



Luzerne
Conservation District 



2008 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

2008 was a year of transition for the Luzerne Conservation District. Along with the rest of the country, the district experienced financial pressures related to the worldwide economic recession. We were able to make some adjustments that enabled us to continue to provide quality public service and that prepared us for a leaner budget in 2009. Many of those adjustments related to personnel.

We had a lot of personnel changes in 2008. Five employees left the district (voluntarily), and four new employees joined us. Dave Moss, Jennie Kramer, and Tanya Dierolf went on to jobs elsewhere. Jeff Peters and Sue Kolb both moved out of state. All of them are missed.

Fortunately, before Sue Kolb left for the Midwest, she was able to spend a few weeks training her successor Jenn Verry. Jenn caught right on and has proved to be a great addition to the district team.

Other new team members include Amy Salansky, our new Chesapeake Bay Technician and Keith George and Aaron Stredny, our new E&S Program Conservation Technicians. After hiring Amy as a part-time secretary, it quickly became evident that her experience and passion for agriculture made her a perfect fit for the job when the district's Chesapeake Bay Technician position came open. We moved her in to that program, and Amy is building a great reputation among colleagues and constituents. Likewise, Keith and Aaron rolled up their sleeves and got busy learning and working in our always-busy Erosion & Sediment Control Program. They have done a great job continuing where their predecessors Dave Moss and Jeff Peters left off.

Unfortunately, due to the financial pressures mentioned above, we were not able to fill the Conservation Education Coordinator position when Tanya Dierolf moved on. However, that doesn't mean that we've abandoned the very important responsibility of educating the public on the conservation of natural resources. We're incorporating conservation education into all of the district's programs; and other staff members are pitching in to continue providing opportunities like our annual Envirothon, Conservation Day, and other workshops and programs.

We've experienced a lot of transition in 2008, but we've been fortunate to gain new employees who are of the same quality as the ones who've moved on. Although some of the faces have changed, the Luzerne Conservation District team remains one that I am proud to lead as we strive to provide dedicated, quality 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 ten staff members including: the District Manager, the Secretary/Bookkeeper, the Chesapeake Bay Technician, a Resource Conservation Specialist, two Erosion & Sediment Control Program Conservation Technicians, the Watershed Program Coordinator, the EPCAMR Executive Director, the EPCAMR Watershed Outreach 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 2008:

Activity	Total
E&S Plan Reviews	251
NPDES General Permits	75
NPDES Individual Permits	5
Total Disturbed Acres	1288
Total Project Acres	2916
Site Inspections	339
Complaint Investigations (delegated)	109
Complaint Investigations (non-delegated, referred to other agencies)	15

E&S Program staff members had many public outreach and technical assistance contacts with the regulated community and the general public in 2008 (2,316 occurrences). The district also partnered with the Wyoming and Lackawanna County Conservation Districts in hosting the 14th Annual Contractors/Engineers Workshop at Keystone College.

Chesapeake Bay 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 2008, the district's Chesapeake Bay Program work included a cover crop incentives program, educational workshops for homeowners, stormwater management, and a grant program for small streambank stabilization projects. Most of these projects are funded through DEP's Chesapeake Bay Special Projects Grant Program. The district's Chesapeake Bay Program Conservation Technician continued implementing special projects from previous years. The following projects were worked on in 2008:

January 2008 - A No-Till Workshop was held for landowners and producers to discuss no-till farming methods. Joel Myers, from the PA No-till Alliance discussed the importance of continuous no-tilling.

September 2008 - A small streambank stabilization project was completed. An 80% cost share of \$5,440 was paid from "Old Bay" monies.

September 2008 - The Luzerne Conservation District held two No-till Field Days in two different areas of Luzerne County. The morning session was held at PJ and Amy Salansky's farm in the northern part of the County with 27 people in attendance. The second was held at Lenny Burger's Farm in Drums with 12 in attendance. Joel Myers, No-till Alliance Coordinator; Melissa Lehman, NRCS; and Tom Strazlecki and Helena Chemical all gave presentations. Pesticide credits were offered.

October 2008 - There were 12 participants in the Cover Crop Program. The total number of acres was 245 and the payout was \$5,630.00.

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 2008:

Education and Outreach:

- Partnered with Penn State Cooperative Extension to hold a workshop on backyard conservation. The workshop was a Conservation Field Day and had 45 people in attendance.
- Coordinated Luzerne Conservation District third annual banquet which profited over \$17,000 that went toward education and outreach projects.
- Participated in the planning of the Northeast Regional Contractors Workshop.

