

Elk County Conservation District 2015 Annual Report



Directors & Staff

2015 Board of Directors

Russ Braun, Chairman
Mike Hovatter, Vice-Chairman
Jan Kemmer, Commissioner
Jerry Olsen, Public Director
Joe Labant, Public Director
Denise Casillio, Farmer Director
Ray McMinn, Farmer Director

Associate Directors

Jim McCluskey

Director Emeritus

Ron McMinn

County Commissioners

June Sorg
Daniel Freeburg
Janis Kemmer



Pictured above: Top (L-R): *Kate & Kim.*

Bottom (L-R): *Diane, Steve, & Amanda*

District Staff

Steven Putt- District Manager

Kim Bonfardine- Watershed Specialist

Kate Yetzer- Resource Conservation
Technician

Amanda Stoltzfus- Resource Conservation
Technician

David Stubber- Solid Waste Enforcement
Officer

Diane Myers- Secretary

The **4th Annual Les Haas Memorial Trail Challenge** was hosted by the Conservation District on Saturday, September 19, 2015. The event, held at the Laurel Mill Trail within the Allegheny National Forest, is an annual fund raiser for the Conservation District's environmental education programs. The race features two competitive running distances, 14K and 7K, and a non-competitive 2 Mile "Fun Walk." The event is held in remembrance of Les Haas, a former Conservation District board director and a retired PA Fish & Boat Commission Waterways Conservation Officer. The event could not have been a success without the support of volunteers and event sponsors. We thank the following businesses and organization for supporting our event: Rebco, Inc., Allegheny National Forest, Country Squirrel Outfitters, Xtreme Wear, Road ID, Dairy Queen of St. Marys, Northwest Savings Bank, Jordan's Bar & Grill, and the Haas Family.



2015 7K Run Winners

Male Winner:	Mathew Klunk	Indiana, PA	37:46
Female Winner:	Diana Wolfe	Johnsonburg, PA	43:00

2015 14K Run Winners

Male Winner:	Frederick Ferguson	Osceola Mills, PA	1:17:21
Female Winner:	Renee Goodman	Harmony, PA	1:24:35

2015 Elk Expo

Every year in August, visitors flock to Elk County for the annual Elk Expo. This two day event was held at the Elk Country Visitor Center in Benezette, PA on August 15th and 16th, 2015. According to Carla Wehler, Operations Manager, this year the attendance was over 16,000 people! Most guests attended the event on Saturday, where the Pennsylvania Game Commission held their elk tag drawing live at the Elk Expo in the ECCO Building.

Elk County Conservation District conducted a children's presentation during the Elk Expo titled "Fred the Fish." During the one hour presentation, children learned about different sources of pollution that affect "Fred the Fish". Children were able to participate by dumping various "pollutants" into the water to see how they impacted Fred. After children dumped the pollutants into Fred's stream, a short discussion was held with both adults and children about solutions to prevent pollution. This included things such as medicine collection services, recycling, proper trash disposal, cover cropping, and washing vehicles in the grass instead of the driveway, to provide a filter for nutrients.

In addition to the environmental educational presentation, the District was also offered the opportunity to set up a display among the other vendors. Throughout the event, district staff spoke with guests about the importance of Conservation Districts and environmental stewardship. The District gave out pollinator seed packets, fish identification brochures, information on local recycling programs, flyers for upcoming workshops, etc.



Top– A crowd gathers in the ECCO Building to witness the drawing of the KEKA Conservation Elk Tag.

Bottom– District staff present the "Fred the Fish" program.

Right– Benny the Elk poses with the District display table.



Chapter 105 Dam Safety & Waterway Management

In 2015 the Elk County Conservation District continued its delegation agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to administer the Chapter 105 program. The Title 25, Chapter 105, Dam Safety and Waterway Management regulations pertain to dams, reservoirs, culverts, bridges, stream enclosures, channel dredging, channel manipulation, fill materials, stream crossings, and other stream and wetland related activities. The responsibilities of the Conservation District under this delegation agreement includes; investigation of complaints, routine inspections, technical assistance, education and outreach, and acknowledgement of General Permit (GP) activities. The number of permits issued in 2015 are listed below.

