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 Somerset, PA 15501
 814-445-4652 ext. 5
 somersetcd@wpia.net



SOMERSET
 CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Conserving Natural Resources for Our Future

2022 Annual Report

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.

How the District is Funded

Oven Run AMD Projects Rededication Ceremony



U.S. Senator Robert Casey delivers the keynote address at the Oven Run Rededication.

In 1995, in a ceremony attended by elected officials, conservation groups, state and federal agencies and the public, ground was broken in Shade Township, Somerset County, along the Stonycreek River, for the first Oven Run abandoned mine drainage (AMD) passive treatment system which began the rebirth of the watershed.

On September 1, 2022, after the reconstruction of all five of the passive treatment systems, which had reached the end of their effective lifespan, a rededication ceremony was held at the same location. Speakers at the event, sponsored by the District, were U. S. Senator Robert Casey; former John Murtha Chief of Staff, John Hugya; State Senator, Pat Stefano; Somerset County Commissioners Gerald Walker, Pamela Tokar-Ickes, Colleen Dawson; Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds Executive Director, John Dawes; PA Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director, Tim Scheaffer; Office of Surface Mining Representative, Robbie Fulton; PA Department Of Environmental Protection Deputy Secretary of the Office of Active & Abandoned Mine Operations, John Stefanko; Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) Chairman, Tom Clark; Somerset County Conservancy President, Jeff Payne; and Conservancy Land Manager, Jim Moses; and Cambria County Conservation District Manager, John Dryzal, all of who spoke about the significance of the long-term and ongoing impacts of the project.

Senator Casey presented the Keynote Address in which he touted the past and current AMD abatement effort of all the partners responsible for the historic resource improvement achievements that has increased the recreational opportunities in the Stonycreek River watershed and spurred an eco-tourism industry that generates positive economic impacts that had never been available before in the region.

District Manager, Len Lichvar, who served as Master of Ceremonies for the event, concluded the program by summing up the direct impact that these systems now contribute. He pointed out that these systems transform over 1.6 BILLION gallons of polluted water into clean water every year and in so doing have solidified their places as essential infrastructure facilities.

Somerset Conservation District
 6024 Glades Pike Suite 103
 Somerset, PA 15501
 www.somersetcd.com

2022 Board Members

Chairman, Roger Latuch
Vice Chairman, Marlin Sherbine
Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand
Commissioner, Gerald Walker
Shawn Saylor
Richard Berkley
Kurt Walker
Glenn Stoltzfus
James Ringler



2022 Associate Board Members
 Tom Croner, Greg Elliot, & Meade Meyers

Seated Left to Right: Vice Chairman, Marlin Sherbine; Director, Jim Ringler; Director, Richard Berkley; Director, Glenn Stoltzfus. Standing Left to Right: Secretary/Treasurer, Bud Weyand; Chairman, Roger Latuch; Director Shawn Saylor; Director, Kurt Walker; Associate Director, Meade Meyers; and Commissioner Gerald Walker.

District Staff

Len Lichvar len-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4259

Len Lichvar, District Manager, manages & oversees six professional staff members of the District & the Southwest Technical Assistance Program. 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 a knowledge of all District projects and programs to assist with and is responsible for their timely completion and success.



Susan Moon sue-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4246

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. Susan attends and represents the District at local, regional, and state meetings. She assists with grant writing. She also administers the Somerset County Farmland Preservation Program.



Phil Wilson - PACD Technical Assistance



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 Conservation Technician is Phil Wilson. Engineering assistance is provided by Danielle Kalp, from the Clarion TAG which 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.

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 6 counties have:
 214 direct borrowers with 417 loans for \$43,075,883.22
 36 guaranteed borrowers for \$13,989,722.51
 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 2022 there were 140 active contracts, with a conservation plan that helps retain soil in place, maintain water quality and prevent floods. A total of \$268,761 in annual payments were made in 2022 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 2018 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. No payments were made in 2022 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. We have two MAL's for 2022 for a loan amount totaling \$224,377.88.

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/equipment. Somerset County currently has one FSFL for a loan amount of \$5,931.

