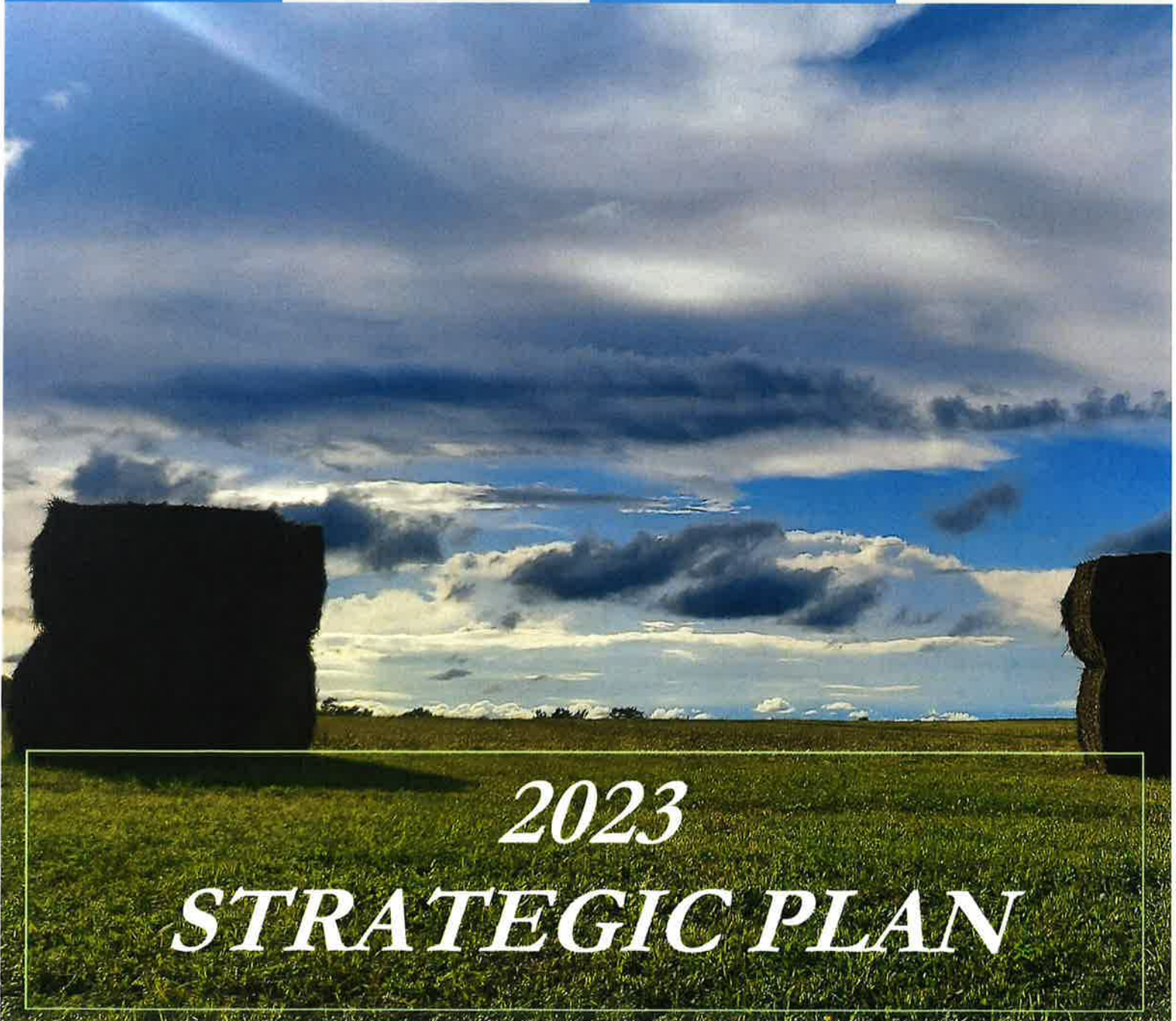




Potter County Conservation District



*2023
STRATEGIC PLAN*

Potter County Conservation District 2023 Strategic Plan

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INTRODUCTION:

Pennsylvania's conservation districts were established in 1945 when the General Assembly passed the Soil Conservation District Act, Act 217 of the General Assembly commonly known as the Conservation District Law. For over 55 years the state's 66 conservation districts have served as leaders, addressing local natural resource concerns at the county level. The county conservation districts work to help people and communities take care of the natural resources in their area including soil, water, wildlife, trees and other plants. Using natural resources wisely helps to ensure their availability well into the future.