<u># Permits Issues</u>	<u>Permit Type</u>
2	GP1 Fish Habitat Enhancement Structures
0	GP2 Small Docks and Boat Launching Ramps
12	GP3 Bank Rehabilitation, Protection/Gravel Bar Removal
2	GP4 Intake and Outfall Structures
6	GP5 Utility Line Stream Crossings
0	GP6 Agricultural Crossing and Ramps
9	GP7 Minor Road Crossings
5	GP8 Temporary Road Crossings
0	GP9 Agricultural Activities



Rain Barrel & Compost Workshop



On October 10, 2015 the Elk County Conservation District and the Elk County Planning Department partnered to provide a rain barrel and compost workshop for area residents. The workshop was attended by 40 residents. Conservation District and Planning Department staff provided information related to home composting and water conservation. Attendees were also provided with a free rain barrel, composting kitchen pail and instructions. Funding for the workshop was provided by a PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Environmental Education grant and the Elk County Act 13 mini-grant program.

1st Annual Clay Shoot

The Elk County Conservation District hosted its first annual clay shoot to benefit environmental education programs.

Thirty five participants registered, including several cooperating agencies. DEP, PA Game Commission, and PA Fish and Boat Commission staff participated in our event.

Participants shot both doubles and wobble trap in groups of 5. High Overall (1st, 2nd, & 3rd), High Female, and High Youth awards were given to those participants.

The money raised from the shoot will go to environmental education programs such as Junior and Senior Envirothon, educational displays, field days, the Elk Expo, and classroom events.

Special thanks to the Saint Marys Sportsman's club, the Benezette Hotel, and Elk County Foods for donations.

Prizes were awarded to:
1st, 2nd, 3rd, Top Female,
& Top Youth shooters.



Area youth participated in
the competition, under adult
supervision.



The beautiful weather
made for an awesome
time and an increase
in attendance.



Prizes were awarded to:

1st place overall– Tj Wehler

2nd place overall- Greg (Hoser) Mahoney

Top Female Shooter– Darcy Gorlowski

3rd place overall– Denny Eckert

Top Youth Shooter- Austin Levenduski

Clarion River Cleanup

Ridgway, PA-The Elk County Conservation District (ECCD) partnered with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), and the Elk County Recycling Office/Elk County Cleanways to host a dual phase river cleanup in an effort to clean up the Clarion River.

The event was part of the International Coastal Cleanup, one of the world's largest volunteer efforts aimed at improving oceans and waterways. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is the statewide coordinator for the ICC, and Elk County Cleanways – administered through the recycling office - is a Keep PA Beautiful affiliate.

Phase one of the cleanup was held on September 1st, 2015. During this phase, a group of 10 adults from the ECCD, WPC, recycling office, Appalachian Power Equipment and local volunteers were able to remove a dumpster, a large shed, and a 48" corrugated steel pipe approx. 25 ft long from the Clarion River, between Ridgway and Portland Mills. A huge thank you goes out to Appalachian Power Equipment for the use of their equipment and their staff. They played a huge role in ensuring the success of phase 1!

Phase two of the cleanup was held on September 10th, 2015. During this phase, a group of 38 high school students from the St. Marys Area High School, Ridgway Area High School, and Elk County Catholic High School combined with their teachers, ECCD Staff, recycling staff, WPC, and more volunteers removed more than 2,520lbs of trash, 4500lbs of metal and 5 tires from the Clarion River. The students were even able to pick up large items such as a stationary bike, aluminum camper pieces, buckets of unopened oil, a 5 gallon pail of paint primer, cardboard drums, and aluminum trash cans!

After phase two of the cleanup, all participants were invited back to Country Squirrel Outfitters, who generously donated the use of their canoes, for a well-deserved lunch. Special thanks to Advanced Disposal Greentree Landfill and DuBois hauling operations for donating a dumpster that was filled with the garbage collected, and Keep PA Beautiful and Elk County Cleanways for gloves and trash bags that were used during the clean-up. The ECCD is extremely proud of the community support they received for this event.

During Phase I of the cleanup, volunteers were able to remove a dumpster, a large shed, and a 48" corrugated steel pipe approx. 25 ft long!



During Phase II of the cleanup, a group of 38 high school students from St. Marys, Ridgway, and Elk County Catholic, combined with their teachers, ECCD Staff, recycling staff, WPC, and other volunteers removed more than 2,520lbs of trash, 4500lbs of metal and 5 tires from the Clarion River!