The Dairy Margin Coverage Program (DMC) was authorized by the 2018 Farm Bill. It replaced the Margin Protection Program for Dairy (MPP-Dairy). Much like the MPP-Dairy program, the DMC program is a voluntary program that provides dairy producers with risk management coverage that will pay producers when the difference (the margin) between the national price of milk and the average cost of feed falls below a certain level selected by the program participants. There were 37 DMC contracts in Somerset County in 2022.

FOREIGN INVESTMENT DISCLOSURE ACT

Requires all foreign owners of U.S. agricultural land to report their holdings, acquisitions, dispositions, leases of 10 years or more, and land use changes to FSA.

EMPLOYEES

Jason Pontillo, Acting County Executive Director
 Amanda Mosholder, Farm Loan Manager
 Joanne Stoltzfus, Farm Loan Officer
 Gillian Shippey, Farm Loan Officer
 Sydney Gaydos, Farm Loan Officer
 Sherry Lynch, Loan Analyst
 Elaine Bocsy, Program Technician
 Ashleigh Yates, Program Technician

COUNTY OFFICE COMMITTEE

Allen Kaufman
 Charlene McWilliams
 Wayne Petenbrink

Agency Partners

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

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

The Natural Resources Conservation Service works with agricultural producers and private forest landowners to address concerns to our natural resources. Maintaining the sustainability of and promoting wise use of working lands and their natural resources is at the heart of the agency's mission. NRCS provides conservation planning and technical assistance, as well as information on soils, agronomy, engineering, wildlife, and land use management.

Conservation Technical Assistance is the program that provides the framework for sound conservation on agricultural operations. Assistance in the form of conservation planning and inventory and evaluation of resource concerns, is provided at no cost to ag producers and private forest landowners. NRCS soil conservationists can provide guidance on alternative management for pasture, cropland, barnyard, woodland, and wildlife land uses to solve resource concerns. Conservation was applied on over 3,450 acres of land in the county through the Conservation Technical Assistance program in 2022.

NRCS administers several programs that are funded by the Farm Bill. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), and the Agricultural Management Assistance program (AMA) are the different programs that producers can participate in to implement conservation measures on their operations or to further enhance conservation systems they have in place. Our county managed to complete 9 EQIP contracts totaling \$240,357 in Somerset County. AMA funds were not available for Somerset County for 2022. We contracted 5 new EQIP and AMA contracts this year for projects including improving pollinator habitat, forest management, grazing plans, and cover crop.

Alissa Gulette is the new soil conservationist in Somerset, PA. She comes to the NRCS from the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, where she worked as a wildlife biologist, concentrating on conservation of reptiles and amphibians around the state. Prior to this, she attended graduate school at West Virginia University, where she studied wildlife habitat suitability of wetlands in the ACEP program. She was born and raised in Florida, where she attended the University of Florida for her bachelor's degree and worked in the Everglades in the early part of her career.

2021 Forestry Report for Somerset County

The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources 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.

The DCNR Bureau of Forestry is committed to the conservation and sustainable management of privately-owned forestland and community trees throughout Pennsylvania. The Forbes Forest District is welcoming a new Urban Service Forester, Levi Canon. Levi is available to assist with managing community and street trees. Michael Doucette is the Rural Service Forester and services Somerset, Westmoreland, and Allegheny County landowners. The Service Forester Program is a government service that offers technical assistance, information on managing private woodlands, and advice for municipalities managing trees. Citizens and Municipalities can request assistance by contacting the district office at (724) 238-1200.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission



The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is tasked with protecting, conserving, and enhancing the Commonwealth's aquatic resources. The PFBC would be severely hindered in this mission in and around the Somerset County area without the partnership with the Somerset County Conservation District (SCD). The PFBC and SCD work closely together year-round to ensure that environmental complaints and concerns within the Somerset County area are handled efficiently, professionally, and in a timely manner.

Waterways Conservation Officer (WCO) Tyler Crooks has been covering the Northern Somerset District since the summer of 2021. He looks forward to continued partnership with SCD members.

WCO Dina Cable, who has been charged with the Southern Somerset District since the summer of 2020, looks forward to continuing the work that she and the SCD have been involved in to maintain the areas natural resources.

The PFBC would like to thank the SCD for their continued pursuit of clean water in Somerset County. Among many other things, our teamwork in identifying and handling erosion and sedimentation issues in the county continues to be a large benefit to local water quality. The SCDs responsibilities in managing and maintaining local AMD treatment plants has helped to make the Stonycreek River watershed the fishing and boating destination that it is today.

