



# God's Country Chronicle

Newsletter of the POTTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

## Watershed Work

### Spring 2019 Riparian Plantings

This Spring, the District worked to organize various riparian plantings, two of which were willow stakings, and two more that involved volunteer groups.

"Riparian zones" refer to areas of land surrounding each side of a river or stream. Well-vegetated, untouched riparian zones naturally dissipate stream energy. Proper vegetation and root systems slow the flow of water, which reduces overall soil erosion and flood damage. Riparian zones also provide wildlife habitat, increased biodiversity, and effective wildlife corridors, enabling aquatic and riparian organisms to move along river systems.

On April 27th, 2019 members of the Upper Allegheny Watershed Association and six members of the Beyond the Horizon 4-H Club volunteered to assist with planting trees and shrubs on over

400 feet of streambank, along Sartwell Creek in Roulette Township. Dominion Energy grant funding was acquired by Conservation District Watershed Specialist Jared Dickerson and the Upper Allegheny Watershed Association (UAWA) through the Western PA Conservancy.

Over the past few months PCCD Communications and Outreach Advisor Emily Shosh had been working with the Beyond the Horizon 4-H Club to introduce watershed health topics ranging from Conductivity to Native plants. The Sartwell Creek Riparian Buffer Planting rounded out the students' experience in watershed education. Sycamores, White and Black Spruce, and Highbush Cranberry were chosen for planting. Equipment was provided by DCNR Forestry and UAWA Volunteers.

On Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, our second

group planting took place. With the Potter County Probation Department, 198 shrubs were planted on the Allegheny River, along nearly 700 feet of streambank. The project site is located on Route 49 and is owned by the Coudersport Christian Missionary Alliance Church.

This new vegetation will offer a healthier stream corridor, and an improved wildlife habitat, especially for songbirds and pollinators. Northern Bayberry, Graystem Dogwood, and Nine Bark seedlings were chosen for this project, and were donated to the District from the PA Game Commission's Howards Nursery.

The District is very interested in expanding this Spring-time conservation service. For more information on these Riparian Planting projects and to discuss possible plans for next Spring, please feel free to contact us!

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L—PCCD Educator Emily Shosh assists 4-H students Kynslee and Tucker with their first tree. R—The entire group of 4H, Trout Unlimited, and Upper Allegheny Watershed Association volunteers on the Gehman site after planting over 100 trees.

# Dirt and Gravel / Low Volume Roads Program

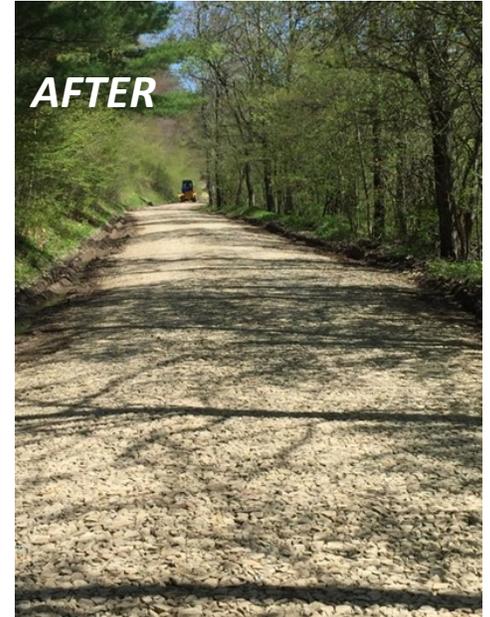
## DG/LVR Municipalities Breakfast Meeting



On a blustery, snowy April morning, township workers from across the county met at the Lumber Museum for a hot breakfast and various DG/LVR program updates. In total, 46 attendees were present, including District staff and four presenters from the Center for Dirt and Gravel Studies and PA One Call. Breakfast was catered by Frosty Hollow Bed and Breakfast. New DGR Specialist Andrew Mickey started the morning off by introducing himself, and providing other District-specific updates. Presenters' topics included pipe installation, new PA One Call regulations, and prevailing wage. Upcoming projects were announced, and the members of program's QAB board were introduced to the group. We intend to hold a meeting like this again next year, and continue with the event annually!

## Dwight Creek Project—Allegany Township

Dwight Creek Road was in poor condition due to soft road material, no crown, and drainage issues. The road parallels Dwight Creek, a high quality, Class A wild trout stream. The project is still in progress and includes seven cross pipes, stream habitat structures, and a base build with #3 stone and 2A limestone. The work done through this project will greatly reduce sediment pollution to the stream and create a smooth, long-lasting driving surface that will require far less maintenance.



