

# Elk Bugle

Volume 10 Issue 3 Fall 2022

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## Happy Birthday to Us!

The Elk County Conservation District is turning 60 years old! Established on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1962, the Elk County Conservation District has been serving our local communities ever since.

In celebration, we will be taking time this week to reflect and celebrate our accomplishments over the years'.

Our staff is proud of the role we play in bringing conservation to the residents of Elk County. Cheers to 60 more years!

### Musings from the Manager:

*"60 Years. Wow. When I think about the District that exists today and I think about what the District likely looked like 60 years ago, it's crazy to think that we started with 1 part-time manager in the basement of the courthouse. We now have 5 full-time staff, a vehicle, and have had to rent office space. Throughout this time, the Conservation District has evolved to address current natural resource concerns and issues.*

*What has remained constant, is our continued commitment to conservation, protection and enhancement of our natural resources and our community. It's exciting to dream of what the next 60 hold. Cheers!"- Kate Wehler*





## Who's covering that program?

**With recent staffing changes some folks may find themselves wondering who is the correct contact for the various programs at the Elk County Conservation District .**

**Here is a list of staff, their program responsibilities, and contact info.**

# Kate Wehler

## District Manager

District Administration, Chapter 105  
Stream and Wetland Permitting, Chapter  
102 Erosion and Sediment Control, Dirt,  
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## Maddie Stanisch

## Resource Conservation Technician

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# Micaela Lefever

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Water Monitoring Program, Stream improvement projects, AMD Reclamation, Aquatic habitat improvement projects,  
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## Ryan Grimm

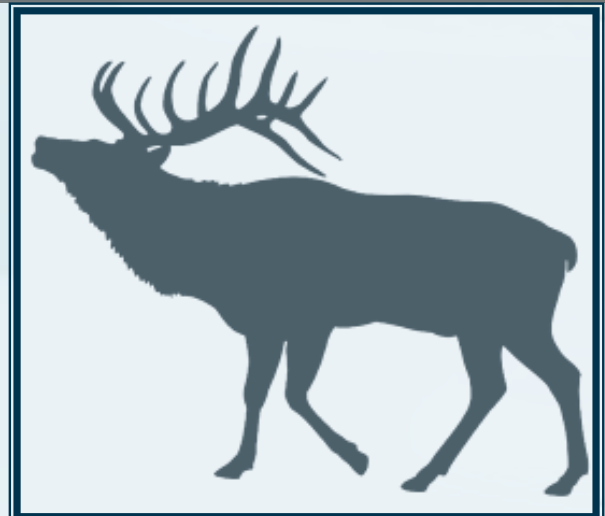
## Resource Conservation Technician

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# Victoria Challingsworth

## Resource Conservation Technician

Environmental Education, West Creek  
Wetland Learning Center  
Activities, Pollinator Programs, Chapter  
105 Stream and Wetland Permitting  
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# CLEANING UP THE CLARION

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Above: Students pose with dump truck of collected trash from the Clarion River

Below: (L) two students stow off tires they pulled from the rivers watery depths.  
(R) Students stop halfway at Cherry Tree Flats to unload their first round of trash



Ridgway PA— Our Clarion River Clean-up is back! After a several year hiatus, we were able to bring back the Clarion River Clean-up. The Elk County Conservation District and St. Marys Area High School (SMAHS) Outdoor Club partnered together to clean-up 9 miles of river.

On September 2nd ,16 students from SMAHS Outdoor Club joined our staff to make this clean-up happen. In total 980 pounds were collected over the course of the day. A huge thank you to the PA Game Commission for hauling the waste collected, Lazy River Canoes for renting us boats, and Greentree Landfill for providing disposal! This event wouldn't be possible without our partners.





# USFS Outdoor Corps Enjoy Education Days



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For 6 weeks this summer the Elk County Conservation District coordinated education days for the US Forest Service Outdoor Corps. The Outdoor Corps is a summer program where local high school students and their leaders do trail work, tree plantings, and other outdoor activities.

Once a week the students have an education day where they learn about various career paths they could take as they prepare for graduation.

