

Conservation Horizons

Since 1948 * Celebrating 72 years of Conservation, Education & Stewardship

Painting by Robert Sopchick

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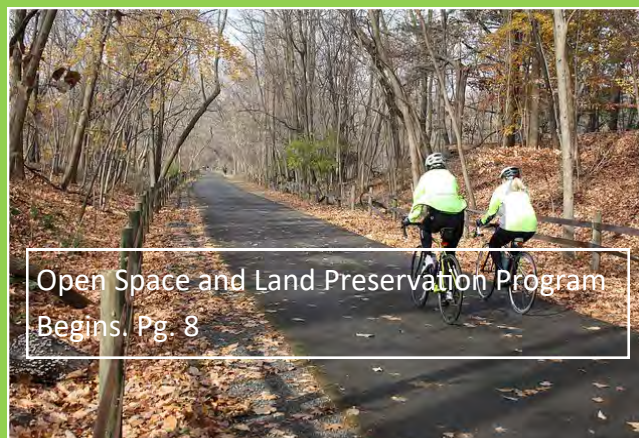
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York County Conservation District

Our purpose is to promote wise use and management of soil, water, air, plants, wildlife and other natural resources through four program areas: Agricultural Resources, Education, Erosion & Sediment Control and Watersheds

We have served York County since 1938, when a group of 554 farmers from 18 townships signed a petition to form the York County Conservation District. This petition was approved by the state Soil Conservation Commission in 1948. Like all Conservation Districts, we are a legal subdivision of state government like townships or school districts. Our budget is supplied by county, state and federal programs, as well as foundation grants & fees for services. And we are managed by a board of environmentally aware York County citizen volunteers.



We have traditionally assisted agricultural producers and other landowners in protecting soils & reducing erosion in our waterways. Today, the District also works with non-agricultural landowners, developers and local government officials to protect our natural resources.

We do this by coupling technical & financial assistance with conservation planning and permitting requirements.

Education is a cornerstone of the District and we target a wide audience about effective pollution-prevention techniques to farmers, landowners, local officials, watershed associations, conservation organizations, civic groups, churches, schools, teachers and youth.

Our Vision - We are committed to the improvement & protection of our environment and the wise use of our County's diverse natural resources.

Our Mission - To achieve that vision we will be proactive providing conservation education, technical services and financial assistance, to enable the citizens of York County be good stewards of our natural resources.

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Conservation Horizons is published 3 times each year & mailed to nearly 8,500 York County homes & businesses at no charge.

Editor/Publisher: Jennifer Risser Computer Technology: Robert Fetter Printer: Graphics Universal, Inc.

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Around the District

A Message from Mark Kimmel, District Manager

I'm pleased to share that the mission of the Conservation District has continued through these past weeks, turned into months of extraordinary circumstances, work from home directives, office skeleton crews and shelter in place orders, while practicing safe distancing measures.

Fortunately, our Ag and our Watershed Teams' duties often involve a single individual working in the field, along a stream or one of our many dirt, gravel or low volume paved roadways. So for these folks, it was nearly business as usual, advancing plans and projects.

And our Erosion Control Team was given a chance to play catch-up on our planning and permit backlogs, as our field inspection work was limited to mostly drive-by observation with follow-up phone calls and emails.

We were rather blessed to have been moving towards laptop computers over the past decade making remote and work from home locations a minor inconvenience. And, we had just enough experience of remote computing to be able to apply this rather quickly to the entire staff. For a few of our team members, internet connections are a daily struggle, but most have been able to set-up shop and keep the ball moving forward with some technical assistance from Rob, our IT miracle worker.

Far from ideal, with extra effort we are getting work accomplished and projects are being completed to improve and protect our soil and water resources. For this we owe a huge THANK YOU to our County Commissioners and Emergency Management Team for leadership; our Conservation District Board Members for their direction, support and encouragement; our clients for their understanding and patience; our customers for their understanding (we cancelled our popular seedling sale); our school aged students who were so disappointed with the cancellation of our Spring Envirothon Events; our staff for their courage and conviction to work in spite of the risks involved; our County support team – (Administration, Human Resources, Facilities Management, Building Safety/Security, Parks & Fleet Management and others I forgot to mention); our partners, all of whom continue to work with us. THANK YOU ALL!