Elk County Water Monitoring Program

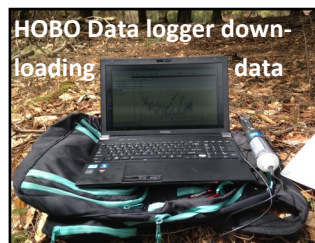
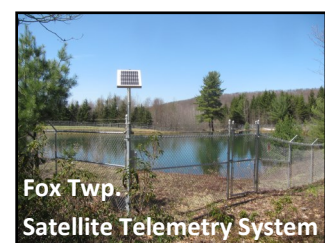
Satellite Telemetry Monitoring

In 2015, the Elk County Monitoring Program (ECWMP) continually recorded Satellite Telemetry Data all year at nine stations. The multicolored data chart shows the average Conductivity and pH for both 2014 and 2015 for comparison. As you can see, the averages from 2015 stayed very close to the averages from 2014. Not included in the chart were 2015 highs and lows of both parameters but they were all within the normal range of the particular stream or groundwater, which is a good indicator that no pollutants were detected that could be monitored by Conductivity and pH. The average range of Conductivity in the nine sites that we are monitoring is a low of 28.7 at Silver Creek to a high of 79.4, which is notable because both are water sources for Johnsonburg. Last years data showed Laurel Run as the highest Average Conductivity at 147.8; but the Laurel Run meter was washed out during the flood of 2014, and a proper replacement area has not been located yet. The Laurel Run site was a very hard location to reach, and very unstable in high water events, so after further evaluation, the meter was not put back into the same location. In September 2015, the Satellite Telemetry System (STS) was removed from the Jones Township site in Wilcox and will not be put back in at this site. Both Jones Township Municipal Authority and the District agreed that the arrangement was not working and we decided to pull the equipment. We are now looking for another ground water source to monitor; therefore, we have two full meters to find new locations to monitor. All STS's required some maintenance over the year and all sites were check and winterized before bad weather set in. The website was also updated this year.

Data Logger Monitoring

2014 & 2015 Average Temperature and Conductivity data			
2014-2015 Data Logger Data		Temp C	Cond µS
Briggs Hollow	Average	3.8	20.6
Bear Creek	Average	3.9	33.6
Little Bear Creek	Average	4.2	20.1
Navel Hollow	Average	4.4	27.3
Data collected from 9-23-2014 to 4-4-2015			

2014 & 2015 STS Average Conductivity and pH data					
2015 STS Data	Cond µS	pH	2014 STS Data	Cond µS	pH
Kersey Run	33.8	6.2	Kersey Run	33.6	6.1
Fox Twp.	29.3	5.3	Fox Twp.	32.7	4.1
Rattlesnake Creek	39.0	6.7	Rattlesnake Creek	40.5	6.6
Highland Twp.	54.1	6.2	Highland Twp.	60.1	5.7
Whetstone Branch	34.3	10.4	Whetstone Branch	38.9	6.2
Powers Run	79.4	7.1	Powers Run	85.2	7.1
Byrnes Run	65.2	6.7	Byrnes Run	66.3	6.8
Big Mill Creek	49.3	7.0	Big Mill Creek	44.9	6.2
Silver Creek	28.7	5.5	Silver Creek	26.1	5.3
Data collected from 1-1-15 to 12-31-15			Data collected from 1-1-14 to 12-31-14		



HOBOT Data logger with housing unit and stake to hold it in place

Most of the data logger monitoring was in the East Branch Dam area and two meters were in the Bear Creek watershed. On April 15, 2015, all meters were removed from the streams and taken back to the office for routine maintenance. During the time meters were in the East Branch area, (November 2013 to April 2015), drilling activity became much heavier and sites were harder to access, nevertheless, we were able to detect one pollution event in 2014 and reported it to the proper authorities. Unfortunately, upon returning to the East Branch Dam area to reinstall meters after some needed maintenance, the roads were blocked off and it was not possible to re-install the meters where they were previously located or anywhere in the area.

According to the Average Conductivity in the chart to the left, the range in the streams that were monitored from September 2014 to April 2015, were between 20.1 and 33.6. These are all normal ranges for streams in our area; Bear Creek had the highest average (33.6), Little Bear Creek showed a lot of fluctuation in Conductivity with an average of 20.1, but it went as high as 110.5.

Currently we have two meters in the East Branch of Spring Creek monitoring a habitat improvement area in conjunction with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Allegheny National Forest. More meters will be placed in streams in the spring/summer as water level allow proper placement.