Left: Failing mafia blocks, which would eventually cause the road bank to collapse into the stream bank, being removed

Middle: Completed three sections of log mudsill cribbing holding the road in place and providing fish habitat

Right: #3 stone being placed on lower section of road to build up road profile and stop rutting

# Education and Outreach

## 2019 Envirothon Competition

On May 2, the 2019 Envirothon Competition was held at the PA Lumber Museum. 95 students from the county's five public schools competed, including four Junior teams comprised of 7th and 8th graders. The Junior teams were a new addition this year, and may lead to the creation of a separate Junior Envirothon Event in the future. Students were tested on Aquatics, Wildlife, Forestry, and Soils, and the Current Issue category, which was centered on Sustainable Agriculture this year. External agency personnel working with the District to administer testing included Service Foresters Mike Cole and Eric Monger (Forestry), Wildlife Conservation Officer Mark Fair (Wildlife), NRCS Soil Conservationist Ashlynn Dunn (Soils), County GIS Technician Charlie Tuttle (Current Issue) and Amidea Daniels with the PA Fish and Boat Commission (Aquatics).

Sponsors of the event this year included the Conservation District, JKLM Energy LLC., the Upper Allegheny Watershed Association, Kessel Construction, Inc., Wending Creek Farms, God's Country Chapter Trout Unlimited, Genesee Headwaters Watershed Association, the First Fork Watershed Association, the Pennsylvania Envirothon Inc., the Black Forest Conservation Association, and Sheetz, Inc. Congrats to our winners and competitive Junior Teams!



First place team "Granny's Flying Squirrels" of Coudersport and Envirothon coordinators: (Students with medals, L-R) Logan Rogers, Matthew Daniels, Cladia Miller, and Hope Daisley.



Winning Junior Envirothon team (back row L-R) PCCD Watershed Specialist and Envirothon Coordinator Jared Dickerson, Sawyer Batterson, (front row L-R) Kevin Sherry, Nash Delp, Alissa Dunn, and Sophia Snowman.

## 5th Grade Conservation Field Days

On May 14th and 15th, 2019, the Conservation District held the annual 5th Grade Conservation Field Days at the Millport Fairgrounds, open to all 5th grade students of Potter County. In total, 160 students from Austin, Coudersport, Oswayo Valley, Northern Potter, and Galeton School Districts were able to attend – making this one of the District's best-attended education events of the year. Stations included Storm water education with Danielle Rhea of Penn State Extension, Macroinvertebrates with Conservation District Watershed Specialist Jared Dickerson, Birding with Conservation District Educator Emily Shosh, Maple Syrup Production with Conservation District Resource Conservationist Glenn Dunn II, Waterfowl and Aquatic Habitats with Wildlife Conservation Officer Mark Fair, and Tree Identification with DCNR Service Forester Eric Monger. Students learned the role each of these topics plays in conservation, citizen science, and environmental stewardship. Special thanks go to the McKean County Conservation District and our local DCNR State Parks for their generous loan of equipment. Thanks also goes out to the aforementioned agency presenters, and the invaluable support of the Millport Fairgrounds Association.



**LEFT:** Emily shares about types of birds and their roles in conservation. Students later practiced using binoculars to identify birds around the fairgrounds.



**RIGHT:** Jared explains Macroinvertebrates through the game Macro Mania.

## My Growing Tree Programs

Each year, the District visits county elementary classes in the Spring to distribute eastern hemlock trees, and share the message of conservation through tree planting and forestry concepts. This year, all 5 county school districts and about 200 students took part.

DCNR Service Forester Eric Monger and District Watershed Specialist Jared Dickerson shared the importance of trees for soil and water health, and significance in the local economy. The program encourages students to plant with their families, tending to trees in their own backyard for years to come.



*Eric Monger and Jared Dickerson visiting the Oswayo Valley Elementary class of Mrs. Hartzell*

## Pollinator Conservation—Women in the Wilds at Sinnemahoning State Park



*The ladies hard at work constructing their solitary bee nesting tubes!*

On June 8th, 2019 Emily Shosh and Associate Director Kathy Mitchell presented a Pollinator program during Sinnemahoning State Park's Summer Women in the Wilds Event. The program included information on Native Bees, Honeybees, Butterflies, Beetles, and many other pollinators and their significance in Conservation across the Country.