We also owe a huge THANK YOU to those of our staff who had been placed on furlough, returning June 22. Each one I know would much sooner have been working with us, all this while, rather than struggling with unemployment applications and waiting on checks to come to pay their bills. Know that we are pleased to have everyone back! And to our Two new employees waiting to begin work as hiring was delayed, we look forward to starting them soon.

And, I'm pleased to report that even under these challenging circumstances, several new initiatives have been working their way to introduction later this year. The Open Space and Land Preservation Committee has continued to meet in hopes of opening up the program for applications this summer. Also, staff have been working closely with the Lancaster County Conservation District and the PA State Conservation Commission and Department of Agriculture to develop a Conservation Excellence Grant Program as part of the State's first ever Farm Bill Program. Look for more information in this newsletter or on our website for these exciting developments.

Never did I imagine having to pen such an article. Extraordinary times call upon extraordinary people and fortunately for us York County has an abundance of them! Please be safe, be well and be patient as we work through the challenges of the 2020 Pandemic.



Around the District

In May, the District said goodbye to Gary Peacock, our Watershed Specialist for over 20 years. With a love of conservation that was instilled by his father, Gary spent a career working to improve water quality in York County waterways. Not a typical hire, Gary was a seasoned conservation and natural resource professional, having worked for state agencies, and private companies for several decades prior to working for the District.

Gary's accomplishments as Watershed Specialist are numerous. According to Gary, the accomplishment that he is most proud of is the creation of the Watershed Alliance of York County. Early on, he identified the numerous groups in the county that focused on water conservation—with storm water management being the unifying theme. "There were a lot of folks doing a lot of things to improve our waterways, but there was little-to-no communication," he remembers. "So I knew we didn't need one more watershed group" What he determined the various groups *did* need was a forum for education, training and networking—and a way to serve the community. And so the Watershed Alliance of York (WAY) was formed. It was a single organization designed to empower the various groups in their local conservation efforts. In a relatively short period of time, WAY became a success story—effective in education and outreach programs on our many watersheds. WAY has been used as a model across the state, helping people to network and solve watershed problems in their own communities. Gary has been the primary director for WAY since its inception over two decades ago.

Beyond his WAY accomplishments, Gary developed the District's Large Woody Debris grant program, HELP Streams Program, and worked with our Ag team leader—Mark Flaharty—to develop the Exelon Habitat Improvement Program that oversees the administration of \$225,000 annual grant awards for watershed restoration and habitat improvement projects. Further, Gary has administered the York County Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Program that provides over \$600,000 annually to municipalities for road projects that correct pollution problems on unpaved and low volume paved roads. Gary was involved with the York County Coalition for Clean Waters since its inception and worked closely with the York County Planning Commission on many watershed-related initiatives. Gary has been recognized by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts for his outstanding work and contributions that extend beyond York County.

During his retirement, Gary plans to remain involved in watershed activities, especially water quality monitoring. He looks forward to spending his time competing in agility dog shows and traveling around the country. The District extends a heartfelt thank you to Gary for his 21 years of outstanding service!





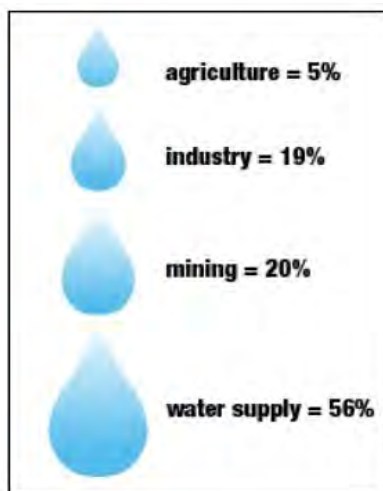
Watersheds

By Emily Neideigh

The 2020 Envirothon Senior High Current Environmental Issue was “Water Resources Management: Local Control and Local Solutions,” specifically as it relates to groundwater. Even though the 2020 Envirothon was canceled, properly managing groundwater remains as important as ever.

Why is groundwater important?