Grants:

- **Luzerne County Streambank Stabilization Program** – The Luzerne Conservation District received a Growing Greener II Grant in 2005 in the amount of \$57,528 to facilitate this program. The primary goal of the Luzerne County Streambank Stabilization Program is to protect the county's water resources by reducing sediment pollution from stream bank erosion. This, in turn, will result in the reduction of sediment and other pollutants to downstream water bodies, including the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. Sediment is, by volume, the leading cause of non-point source pollution to the waters of Pennsylvania. The district continued working on projects under this grant in 2008, completing its final project located in Kingston Township on Toby's Creek at a cost of \$19,312.98 and one project with Chesapeake Bay Special Project funding for \$5,440.00 located in Kingston Township on Abrahams Creek.
- **Luzerne County Dirt and Gravel Roads Best Management Practice Program (D&G Roads BMP Program)** - The primary goal of the program is to protect the county's water resources through the reduction of dust and sediment pollution from dirt and gravel roads. This, in turn, will result in the reduction of sediment and other pollutants to downstream water bodies, including the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. This program was created to enhance funding of the districts D&G roads program. The district received a Growing Greener Grant under this program in the amount \$74,000. In 2008 the remaining funding for the grant went to Jackson Twp for payment for the Steele Rd project in the amount of \$913.60 and Dorrance Twp for the Taney Rd project in the amount of \$10,246.26
- **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 2007. The project is expected to be completed in the fall of 2009.

Technical Assistance and Training:

- Provided assistance to Bowman's Creek Watershed Association, Toby Creek Watershed Association, Friends of the Nescopeck, and Hick's Creek Watershed Associations with outreach programs, tree plantings, grant opportunities, and watershed 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 watershed formation and sustainability.
- Attended 3 multiple-day trainings ranging in topics from Environmentally Sensitive Dirt and Gravel Roads to Streamside Clean-up.
- Assisted residents of Luzerne County with technical advice on streambank erosion and permitting.

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 Luzerne Conservation District also obtained funding through DEP Growing Greener Grant program to help supplement the funding it received from the State Conservation Commission.



The 2008 county-wide grant total from the district's regular Dirt & Gravel Road Program allocation was \$33,524.40. There were a total of two

projects. Townships benefiting from these grants were Fairmount Township, with a project on Pine Creek Road and Jackson Township with a project on Steele 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 2008, some of those efforts included: continued maintenance of the Luzerne Conservation District website (www.luzernecd.org); our third Annual District Banquet; and the 2008 Luzerne County Envirothon.

Annual Banquet:

In 2008 the Luzerne Conservation District held its second annual banquet. The event was a great success, and we were able to raise over \$17,000 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 2008 awardees:

Stanley M. Sowa Jr. Conservationist of the Year Award
Rick Koval

Lewis Rinehimer Conservation Farmer Award
Jeff Bloss

Conservation Educator Award
Damien Rutkoski
Wyoming Area High School

Watershed Stewardship Award
Joe Ackourey

EPCAMR Partnership Award
Diane Madl
PA DCNR, Nescopeck State Park

2007 Luzerne County Envirothon Winner
MMI Preparatory School
Anthony Gennaro, Advisor

Envirothon:



The Envirothon is an annual environmental competition for high school students. The Luzerne Conservation District coordinated and sponsored the 2008 Luzerne County Envirothon on April 17, 2008. The event, which was held at PPL Riverlands in Berwick, is for Luzerne County high school students in grades 9 – 12. Thirty-five teams of students from 12 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 2008 Current Issue was “*County Recreational Impacts on the Environment*”

One hundred and fifty students making up 35 teams from the following schools participated in the 2008 Envirothon: James M. Coughlin JSHS, Crestwood JSHS, GAR JSHS, Greater Nanticoke Area JSHS, Hanover Area JSHS, Hazleton Area JSHS, Elmer L. Meyers JSHS, MMI Preparatory School, Northwest Area JSHS, Pittston Area JSHS, Wyoming Valley West JSHS and Wyoming Area JSHS. **The three top scoring teams were: Crestwood, First Place; Wyoming Area, Second Place; and Hazleton Area, Third 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

The Luzerne Conservation District's Abandoned Mine Reclamation (AMR) Program provides administrative support to the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR). The district sponsors the grant which provides funding for the EPCAMR staff members who carry 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 2008 EPCAMR regular staff members were: EPCAMR Executive Director, Robert Hughes and Watershed Outreach Coordinator, Michael Hewitt. Carly Truman, a part-time summer intern funded in part by the Office of Surface Mining, also joined the staff.

Information on the EPCAMR program, along with the 2008 Annual Report, can be obtained at: www.orangewaternetwork.org

2008 Luzerne Conservation District Board of Directors

Thomas Venesky, Chair
Timothy Ference, Vice Chair
Timothy J. Connolly, Jr., Secretary/Treasurer
Joseph Boiwka
Leonard J. Burger, Jr.
William Letwinsky
Commissioner Gregory Skrepenak
Bruce Trumbower
Carl Urbanski

Associate Directors:

Rob Andrews
Jack Hanish
Commissioner Stephen Urban

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.

2008 Luzerne Conservation District Staff

Joshua Longmore, District Manager
Heather Berlew, Resource Conservation Specialist II
Tanya Dierolf, Conservation Education Coordinator*
Keith George, E&S Program Conservation Technician**
Susan Kolb, Administrator*
Jennie Kramer, Chesapeake Bay Technician*
David Moss, Resource Conservation Specialist I*
Jeffrey Peters, Resource Conservation Specialist I*
Shawn Rybka, Watershed Program Coordinator
Amy Salansky, Chesapeake Bay Technician**
Aaron Stredny, E&S Program Conservation Technician**
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 2008.*

***Staff members who joined the team in 2008.*

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



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