

Our Team:

2025 Board of Directors:

- John J. Wilkes, Jr., Chair
- John P. Hanish, Jr., Vice-Chair
- Tracey Chonko, Secretary-Treasurer
- Leonard J. Burger, Jr.
- Thomas Herbert
- Gary Moyer, Sr.
- Gregory Wolovich

Associate Directors:

- Timothy Ference, Emeritus
- Jerry George
- Susan Traver

2025 Staff:

- Hunter Bednarczyk, Conservation Coordinator (E&S)
- Keith George, Deputy Director
- Heather Graham, Conservation Coordinator (E&S)
- Lauren Holder, Conservation Specialist (MDC & Edu/Outreach)
- Deborah Josuweit, Office Administrator
- John Levitsky, Watershed Specialist
- Joshua Longmore, Executive Director
- Jennifer Merryman, Agricultural Conservation Specialist
- Michael Schlauch, Conservation Coordinator (Ag & Roads)
- Michael Skokoski, Conservation Technician (MDC)
- Frank Semanski, Building & Grounds Keeper
- Jerry Flynn, Building & Grounds Keeper

Our Programs:

Erosion & Sediment Pollution Control – provides review, permitting, inspections, and voluntary compliance technical services for earth disturbance activities

Agricultural Conservation – provides technical support to plan and implement conservation practices on agricultural lands, including farmland preservation through conservation easements

Watershed Stewardship - provides technical support to plan and implement watershed conservation efforts

Dirt, Gravel, & Low-volume Road Environmental Improvement – provides technical support & grant funding to aid public road owners in implementing environmental improvement projects

Mosquito-borne Disease Control – conducts surveillance and control activities to reduce the threat of mosquito-borne diseases

Conservation Education & Outreach – Each of the district's programs seeks to not only "put conservation on the ground", but they also have a component of education and outreach with the goal of establishing a conservation ethic among the citizens of Luzerne County.

Our Partners:

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

- Esther Ermlick, District Conservationist, USDA NRCS
- Caitlin Connolly, Conservation District Field Representative, PA DEP

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 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 Natural Resources Conservation Service

Nominating Organizations:

The following organizations have been approved by the State Conservation Commission to nominate people to serve on the Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors. Nominations are given to the Luzerne County Council, and council appoints 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
- Northeastern Pennsylvania Herpetological Society
- PA Environmental Council, Northeast Office
- Penn State Cooperative Extension, Luzerne County Board
- North Branch Land Trust
- Western Pocono Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- Luzerne County Historical Society
- USDA Farm Service Agency, Luzerne County Committee

Luzerne Conservation District

Annual Report
2025



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





About Us:

We are a local agency responsible for soil and water conservation programs within Luzerne County. Our primary types of activities include implementing conservation projects, providing technical assistance, conducting education/outreach, and encouraging voluntary compliance with environmental regulations.

We accomplish our mission through cooperation with landowners and land users and by working with other public and private organizations to increase citizen awareness of the responsibility to be good stewards of our natural resources.

As one of the sixty-six county conservation districts in Pennsylvania, we are 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 seven-member board consisting of community volunteers and a member of Luzerne County Council. Currently, the district has eleven staff members who carry out the agency's day-to-day operations. It is the goal of the board and staff to implement programs that best serve the specific needs of the natural resources and people of Luzerne County.

More Work to Do:

- Provide ongoing natural resource conservation assistance to state and federal partners and Luzerne County municipalities, landowners, & land users
- Implement ongoing and new conservation projects on farms and along streams, wetlands, and lakes
- Coordinate the preservation of more Luzerne County farms through the Farmland Preservation Program
- Provide multiple educational opportunities to promote the stewardship of our natural resources

Board Updates

Longtime district director John (Jack) Hanish retired from the board in June 2025 after serving more than 17 years. With deep appreciation for Jack's dedication and guidance over the years, he was presented with recognition for his many years of faithful service to the district and our state association.

Greg Wolovich, who served as a great advocate for the district as the County Council appointee on our board for the last four years, completed his final term at the end of 2025. We are grateful for Greg's active participation and support and wish him well in his future endeavors.



Pictured from L to R: Tom Herbert, LCD Director & PACD NE Region Director; Jack Hanish; Jay Wilkes, LCD Board Chair; Josh Longmore, LCD Executive Director

We were very fortunate to have Susan Traver and Jerry George join the board as Associate Directors in 2025. Their support and input have already been a great encouragement as we continue seeking to improve the district.

The district also welcomes two newly appointed board members in 2026: Patty Krushnowski was appointed as the new County Council Director, and Gary Williams was appointed as a new Public Director. We appreciate the dedicated service and friendship of our former board members and welcome and look forward to working with the new members of our district team.

Funding brought to the county for direct conservation efforts in 2025:
\$1,814,498

Annual Program Accomplishments

- Authorized **66** NPDES permits & approved **32** other Erosion & Sediment Control plans for construction activities
- Responded to **92** complaints related to soil and water issues
- **320** permit applications/plan reviews and **190** site inspections for earth disturbance activities in Luzerne County
- Luzerne County Farmland Preservation Program preserved **4** farms in perpetuity, bringing the total preserved farmland to **4,420 acres**
- Completed **2** roofed manure storage and animal heavy use area stabilization projects on farms in Huntington Township and Sugarloaf Township
- **438** acres of cover crop were planted in Luzerne County through an incentive program made possible by a **Growing Greener Grant** from DEP
- Assisted **4** agricultural producers with REAP tax credit applications
- Provided **\$157,757.12** in municipal grant payments along with technical services for **8** projects to reduce sediment pollution from and improve stormwater management drainage, & road base surfaces on local **dirt, gravel, and low-volume paved roads**
- **10.5** acres of trees planted to establish riparian buffers to protect streams, reforest abandoned mine lands, naturalize stormwater basins, and establish more urban tree plantings
- Responded to over **175** mosquito complaints, set **692** mosquito traps with **81,000** mosquitoes collected for testing for mosquito-borne diseases
- Conducted **39** adulticide control operations and **162** larvicide control operations treating a total of **5,892** acres
- Participated in **11** educational events to increase public awareness and safety