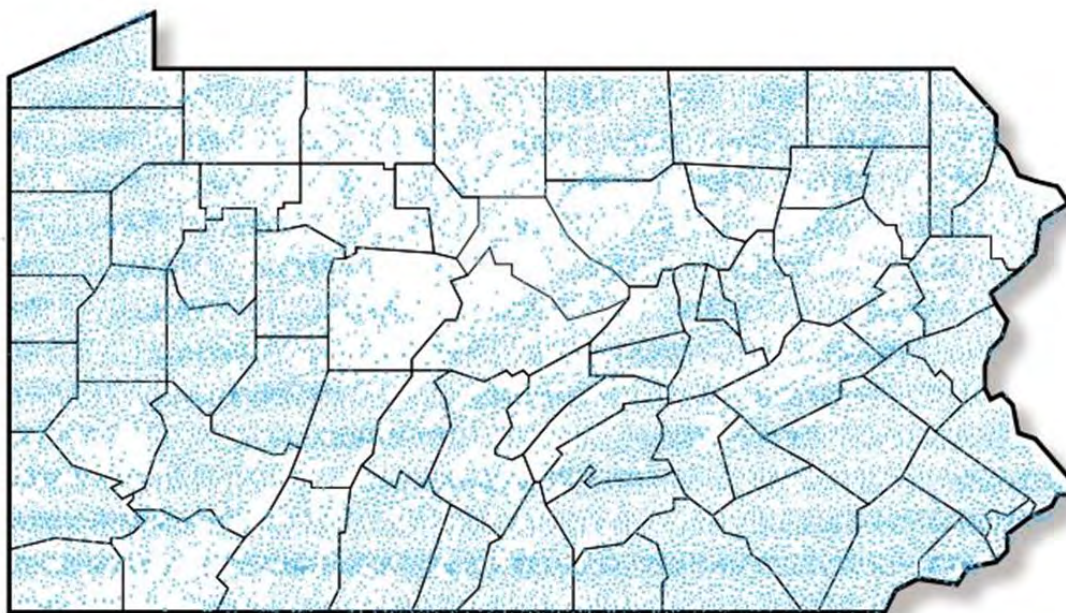
It is estimated that groundwater in Pennsylvania is twice as abundant as the amount of water that flows annually in streams. There are more than one billion gallons of groundwater pumped from aquifers in PA each day. Of that, more than half is used for the domestic water supply. Groundwater also accounts for the majority of the water used in mining, industry, and agricultural activities.



If you get water from a well located on your property, you rely on groundwater. Pennsylvania has the second largest number of private wells in the US, with more than one million private wells supplying water to more than three million rural residents. Additionally, around the state, there are 20,000 new private wells drilled each year.

Human activities, including waste disposal, mining, agriculture, and urbanization, can negatively affect groundwater quality and quantity.

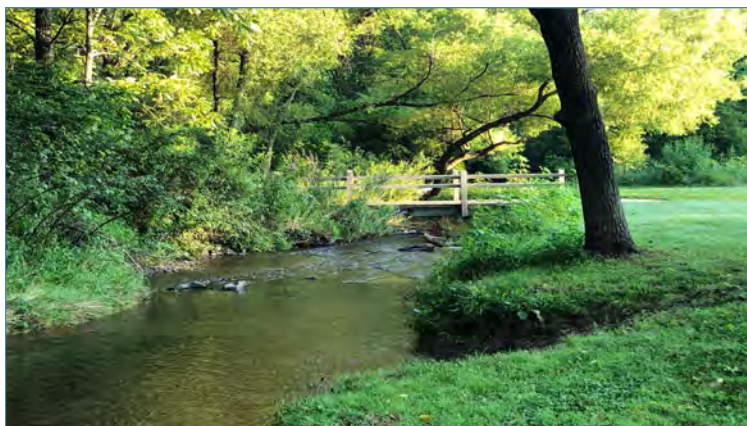
While there are more wells drilled each year, groundwater usage in Pennsylvania has remained fairly stable, due in part to education and water conservation measures. Stay tuned for the next newsletter for what you can do to protect groundwater resources.



Private water wells reportedly drilled between 1963 and 1994 to serve individual homes in Pennsylvania. Each dot represents one drilled well. Data from the *Pennsylvania Groundwater Information System* compiled by the Pennsylvania Geological Survey.

