

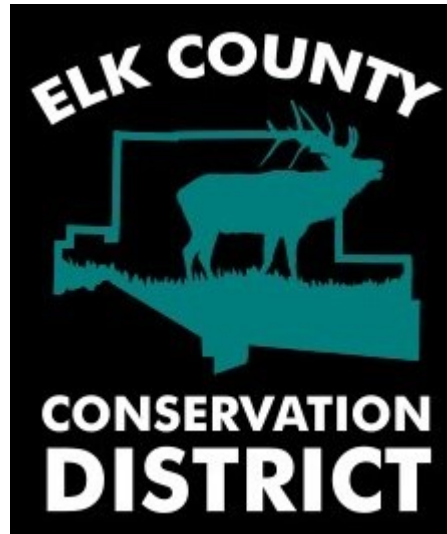
Elk County Conservation District Annual Report



2019



The cover photo features a newly-emerged dragonfly found near Elk Creek. Dragonflies have three life stages: egg, nymph, and adult. When the nymph transitions to adult, it molts and leaves behind its former exoskeleton. The molt can be seen below the dragonfly in the photo attached to the branch. Photo by Watershed Technician, Stephanie Stoughton.



Directors & Staff

District Staff

Steven Putt- District Manager

Kate Wehler- Resource Conservation Technician

Kelsey Kilhoffer- Resource Conservation Technician

Stephanie Stoughton- Watershed Technician

David Stubber -Solid Waste Enforcement Officer

Diane Myers- Secretary

Associate Directors

Jim McCluskey

Chris Smith

Director Emeritus

Ron McMinn

2018 Board of Directors

Russ Braun, Chairman

Mike Hovatter, Vice-Chairman

Jerry Olsen, Secretary/Treasurer

Matt Quesenberry, Commissioner

Joe Labant, Public Director

Andy Sorg, Farmer Director

Ray McMinn, Farmer Director

County Commissioners

Matt Quesenberry

Daniel Freeburg

Janis Kemmer

2018 Elk Expo

District staff delivered a stormwater management seminar during the Elk Expo at the Elk Country Visitor's Center. Each participant was entered into a raffle for a rain barrel, which was given away at the conclusion of the talk.



Career Day at the Elk Country Visitor Center



Conservation District staff, Kate & Stephanie, attended a career day at the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette on March 23rd. This event was open to middle school, high school, or college level students interested in pursuing a career in natural resources. The District joined other professionals from : The Keystone Elk Country Alliance, Pa Game Commission, Pa Fish and Boat Commission, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, US Forest Service, & US Army Corps of Engineers.

5th Annual Elk County Junior Envirothon 2018

Bendigo, PA-

The Elk County Conservation District held it's 5th Annual Jr. Envirothon on May 2, 2018 at Bendigo State Park. Teams from St. Marys, Elk County Catholic, and Johnsonburg Middle Schools participated in the categories of Forestry, Wildlife, Aquatics, and Soils. After the competition, the students participated in a walk on the Eagle Trail led by Erica with DCNR. All of the teams did a fantastic job and we plan to continue this event in the future. All 6th through 8th grade students in Elk County are encouraged to participate in this environmental learning experience.

Special thanks to DNCR and Bendigo State Park for assisting at the Junior Envirothon and allowing the use of their facilities.

Pictured Right:

First place winners from St. Marys Area Middle School: Zach Mosier, Andy DePrater, and Caleb Mattiuz.

Pictured Below:

Participants from Elk County Catholic Middle School, Johnsonburg Area Middle School, and St. Marys Area Middle School .

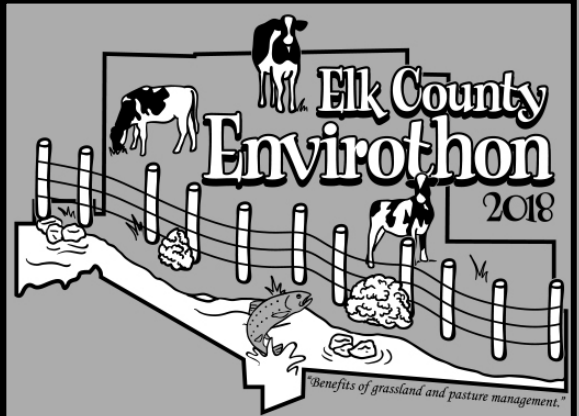
Lunch , t-shirts, and awards were provided to all participants and their advisors.



Envirothon 2018



Students had a special session at Study Day. WCOs Jason Wagner and Sue Edmiston brought a nuisance bear, trapped in Caledonia, and allowed the students to collect health data from the bear and place a tag in its ear. Pictured left is Isabel Ginther tagging the ear under the guidance of WCO Jason Wagner.



Each participant received a t-shirt coordinated with the current issue (left) for the 2018 Envirothon: "Benefits of grassland and pasture management."

Ten teams from Johnsonburg, Ridgway and Elk County Catholic competed in our 15th annual Envirothon. Students were tested on their knowledge of forestry, aquatics, wildlife, soils and pasture & grassland management. Each participant received a t-shirt and was treated to a lunch of walking tacos. First and second place teams were awarded trophies to take back to their school. Members of the first place team were also given plaques from Elkwood Arts. Envirothon would not be possible without help from cooperating agencies: Western PA Conservancy, PA Game Commission, PA Fish & Boat Commission, Penn State Extension, DCNR, Keystone Elk Country Alliance, and the St. Marys Sportsmen's Club.