County conservation districts operate under the belief that conservation works best when local people, those who live and work in the area, play an active role in managing their natural resources. Because conservation districts are familiar with local issues, they are able to manage the resources of a particular area.

Conservation districts stand ready to offer technical assistance and educational guidance to land owners and managers, local governments, teachers, students and people from every walk of life. They can provide information and help on matters such as reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality, or preventing hazardous situations such as floods.

Conservation districts work to better the community as a whole. They help citizens identify available natural resources and establish plans for their wise use. Because conservation districts have established a solid network of available human resources, they frequently work cooperatively across county and state lines.

County conservation districts are efficient and effective. They work with private citizens, partner with state and federal government agencies and facilitate the work of many private organizations and other conservation districts. The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. provides the collective voice for conservation districts at the state and national level.

Conservation districts were initially established to promote the value of conserving soil and water to farmers. Today's districts have evolved; their areas of interest and expertise involve almost every area of natural resource conservation imaginable.

The Potter County Conservation District was declared a District by the Board of County Commissioners on November 28th, 1945, and became the Commonwealth's first Conservation District. Today, the Potter County Conservation District is administered by a board of seven (7) Directors – Four (4) farmer directors, two (2) public directors, and one (1) County Commissioner. Directors are appointed by a developed list of nominating organizations. Four (4) associate directors are also involved with the functions of the District. Six (6) staff people conduct the day-to-day operations of the District. These positions include a District Manager, Administrative Assistant, Resource Conservationist, Agricultural Conservation Technician (ACT Tech), Watershed/Nutrient Management Technician, and a Dirt and Gravel Roads/Low Volume Roads Project Specialist.

The primary goal of the District is the development, improvement and conservation of the County's soil, water and related resources as well as educating the community in various conservation and environmental practices and methods.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Earl Brown – Chairman, Public Director

Phil Lehman – Vice Chairman, Farmer Director

Jon Blass – Treasurer, Farmer Director

Stan Hess - Alternate Treasurer, Public Director

Barry Hayman - Commissioner Director

Chris Robbins - Farmer Director

Jeff Cady - Farmer Director

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS:

Dr. Pete Ryan

Bart Ianson

CC Felker

Donald Heiner Jr.

Betsy Long

STAFF:

Jason Childs, District Manager

Jared Dickerson, Watershed/Nutrient Management Technician

Glenn Dunn II, Resource Conservationist

Andrew Mickey, LVR/DGR Project Specialist

Emily Shosh, Communications & Outreach Advisor

WHO WE ARE:

The Potter County Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who aims to be a leader in promoting the stewardship of our natural resources to current and future generations. The district prides itself on being a grassroot, boots on the ground, organization who works with the cooperation of the farming community, environmental community, governmental entities and agencies, as well as the general public as a whole to implement projects and programs within Potter County.

BENEFICIARIES:

The clients of the Potter County Conservation District's services are the citizens, landowners, homeowners, businesses, local governments, visitors, schools, volunteers, and future generations of Potter County.

PHILOSOPHY:

The Potter County Conservation by taking a grassroot, boots on the ground role in local conservation strives to be a leader to help coordinate programs and information between the District and other governmental agencies to educate and guide development to manage and improve the environment.

VISION:

The Potter County Conservation District is dedicated to establishing innovative conservation practices with leadership and education through partnership with the community we serve. It is our goal to foster stewardship of our natural resources by inspiring current and future generations to preserve the legacy of conservation.