York County Begins Land Preservation Program

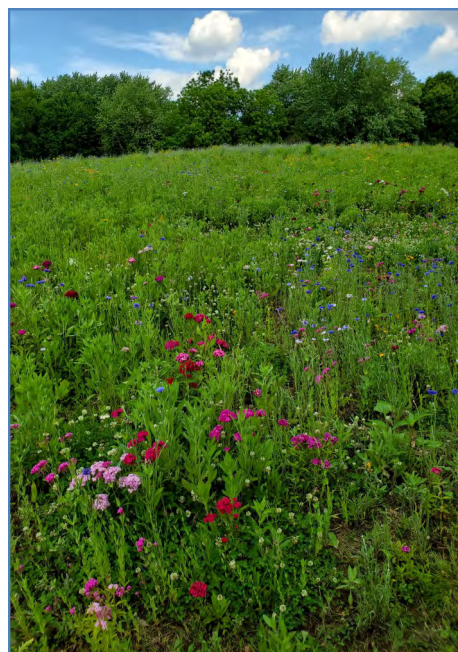
Open space protection is nothing new in York County. Known for its rich agricultural history, the land has always been important to York County. In 1938, the York County Conservation District was founded to promote the wise use of the land, water and soil and to protect the natural resources in York County. Thirty years later, increasing population and diminishing open space led the York County Commissioners to establish the York County Parks Department. The first county park, Rocky Ridge, was acquired that same year (1968). The York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board and the Farm and Natural Lands Trust have been working to preserve high quality agricultural and natural area lands since 1990. In 1992, York County adopted its first comprehensive plan with goals to direct growth and development to appropriate locations, to protect and preserve important natural resources, and to facilitate coordinated planning at all levels. An annual benchmark was established to protect 2,500 acres of land annually, but the County has fallen short of that goal for the past 10 years. There is plenty of land to protect – the issue was a lack of predictable, dedicated funding for land preservation.



The York County Open Space and Land Preservation Committee met for the first time in 2016. Representing the York County Conservation District, the York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board, the Farm and Natural Lands Trust, York County Parks, the York County Planning Commission and the York County Administrator, this group worked resolutely over 2017-2018 researching funding options and making key contacts regarding land protection efforts. In early 2019, public

support of open space protection was discussed. During the summer of 2019, a countywide education and outreach campaign was launched and in late summer public polling activities (random sample and voluntary) were conducted. Combined overall survey results showed overwhelming support for increased land protection efforts and dedicated funding for open space protection.

With the public support for open space protection in concert with their commitment, the York County Commissioners took decisive action at the end of 2019. They passed a resolution formalizing the York County Open Space and Land Preservation Committee and dedicated 0.1 mill in the County budget to preserve open space. 0.09 mill will be directed to projects that will meet the benchmark of annually protecting an average of 2,500 acres, specifically through agricultural preservation easements, natural lands easements, and County parkland acquisition. To support the additional



land preservation activities, funding (0.01 mill) was set aside for the additional staffing needs of the York County Conservation District, York County Ag Land Preserve Board, Farm and Natural Lands Trust, and York County Planning Commission. Funds are also designated for the York County Open Space and Land Preservation Grant Program. . The grant program will provide opportunities to municipalities and non-profits for parkland and open space land acquisition. A portion of the funding will be set aside for municipal planning and ordinance updates that support open space protection. The grant program is planned to open in June or July, with funding announcements made in the fall. Please consult www.yorkopenspace.org for grant program materials and information.



York County is situated within a day's drive of 40% of the US population. It is a beautiful and treasured place and its desirability places development pressures on our area. It is fitting that as our nation marks the 50th anniversary of Earth Day this year, York County launches the Open Space and Land Preservation Program. The tireless work of the York County Open Space and Land Preservation Committee and their stakeholders and partners, along with overwhelming support from York County residents, and the continued commitment and leadership of the York

County Commissioners ensures protected open space for future generations.





Ag Resources

Conservation Excellence Grant Program for Ag Operations

By Stephen Miller

The Conservation Excellence Grant (CEG) Program is a new state funded program with the purpose of providing financial and technical assistance for the implementation of best management practices (BMPs) on agricultural operations. The State Conservation Commission (SCC) administers the program with assistance from county conservation districts delegated certain responsibilities and duties. These delegated responsibilities include reviewing, ranking and approving applications for eligible projects and monitoring project completion. Financial assistance is provided to program applicants through grants, loans and tax credits, or a combination of all three. Priority will be given to applicants who propose utilizing all three methods of funding. Tax credits will be facilitated through the REAP Program administered by the SCC. A single grant awarded by the District to an eligible applicant may not exceed \$250,000. Projects with total costs exceeding \$25,000 are subject to the requirements of the Pennsylvania Prevailing Wage Act. Grant funding is available for small projects with costs totaling less than \$25,000.