First Place—Johnsonburg
Kyle Walker, Josh Calla, Austin Hoover,
Zac Hodgdon, and Zac Rigard



Second Place—Ridgway
Isabel Ginther, Gabbie Rohr, Maddie Taylor,
Bailey Bauer, and Carly Renwick

Agricultural Bus Tour

The District hosted a day-long Agricultural Bus tour which showcased Hoffman Appalachian Farm, Straub Brewery, and Chocolate Drop Farm. Twenty people attended to learn about local farm-to-table initiatives in the St. Marys community.



1



(LEFT) The tour began at Hoffman Appalachian Farm to learn how hops are grown and harvested for beer production. Attendees also learned about Certified Naturally Grown requirements and saw hop trellises.

(RIGHT) The next stop on the tour was Straub Brewery. Tour participants learned how hops are processed at the brewery to make beer in small batches in their hometown of Saint Marys.



2



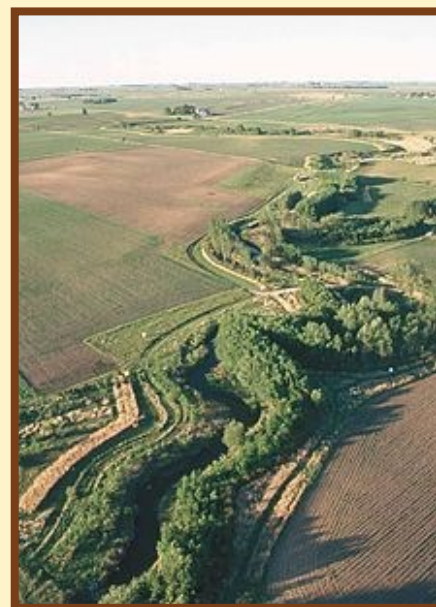
3

(LEFT) Chocolate Drop Farm was the final stop of the tour. At Chocolate Drop Farm, Hereford Cattle are fed the spent grains from making beer at Straub Brewery.

Tour participants were treated to lunch from Tablespoons Café and granola bars from New Horizons Healthy Foods—both St. Marys businesses which use locally-sourced ingredients for their products.

Farmers Winter Meetings

On March 7th and 14th, the Elk County Conservation District held winter meetings for farmers at the Elk County Courthouse Annex and the ECCD office, respectively. Speakers included Dr. Kimberly Bohn (pictured right) with Penn State Extension, Tim Elder with NRCS, Joel Semke with the State Conservation Commission, and Kelsey Kilhoffer with the ECCD. Topics encompassed riparian buffers, rotational grazing, the REAP tax credit program, and manure management. The ECCD provided free soil test kits to all attendees.



The ECCD provided all attendees pizza and refreshments. Financial support for this project was provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection through the Clean Water Fund.



Forestry Days for Districts



On April 27th, Mike Hovatter, District Forester with LandVest Forest Management Services, hosted an educational tour for District staff. The tour included site visits to active and future harvest sites. Great discussions were had about healthy, sustainable forest management. District staff also learned about timber harvesting equipment and safety components of active sites.

Did you know?

According to Penn State Extension: The leading hardwood-producing state in the nation, Pennsylvania, is home to more than 2,100 forest-products companies and 500,000 forest landowners. More than 80,000 Pennsylvanians work in the forest-products industry, accounting for about one of every nine manufacturing jobs in the state. The industry generates nearly \$12 billion in annual sales and contributes about \$19 billion a year to the state's economy.



Staff from Elk, Cameron, Warren, Jefferson, and Huntingdon County Conservation Districts attended this event. We hope to make Forestry Days an annual opportunity for local conservation districts.