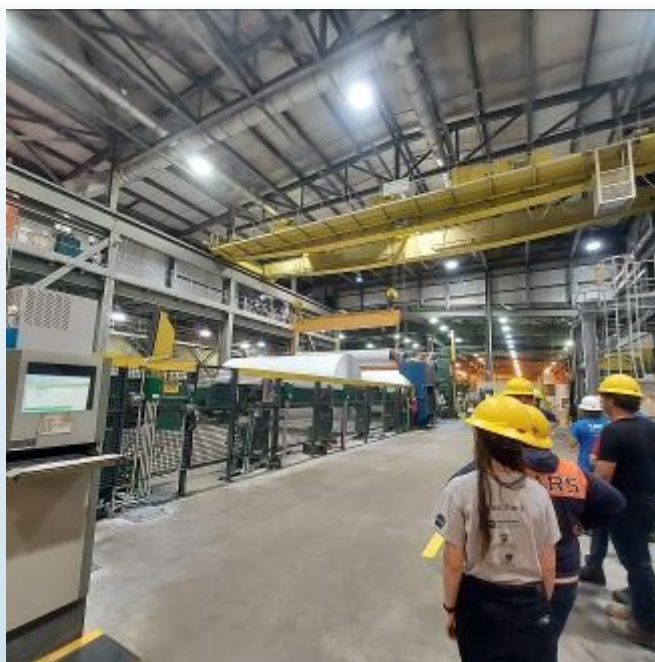
Over the course of their 6 weeks the students visited Greentree Landfill, Elk County Community Recycling Center, St. Marys Water Authority water treatment plant, participated in a timber harvest field tour with Landvest, toured Domtar Paper and St. Marys Lumber Sawmill, enjoyed a tour of East Branch Dam, and attended AG Progress days!







Students enjoyed a variety of tours and related hands on activities such as macroinvertebrate surveys to gauge water quality and measuring stream bankfull to ensure structures are adequately sized for Aquatic Organism Passage.





# Improving Streams throughout Elk County

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*Ridgway, PA*— If you have been to Sandy Beach Park anytime over the last few months, you may have noticed construction equipment, stone piled up, or even that the park looks different than the last time you were there. Thanks to a vast number of partnerships, the Elk County Conservation District was able to install fish habitat structures in Big Mill Creek, which will provide better habitat for fish and other aquatic organisms. Approximately 180' of mudsills were installed, as well as two rock throated cross vanes. The mudsills helped to narrow up the over-widened stream channel. This will help to keep the water moving through this area, helping to prevent sedimentation. These mudsills also provide overhead cover for fish, which serves as important protection from predators while also armoring the streambank to prevent erosion. The cross vanes help to centralize the stream flow, helping to decrease streambank erosion. Cross vanes also help to create a natural pool in the stream, providing fish and other species with a variation in habitat.

The Conservation District would like to thank the Elk County Community Foundation, the Stackpole-Hall Foundation, Seneca Resources, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Habitat Management Division, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Jim Zwald Chapter Trout Unlimited and Ridgway Township for their support with this project.



Big Mill Creek prior to habitat improvement structure installation



Big Mill Creek after structure installation



# Improving Streams throughout Elk County

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*Dents Run*— With the support of a Headwaters RC&D Council grant, the Elk County Conservation District was able to install a rootwad deflector in Dents Run during the month of August. This deflector consisted of approximately 25 root balls from trees, which are placed in the stream with the stumps buried in the streambank. Stone is then placed on top of the stumps and in between the rootwads to help secure them in place, in addition to rebar. These rootwads serve as streambank erosion protection while also providing habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates.



Dents Run prior to rootwad installation



Dents Run after rootwad installation

*Brockport, PA*— In April, the Conservation District was able to coordinate a streambank stabilization project for a local landowner. As seen below (bottom left), the erosion of Little Toby Creek resulted in the exposure of a gas line. National Fuel Gas was relocating the line, and as a result, provided streambank stabilization. The Conservation District provided technical assistance to the landowner throughout the permitting process. Rip rap was used to protect the streambank from future erosion, as can be seen below (bottom right).