The CEG Program funds are for proposed projects that implement planned BMPs from an Ag E&S Plan, Conservation Plan, Nutrient Management Plan or a Manure Management Plan that has been developed for an agricultural operation. Priority will be given to proposed projects that already have planning, engineering, and design work completed. Priority practices include livestock exclusion fencing, off-stream livestock watering facilities, stream crossings, riparian buffers, barnyard and feedlot runoff abatement, waste storage facilities, streambank protection, cover crops, and planning BMPs (Ag E&S Plan, Conservation Plan, Nutrient Management Plan, Manure Management Plan). Combining multiple priority practices improves application scoring. Other non-priority practices that are eligible for funding can be found in the REAP Program BMP list.

CEG Program applications will be available from the Conservation District soon (see website or contact the District). Applicants can also find more details on eligibility, priority projects, and program guidelines and requirements on the Conservation District website at yorkccd.org. For more information or for help completing an application, feel free to contact Mark Flaharty mflaharty@yorkccd.org (mflaharty@yorkccd.org) or Stephen Miller (smiller@yorkccd.org) by email or call the Conservation District at (717) 840-7430.

The York County Ag Preservation Program

Patty McCandless, Program Director

2401 Pleasant Valley Road, Suite 101, Room 145

York, PA 17402



The York County Agricultural Land Preservation Board received 64 applications on 5,749 acres for farmland preservation in 2020. Staff reviewed each easement application to determine if each met the required eligibility criteria. Of the 64 applications, 50 farms on 4,474 acres, moved forward to the ranking phase. During the YCALPB's May 19, 2020 online Board meeting via Webex, the Board began selection with the three highest scoring farms. These three farms will be appraised to determine their agricultural easement value, or development value. In the months ahead, landowners will be contacted according to the list of scores, and given the opportunity to have their farm appraised to determine the easement value. The number of acres we may preserve will be determined by the funding received in 2020 and 2021. Recall there will be no February 2021 application round. The Board and staff will continue to process farms from this list of ranked applicants over the next year.

In early June, landowners were sent their individual 2020 Farmland Ranking Worksheets. Also sent was the list of all scores for this Application Round. Landowners are encouraged to call or email our agency to discuss their application, if they have questions. After June 22, 2020 we may begin meeting with clients in our office contingent upon following CDC recommendations, i.e. masks, social distancing, etc. Please call for an appointment.

County Ag Land Preservation Boards across the state have been notified by the PDA - Bureau of Farmland Preservation that state 2020 funds have been reduced due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The PA Ag Land Preservation Board had set a statewide spending threshold in February of 2020 for \$43 Million for farmland preservation efforts across Pennsylvania, however, that allocation was reduced to \$38 Million following the Declaration of Emergency by Governor Wolf. We anticipate a final report following the PA Agricultural Land Preservation Board's June 11, 2020 state board meeting. Follow us on the county webpage to find information on the final farmland preservation funds for 2020.

Please know that your opinion is critical when talking with your legislator and our county commissioners. You have a role to play when state and county government officials make the tough decision on what programs to fund. Please let your area legislators and our county commissioners know your thoughts on the importance of preserving farmland in York County. The County remains committed to the funds they allocated for 2020 land preservation efforts. Thank you County Commissioners!

Please consider visiting our website, www.yorkcountypa.gov to follow our News, Links, and Updates. Scores have been posted following the 2020 application round. Find our map of preserved farms. Thank you York County for your ongoing support of York County's farmland preservation efforts to protect our working lands.





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July 2020

July 9 YCCD Board Mtg - 7:00 pm
July 23 Dirt Gravel Low Volume Roads Application Deadline

August 2020

August 13 Annual Conservation Awards Picnic
August 20 DGLVR QAB Meeting

September 2020

Sept 10 YCCD Board Mtg - 7:00 pm
Sept 18 13th Annual Clay Shoot
Central Penn Sporting Clays— noon
Sept 20-26 Watershed Weekends

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