Clarion River Cleanup



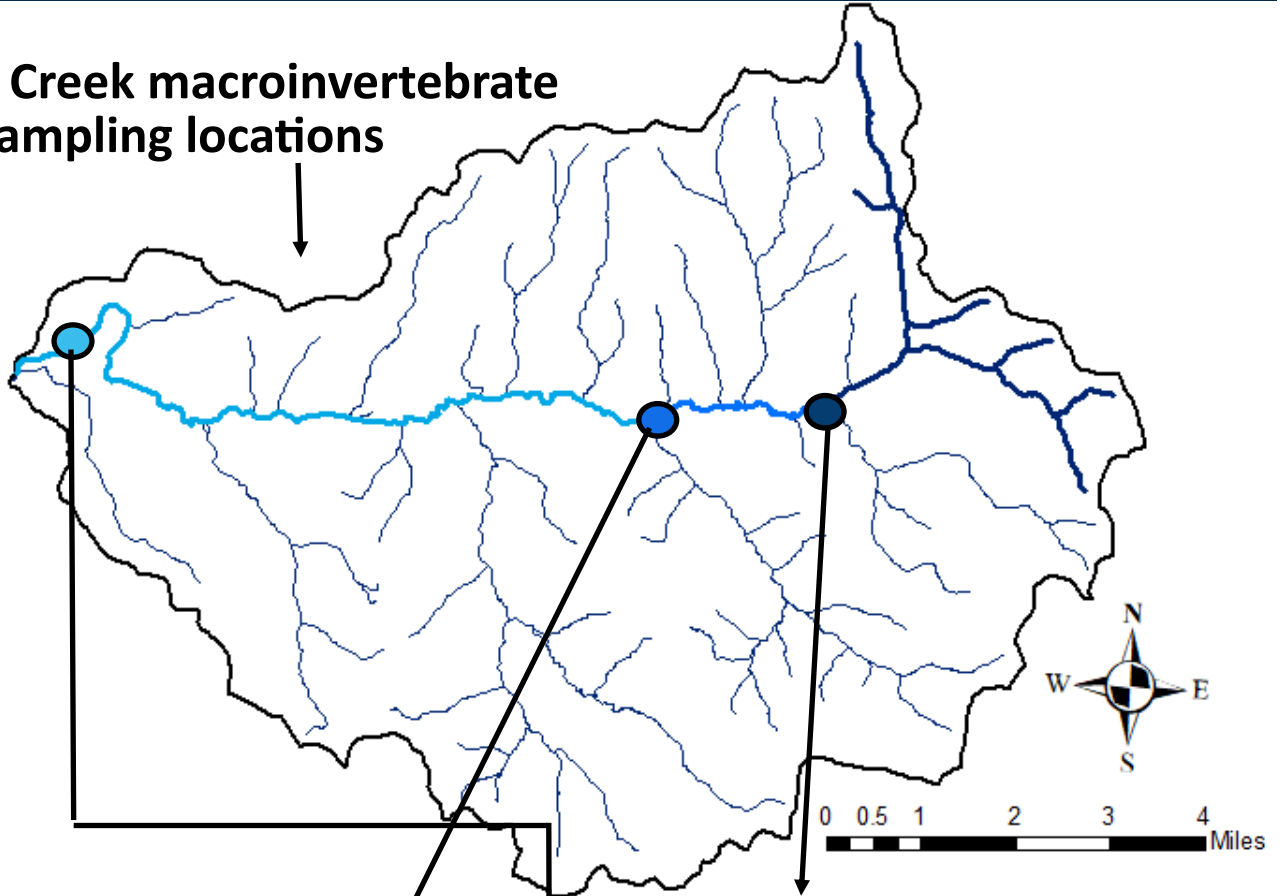
The 5th annual Clarion River Cleanup was held on September 27th, 2018. It was a great success thanks to the St. Marys High School Ecology Club, PA Game Commission, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Western PA Conservancy, Elk County Community Recycling Center, and Elk County Solid Waste Authority. Together, we were able to clean up 2.5 miles of Clarion River shoreline.



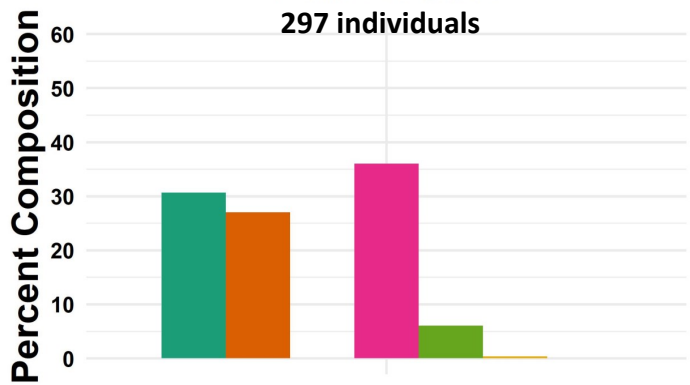
(LEFT) Students pose with some of the 2,080lbs of litter they picked up along the Clarion River shoreline and riparian area. Litter included a metal drum, 4 tires, a wooden spool, a children's kitchen play-set, and 4 televisions, among other items.

Elk Creek Project Update

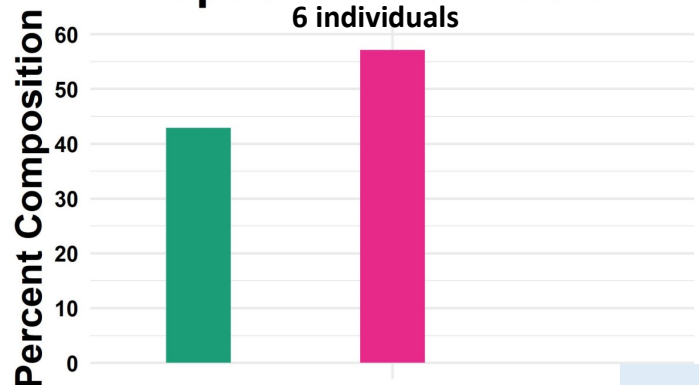
Elk Creek macroinvertebrate sampling locations



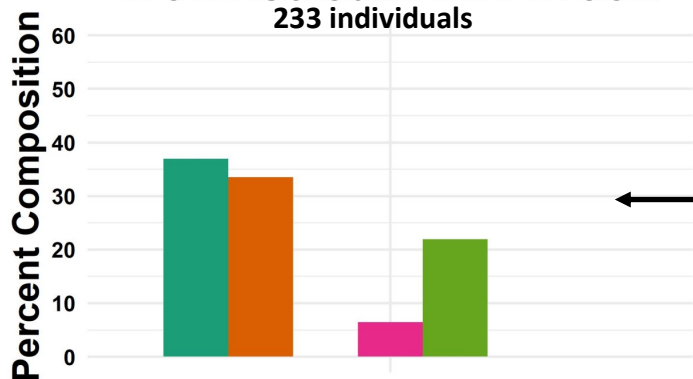
● Elk Creek
297 individuals



● Upstream Elk Creek
6 individuals



● Downstream Elk Creek
233 individuals



Functional Feeding Group



Elk Creek Project Update

What does it mean?