# Arrows For Education: A 10X Success

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Fox Township, PA— This year the Elk County Conservation District decided to try something new, and hosted our first Arrows for Education 3D Archery shoot. This event was held as a fundraiser for our Envirothon competition. Historically, we raised funds for Envirothon with Clays for Conservation, our annual trap shoot, but due to COVID and shell shortages, we weren't able to host it these past few years.

The Arrows for Education created a fun alternative to the clay shoot which appealed to the same crowd of outdoor loving individuals. The event was held at the Fox Township Sportsman's club and utilized their course of 30 unique targets, sporting things like alligators, velociraptors and even a goblin (pictured right), as well as some more traditional animals.

The day of the event we had excellent weather and had over 40 shooters show up to test their skills on the course. A huge thank you to all the attendees and sponsors who helped make sure this event hit the mark!



Left: A shooter takes aim at the 50/50 target

Right: as the trail winds through the woods a shooter takes aim at a target

A goblin target is just one example of the unique targets on the course





# Farmer's Market Fun!

St. Marys, PA—This year the St. Marys Heritage Preservation Group brought back the St. Marys Farmer's Market after a 2 year hiatus, and added a few changes of their own. The Market this year was more than just a farmer's market, it also boasted artisan goods and nearly every week offered

educational opportunities for attendees.

The Elk County Conservation District was excited to be one of the educational groups in attendance. In July, the District provided education on pollinators and handed out posters and crafts. Then in September the

District brought our Fur kit and tested people's knowledge on the fur bearers of Pennsylvania!

The District also held a raffle and gave away a free compost bin to one lucky attendee!



## Providing Education at the Elk County Fair

Kersey, PA— We love to educate and this year we took advantage of the opportunity the Elk County Fair provided for us to educate our community about who we are and what we do!

Each of our staff took a turn running our booth at the fair where we discussed the different programs the District offers. We also enticed each passerby to try their hand at our Conservation Trivia, where the high score could win them a 10 gallon hydroponics fish tank, provided by Young Ag Professionals, or 2 tickets to the Pittsburgh Zoo. Congrats to our winners and thanks to everyone who stopped by our booth!





# ELK COUNTY ENERGY UPDATES

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One of the largest industries in our region is oil and gas—without it, we could not heat our homes or power our vehicles. Since both oil and gas are produced in our area, the products must be transported to other places to be used. This is where pipelines come into play—companies, such as National Fuel, run pipelines from town to town in order to service its customers.

These pipelines can decay over time and require repairs or, if severe enough, abandonment and creation of a new line.