Invasive Species & Forest Pest Management

Gypsy Moth Suppression Program

In 2015, the Elk County Conservation District continued to serve as the County Coordinator for the DCNR Bureau of Forestry's Gypsy Moth Suppression program. Throughout 2015, gypsy moth populations remained steady and confined to small isolated populations in the County. Little signs of defoliation were present. There was no need for a spray program in 2015. Areas in eastern Pennsylvania had larger populations and had greater impacts. The gypsy moth populations will continue to be monitored in Elk County.



Gypsy Moth (female) with Egg Mass

Invasive Species Monitoring

The Elk County Conservation District continues to work diligently to educate area residents about the importance of forest pest management and invasive species. Early detection and rapid response is always the key to controlling forest pests and invasive plants. The Conservation District continues to work closely with various cooperating agencies and non-profit groups to educate area residents, identify problem areas, and develop strategies for minimizing the spread of unwanted species.



Hemlock Woolly Adelgid



Emerald Ash Borer



Garlic Mustard



Common Buckthorn

Dirt, Gravel, & Low Volume Road Program Update

In 2014, a new transportation bill was passed, effectively increasing statewide funding from \$4 million to \$28 million. \$8 million of this new funding was to be specifically spent on, “Low Volume Roads.” A Low Volume Road (LVR) is any sealed roadway (paved or tar & chipped) that receives 500 or less vehicles per day. DSA is now the only surface aggregate that is eligible to be purchased with program funds. In order for the DSA to be eligible, it must meet a plasticity index (PI) of 6 or less and be tested by PSU in advance of use. In addition, new district policies were created along with a Stream Crossing policy and a Traffic Count policy.

In 2015 the Elk County Conservation District was allocated approximately \$128,327 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 \$40,082 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 the following: road drainage improvements, culvert and cross pipe replacements, headwalls and endwalls, vegetation management, road surface improvements, dust suppression, and road base improvements. For an entity to be eligible to receive funding from the Elk County Conservation District’s Dirt & Gravel Road Program, the entity must have attended 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, the City of St. Marys, Jones Twp, Fox Twp, , Ridgway Borough, Millstone Twp, Highland Twp, Horton Twp, Jay Twp, Johnsonburg Borough, Spring Creek Twp, Penn-Dot and the PA Game Commission.

2015 Low Volume Road Project

In 2015 the Elk County Conservation District agreed to fund one project under the Low Volume Road Program. The project included full-depth reclamation, re-establishing a road crown, and installing cross pipes. This work area included approximately 3,160 feet along Oyster Run Road (T452) in Horton Township. \$14,500 was allocated for this project.



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

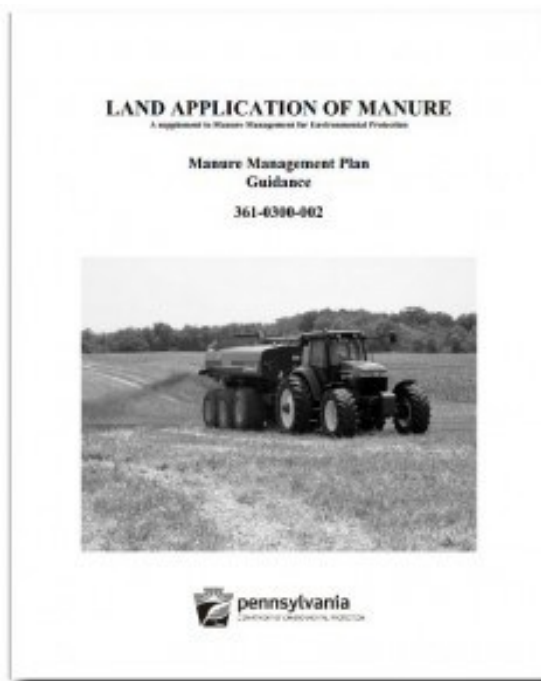
Conservation District Continues to Assist Agriculture Producers within Elk County

A Manure Management Workshop was held on February 24, 2015 in which 5 farmers attended. Jamie Ulrich from the State Conservation Commission, Josh Hassler, DEP, and Amanda Stoltzfus, ECCD, all spoke to the attendees about topics regarding manure management, Conservation Planning, and funding programs and opportunities. Although a small turn out, 4 out of the 5 attendees followed up the conservation district, and have been worked closely with ECCD and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) in regards to manure management, conservation planning, and potentially future BMP projects on their agriculture operations.