Macroinvertebrates are often categorized by their primary food source and how they acquire food. The categories are referred to as “functional feeding groups” or “FFGs.” Stephanie and intern, Tara Fisher, sampled Elk Creek and its tributaries for macroinvertebrates in August 2018. From those samples, Stephanie identified the macroinvertebrates and grouped them according to their FFGs so that we could compare macroinvertebrate communities between streams. In Elk Creek, we noticed FFGs varied between the upstream, middle, and downstream sections of Elk Creek.

The upstream Elk Creek macroinvertebrate community looks different from the middle and downstream sections.

- Upstream Elk Creek only had predators and filterers present: Hydropsychidae and Athericidae.
- There were only 6 individuals present upstream.
- The upstream taxa were somewhat tolerant, meaning they can tolerate moderate levels of water pollution.



Hydropsychidae
Net-Spinning Caddisfly



Athericidae
Water Snipe Fly

Conclusions:

- Upstream Elk Creek *may* have a lack of habitat and food required by macroinvertebrates of other feeding groups. This could help explain the low population numbers and lack of shredding, scraping, and gathering taxa.

Habitat data for the upstream section supports this statement, as upstream Elk Creek had moderate channel alteration and lower overall habitat quality compared to the middle and upstream sections of Elk Creek. Both habitat metrics were rated as “sub-optimal” for aquatic life.

- Upstream Elk Creek *may* have water quality degradation. Specific conductivity readings collected from the upstream section support this statement. Specific conductivity is a measure of the amount of dissolved ions in the water and can be an indication of water pollution.

The average specific conductivity reading for upstream Elk Creek was 354 us/cm. Normal conductivity for Elk County ranges from 35-75 us/cm.

National Manufacturing Day

Stephanie and Kelsey teamed up with Brian Regan, a process engineer from Domtar, for National Manufacturing Day for 5th graders at South St. Marys Elementary School. Brian taught the students about the paper-making process. Stephanie and Kelsey conducted a wastewater treatment activity with the students. The students, using common household materials, learned how Domtar treats water before and after paper processing.



Ag Literacy Week



On March 19, 2018 Fox Township and Bennett's Valley Elementary Schools, along with other schools in the county, participated in Ag Literacy Week. This is an annual event organized by the Elk County Farm Bureau. Kate Yetzer and Kelsey Kilhoffer, with the Elk County Conservation District, along with Danielle Terbovich, Elk County Farm Bureau Member, read the book "Tyler Makes Pancakes" to Kindergarten through 2nd grade students. The content focused on the connections between farms and every day food items.

Project Learning Tree



On March 8th, staff from the Elk, McKean, Cameron, Potter, and Warren County Conservation Districts, along with members of the Keystone Elk County Alliance (KECA), Penn State Extension and the Cameron County Outdoor Youth Activity Group, attended a Project Learning Tree training at the Sinnemahoning State Park Wildlife Center (Pictured Above). Attendees were taught various different activities that are linked to trees. These activities are able to be incorporated into current youth environmental education programs.