MISSION:

The Potter County Conservation District will provide leadership to ensure the protection of the natural resources of Potter County through project implementation, educational programs, technical assistance, and by fostering public and private partnerships.

PLAN DEVELOPMENT:

The Potter County Conservation District held a series of four meetings beginning on April 5th, 2016 and concluding on May 3rd, 2016 to develop a new Strategic Plan. The sessions were facilitated by Penn State Extension staff Don Tanner and Neal Fogle. The sessions were attended by approximately 20 individuals representing Conservation District Directors and staff; cooperating agency representatives; and representatives from the District's nominating organizations.

During the session the facilitators reviewed the current role of the Conservation District by conducting an organizational assessment. During the process the current Vision and Mission statements were reviewed and updated.

A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats) Analysis was performed. Our external opportunities and threats were also reviewed as they pertained to the political, economic, social, and technological environment. Participants also identified what major trends or forces of change can be expected during the next 2 to 5 years.

Through these exercises six goals were established. A portion of the 3rd session and a majority of the 4th and final session were held among the Directors, staff, and cooperating agency representatives to determine the objectives and action steps for each of these objectives.

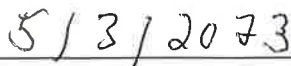
The original plan was approved on the 7th day of June 2016, by the Potter County Conservation District Board of Directors.

In 2023 the Potter County Conservation District held two sessions to update the Strategic Plan that was originally developed in 2016. A stakeholder meeting was held on February 28th, 2023 followed by a organizational (board of directors and staff) meeting on March 7th, 2023. A stakeholder and internal survey was distributed as part of the process to obtain additional input.

Approval: On this 2nd day of May 2023, the Potter County Conservation District Board of Directors hereby approved by resolution this update to this Strategic Business Plan.



Board Chair (signature)



Date



District Manager (signature)



Date

HOW PRIORITIES WERE CHOSEN:

The identification of the key issues affecting the District was derived through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. This useful method allowed the group to think about the issues currently facing the District as well as the issues the District would likely face in the future; and identify whether they are strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and/or threats. This listing provides a useful framework for understanding these issues and for developing a plan for building on strengths, resolving weaknesses, taking advantage of opportunities, and minimizing threats.

The ideas in the SWOT analysis are the groundwork for developing the District's vision and mission statements, set and prioritize goals and objectives, and create action plans to implement these goals and objectives.

GOALS

- A. Organizational Excellence
- B. Soil Conservation Including Regulations & Permitting
- C. Water Resource Management
- D. Land Use & Stewardship
- E. Education and Community Engagement

GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTION STEPS

Goal A: Organizational Excellence.

Objective #1: Encourage professional development.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Develop a professional development scale/tiered salary system	District Manager/Personnel Committee	Fall of 2025
Evaluate staff capacity to carry out current and future programs.	District Manager/Board of Directors	Annually
Continue to have staff present on their programs at Board meeting on a rotational basis. Each staff would report 3 times annually.	Staff	On-going/monthly
Provide an internship. (paid or unpaid)	District Manager	On-going/annually
Expand workplace benefits and employee recognition	District Manager/Board of Directors	Fall of 2028

Objective #2: Encourage Board Participation in District events, programs, projects and committees.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Hold at least one committee meeting annually for each committee.	Committee Advisor	March 2024
Encourage Board to Attend at least 3 professional development opportunities.	District Manager	March 2024
Communicate with the Board on District Functions including programs, workshops, and projects. Get all board members to attend at 3 events per year.	All staff	December 2024

Objective #3: Incorporate new technologies in the workplace to streamline work.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Utilize Survey 123, ArcGIS, other apps to collect field data and streamline.	All staff / County Planning / GIS	2025
Display annual projects and permitted sites on District website	District Manager	2025