Nutrient Management Delegation

Elk County is now delegated to carry out the Nutrient Management Program. Amanda completed her certification through the State Conservation Commission to be a Nutrient Management plan writer and reviewer. The district can now respond to agriculture complaints, and review any Nutrient Management Plans submitted by plan writers.

In addition to carrying out this delegation, the conservation district signed an MOU with McKean and Jefferson Counties to assist in plan reviews and plan writing. This will allow the counties involved to work more quickly and efficiently with our farmers, as well as work closely with neighboring districts.



Agriculture Bus Tour

On August 21, 2015, the Elk County Conservation District hosted a local farm tour featuring two farms in the county. Heritage Farms of Ridgway and Sugar Hill Farms of Saint Mary's.

Heritage Farms is owned and operated by the Burns Family and Sugar Hill Farms is operated by Cathy Pomanti, owner, and Andy Sorg, farm manager. Seventeen attendees boarded a bus in Ridgway and traveled to see where their local food comes from and how it is raised.

Heritage Farm raises laying hens in outside chicken coops allowing the chickens to graze during the warm months. Heritage farm showed attendees how they manage compost, grazing of sheep and cattle, and even allowed the attendees to taste some grass fed lamb.

At Sugar Hill, attendees looked at the Scotch Highland cattle that are intensively grazed and grass fed. Cathy Pomanti led the tour on a wagon ride around the pastures. She explained the rotational grazing system and the solar watering system used to water cattle in each paddock they graze.

Following the tour; conservation district staff grilled organic grass fed beef burgers and lunch was served to those attending. All foods were grown in Elk County. Lunchtime speaker LeRoy Kopp, of New Horizons Healthy Foods, spoke about Permaculture Farming methods and how they can be applied to home gardening. A lot of positive feedback was received from those who participated in the tour. Funding for the tour was provided by a PACD Mini Grant.



Right: Pete Burns, of Heritage Farm, speaks to guests about the cow milk share program they recently began at the farm.



Right: Farm Tour attendees sit on wagon ride, donated by Mr. Mattiuz of PA Elk County Farm Bureau, while touring Sugar Hill Farm, owner Cathy Pomanti led the tour.

Elk County Fair

Once again, the Elk County Conservation District set up a booth at the Elk County Fair in Kersey, PA August 11-15th 2015.

This year the booth focused on agriculture and agriculture assistance programs offered by the conservation district and cooperating agencies. Many handouts and pollinator garden seeds were provided by NRCS/USDA for those interested to take. Amanda attended the fair two evenings and enjoyed talking to members of the community who had questions and expressed interest in programs.



Backyard Conservation Workshop

On a snowy day on April 1, 2015, a backyard conservation workshop was held at the Elk Country Visitor Center. The Western PA Conservancy, Sinnemahoning Invasive Plant Management Area (SIPMA), Woodland Agri- Services, The PA Game Commission, The Elk Country Visitor Center and the Elk County Conservation District, presented the 16 attendees with information about riparian buffers, landscaping with native plants, native grasses, rain gardens, invasive species, why it is bad to feed wildlife, and stormwater BMP's. Toby Neal of the Elk Country Visitor Center gave participants a tour of the Elk Visitor Grounds to showcase stormwater BMP's that is used around the facility.



Above: Attendees follow Toby Neal, of the Elk Country Visitor Center, as he gives a tour of the stormwater basin system in the Elk Country Visitor Center Parking area.

Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control Program

(E&S Program)

The Elk County Conservation District has Level II delegation from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to administer the erosion and sediment pollution control program. Level II duties include; education, technical assistance, site inspection, plan review, and voluntary compliance. The Conservation District works with the DEP on all enforcement matters. The goal of this program is to minimize soil erosion and sedimentation. Erosion is part of our naturally occurring processes, but this process can be greatly increased by human disturbances.

PA Code, Title 25, Chapter 102 and the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law requires measures and facilities to be in place during earth disturbance activities to minimize the potential for erosion and sediment pollution problems. These regulations also require individuals involved in earth disturbance activities to develop an erosion and sediment control plan (E&S Plan). An E&S plan is required for all disturbance of 5,000 square feet in size or larger. This plan includes measures that will be implemented to minimize erosion, describes how construction activities will progress at the site, identifies the scope of the project, and identifies how the disturbed areas will be stabilized upon completion of the project.

Working under the direction of the Chapter 102 rules and regulations and through the delegation agreement with the PA Department of Environmental Protection, the Elk County Conservation District is tasked with the responsibility of reviewing erosion and sediment control plans. In 2015 the Elk County Conservation District reviewed and processed 61 erosion and sediment control plans. Projects encompassed approximately 6,298 project acres and included approximately 153 acres of disturbance.