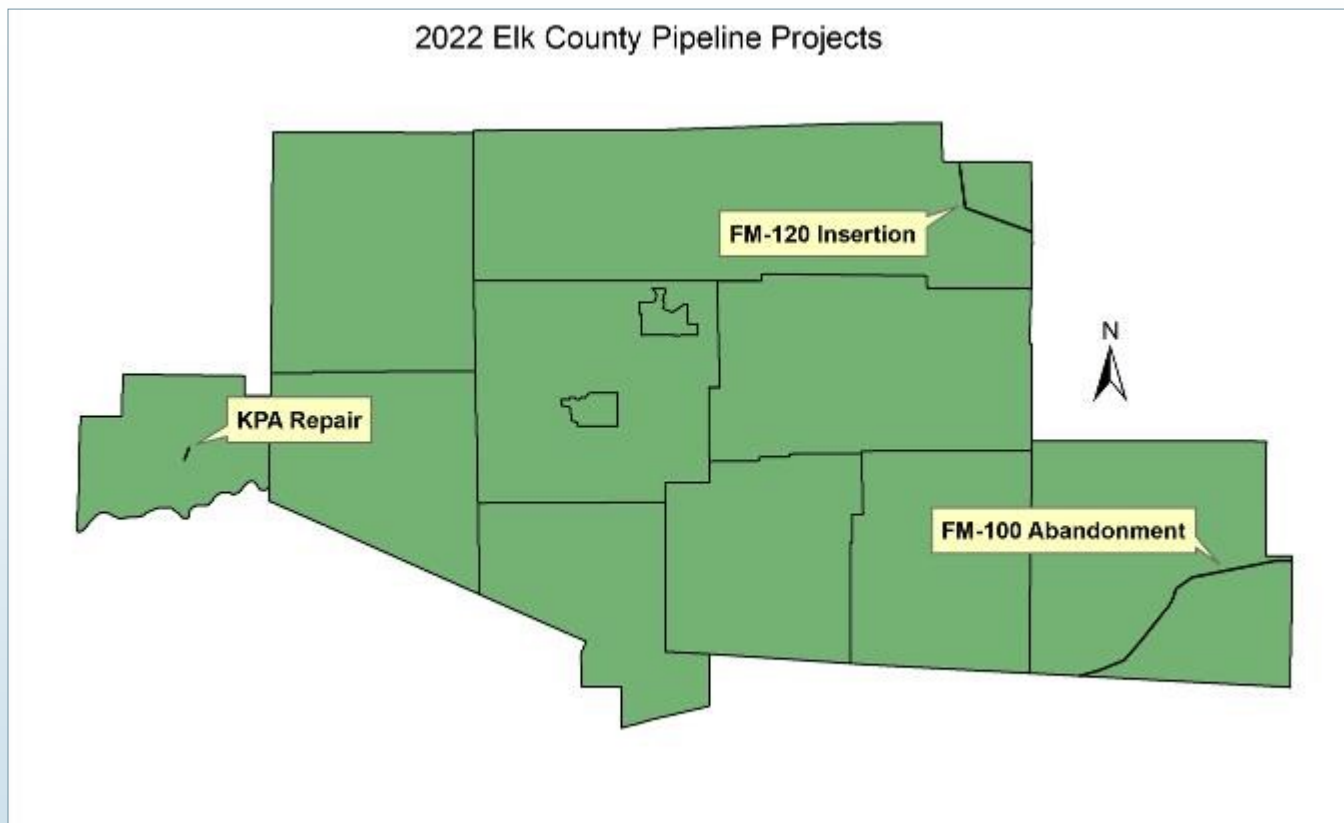
In 2022, Elk County has had three active pipeline projects across multiple townships.

The first project, FM-120 Insertion, involves the creation of new line to replace an existing, older line. This project runs through Saint Marys City and Jones Township.

The next project, FM-100 Abandonment Project, decommissioned an active line in Benezette Township. This project had small, localized areas of earth disturbance as areas of the line were filled in for the abandonment.

The final project, KPA 12 Repair, will repair “anomalies,” or defects in the line.

The map below shows the locations of each pipeline across Elk County:





# PA DEP HOSTS REGIONAL WETLAND TRAINING

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Meadville, PA— The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental protection (PA DEP) in conjunction with Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) hosted a regional wetland training for Conservation District staff, as well as PA DEP and NRCS staff. This training was held in late August and focused on wetland indicators such as hydric soils, hydrophytes (plants that love water) and how to identify them.



Elk County was fortunate to send two staff to the training for this valuable experience. Identifying wetlands is a skill that is utilized frequently in this line of work. While the District does not conduct professional wetland delineations for clients, we can provide advice on the topic and suggest that an area is likely a wetland and would require further delineation before construction can commence.

To many it may seem silly to have a class on identifying wetlands. How hard can it be? Look for cattails and water (or Clean Fill Wanted signs). While that is one type of wetland, there are many more, for example upland wetlands and emergent wetlands, which are less obvious. Many types of wetlands don't have standing water or cattails, but are still considered wetlands due to the presence of other indicator species and wetland soils, which is why being able to effectively identify them is so important.



Above: Attendees complete a wetland profile

Wetlands are an incredible resource. Not only are they home to numerous species, many of which are endangered, but they also play an enormous role in water retention. Wetland soils act as Mother Nature's natural sponge, retaining water so it can be released slowly or evaporate, providing flood relief for areas down stream. During the process wetlands also natural filter the water and help remove pollutants.

These fascinating benefits of wetlands are just a few of the reasons we should aim to protect them! District staff is excited about the new skills we picked up at training and looking forward to putting them to use in further protecting the wetland resources of Elk County!