Goal B: Soil Conservation Including Regulations and Permitting

Objective # 1: Chapter 102/105 – Minimize erosion impacts through education, assistance, planning, Plan reviews and approval, and implementation of BMPs.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Continue to provide or assist in at least 2 independent E&S/Soil and Water	Resource Conservation	On-going / yearly

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Workshops in addition to those sponsored by the District Workgroup.	Technician	
Review plans within required timeframes specified as part of the Permit Decision Guarantee, SOPs, and those established by the District.	Resource Conservation Technician	On-going / yearly

Objective # 2: Stormwater (watershed based) assessments.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Conduct a road sedimentation survey in a specific watershed location.	All staff	2025
Identify sources contributing to increased stormwater concerns within a specific watershed.	All staff	2025

Objective # 3: Act 167 Stormwater Management update and coordination with the county planning office.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Assist with update and implementation of the County Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan (ordinance).	Resource Conservation Technician / District Manager	Spring 2024 – update every 5 years as required by DEP

Goal C: Water Resource Management

Objective #1: Restore streams and riparian corridors.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Obtain additional grant funding by applying for a minimum of 2 grants per year.	Staff and District Manager	Annually
Increase volunteer participation by maintaining and fostering partnerships with other organizations.	Watershed Specialist	5 years
Restore instream habitat, bank stability, and aquatic connectivity by improving 1 mile of stream per year.	Watershed Groups, PFBC, Landowners, Watershed Specialist	Annually
Restore the riparian buffers on 2/3 of completed stream restoration projects and a minimum of one other site annually by planting various native tree/shrub species.	Watershed Specialist, PFBC, Landowners, Watershed Groups	Annually
Assist with 3 aquatic organism passage barrier removal projects	Watershed Specialist, DGLVR Project Specialist	Annually

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Objective # 2: Maintain current water monitoring efforts.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Increase data analysis to determine changes in water quality.	Watershed Specialist	Annually
Display projects and monitoring efforts spatially - mapping	All staff	2025

Objective # 3: Increase education about water quality related issues.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Obtain funding by applying for 2 grants per year.	Watershed Specialist and District Manager	Annually
Conduct at least 5 youth education programs about water quality (chemistry and biology) and riparian buffers per year.	Watershed Specialist	Annually
Conduct at least 3 adult education programs about water quality, stormwater, or other water conservation BMP (ex: buffers) benefits.	Watershed Specialist / District Manager	Annually

Objective # 4: Strengthen municipal participation, cooperation, and understanding within the DGLVR program and increase program efficiency within 5 years.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Increase District website resources to provide technical assistance and illustrate high priorities.	DGLVR Project Specialist / District Manager	1 year - 2024
Digitize work plan template and program ranking form	DGLVR Project Specialist / District Manager / Potter County Planning	February 2024
Complete countywide unpaved road assessment and update potential unpaved road worksite inventory.	DGLVR Project Specialist / Intern	2026

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Objective # 5: Dirt and Gravel Roads – Continue to promote the use of ESM practices by leveraging outside funds and expanding partnerships.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Educate municipalities to implement ESM practices outside the program by hosting a minimum of 2 training opportunities per year.	DGLVR Project Specialist	Annually
Ensure project implementation of all DGLVR Program projects awarded.	DGLVR Project Specialist	Annually
Secure and leverage outside funding on a minimum of 1 project to increase available DGLVR Program funding.	DGLVR Project Specialist	Annually

Goal D: Land Use and Stewardship

Objective # 1: Obtain a commitment for one farm in the farmland preservation program in the next three years.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Promote and host an educational meeting for farmland preservation for 10 participants and obtain 3 applications.	Communications and Outreach Advisor / District Manager	2 years
Discuss Ag Security Areas at an event/workshop	Communications and Outreach Advisor	2 years
Hold a signup period for farmland preservation.	Communication and Outreach Advisor	3 years
Rank and commit to find the highest ranking application.	Communication and Outreach Advisor	4 years