In addition to the processing of erosion and sediment control plans, the Conservation District also investigates complaints, conducts site inspections, provides technical assistance and organizes educational events. In 2015 the Elk County Conservation District received and investigated 12 complaints and conducted 47 site inspections.

NPDES permits are required for earth disturbance activities that will involve one (1) or more acres of disturbance over the life of the project (excludes agriculture, timber harvesting, road maintenance and oil & gas activities). There are two types of NPDES permits. Individual NPDES Permits are required for projects that will occur in special protection watersheds (high quality or exceptional value) or may be required due to other special circumstances. General NPDES permits are for projects involving earth disturbance activities of one acre or more in areas that are not considered special protection and do not fall under one of the other special circumstances. In 2015 the Conservation District processed 6 General NPDES permits and 2 Individual NPDES Permit. We were also involved in 1 NPDES Permit Major Modifications.



5 County Cooperative Outreach Activities

The Elk County Conservation District has been partnering with Cameron, McKean, Potter, & Warren counties to hold several workshops for the citizens of these counties. In 2015 the following workshops were held as a part of this cooperative outreach effort:

DGR ESM Workshop– Held in McKean Co.

SFI Workshop– Held in McKean Co.

E&S Technical Workshop– Held in McKean Co.

E&S Basic Workshop– Held in Warren Co.

E&S Basic Workshop– Held in Elk Co.

E&S Basic Workshop– Held in Potter Co.



ECCD staff (Kate, Amanda, & Steve) attend a workshop planning meeting held in McKean Co.

A snapshot taken at the E&S Technical Workshop held in McKean Co.



Representatives from all five counties attend a workshop planning meeting held in McKean Co.





*Take me to the river,
Drop me in the water*

TROUT in the CLASSROOM



Trout In the Classroom (TIC) is a program for students in grades 3-12 to learn about coldwater conservation while raising brook trout from eggs to fingerlings in a classroom aquarium. TIC ties together environment & ecology, science & mathematics, social studies, language & fine arts, and physical education. Each teacher tailors the program to fit his or her curricular needs. Eggs are delivered to the participating schools in the fall and the program ends with the school year by releasing their fingerling trout into a state-approved waterway.

Along with the release of the fish, teachers set up an aquatic educational aspect to the field trip and that is where ECCD comes in. For the past several years, ECCD has been collaborating with Trout Unlimited, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC) and the Western PA Conservancy (WPC) to provide interesting out of the classroom experiences as the students say good-bye to the young fish that they reared from eggs. It is a wonderful learning experience for the kids and the lessons make good connections between clean water and health and survival, not only for the fish but also for the entire food web.

This year, ECCD was invited by three different schools to participate as they released their fingerlings. District staff provided students with a macroinvertebrate lesson, WPC played an interactive Predator/Prey game and a PFBC Conservation Officer was also on hand to discuss water conservation efforts with the students. Fun was had by all, students and instructors.

St Marys High School
Laurel Run Reservoir
4-27-15

Ridgway High School
Clarion River, Ridgway
4-29-15

Elk County Catholic High School
Clarion River, Bendigo State Park
5-11-15



The Pennsylvania TIC program is made possible through a unique partnership between Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. This partnership provides curriculum resources, workshops for teachers and program partners, technical support, brook trout eggs and food, and grants.

12th Annual Elk County Envirothon



The 12th Annual Elk County Envirothon was once again held in May at the St. Mary's Sportsmen's Club. All four local high schools, Johnsonburg, St Marys, Ridgway and Elk County Catholic, had teams compete. They were tested in the areas of Wildlife, Soil & Land-Use, Forestry, Aquatics, and the Current Issue was Urban Forestry. Two St. Marys teams won first and second place and an Elk County Catholic team won third place. The photo above is all of the students & helpers; and below are pictures of the first place winning team, & during the Envirothon and Study Day.



2nd Annual Elk County Jr. Envirothon

On May 5th, 2015, the 2nd Annual Elk County Jr. Envirothon was held at Bendigo State Park. For this annual event, nine teams from the Elk County Catholic and Johnsonburg Area Middle Schools participated. The students were tested in the areas of: Wildlife, Aquatics, Forestry, & Agriculture/Soils. Each participant received lunch, an award and a tee-shirt.