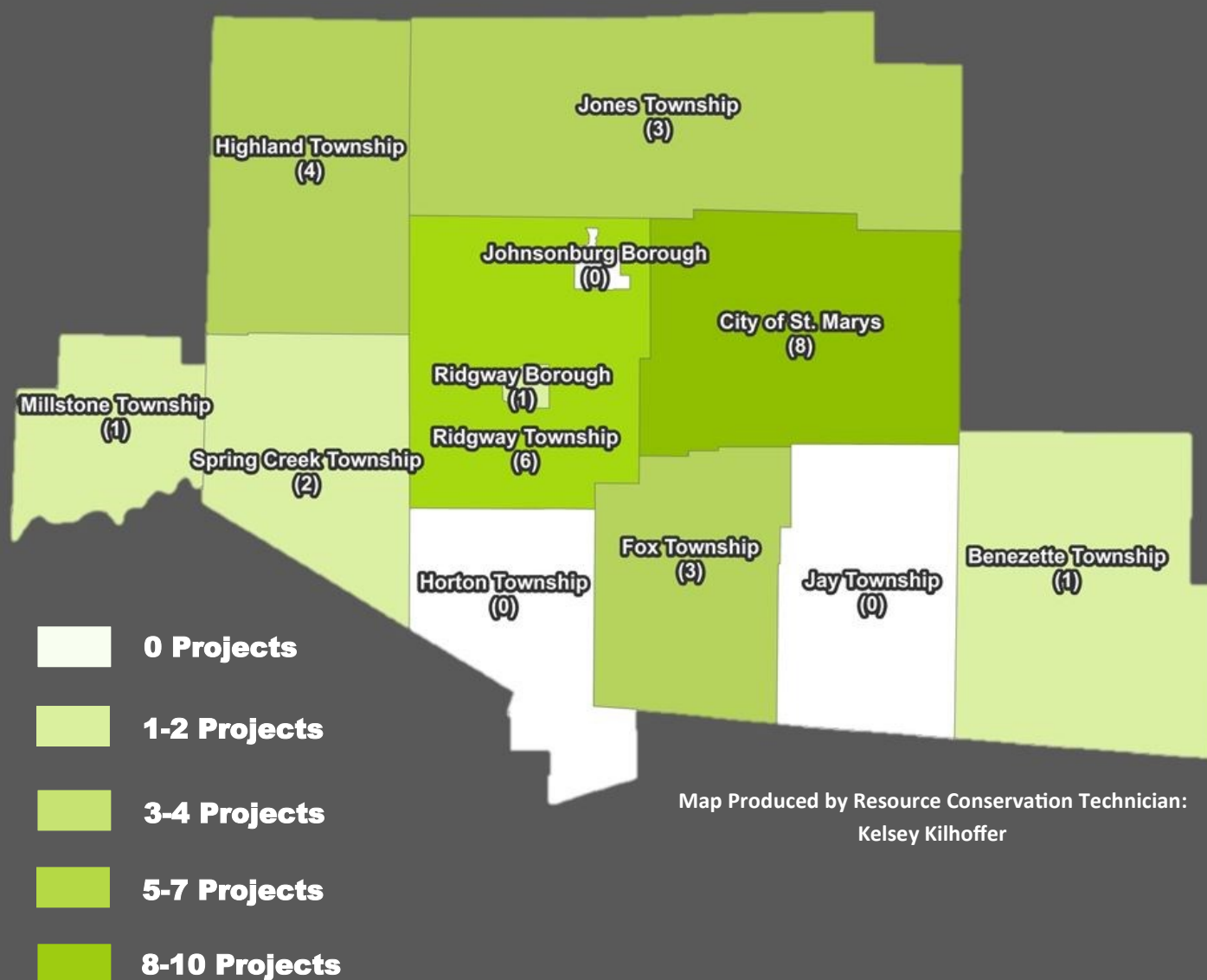
Rain Barrel Workshop

On April 7th, thirty-eight participants attended the Stormwater and Rain Barrel Workshop hosted by the Elk County Planning Department and the Elk County Conservation District. Participants learned about composting, healthy soil, storm water impacts on ecosystems, and how landowners can minimize stormwater on their property. The goal of the workshop was to educate landowners about stormwater issues, and how they can combat those issues using items such as a rain barrel. All attendees received a free 40 gallon rain barrel and a compost bin so they could apply their newly-learned knowledge at their own homes.



Workshop speakers included Stephanie Stoughton (Pictured Left), ECCD Watershed Technician, and Jodi Foster, Elk County Planning Director. Funding for this event was provided by a DEP Education Grant, Elk County, and Seneca Resources.

2018 Elk County E&S Projects by Municipality



In 2018 the Elk County Conservation District approved a total of 32 erosion and sedimentation projects. Projects included NPDES permits, GP permits (stream & wetland crossings and encroachments), ESCG permits (oil and gas related), and small erosion and sedimentation projects. The map above depicts the location of each approved project. Projects tended to be concentrated toward the eastern part of the county in 2018. The City of St. Marys had the highest number of approved projects (8), while Horton Township, Jay Township, & Johnsonburg Borough had the least (0).

BMP Workshop

A Best Management Practices (BMP) workshop was held on February 15, 2018 at the 911 Center in Ridgway. This years' workshop highlighted common sense wetland identification tips, new invasive species, hydraulically applied blankets, and site inspection procedures.

One featured speaker was John Ellis with LSC Environmental Products. John discussed hydraulically applied blankets including where and how they are best applied. He later discussed the maintenance requirements of hydraulically applied blankets.

Joseph Hudson, Watershed Specialist at the Erie County Conservation District, spoke about common sense tips to wetland identification. If a wetland is not easily identifiable, oftentimes it can be mistaken for just a, "wet area" and not an actual "wetland." This is an issue because wetlands are a resource of the commonwealth and have similar protections to streams. Joseph did a fantastic job relating the components of wetlands to everyday situations and scenarios.

Conservation District Staff, Steve and Kate, discussed site inspection procedures related to Chapter 102 regulations and updated invasive species information on the spotted lanternfly. The spotted lanternfly prefers to eat several agricultural crops, including: apples, nut trees, grapes (wine!), and hops (beer!)



Above: John Ellis speaks about hydraulically applied blankets to over 45 attendees.