The PFBC has completed the dam repairs at Somerset Lake and it is quickly returning to normal pool level, and kayakers are beginning to take notice. The PFBC would like to thank the SCD along with many other volunteers and local school districts that have assisted in the process of returning this local gem of a lake to the public.

District Staff

Don Williams don-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4248

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-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4251

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-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4250

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-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4247

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-scd@wpia.net 814-289-4236

Aimee Steele is the Conservation District's 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 and provides D&GR Program assistance.



Solar Power Project Dedication

The District completed its Solar Power Project in 2022 that placed 60 solar panels on the roof of the Somerset County Education Center where the District and other agencies have their headquarters. The panels supply a portion of the building's electric requirements.

The project was funded through a Penelec Sustainable Energy grant administered by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. The Solar Samaritans from the First United Methodist Church in Somerset provided the technical expertise and manpower with assistance from instructor Cody Kerr and students from the Somerset County Technology Center. Cordell Howatinech, owner of Core Electric, also provided essential construction assistance along with equipment provided by John Morocco.

The District sponsored an official dedication ceremony on May 24, 2022, in cooperation with the Somerset County Commissioners, to announce the completion of the project.

Cooperative Intern Program

Hi, my name is Ally Harrold and I live on a farm in Kingwood with my family. I have an older brother, Tyler, and my parents are Jen and JB Harrold. Our farm is Certified Organic, and I enjoy working with cattle and calves the most. I assist in the spring with calving and in charge of moving cows through our grazing system every day. I help with vaccinations and all other needs of the beef cattle. When needed, I also help with making hay and harvesting crops. I am a Senior at Rockwood Area School. My activities include Captain of the Rockwood Girls Varsity Soccer Team, PA West Soccer, Indoor Soccer at Turfside, FFA currently holding office as treasurer, NHS, and SHS. My hobbies include hunting, camping, and spending time with my friends and family. I am a member of St. Pauls Lutheran Church in Barronvale. My future plans are to go to school to either be an Accountant or a Physical Therapist. I like this job because I love the outdoors and making the natural area beautiful and accessible for others to enjoy.



Ally Harrold served as intern for both the District and the Somerset County Conservancy.

Conservation Education



The District participated in multiple education projects aimed at both youth and adult audiences in 2022. In addition to the annual Envirothon competition, Resource Specialist, Aimee Steele, and District Manager, Len Lichvar, assisted in presenting programs through Penn State's 4H Farm City Days, Shade School and Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited's Trout in the Classroom release, and the Somerset County Fair.

Penn State's 4H Farm City Days



Len Lichvar showed the students how to use a kick net to find macroinvertebrates.

Aimee Steele and Len Lichvar presented a wildlife station for the Berlin School district.



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 2022. The 2021 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 statewide 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.

Facebook—You can find and "like" the Somerset Conservation District on Facebook.

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.

SCD - Ag Technical Assistance—REAP - 2022

The Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) is a Pennsylvania tax credit program for agricultural producers who implement best management practices or purchase equipment that reduces the amount of nutrient and sediment runoff and improves the quality of Pennsylvania's waters. 2022 marks the 15th year that this program has been available. Many Somerset County producers have utilized this program to have Manure Management or Agricultural E&S Plans written, acquire no-till equipment, and install Best Management Practices. During fiscal year 2021-2022, SCD assisted 10 producers with REAP applications. During that time 5 county producers had applications approved which resulted in \$179,798 of State Tax Credits being awarded to Somerset County Farmers.

Voice of Ag

The Voice of Ag Work Group continued to identify and discuss important agricultural issues specific to Somerset County and identify potential partnerships and assistance opportunities.

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 2021:

- E&SPC BMP's/controls were applied to minimize erosion on 208 disturbed acres
- 17 stand-alone E&SPC plans were processed, reviewed and approved
- 13 General NPDES/PCSM construction permits/E&SPC/PCSM plans were processed & approved
- 19 earth disturbance assessments/inspections were conducted
- 6 final EDI/PCSM reports and NPDES permit terminations were completed
- 69 Ch. 102 E&SPC/NPDES/Ch. 105 technical & informational assists were provided
- Handled & processed 6 citizen complaints

Somerset County Conservancy Partnership

The Somerset Conservation District has partnered with the Somerset County Conservancy to coordinate and track the dues and membership for the SCC, format, publish, and mail the semi-annual SCC newsletters, pick up and distribute bills, invoices, and other mail, plan and coordinate, in cooperation with SCC volunteers, public conservation-oriented youth and adult education programs. The District also provides grant writing assistance as needed.