In the United States, bees alone are responsible for one of every three bites the average American eats, which equates billions in crop production. Emily especially stressed the need for best management prac-

tices in backyard conservation, including reduced pesticide and herbicide use, planting native flowers and/or shrubs that provide a succession of blooms, and avoiding plants treated with Neonicotinoid pesticides – which are used on many plants from larger chain stores.

Attendees were also able to construct their own solitary bee nest to take home, which provides cover to some of our most efficient native bee populations. These bees, including native Leafcutter and Mason bees, house their larva into pithy stems, leaving them to over-winter and

emerge the following spring. The District is currently taking part in a Penn State study on bee nesting, using a prototype similar to what was constructed during Women in the Wilds. Nest building projects are an excellent citizen science opportunity, and a great venture in pollinator conservation and backyards stewardship.

Event attendees also took a walk around the park to take inventory of active pollinator sites and beneficial native flowers present near the park visitor's center. For more info on Pollinators, contact Emily at 814-320-4017, or [e.shosh@pottercd.com](mailto:e.shosh@pottercd.com)

**UPCOMING!**

# Backyard Conservation Workshop Series

*Sponsored by:*



Join us for a **FREE** sampling of backyard conservation topics through the summer! Each program will include materials, free giveaway's, and door prizes to help you implement conservation practices at your home.

PROGRAM TOPICS:

**Homewater Management-Hamlin Lake Park, Smethport—June 20th, 6:30 PM—8:00 PM**

⇒ *Learn about Rain barrels and rain gardens, construct and take home a rain barrel*

**Native and Invasive Plants—Sinnemahoning State Park, Austin—July 11th, 6:30 PM—8:00 PM**

⇒ *Practice ID of native and invasive plants, enter to win one of three gardening door prizes*

**Soil Health and Vermiculture-Graham's Geenhouse, Bradford—August 8th, 6:30 PM—8:00 PM**

⇒ *Learn about the value of soil health and vermiculture, construct and take home a vermiculture system*



## Registration is Required!

To register or for more information, contact Emily Shosh at the Potter County Office, 814-320-4017, or contact Jody Groshek at the McKean County Office, 814-887-4001.

# Agriculture

## Rotational Grazing Starter Kit to be Offered

This June, the Potter County Conservation District received \$2,000.00 in PACD Non Point Source Pollution (NPS) grant funding to offer a rotational grazing trail kit to local livestock producers interested in this type of management system. Grant funding will also provide for homeowner stream stewardship education. "Conservation district staff will use this grant funding for an adult education program. Clean water is important to our communities.

Working together, we can all do our part to ensure there is enough clean water for future generations," said Jason Childs, District Manager.

Sean Rukgaber of NRCS assisted in selection of equipment to be included, and where to implement. For this year, the equipment will be used on Jeff Cady's property. The full rotational grazing trial kit will include the hoses, tanks, and pumps for watering livestock. It will also include poly wire and rib-

bon (two fence options), posts (2 different types), and gate handles to construct the paddocks. The equipment will be implemented on dairy farmer Jeff Cady's property this summer, and a field day will be hosted in September to debut results and feedback of the system.

PACD NPS grant funding was also awarded to Jared Dickerson, Watershed Specialist, to hold a stream stewardship workshop, which will take place this fall. Contact us for more information on this event and future grazing projects!



*The benefits of Rotational grazing improve the health of the environment and livestock. Some benefits include increased forage production, increased soil fertility, lower stress on animals, and better assessment of overall animal health.*

### **NO-TILL ACERAGE**

*As of June 18,2019, here are the usages for each no-till drill rental we offer to the public.*

**Great Plains 1006— 121 Acres**

**John Deere 1590— 100 Acres**

**John Deere 7000 Cornplanter—48.5 Acres**

***TOTAL = 269.5 of No-till implementation!***

# EASTERN HELLBENDER

## Pennsylvania's Official State Amphibian



photo-Christopher Guerrisi

by **Robert B.J. Small**  
*PFBC Commissioner*

"It was no small feat to get this recognition for the hellbender," said Governor Tom Wolf before signing a bill that designated the Eastern Hellbender, *Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis*, as Pennsylvania's official state amphibian.

"I want to thank the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) and also acknowledge the hard work of the Foundation's Student Leadership Program," said the Governor. "The voices of members can clearly make a difference here in Harrisburg."