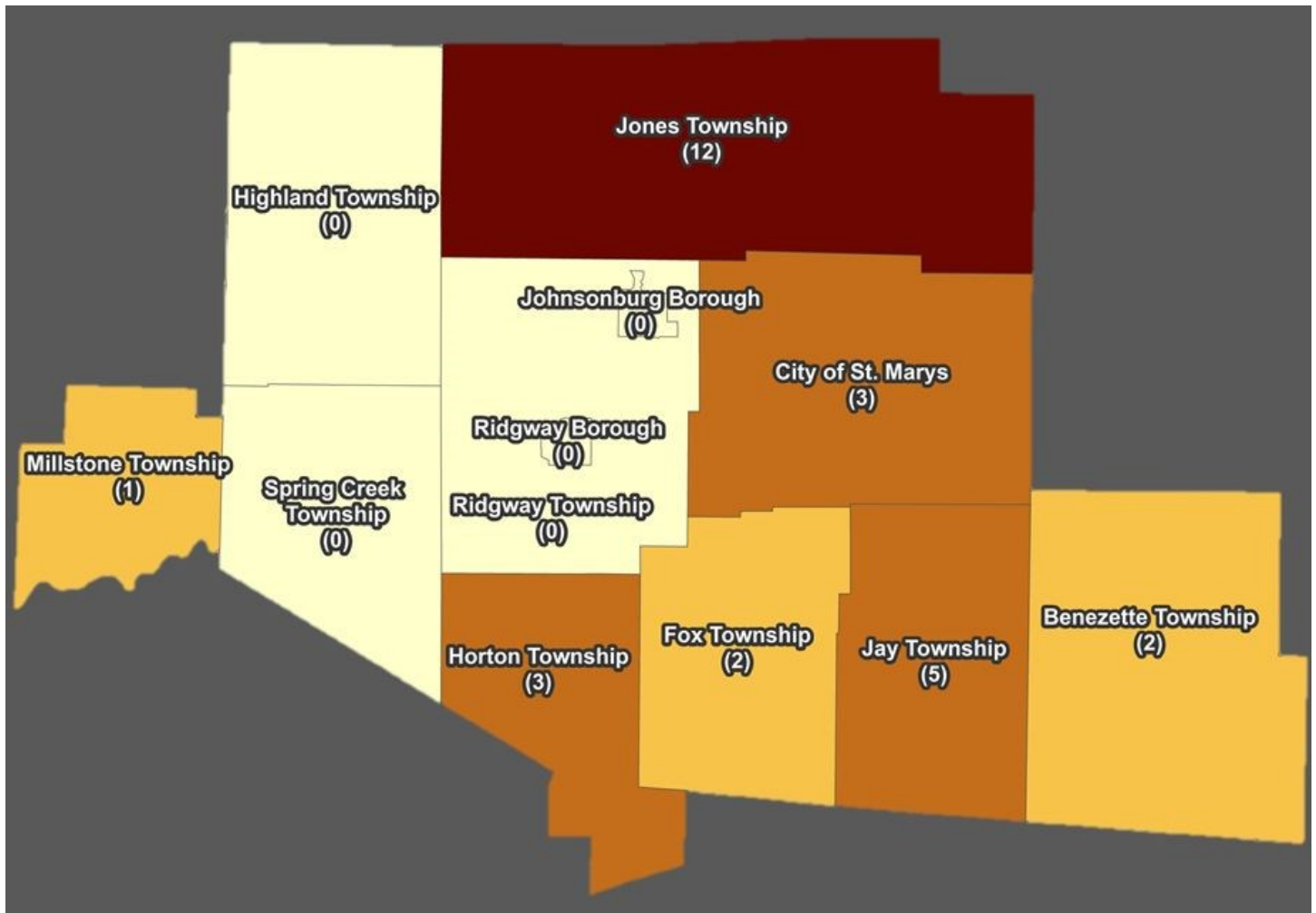
Left: A photo of the spotted lanternfly. Adults are approx. 1in. long and 1/2 in. wide.

Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Road Program

In 2018 the Elk County Conservation District was allocated approximately \$129,512 to utilize for on-the-ground dirt & gravel road improvement projects. Additionally, the ECCD was allocated \$32,000 for on-the-ground LVR projects. Approximately \$40,378 was allocated for the Conservation District to utilize for administration and education related to the program. Projects eligible for funding under this program include, but are not limited to, road drainage improvements, culvert and cross pipe replacements, headwalls and endwalls, vegetation management, road surface improvements, dust suppression, stream crossings, and road base improvements.

For an entity to be eligible to receive funding from the Elk County Conservation District's Dirt & Gravel Road Program, they must attend the 2-day Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance of Dirt & Gravel Roads training within the last 5 years. There are currently 13 entities in Elk County that are eligible for funding; Benezette Twp, City of St. Marys, Fox Twp, Highland Twp, Horton Twp, Jay Twp, Johnsonburg Boro, Jones Twp, Millstone Twp, PA Game Commission, PennDOT, Ridgway Boro, Spring Creek Twp.

The map below shows the location of all projects in the last 5 years. Note: The Pa Game Commission completed one project in Jones Twp and one project in Horton Twp.



Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Road Program Cont.

Quality Assurance Board (QAB)

The Elk County Conservation District's Dirt & Gravel Road Program is administered by a 4 member (3 voting and 1 non-voting) Quality Assurance Board (QAB). The QAB sets local program policies, reviews all program applications, and makes recommendations to the Conservation District Board for project spending.