The SCC has several events already planned for 2023 such as snowshoe, ski, hiking, frog walks, nature walks, and the Earth Day event at uptown Somerset.



Shade High School placed first and moved on to the State Envirothon.

2022 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 32nd Somerset County Envirothon this year. The day-long event is an environmental-education competition testing students' knowledge in five general areas: soils, wildlife, forestry, aquatics, and a current environmental issue.

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

Water Quality

STREAM Act Becomes Law

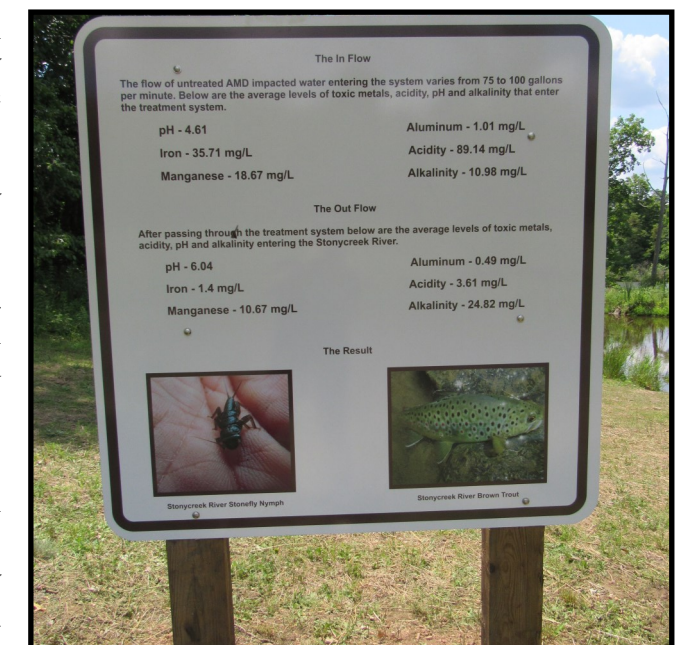
The Safeguarding Treatment for the Restoration of Ecosystems from Abandoned Mines (STREAM) Act passed the U. S. Congress in late December, 2022, and was signed into law by President Joe Biden on December 29, 2022. This essential federal legislation co-sponsored by U. S. Senator Robert Casey and U. S. Representative Matt Cartwright, will make the millions of dollars from the federal Infrastructure and Jobs Act of 2022 allotted for AMD abatement, be used for set-aside funds for future operation and maintenance (O&M), as well as, for the design and construction of AMD treatment systems.

Without the passing of this legislation essential O and M, which has been severely lacking for previous projects, would not have been available for this use. The District supported the passing of the STREAM Act with letters to legislators and Senator Casey used the Oven Run Rededication Ceremony for more public emphasis on the importance of this legislation.

Oven Run Treatment Systems Working Better Than Ever

The District had four of the newly reconstructed Oven Run AMD Treatment Systems professionally sampled by InnoH2O Solutions in 2022 in order to gather scientific data to confirm that the recent efforts have achieved the intended goal. The results have proven that collectively the systems have significantly increased pH and alkalinity levels, decreased iron, aluminum and manganese to levels exceeding the original levels of 25 years ago. In addition, the redesign of the systems by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District's Technical Assistance Group has enabled less water to be bypassed and more water to be treated than before.

Continued sampling of the systems, as well as Oven Run and the Stonycreek River, may in the near future demonstrate the first documented additional water quality improvement in both waterways above the levels achieved over 25 years ago.



SLAC / Somerset Lake

A special ceremony marking the beginning of the refilling of Somerset Lake was held in June of 2022. With the reconstruction of both the earthen dam and concrete spillway completed, Somerset Lake should return to its angling and boating recreational opportunities in 2023. A gradual restocking of forage fish and game fish by the PA Fish and Boat Commission has already begun.



