerset Lake. This location houses, not only law enforcement, but also the Area 8 fisheries biologists and managers that make important decisions regarding how warm-water and cold-water fisheries are conserved and improved throughout Southwestern Pennsylvania. District staff and interns often assist with fish surveys in Somerset County waterways.



By Len Lichvar– District 4 Commissioner, PFBC

# 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 credit 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, and 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.

Somerset Ag Credit is the Headquarters County for 5 counties have:  
194 direct borrowers with 377 loans for \$30,758,394  
35 guaranteed borrowers for \$14,585,496  
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 2018 there were 164 active contracts, with a conservation plan that helps retain soil in place, maintain water quality and prevent floods. A total of \$264,690 in annual payments were made in 2018 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 2014 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. Owners made a one-time election to reallocate crop bases, update program payment yields and producers select the type of coverage (price protection, county revenue protection, and/or individual revenue protection) for crop years 2014-2018. Payments were made in 2018 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. The Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy) was authorized through the 2014 Farm Bill and continued through December 2018. The MPP-Dairy program offers protection for dairy producers when the difference between the all milk price and the average feed cost (the margin) falls below a certain dollar amount selected by the producer. In 2018, there were 59 active contracts. \$627,637 in payments were issued in 2018.

**THE CROP DISASTER PROGRAM:** Assists County farmers in recovering from crop losses.

**LIVESTOCK ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:** Assists County farmers in recovering from feed losses.

**OILSEED PROGRAM:** Assists County farmers in recovering from poor prices on Oil Seeds.

**NON-INSURED ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:** Assists County farmers in recovering from losses on non-insurable crops.







**PennState Extension**



*Jeff Hackenberg, CRM*

Cooperative Extension instituted a new operational model with the creation of two new roles replacing the District Director role. These positions are the Client Relationship Manager and the Business Operations Manager. The Client Relationship Manager manages the relationships with County Commissioners, the Extension Board, community organizations, as well as other stakeholders. The Business Operations Manager manages all the functions of the Extension office, such as personnel, administrative duties, and budgetary matters. These changes will help Extension improve delivery of services, increase access to our educational resources, and respond quicker to meet local needs. Extension's new website will also help more people access Extension's resources when it is most convenient for them.

Government support through tax dollars provides the base funds to operate Penn State Cooperative Extension throughout Pennsylvania. County funds help Extension maintain a presence in each county.

**4-H**  
Somerset County saw another successful year in 4-H. With a youth-organized kick-off event held in March, the program acquired over 85 new members while proclaiming, "4-H: Not just a club, It's a way of life." A major factor responsible for the increase in program numbers is the dedication of the 144 adult volunteers giving their time and energy to the program. Volunteers work closely with staff to ensure both state and program guidelines and restrictions are followed. Success in 4-H is the result of an incredible team effort.

### **Nutrition and Health**

#### *Nutrition Links*

Karen Serball, Nutrition Education Advisor with Nutrition Links Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), in cooperation other agencies, such as Twin Lakes Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation Center, EARN, Children's Aid Home, and Tableland, helps low-income families acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors that lead to nutritionally sound diets.

### **Agriculture Entrepreneurship and Farm Management**

Penn State Extension works with farmers to improve profitability and sustainability, teaching through workshops, field days, online courses, and personal assistance. Key educational focus areas are beginning farming, farm management and growth, and transitions.

#### *Farm Management*

Farm Financial and Production Analysis Training (Farm\$en\$e) is offered in various locations across Pennsylvania. Producers learn to analyze past performance, complete budgets, analyze the profit potential of partial changes and engage in appropriate record keeping. Financial training is required to obtain a Farm Service Agency loan. Although Farm\$en\$e competes with two other Farm Service Agency authorized vendors, this is the only one of the three vendors that can provide follow-up visits by an Extension educator if a production problem affecting profitability needs to be addressed.

### **Commercial Horticulture**

The Commercial Horticulture Program in South Central Pennsylvania is multi-faceted, targeting commercial pesticide applicators, property managers, farmers, growers and landscape/turf professionals with non-formal educational programs that improve their capacity to compete in the marketplace, maintain licensure requirements, retain employees, and protect the environment.

#### *Master Gardeners*

Master Gardeners provide valuable residential horticulture expertise answering hotline calls at the Extension office. These services are provided during the summer months. In addition, Master Gardeners present educational programs and events to adults and elementary students in the county.

## **Penn State Extension – Somerset County Staff**

**Jeff Hackenberg**—Client Relationship Manager      **Laurie Hubbard**—Extension Educator  
**Stan McKee**—Business Operations Manager      **Carol Pyle**- -Program Assistant      **Karen Serball**—Nutrition Links

*To contact the Penn State Extension Office: 814-445-8911*



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***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 Conservation District  
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