The QAB is made up of the following individuals:

Steven Putt, Elk County Conservation District– non-voting member

Mike Hovatter, Elk County Conservation District– voting member

Tom McMann, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission– voting member

Jared Shippey, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service-voting member

2018 Project Feature– City of St.Marys: Jackson Road



Before



After

Details: This unpaved road was constantly rutted, full of potholes, and at risk from the adjacent exceptional value stream. We shifted the road 10' away from the stream in order to establish a stable floodplain buffer area. The streambank was stabilized with four log vane deflectors and rip-rap to control flow and reduce erosion. The new streamside buffer was then stabilized with native trees and shrubs. The road was then stabilized with the addition of competent base material and the placement of Driving Surface Aggregate.



Before



After

Clays for Conservation



Our 4th Annual Clays for Conservation Shoot was a large success and raised nearly \$1000 for environmental education programs in Elk County. Thirty-seven competitors came out to shoot wobble and double trap on a beautiful Sunday morning. Katelynn Decker was the 1st place overall youth competitor (59/75) and Roger Retzinger scored 68/75 to place first overall among adult competitors. Participants were treated to a pulled-pork barbeque lunch courtesy of the Benezette Hotel.

Les Haas Memorial Trail Challenge



Despite muddy trail conditions, sixty-three runners participated in the 7th Annual Les Haas Memorial Trail Challenge. Best overall finishers in the 14K race were Leroy Kopp (men, 1:07:37) and Lucy Anthony (women, 1:18:11). In the 7K race, Rick Gabler (00:35:36) had the best male overall time and Megan Quesenberry was the top-placed woman (00:38:26). Megan also broke the women's 7K course record by 00:02:59! Congratulations to everyone who participated and conquered the challenging course! With your help, we were able to raise nearly \$1800 for conservation education in Elk County. We'd also like to extend a special thanks to REBCO, Temple Studio, Sugar Hill Farm, Country Squirrel Outfitters, Purple Lizard Maps, Jordan's Bar and Grill, and Jan Haas for sponsoring another successful race.

(RIGHT) Pictured left to right are our overall course winners Megan Quesenberry (7K), Rick Gabler (7K), and Lucy Anothony(14K).



Missing from the photo is the top-placing male from the 14K race, Leroy Kopp.

Elk County Community Recycling Center

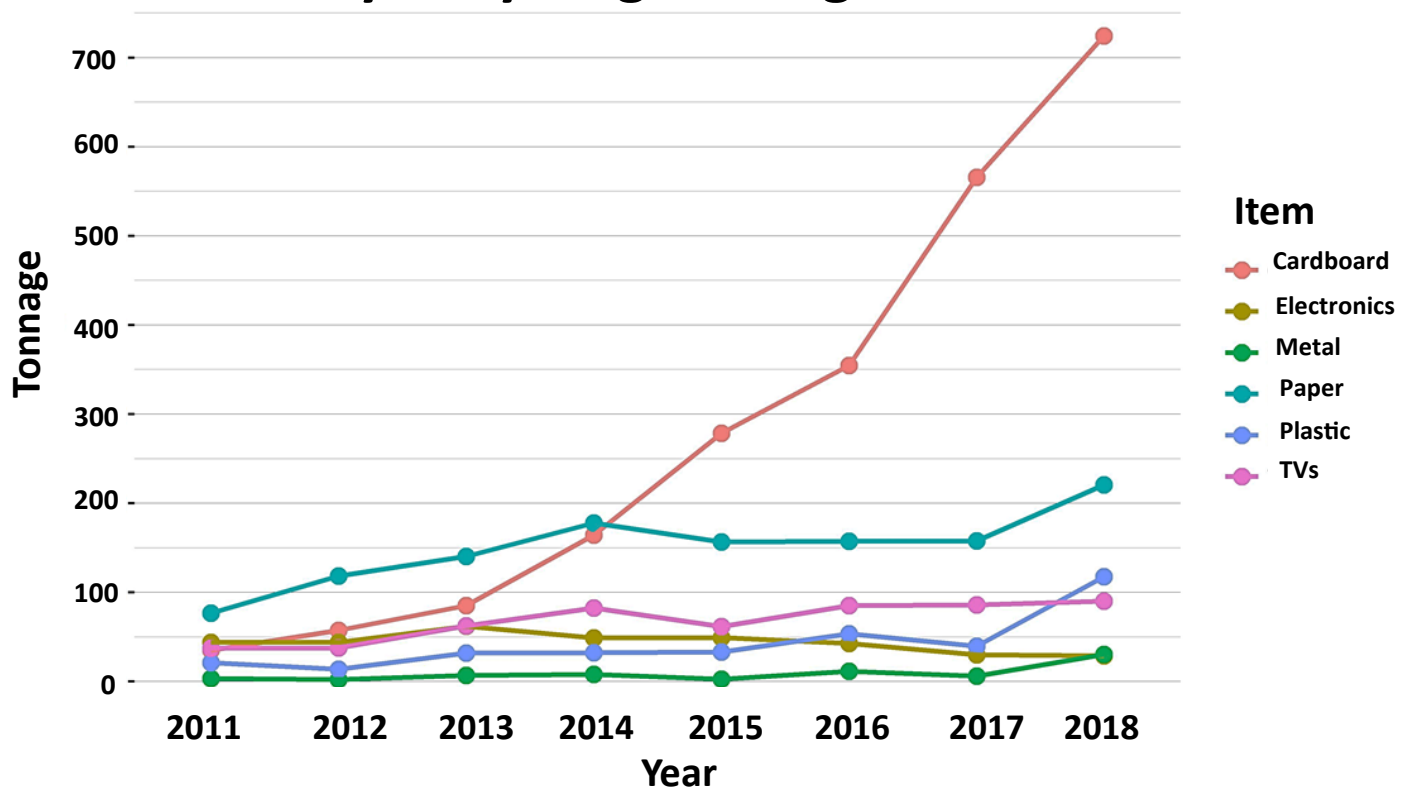
850 Washington Street, St. Marys, PA 15857 (814) 776-5373