# 3RD ANNUAL CONSERVATION CUP

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St. Marys, PA -This years' Conservation Cup, held on July 30th, turned out to be a great success. Thanks in part to many generous donations from our local sponsors, we were able to raise \$2,500 that will be used for environmental education and the continuation of our Elk County Conservation District Scholarship. The 2022 tournament winners were Seth Peterson, Cole Peterson, Justin Quiggle and Matt Walters. Abram Zoschg won a \$200 lottery ticket basket and Seth Peterson took home two brand new trail cameras. We want to thank all of our sponsors and participants for making this outing a success!



L-R Above: Justin, Cole, Seth, & Matt

## ECCD Awards Conservation Scholarship



St. Marys, PA—The 2022 recipient of the Elk County Conservation District Scholarship is Lindsay Steis! Lindsay is a Ridgway native who is studying Environmental Engineering at Gannon University. Lindsay is looking to use her love for math and engineering to help solve the tough environmental problems we currently face! The Elk County Conservation District would like to wish Lindsay nothing but the best of luck and can't wait to see the positive environmental impacts she has!

Above: Lindsay poses with her scholarship check with Ryan Grimm & Kate Wehler.

# Yeah, We Recycle That!

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People are always amazed to find what a large and diverse number of items the **Elk County Community Recycling Center** takes for recycling. With such a wide variety, aside from the traditionally thought of plastics and aluminum, we want to feature an item each edition to educate our community about all the incredible services available to them!

## ATTENTION!

A message from Elk County Solid Waste Coordinator, Bekki Titchner- "For nearly 30 years, the county's recycling office has picked up the cost of properly managing refrigerated white goods. In the past 11 years, this service has cost us about \$70K, and if we go back to the beginning, the price tag has most likely been close to \$200K. We have made a difficult decision **to begin charging for this service come October 1**. Customers will be charged what we are charged by the individual removing the refrigerant: \$15 per item. While we won't be making money, we also will stand to save about \$8K over the course of the year, and this savings can be put to good use in other areas of operation. Along with the sign in sheet will be a container for money next to the white goods drop off. We ask for your consideration and understanding."



The **Elk County Community Recycling Center** is located at:

850 Washington Street

St. Marys 15857

Ph.: (814) 776-5373

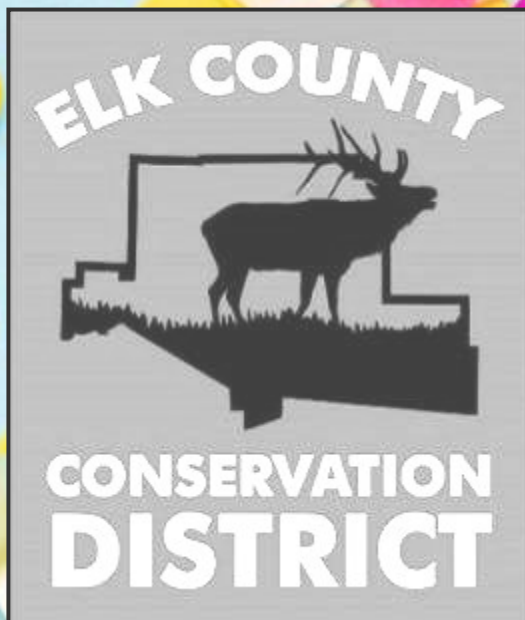
**Hours of Operation:**

**Monday: 10-2**

**Wednesday: 12-7**

**Friday: 10-2**





## Elk County Conservation District

### Elk County Community Recycling Center

850 Washington Street

Saint Marys, PA 15857

(814) 776-5373

### Staff

**Kate Wehler, CPESC** —District Manager

**Ryan Grimm**—Resource Conservation Technician

**Maddie Stanisch**—Resource Conservation Technician

**Victoria Challingsworth**—Resource Conservation Technician

**Micaela Lefever**—Watershed Technician

**David Stubber**—Solid Waste Enforcement

**Carole Johnson**— Administrative Assistant

### Directors

**Russ Braun**- Chairman

**Mike Hovatter**- Vice-Chairman

**Joe Daghir**- Commissioner

**Ray McMinn**- Farmer Director

**Andy Sorg**- Farmer Director

**Joe Labant**- Public Director

**Chris Smith**— Public Director

**Jerry Olson**— Associate Director

**Jim McCluskey**- Associate Director



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