Special thanks to DNCR and Bendigo State Park for assisting at the Junior Envirothon and allowing us to spend the day at the park. Additionally we would like to extend a huge thank you to Advantage Metal Powders, Inc. and Seneca Resources for donations that allowed us to provide each participant with a free t-shirt, lunch and plaques for the top three teams.



1st Place— The Green Thumbs from Johnsonburg

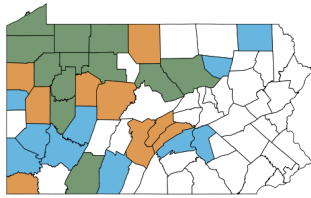
2nd Annual Elk County Jr. Envirothon group photo.



Teams identifying Pennsylvania fish by their photograph.

The Eastern Hellbender in Elk County

Cryptobranchus alleganiensis alleganiensis



● Verified by PAHERP ● Verified before 2000 ● Historic in County ○ No Record



Eastern Hellbender Photo by: Julie Larson Maher

The Eastern Hellbender, also known as *devil dog*, *snot otter*, *grampus*, *mud dog* or *Allegheny alligator*, is one of the world's largest salamanders and one of the two large salamanders that inhabit Pennsylvania. They live here in Elk County in both the Susquehanna and Ohio River watersheds.

This nocturnal creature is harmless and does not inflict a poisonous bite as many people believe. It prefers cold fast-flowing, medium-sized streams and large rivers with gravel or sandy bottoms and large rocks, with clear water. By day, it takes refuge beneath large stones and snags, coming out to forage for food at night. Hellbenders are carnivorous amphibians, feeding on crayfish, snails, aquatic insects and small fish. It may even bite your hook while you are fishing, if so, gently remove the hook and return it to the place you caught it, as there is no open season (it is illegal) to catch hellbenders. They also fill an important niche in the aquatic ecosystem and populations have been declining so if you do see one consider yourself lucky, although some say they are less than attractive and prehistoric looking.

Hellbenders hatch from eggs and larvae have no functional limbs and have gills, as they age limbs grow and the gills close. The loss of gills occurs at about 2 years old when they close and they transition to an unusual means of respiration that involves gas exchange through capillaries found in their dorsoventral folds. This animal is the largest aquatic vertebrate that lacks gills and yet utilizes almost exclusively an aquatic mode of specialized cutaneous respiration.

As an adult, they have a distinctive appearance, with tiny eyes and wrinkly skin. They are usually brown or reddish-brown, with a pale underbelly. They have five digits on their back feet and four digits on their front feet. The narrow edge along the dorsal surface of their tail helps propel them through the water. Hellbenders flat bodies average about two feet in length, but have been known to reach lengths up to 30 inches. The lifespan is commonly 12-15 years, but a few in captivity have been known to live over 25 years. Pollution and siltation of streams can reduce its lifespan and destroy their habitat; hence its population decline. The hellbender can be confused with the Mudpuppy



The Mudpuppy: *Necturus maculosus maculosus*

Is the only other salamander in Pennsylvania that grows to a comparable size to the Hellbender. The most distinctive feature that can help you identify a mudpuppy from a hellbender are three pairs of bushy external gills that are present at the junction of the neck and head (see picture). Hellbenders only have external gills until they are 4-5 inches long. Another identifying feature is the mudpuppy has four digits on all four feet, unlike the hellbender with five digits on the back feet and four on the front feet.

As you are out enjoying the waters of Elk County you may encounter a giant primitive looking salamander, do not be afraid of these docile creatures; they are an important part of the aquatic ecosystem, an indicator of the health of the water, and remember... they will not harm you.

Hellbenders are more prevalent in Elk County, but both hellbenders and mudpuppies are native to the area.

The photo to the right is a hellbender found in the Clarion River in 2015.



Photo by Stacey Foster

Other Environmental Education by the District

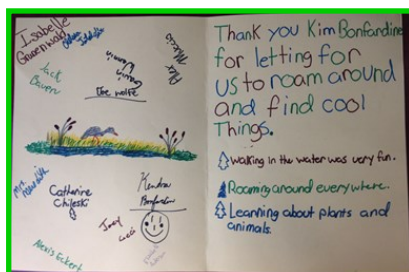
The Elk County Conservation District's mission is to promote sound environmental stewardship through leadership, **education**, and technical assistance for the benefit of the environment and future generations. We take this mission seriously and hold many different workshops and environmental education events throughout the year. Some are highlighted in this report such as the Envirothon, the Elk Expo, Trout in the Classroom, etc., and here are a few others hosted by ECCD in 2015.