Since 2016, CBF's Student Leadership Council (SLC) members have spearheaded the campaign to recognize the Eastern Hellbender and create greater awareness of the critical need to reduce pollution in Pennsylvania's rivers and streams.

Hellbenders are an indicator species for clean water. They survive where there is cold, clear, swift-running water.

Students studied hellbenders extensively, installed nesting boxes in several Pennsylvania streams and wrote the first draft of a bill that was sponsored by Senator Gene Yaw (R-Lycoming) and passed the Senate last year. Though the bill did not pass the House before the session ended, the students did not give up.

When the new session began in January, the students again found Senator Yaw to be their champion. He reintroduced the effort as Senate Bill 9, which was signed into law by Governor Wolf. The bill was passed overwhelmingly by the Senate and House on February 4 and April 16 respectively.

"This bill is more than just about naming a new symbol for our state," said Senator Gene Yaw. "It is about fostering youth involvement in the legislative process, and championing an issue through that process. It's about advocating for clean water in Pennsylvania and promoting conservation programs that improve water quality for all of our species. The uniqueness of the hellbender and its contribution to aquatic biological diversity are adequate justifications for this remarkable designation. I applaud Governor Wolf for recognizing the importance of the hellbender to our state, and also for affirming for our young citizens that they can make a difference if they get involved in the governmental process."

"It is my hope that other student leaders across the Commonwealth may be inspired by our work," said SLC President Emma Stone. "That they too will take action on behalf of the hellbender and clean water in the Commonwealth."

Making change is possible, no matter your age. All you need is dedication, support and, of course, a worthy cause. The hellbender is a worthy cause."

"Today's ceremony is about more than a declaration of an official state amphibian. It's about reaffirming our commitment to protecting our waters in Pennsylvania," said Governor Tom Wolf. "Clean water is critical for the hellbender, and we need to continue to do our part to improve water quality in the Commonwealth so that the state first amphibian can thrive."

Hellbenders prefer rocky streambeds. Their spongelike bodies allow them to squeeze into crevices, which they use for protection and for nesting. Folds of wrinkled skin provide a large surface through which they draw most of their oxygen.

Senator Yaw remembered days as a youngster catching hellbenders in the local creek. "They are a natural barometer of water quality, and they live where the water is clean," said Senator Yaw. "If they are surviving in streams, it is a good sign for the water quality. They are nature's own testing kit for good water quality."

A lack of streamside trees along Commonwealth waterways allows waters to warm, polluted runoff to enter rivers and streams, and silt to build up in streambeds. As a result, habitat for hellbenders has been degraded and hellbender numbers have been decimated in streams where they were plentiful as recently as 1990.

"I am proud to have introduced a companion bill to Senator Yaw's and am happy that this legislation has made its way to the governor's desk," said Representative Sheryl Delozier (R-Cumberland).

"As much as this effort has been about the hellbender and clean water, it's also a story about the creativity and passion of these student leaders," said Harry Campbell, CBF's Executive Director in Pennsylvania.

The students' hellbender campaign garnered local, state and national attention, making it onto the front page of the Wall Street Journal and as subject of the iconic Mark Trail Sunday comic strip. A radio station in Canada interviewed Emma Stone.

"CBF would like to thank Governor Wolf, Senator Yaw and all the legislators who supported both the hellbender and our student leaders," said SLC Coordinator Emily Thorpe.

For more information about the Eastern Hellbender campaign, visit [www.cbf.org/hellbender](http://www.cbf.org/hellbender). ☐

The Eastern Hellbender was named our State amphibian this year. Hellbenders are the largest amphibian in North America, and native to PA. On average, they reach 12-15 inches long!



# POTTER COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

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## District Directors

- Earl Brown, *Chairman*
- Phil Lehman, *Vice-Chairman*
- Jon Blass, *Treasurer*
- Stan Hess, *Alternate Treasurer*
- Doug Morely, *Commissioner Director*
- Kevin Smoker, *Farmer Director*
- Chris Robbins, *Farmer Director*

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*Watershed Specialist / NM Technician*  
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*LV / DGR Project Specialist*  
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## Associate Directors

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| Dr. Peter Ryan | Bart lanson    |
| Jeff Cady      | Charlie Tuttle |
| C.C. Felker    | Kathy Mitchell |
| Don Heiner     |                |

**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.

**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.