Officials and children stocked about 5,000 golden shiner minnows in Somerset Lake to commemorate the completion of the new breast and spillway. From left, Senator Pat Stefano, Junie Wismer, Daniel Wismer, and Jordan Steele.

Along with all of this the Somerset Lake Nature Park will feature new attractions such as a now completed segment of a walking trail with more to be completed in the coming years. Pavilions and a handicap fishing facility have already been completed along with a constructed island and a low-water bird watching peninsula. Fish habitat structures have also been added with more to come to improve angling opportunities.

Without the creation of the Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) and the public support it generated and the funds it secured, the reconstruction of the lake, much less all the new, public improvements, would not have occurred.

The District provided significant empowerment to the Somerset County Conservancy's SLAC Committee from the very beginning and the District played a key role in the effort that led to the formation of SLAC ten years ago.

Rock Tunnel Treatment System

The District is responsible for operation and maintenance (O&M) of 11 of the 24 AMD passive treatment systems in the Stonycreek River watershed. Among them is the Rock Tunnel system originally constructed in 1991 on the South Fork of Bens Creek. Ongoing O&M of the system is a continually required effort in order for this undersized system to continue to effectively minimize historic AMD pollution in the stream.

The District contracted Whitehorse Excavating to reinstall and correct piping and valve issues at the system. The District also contracted InnoH2O Solutions to remove iron sludge from the wetland component of the system. The combination of both efforts, funded by Emergency Response grants from the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, has enabled the system to continue to function to its optimum level.

Quemahoning Buffer Project

The District completed the Quemahoning Creek Watershed Buffer Project through the planting of 1,000 trees over ten acres and established a forested buffer to reduce runoff and improve the water quality in the headwaters of a wild trout tributary to the Quemahoning Reservoir. The project was funded by federal dollars contracted through the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds and was completed on two farms located in Conemaugh Township.



A section of the completed stream buffer.

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 2021-2022 allocations to Somerset County were \$471,953 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$175,294 for Low Volume Roads. The 2022-2023 allocations for Somerset County are to be \$458,079 for Dirt & Gravel Roads and \$180,579

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 Richard Berkley, Somerset Conservation Board member, Alissa Gulette, NRCS, and Tyler M. Crooks, 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 2022 to review and recommend project requests to the Somerset Conservation Board for funding, and to review and approve project amendments and final project payments.

2021-2022 projects that were funded, started and/or completed are:

Dirt & Gravel Road projects:

- Easy Camp Rd./Crum Rd./Alvin Lane, Shade Township (project was started in 2021)
- Easy Camp Road (Phase II), Shade Township
- Wine-O Road, Upper Turkeyfoot Township
- Shade Hollow Road, Ellick Township
- Cranberry Road, Lower Turkeyfoot Township
- North Fork Road, Lincoln Township
- Wolf Camp Road (Phase II), Allegheny Township
- Yonai Road, Stonycreek Township (project to be completed in 2023)

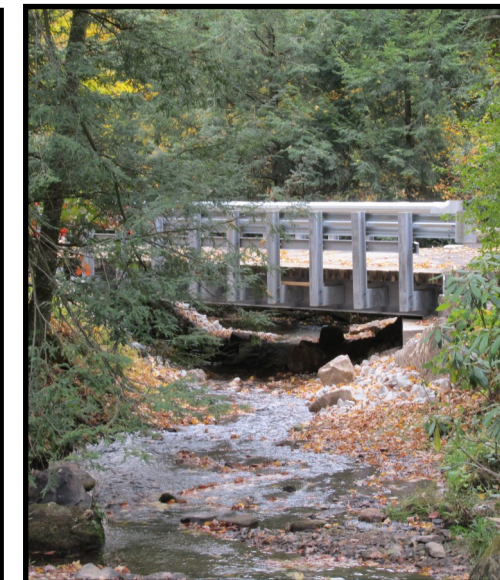
Low Volume Road projects:

- Shafer Run Road, Jefferson Township (Stream Crossing) (project was started in 2021)
- Kendallwood Road, Greenville Township
- Swamp Creek Road, Brothersvalley Township
- Blue Bird Spring Road, Lincoln Township