Objective # 2: Aid in the development of manure management plans, conservation/Ag E&S plans (and ensuring implementation) for 10 producers per year.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Identify a minimum of 10 producers without manure and Ag E&S plans.	NM Technician	Annually
Assist at least 10 producers with developing any, or all, of the required manure management, Ag E&S, or conservation plans.	NM Technician	Annually
Ensure and assist with the implementation of developed plans.	NM Technician / ACT Technician	Annually
Complete plan reviews in the specified timeframes	NM Technician	As required

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Objective # 3: Encourage the adoption and use of no-till cropping systems, implement Ag BMPs, and prioritizing soil health practices to benefit water quality within Potter County.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Promote and host at least 2 field days, demonstration plots, and/or workshops for producers.	ACT Technician, NM Tech, NRCS, Field and Forage agent	Fall 2026
Prioritize no-till equipment usage. Use committee as a guide. Update policies/lease agreement.	ACT Technician / District Manager / Board	Spring 2023
Implement Ag practices utilizing the ACAP Program and other outside grants / funding opportunities.	NM Tech / ACT Tech	2024
Seek funding and implement cover crops, manure injection, liming, and soil testing for a minimum of 500 crop acres.	ACT Technician and NM Tech	2025

Objective 4: Prevent, Control, and Eradicate Invasive Species

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Provide technical assistance and education for invasives identification and control	Communications and Outreach Advisor, staff	On-going
Obtain and administer grant funding for invasive species education, monitoring, control, and eradication projects	Communications and Outreach Advisor	1 year
Prioritize invasive work based on landscape value, EDRR species presence, and partnering agency goals	Communications and Outreach Advisor	1 year

Goal E: Education and Community Engagement

Objective # 1: Hold a minimum of 8 Ag adult educational events in the next 3 years.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Hold Crops and Planting Clinic and ACAP Outreach meeting annually.	Staff, PSU Extension, NRCS, speakers	Annually
Hold or assist in 2 agricultural events that promote soil health and/or BMPs that benefit water quality.	Staff, PSU Extension, NRCS, speakers	3 years – fall 2026

Objective # 2: Increase public education.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Develop, fund, and host at least 2 adult oriented workshops for the general public annually.	Watershed Specialist and Communication/Outreach Advisor	Annually
Offer presentations and programs as requested among the local community and conservation groups throughout the state. (minimum of 5 per year)	Communications and Outreach Advisor	Annually

Objective # 3: Update the current website to showcase current and future projects. Incorporate technology into the website and workplace (day to day operations).

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Incorporate Survey 123 / ArcGIS and other data collection programs into ranking and field data collection.	All staff	2 years – summer 2025
Digitize ranking and inspection forms.	District Manager & Staff	2025
Develop online map utilizing ArcGIS Online to showcase projects on the District website	District Manager, Staff, and County GIS Director	2028

Objective # 4: Promote youth education.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Continue to sponsor and support youth field days including: My Growing Tree, Conservation Field Days, Envirothon, Potter County Junior Conservation School, etc.	District Manager, Board, and Staff, Service Forester, other cooperating agencies	Continuous

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Offer at least 2 lessons in the formal classroom as requested by county teachers and other youth leaders.	Communications and Outreach Advisor, Watershed Specialist	Annually
Offer at least 3 lessons in non-formal settings for community youth groups, scouts, 4H, etc.	Communications and Outreach Advisor	Annually

Objective # 5: Increase public awareness of what the District offers through programs, technical assistance and education.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Maintain the District website and social media pages. Add content weekly to social media pages.	Communications and Outreach Advisor / District Manager	Continuous
Maintain and expand online resources, 360 camera work, YouTube Channel, ArcGIS/mapping, and other digital educational resources.	Communications and Outreach Advisor, staff, GIS/planning	2024
Develop and distribute quarterly newsletters.	Communications and Outreach Advisor / District Manager	July 2023 and ongoing
Promote District projects and programs through local newspapers and other news outlets when advantageous.	Communications and Outreach Advisor	Annually
Attend at least 3 outreach-oriented events per year.	Communications and Outreach Advisor and staff	Annually over the next 5+ years.
Host an annual community conservation dinner/awards ceremony and staff recognition event.	Communication and Outreach Advisor / District Manager / Board	Fall 2024

CONTINUING EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF THE PLAN:

The Strategic Plan is being implemented employing constant communication with the individuals and agencies which support the District on an annual basis. This will help maintain good partnerships and ensure continued support from inside and outside the District. **This plan will be reviewed quarterly at the monthly board meeting by the District Board of Directors, Manager, and Staff over the first 18 months beginning May 2023. After this time the plan will be reviewed every annually, and on an as needed basis.**

DISTRIBUTION

The Strategic Plan update will be distributed to the Potter County Commissioners (Nancy Grupp, Paul Heimel and Barry Hayman), Cooperating Agencies and Nominating Organization (listed below), various stakeholder organizations, as well as to those who make a request.

COOPERATING AGENCIES

STATE CONSERVATION COMMISSION – Doug Wolfgang, Executive Secretary
PENNSYLVANIA ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS (PACD) – Brenda Shambaugh – Executive Director
DEP, WATERSHED MANAGEMENT – Rachael Fish – NC Conservation District Field Rep.
FARM SERVICE AGENCY – Meghan Zylinski - Executive Director
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE – Amanda Murdock - District Conservationist
PENN STATE EXTENSION – Robert Dickenson- Extension Director
POTTER COUNTY PLANNING/GIS COMMISSION – Will Hunt - Director
PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE –
DCNR - BUREAU OF FORESTRY – Christian Nicholas - District Forester
PA FISH & BOAT COMMISSION - Thomas Watson – Waterways Conservation Officer
PA GAME COMMISSION – Luke Mentzer – Game Warden

NOMINATING ORGANIZATIONS

Dairy Herd Improvement Association

Rhoda Lent
681 Brookland Road
Coudersport, PA 16915

Potter County Cooperative Extension

Rob Dickenson
7 Water Street
Coudersport, PA 16915

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Upper Allegheny Watershed Assoc.	Heather McKean PO Box 146 Coudersport, PA 16915
God's Country Chapter of Trout Unlimited	David Saulter PO Box 72 Coudersport, PA 16915
Potter County Holstein Club	Jack Thomas 8 Lehman Rd Ulysses, PA 16948
Genesee Headwaters Watershed Association	Stephen Richard PO Box 145 Genesee, PA 16923
Tioga-Potter Farmers' Association	Jon Blass 943 Brookland Road Coudersport, PA 16915
Potter County Pomona Grange	Elaine Flewellyn 613 S Main Street Ulysses, PA 16948
Potter County Federation of Sportsmen's Club	Paul Lilja 2514 Dividing Ridge Road Coudersport, PA 16915
Farm Service Agency	Meghan Zylinski 103 Market Street Coudersport, PA 16915
Potter County Fair Association	Marsha Prince RR 1 Box 250 Shinglehouse, PA 16748

LIST OF ACRONYMS:

ACAP -	Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program
CD -	Conservation District
DM -	District Manager
RC -	Resource Conservationist

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QAB –	Quality Assurance Board for Dirt & Gravel Road Program
BMP –	Best Management Practice
E&S –	Erosion & Sediment
NPDES –	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
DGR -	Dirt & Gravel Road Program
OGM –	Oil & Gas Mineral Development
NM –	Nutrient Management
SCC –	State Conservation Commission
DEP -	Department of Environmental Protection
DCNR-	Department of Conservation of Natural Resources
DCED –	Department of Community & Economic Development
PACD –	Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
PDA –	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
PFBC –	Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission
PGC –	Pennsylvania Game Commission
FSA –	Farm Service Agency
NRCS –	Natural Resources Conservation Service
UAWA –	Upper Allegheny Watershed Association
GHWA -	Genesee Headwaters Watershed Association
FFWA -	First Fork of the Sinnemahoning Watershed Association
WPC -	Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
KCWA -	Kettle Creek Watershed Association