Hours: Mon. & Fri. 10am-2pm, Wed. 12-8pm



The Elk County Community Recycling Center opened in October 2010 by the County of Elk and the Elk County Solid Waste Authority/Recycling Office. The Recycling Center accepts newsprint, office paper, magazines, mixed paper, cardboard, hard & soft cover books, #1 plastic bottles, #2 plastic bottles, #5 plastic, bi-metal cans, and aluminum cans, fluorescent bulbs, batteries, oil based paint, pesticides and electronics.

Elk County Recycling Tonnage 2016-2018



Elk County Community Recycling Center Cont.

Ever wonder why the Recycling Center isn't open to the public on Tuesdays and Thursdays?

It's because these days are used to process commercial loads, along with the containers from the drop-off sites, throughout the county. Each load is dumped on the pad outside the processing area, scooped up, placed on the conveyer, and then all the material is hand-sorted on the sort line and the garbage is removed.



From the Desk of Bekki Titchner, Elk County Recycling/Solid Waste Coordinator:

“The Center continued to see unprecedented growth throughout 2018, and we’ve hired our first full time recycling center employee. The stringent scrap import policies put in place by China in early 2018 had an impact on recycling markets throughout the US. Fortunately, our program was able to continue to find buyers for materials recycled here by residents and businesses. However, commodity pricing was some of the lowest we have experienced since opening the community recycling center nearly nine years ago.”



Meet Nick!

Nick Reuscher joined the Elk County Community Recycling Center and Solid Waste Authority as the first full-time recycling center employee in July. Nick, a native of Elk County, says he likes, “that it’s such a laid back place where everyone is friends, including with the volunteers and that the work we do actually matters and benefits the environment.” In his spare time Nick enjoys playing video games with his friends and coed softball.

2018 Elk County Conservation District Financial Report

Income

Conservation District Fund Allocation Program	\$116,036.97
Nutrient Management Program	\$ 13,788.73
UGWF Act 13 Funds	\$ 58,712.12
Watershed Specialist Grant	\$ 34,536.77
County Reimbursement for Waste Enforcement Officer	\$ 48,641.88
County Allocation	\$ 36,750.00
E&S Plan Review Fees	\$ 4,225.00
Chapter 105 GP Permit Fees	\$ 3,600.00
NPDES Permit Fees	\$ 6,500.00
Accounts Interest	\$ 1,468.27
Mini-Grants	\$ 16,081.00
Workshop Registration Fees	\$ 360.00
Donations	\$ 700.00
Fundraiser Events	\$ 3,650.00
West Creek AMD Project Grants	\$ 30,892.31
Dirt & Gravel Road Program	\$241,594.59
Low Volume Road Program	\$ 62,181.46

Total Income **\$679,719.10**

Expense

Staff Payroll	\$167,865.00
Staff Health Insurances	\$ 28,887.61
Staff Retirement	\$ 11,750.76
Social Security	\$ 12,813.70
Unemployment & Workers Compensation	\$ 3,166.60
Staff Travel, Training & Per Diem Expenses	\$ 6,065.57
Office Supplies & Office Expenses	\$ 2,012.16
Dues, Memberships & Sponsorships	\$ 3,605.00
Environmental Education, Outreach & Workshops	\$ 1,171.03
Administrative Operations	\$ 26,564.14
Envirothon & Jr. Envirothon Events	\$ 2,255.50
Fundraiser Event Expenses	\$ 1,203.12
Elk Creek Coldwater Heritage Assessment	\$ 2,492.98
Misc. Mini-Grant Expenses	\$ 7,389.43
West Creek AMD Project	\$ 2,010.00
Water Monitoring Program	\$ 15,669.02
Dirt & Gravel Road Program	\$203,595.23
Low Volume Road Program	\$ 64,291.72

Total Expense **\$562,807.97**

Net Income **\$116,911.13**

Cooperating Agencies & Organizations

The Elk County Conservation District works closely with many local, state and federal government agencies as well as many non-profit organizations. We greatly value these partnerships and collaborative conservation efforts they provide. The following is a partial list of some of our partnering agencies and organizations:

Allegheny National Forest

Army Corps of Engineers

DCNR Bendigo State Park

DCNR Bureau of Forestry

Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development

Keystone Elk Country Alliance

North Central PA Regional Planning & Development

PA Association of Conservation Districts

PA Department of Agriculture

PA Department of Transportation

PA Dept. of Environmental Protection

PA Fish & Boat Commission

PA Game Commission

US Fish & Wildlife Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy

