



LUZERNE CONSERVATION DISTRICT



2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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Mission Statement

Conserving land and water resources in Luzerne County by promoting public awareness, providing technical assistance, and encouraging regulatory compliance.

A Brief Review of the Year

2009 was the forty fifth anniversary of the Luzerne Conservation District. In 1964, a group of local citizens petitioned the county commissioners to form the district, and since that time we have been implementing programs and projects to conserve soil and water resources in Luzerne County.

The board and staff worked hard in 2009 to steer the district through the difficulties of the international recession. As was the case for nearly every other individual and organization, 2009 was not an easy year for our conservation district. Reduced service fees and reduced funding from the county and state required us tighten our belts significantly. Fortunately, voluntary staffing changes in 2008 positioned us well to enter into a fiscally lean 2009. We held our expenses to a bare minimum but were able to continue providing many of the public services necessary to carry out our mission of soil and water conservation in Luzerne County.

As we move forward, 2010 is sure to be equally challenging. With the addition of the West Nile Virus Program and accompanying staffing changes, I'm confident that the district team can continue to carry out our mission while providing excellent public service.

~ Josh Longmore, District Manager

Introduction

On February 13, 1964, out of concern for the conservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic resources of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, the Luzerne County Commissioners established the Luzerne Conservation District.

The Luzerne Conservation District is a not-for-profit, local agency whose primary types of activities include: regulatory/voluntary compliance, technical assistance, and education/outreach. We accomplish our mission through cooperation with landowners and land users; by working with other public and private organizations; and by increasing citizen awareness of the responsibility to be good stewards of natural resources.

As one of the sixty-six conservation districts in Pennsylvania (one for each county except Philadelphia County), the Luzerne Conservation District is involved in developing local programs and implementing on-the-ground practices to protect the soil and water resources of Luzerne County. The district is led by a nine-member board consisting of community volunteers and a county commissioner. Currently, there are 8 staff members including: the District Manager, the Secretary/Bookkeeper, the Agricultural Conservation Specialist, the Resource Conservation Specialist II, two Resource Conservation Specialists I, the Watershed Program Coordinator, and a part-time Building and Grounds Keeper. District programs are developed and carried out to best serve the specific needs of the natural resources and people of Luzerne County.

Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control Program

Did you know that sediment is the number one pollutant, by volume, to waters of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania? Sediment pollution is the result of erosion. While some erosion is natural, accelerated erosion (caused by human activities such as development and farming) can significantly impair watercourses and cause serious problems like drinking water pollution, fish kills, and siltation of dams and channels.



In order to ensure that proper erosion and sediment pollution control techniques are implemented within Luzerne County, the Luzerne Conservation District has been delegated the responsibility by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to administer the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Program (Chapter 102) and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Program (Chapter 92) and to review Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control (E&S) Plans for earth disturbance activities within the county. The district also conducts related training for engineers, contractors, and municipalities; and district staff members perform site inspections of earth disturbance activities to determine compliance with the applicable state regulations. The district also responds to and investigates complaints involving erosion, sedimentation, and stormwater problems occurring during earth disturbance activities.

NOTE: State law requires that an E&S Plan, which meets the requirements of Chapter 102 (Erosion and Sediment Control Regulations), be properly designed, implemented, and available on site for all earth disturbance activities that disturb 5,000 square feet or more.



Below is a list of activities that fall under the above-mentioned programs for 2009:

Activity	Total
E&S Plan Reviews	285
NPDES General Permits	32
NPDES Individual Permits	3
Total Disturbed Acres	1654
Total Project Acres	9693
Site Inspections	406
Complaint Investigations (delegated)	112
Complaint Investigations (non-delegated, referred to other agencies)	3

E&S Program staff members had many public outreach and technical assistance contacts with the regulated community and the general public in 2009 (3,448 occurrences). The district partnered with the Wyoming and Lackawanna County Conservation Districts in hosting the 15th Annual Contractors/Engineers Workshop at Keystone College. The district also held our first MECC (Municipal, Engineer, Contractor, Conservation) Workshop, with over 130 attendees.

Chesapeake Bay/Nutrient Management Program

The Chesapeake Bay Program provides technical and financial assistance for farmers and other land users to implement best management practices (BMPs) to reduce non-point source pollution to local streams within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

To help meet Pennsylvania's goals set by the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement, the Luzerne Conservation District (and other conservation districts within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed) developed a county specific Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy Implementation Plan. The plan identifies major sources of non-point source pollution within Luzerne County, and prescribes various BMPs for addressing the water quality impairments. Through this program, the district undertakes projects to implement the recommendations of the plan.

The Luzerne Conservation District also provides nutrient management planning assistance to farmers. This technical assistance helps farmers utilize nutrients from manure and fertilizers for more efficient crop production, while aiming to keep those potential pollutants out of streams and other water bodies.

In 2009, the district's Chesapeake Bay Program work included water and manure management projects on agricultural operations, a cover crop incentives program, educational workshops for equine owners and agricultural producers. Most of these projects are funded through DEP's Chesapeake Bay Special Projects Grant Program. The district's Agricultural Conservation Specialist continues implementing special projects from previous years and applied for grant funding for additional projects in 2009. The following shows the projects that were worked on and/or funded in 2009.

Special Projects:

2008/2009 Cover Crop Program	\$4520.00
2009/2010 Cover Crop Program	\$5800.00 <i>(The 2009 cover crop year was very difficult for farmers. With the rainy weather that lasted through the fall and cold weather that came in early, farmers had a tough time planting their cover crops this year. Total acres planted were 296 acres.)</i>
2009 Equine Watering System	\$4248.80
2009 Roofed Manure System	\$21,000.00
Small Cattle Watering System	\$4,370.50
Soil Test Incentive Program	\$500.00

Ag Conservation Specialist's Education and Outreach Activities:

- Held a "Get the Dirt on Dirt" workshop for no-till farmers in January at the Nescopeck State Park Building
- Assisted in a CREP workshop with NRCS's Conservation Technician
- Attended a week long "Conservation Boot Camp" for basic training
- Held an annual seedling sale for Luzerne County residents. There were 47 participants that ordered seedlings.
- Assisted with Conservation Field Days
- Held an equine workshop in July to inform horse owners of the Nutrient Management Regulations in place in Pennsylvania as well as rotational grazing techniques.
- Assisted with the MECC workshop in August
- Held a "Get Rooted" workshop for 25 local farmers to give them a first hand view of how tillage radishes work with their no-till soils.

Watershed Stewardship Program

The Luzerne Conservation District's Watershed Program Coordinator administers the Watershed Stewardship Program in Luzerne County. The Watershed Program Coordinator position is partly funded by a Growing Greener grant through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The coordinator focuses efforts on improving the quality of the county's surface and ground water through the protection and enhancement of natural systems within the watershed.

Through the Watershed Stewardship Program, the district aids in the formation and operation of watershed associations and coalitions; provides technical assistance related to watersheds and water resources to landowners, municipalities, and private organizations; procures funding for and administers watershed restoration projects; provides watershed education programs to various age groups; helps direct and influence local conservation issues by advising and participating on various committees and boards; and assists other district programs with various tasks and projects.

The following is information about the Watershed Program Coordinator's activities in 2009:

Education and Outreach:

- Partnered with Penn State Cooperative Extension to hold a workshop on backyard conservation. The Conservation Field Day workshop had 30 people in attendance.
- Coordinated Luzerne Conservation District Annual Banquet which profited \$12,000 that went towards education and outreach projects.
- Participated in the planning of the Northeast Regional Contractors Workshop and the district's Municipal, Engineers, & Contractors Conservation Workshop.

Grants:

- **Toby's Creek Assessment Grant**– The district received a Growing Greener Grant in the amount \$86,689 for an assessment of the Toby Creek Watershed. The primary goal of the Toby's Creek Assessment Grant is to provide comprehensive, watershed wide appraisal of the Toby's Creek watershed, which is 36.5 square miles. The assessment is focusing on evaluating stormwater management, streambank erosion, and flooding problem areas and identifying where and how Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be implemented both within and along stream corridors throughout the basin. Key locations for conservation will also be identified, and a hydrologic model will be used to demonstrate the benefits of implemented projects. Borton-Lawson was the contractor chosen to conduct this project, and its expected to completed by the summer of 2010.
- **Toby's Creek Construction Grant** - Like many other streams in this region, and the Commonwealth in general, Toby Creek has experienced significant flood damages from major storms over the years. The most recent severe storm – that of late June 2006 – caused especially severe damages along Toby Creek, as it did in much of the rest of the mid-Atlantic region. This storm, which the National Weather Service ranked as a 200-year magnitude event in many areas, is widely considered the worst flood in this region since that associated with Hurricane David in 1979. Again as in many other areas, flood damages along Toby Creek and its tributaries are a result in large part of the many historical alterations to the watershed associated with basin land use, most recently urbanization. A post-flood reconnaissance assessment of watershed conditions was completed in the summer/fall of 2006 by the Luzerne Conservation District (LCD). This identified numerous channel erosion and flood damaged locations within the watershed. The highest priority site identified by the LCD assessment was a section of Toby Creek within Luzerne Borough from the Main Street bridge upstream to the start of the property own by Luzerne Lumber. This area has been seriously destabilized and is poised for further

significant erosion during future rain events. The district received a Growing Greener Grant for the design, permitting, and construction in the amount \$102,362 and applied for additional funding in the amount of \$445,345 for the 2010 round of Growing Greener to complete this entire section of this project. It is anticipated the project should be complete by spring of 2011.

- **Lake Frances Slocum & Abrahams Creek Watershed Assessment** - Due to increased levels of eutrophication, the Luzerne Conservation District with the full support of the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR), Bureau of State Parks, received state funds through the Section 319(h) Nonpoint Source Management Grant Program in the amount of \$48,900 to develop a comprehensive lake and watershed management plan to restore and ultimately protect Lake Frances Slocum and its tributaries. The district's contractor, Aqua-Link, Inc., continued working on the project in 2009. The project is expected to be completed in the spring of 2010.

Technical Assistance and Training:

- Provided assistance to Toby Creek Watershed Association, Friends of the Nescopeck, and Hick's Creek Watershed Associations with outreach programs, grant opportunities, and organizational formation and sustainability.
- Provided assistance to conservation organizations including: The Conservation Coalition, National Wild Turkey Federation, Quality Deer Management Association, Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation & Development Council, and Pheasants Forever with outreach programs, habitat enhancement projects, grant opportunities, and organizational formation and sustainability.

Dirt & Gravel Roads Program

The Luzerne Conservation District administers the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) Dirt and Gravel Road Program in Luzerne County. The purpose of the Dirt and Gravel Road Program is "to fund safe, efficient, and environmentally sound maintenance of sections of dirt and gravel roads which have been identified as sources of dust and sediment pollution." Through this program, the district provides grants and technical assistance to local municipalities for work on dirt roads. Our partners in this program include: the SCC, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Penn State University's Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies.

The program is designed to encourage municipalities to implement environmentally sensitive road maintenance practices on dirt and gravel roads in Luzerne County. Once a municipality has completed the required training, they are eligible to apply to the district's Quality Assurance Board for grants to fund environmentally sensitive road maintenance projects. Funding for this program is made available to districts through the State Conservation Commission.

The 2009 county-wide grant total from the district's regular Dirt & Gravel Road



Program allocation was \$24,874.00. There were a total of 5 projects. Townships and agencies benefiting from these grants were Jackson Township, with a project on Gates Road, Dorrance Township with a project on Taney Road, PA Game Commission with a project on a road on Game Lands 57, Lake Township with a project on Wesley Road, and Hollenback Township with a project on Kingsbury Road. These environmentally sensitive projects included correction of drainage problems, pipe installation, resurfacing of roads, stream bank stabilization, etc. with the main focus on reducing sediment pollution to the waters of the Commonwealth.

Conservation Education & Outreach Program

While conservation education is an important part of most of the individual programs at the Luzerne Conservation District, we have several separate efforts to promote environmental stewardship and general awareness of the conservation district and our programs. In 2009, some of those efforts included: continued maintenance of the Luzerne Conservation District website (www.luzernecd.org); our fourth Annual District Banquet; Conservation Field Day; Spring Seedling Sale; and the 2009 Luzerne County Envirothon.

Annual Banquet:

In 2009 the Luzerne Conservation District held its second annual banquet. The event was a great success, and we were able to raise over \$12,000 to support our conservation education efforts. The banquet also included an awards ceremony in which we recognized people and organizations within our community for their conservation efforts. The following were the 2009 awardees:

Stanley M. Sowa Jr.
Conservationist of the Year Award
Nanticoke Conservation Club

Lewis Rinehimer Conservation Farmer Award
Ide-L-Acres Farm

Conservation Educator Award
Karen & Craig Yarrish
Wild Birds Unlimited

Watershed Stewardship Award
Abrahams Creek Watershed Association

EPCAMR Partnership Award
Newport Township Community Organization

2008 Luzerne County Envirothon Winner
Crestwood High School
Fran Gough, Advisor

2009 PA State Fair Queen Recognition Award
Nicole Clemson

Envirothon:

The Envirothon is an annual environmental competition for high school students. The Luzerne

Conservation District coordinated and sponsored the 2009 Luzerne County Envirothon on April 22, 2009. The event, which was held at PPL Susquehanna Riverlands in Berwick, is for Luzerne County high school students in grades 9 – 12. Thirty-four teams of students from 10 schools were tested on their knowledge of the environment at five testing stations: Aquatics, Forestry, Soils, Wildlife, and a Current Issue, which changes each year. The 2009 Current Issue was “*Biodiversity in a Changing World*”.



One hundred students making up 34 teams from the following schools participated in the 2009 Envirothon: James M. Coughlin JSHS, Crestwood JSHS, GAR JSHS, Greater Nanticoke Area JSHS, Hanover Area JSHS, Hazleton Area JSHS, Elmer L. Meyers JSHS, Pittston Area JSHS, Wyoming Valley West JSHS and Wyoming Area JSHS. **The four top scoring teams were: Wyoming Valley West-Team A, First Place; Wyoming Area-Team B, Second Place; Wyoming Area- Team A, Third Place; and Crestwood- Team B, Fourth Place.** The first place team received a \$250.00 Travel Scholarship from the Luzerne Conservation District to the Pennsylvania State Envirothon.

Partners from the following agencies staffed the various testing stations for the Envirothon: USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation of Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry and Bureau of State Parks.

Volunteers from the Department of Environmental Protection in Wilkes-Barre, district staff and board members, other volunteers assisted with the Envirothon by monitoring teams and stations, by assisting with the scoring, and in other areas as needed. The Lands at Hillside Farms donated chocolate and white milk for the students on the day of the event, and lunch was donated by Domino’s Pizza in Berwick.

Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program

Up until July 1, 2009, the Luzerne Conservation District’s Abandoned Mine Reclamation (AMR) Program provided administrative support to the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR). The district sponsored the grant which provided funding for the EPCAMR staff members who carried out projects and offer technical support on behalf of the EPCAMR organization. Funding is provided by the Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Watershed Management (Section 319) Non-Point Source Grant Program.

The 2009 EPCAMR regular staff members were: EPCAMR Regional Coordinator, Robert Hughes and Watershed Outreach Coordinator, Michael Hewitt.

Information on the EPCAMR program can be obtained at www.orangewaternetwork.org

2009 Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors

Timothy Ference, Chair
Commissioner Stephen Urban, Vice-Chair
Timothy J. Connolly, Jr., Secretary/Treasurer

Joseph Boiwka
Leonard J. Burger, Jr.
William Letwinsky
Bruce Trumbower
Carl Urbanski
Thomas Venesky

Associate Directors:

Rob Andrews
Jack Hanish
John J. Wilkes, Jr.

The Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors holds monthly meetings on the second Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM at the district's office located at 485 Smiths Pond Road, Shavertown, PA 18708. The public is welcome to attend.

2009 Luzerne Conservation District Staff

Joshua Longmore, District Manager
Heather Berlew, Resource Conservation Specialist II
Keith George, Resource Conservation Specialist I
Shawn Rybka, Watershed Program Coordinator
Amy Salansky, Chesapeake Bay Specialist
Aaron Stredny, Resource Conservation Specialist I
Jenn Verry, Secretary/Bookkeeper
Ron Jesse, Building & Grounds Keeper
Michael Hewitt, EPCAMR Watershed Outreach Coordinator*
Robert Hughes, EPCAMR Executive Director*

**Staff members who moved on during 2009.*

Nominating Organizations

The following organizations have been approved by the State Conservation Commissioner to nominate people to serve on the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors. Nominations are given to the Luzerne County Commissioners, and the commissioners appoint district directors from the names provided:

Anthracite Scenic Trails Association
Bloomingdale Grange #536
Greater Wyoming Valley Audubon Society
League of Women Voters, Luzerne County Chapter
Luzerne County Farm Bureau
Luzerne County Federation of Sportsmen
Luzerne County Ponomo Grange
Northeastern Pennsylvania Herpetological Society
Pennsylvania Environmental Council, North East Office

Penn State Cooperative Extension, Luzerne County Office
North Branch Land Trust
Western Pocono Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Wyoming Historical & Geological Society
USDA Farm Service Agency, Luzerne County Office

Cooperating Agencies and Personnel

Partnerships are an extremely important part of successful natural resource stewardship. The Luzerne Conservation District works with many individuals and organizations to accomplish our shared conservation goals. The following individuals work closely with the district staff and board:

Richard Maculaitis, District Conservationist
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Shane Kleiner, Conservation District Field Representative
Peter Tarby, Chesapeake Bay Field Representative
PA Department of Environmental Protection, Northeast Regional Office

Andrew Duncan, Luzerne County Service Forester
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry

We also have numerous partners within the following agencies:

PA Association of Conservation Districts
PA Department of Agriculture
PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources
PA Department of Environmental Protection
PA Environmental Council, Northeast Office
PA Fish & Boat Commission
PA State Conservation Commission
Penn State Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads Studies
Penn State Cooperative Extension
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation & Development Council
USDA Farm Service Agency



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