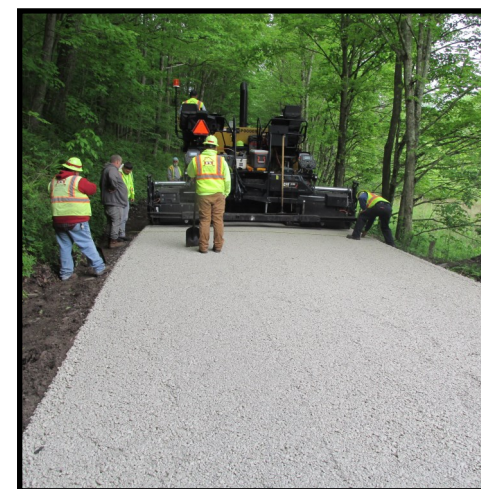


Cranberry Road, Lower Turkeyfoot Twp. Road Fill Project, Dirt & Gravel Road

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.



*Before and After
Shafer Run Road, Jefferson Township
Stream Crossing Replacement, Low Volume Road*



*Wolf Camp Road, Allegheny Twp.
DSA Placement, Dirt & Gravel Road*

Agricultural Programs, continued

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 a delegation agreement with the State Conservation Commission, SCD is tasked with the review and approval of NMP's. Currently Somerset County has eight CAFO farms with approved nutrient management plans.

Beginning in October 2006, Pennsylvania regulations require Nutrient Balance Sheets (NBS) for farms that import manure. Since 2007, the Conservation District has assisted many county farms with development of these NBS. At the end of 2022, Somerset County has 64 Farms with NBS which include over 11,600 acres.

Project Grass

Southwest Project Grass is a cooperative effort by local Farmers, County Conservation Districts, USDA-NRCS, and other partners. This program promotes conservation through proper pasture management in 14 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania. The SCD supports the Southwest Project Grass Chapter to achieve its goals of improving the economic position of local farmers, increasing 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 14 easements perpetually preserving 1,834 acres in Somerset County.



Marlin Sherbine

After 38 years serving on the Board of the Somerset Conservation District, Marlin Sherbine, stepped down from that position at the end of 2022.

The District Board and staff thank Marlin for his dedicated service to the District and natural resources conservation.

Roger Latuch, right, presented Marlin with a plaque thanking him for his service.



South Fork Bens Creek

The second phase of the South Fork of Bens Creek Fish Habitat Mitigation Project was completed in 2022. The funding was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and the project was designed by District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, who also oversaw the implementation of the project which was contracted to Blackner Excavating.

The 1,000 foot long project resulted in the installation of wood structures, root wads, streambank stabilization, and narrowing of the stream channel in a section of the South Fork where wild trout predominate. An electro fishing survey, conducted several months after the completion of the project, confirmed that the wild trout were indeed using the new habitat which indicated that the opportunity for the wild trout population to expand and extend its range should increase.



Root wads and other woody debris create enhanced fish habitat.

Quemahoning Creek Tailwater

In 2022 the District completed Phase Three of the Quemahoning Creek Tailwater Fish Habitat Project on the Quemahoning Creek downstream from the Quemahoning Reservoir. The coldwater conservation release out of the Quemahoning Reservoir every day has enabled a fishery to prosper in the last 1.3 miles of the creek before it enters the Stonycreek River.

This third phase, funded by federal dollars contracted through the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, constituted the largest habitat project yet attempted on the stream. Over 2,000 tons of rock were added to the streambed, as well as root wads, cross veins, and other wood addition. The streambank was stabilized and narrowed all of which was designed by District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick. The project will provide significantly more fish habitat and increase the aquatic life food source for the existing trout and other game fish species.



Rock and wood placement along with bank stabilization on the Que Tailwater.

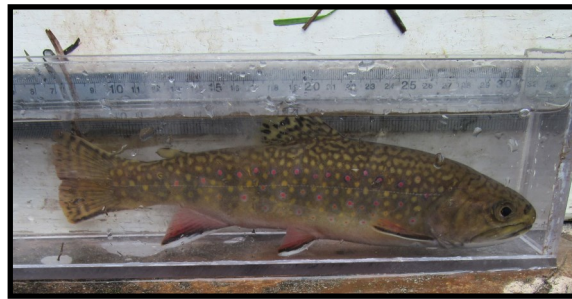
In recent years the tailwater has been stocked with trout paid for through the District's Quemahoning Trust Fund. In 2022, the District planted advanced sized trout fingerlings after the completion of the project. Additional plantings of adult size trout are planned for the future that are in addition to the PA Fish and Boat Commission annual fingerling stocking in the tailwater. Future fish surveys will be conducted to determine the overall impact of the increased habitat on the number and size diversity of the fish which are both anticipated to increase.

Higgins Run

The District, along with its cooperating partner, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and their professional staff, who are trained in this growing habitat improvement initiative, implemented its first ever large-wood addition project on Higgins Run in 2022. The project, which was completed on Cambria-Somerset Authority property, added significant amounts of wood to the stream which will not only create additional habitat for the wild trout, but also increase macroinvertebrate numbers and diversity in the stream as well as restore the natural flood plain of the watershed enabling life-inhibiting sediment to pass through the waterway rather than being deposited in it.



A crew from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy cut & place woody debris in the Higgins Run.



A wild native brook trout captured during the fish surveys.

Baseline Fish Surveys

The District once again, in partnership with Garrett College of Maryland, conducted fish surveys in key locations to gather essential scientific data on watersheds where District projects have been implemented.

Electro fish surveys were conducted on the South Fork of Bens Creek, Roaring Run, and two locations on the Stonycreek River. A site surveyed just outside of the city limits of Johnstown on the Stonycreek River, proved that trout and other game fish are now beginning to establish viable populations and generate limited but realistic angling opportunities.

Lamberts Run

The District's Lamberts Run AMD project aimed at minimizing the final AMD discharge on Lamberts Run before its waters reach the Stonycreek River experienced a variety of alternatives and changes. The District's consultant, Hedin Environmental, attempted a variety of pathways to secure required permitting and the District attempted multiple efforts to secure the required access agreement.

Despite significant time and effort expended by District staff no resolution was achieved on either requirement in 2022. The District is working a new way forward on both issues and the effort to finally construct the project will continue in 2023.

SCRIP

The District continued its support and involvement with the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) with District Manager Len Lichvar serving as SCRIP Vice-Chairman. SCRIP continues to provide assistance, support and direction for the ongoing AMD abatement efforts in the Upper Conemaugh River watershed that it has for the past 32 years.



L-R District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, DEP's Alex Veto, and Bob Hedin discuss permitting of the Lamberts Run Project.

Agricultural Programs

Penn Woods Farm Ag Career Day

On Friday, May 13, 2022, Somerset County Ag Career Day was held at Pennwood Farms near Berlin. Over 700 eighth grade students attended this event.

Somerset Conservation District staff members, Don Williams, Aimee Steele, and Len Lichvar, served as presenters. They explained in detail the goals and job duties of working for a conservation agency. Students learned about the importance of site maps and were able to participate in a soil sampling demonstration.

District Ag Technician, Don Williams, assists a student with soil sampling.



Pasture Walk with Extension at JBH Farms



J.B. Harrold speaks to the pasture walk tour participants.

Somerset County hosted a field day on June 22, 2022, entitled Pasture Walk with Extension which was held in conjunction with a Southwest Project Grass meeting.

The purpose of these events is to bring people with various levels of grazing-management experience together for information sharing, education, and networking. Approximately 33 landowners, farm operators, students, and agency personnel attended this pasture walk.

In the morning the group met at JBH Farms near Markleton. JBH Farms has been in operation since 2000 and is a certified organic farm, and currently includes over 300 acres of owned and rented land. This operation consists of a cow/calf beef herd, custom grazed dairy heifers, along with organically grown grains and hay. J.B. Harrold led a walking tour of his grazing system. Field demonstration and discussion focused on rotational grazing, organic farming, pasture evaluation, and soil health.

Manure Hauler & Broker Meeting



On Tuesday, February 1, 2022, Somerset Conservation District hosted a Manure Hauler & Broker Workshop.

The purpose of these workshops is to provide attendees with the latest information on regulations and maure industry issues. In addition, Commercial Manure Haulers & Brokers earn continuing education credits towards maintaining their certification.

Approximately 18 haulers, farmers, and agency personnel attended this event. Robb Meinen, Penn State Department of Animal Science, was the instructor for this training which focused on the effects of weather on manure application, hauler safety, and the concept of manure sheds. It also included a discussion on using manure during times of high fertilizer prices.