Ridgway Township held a Family Day on April 2, 2015 and invited ECCD to have an educational display near the creek. The macroinvertebrate display was a hit with adults and kids alike. All the macros were collected from the stream just beside the park (Big Mill Creek) and from the pond on the park property. Comparisons were made between the two ecosystems, stream & pond.



On 8/13/15, ECCD hosted a WPCAMR meeting at the Elk County Visitors Center. The meeting was well attended and participants took a field trip to the lime doser that is treating AMD on Winslow Hill. The interactive field trip was very successful as guests could see the equipment working and ask questions about the operation and maintenance of a lime doser in Pennsylvania climate.

Pictured to the left are some of the Elk County Catholic Middle school students who attended a field trip to the West Creek Wetland Learning Center on 10/15/15. Students visited the WCWLC for a wetland lesson and a fun scavenger hunt to learn about the plants that grow in and around a wetland.



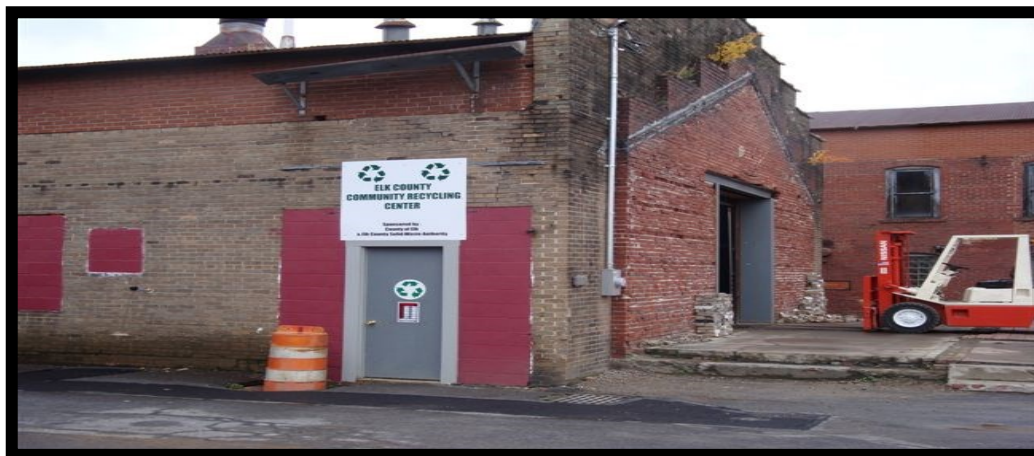
What an awesome
Thank You card
from the students
on the West Creek
Wetland field trip!



ELK COUNTY COMMUNITY RECYCLING CENTER

Stackpole Complex, 45 Heritage Drive, St. Marys, PA 15857 (814) 834-4886

<http://www.co.elk.pa.us/recycling/>



The Elk County Community Recycling Center was opened in October 2010 by the County of Elk and the Elk County Solid Waste Authority / Recycling Office. The center's main building is used for sorting and baling of materials. A warehouse next to the center was rented in 2011 for the storage of material until enough is accumulated for shipment. In 2012, additional space was acquired in the rear of the center and provided space for an office, break room, and bulb & battery storage.

The Recycling Center currently accepts newsprint, office paper, magazines, mixed paper, cardboard, hard & soft cover books, #1 plastic bottles, #2 plastic bottles, #5 plastic, #5 flex bags (bulk packs), bi-metal cans, and aluminum cans. In addition, the Recycling Office has an on-going electronics collection which occurs on the 3rd Saturday of each month and ships out a truckload of electronics about every month. They also collect fluorescent bulbs, batteries, and oil based paint and pesticides.

The Recycling Center continues to grow each year. We currently have three full time staff and two part-time positions. Local business and school cooperation continues to increase. We also commend the loyal support of our volunteers.

The Elk Conservation District provides staffing for the Recycling Center. David Stubber, Solid Waste Enforcement Officer, has his office located in this building and oversees daily activities.

The County of Elk is currently in the process of purchasing the former Advanced Recycling Equipment building for a new recycling center.

Hopefully all recycling programs will move to the new facility in the spring of 2016.

2015 Community Recycling Center Totals

Material	Lbs.	Tons	Material	Lbs.	Tons
#1 PETE—Plastic	40,563	20.28	Magazines	51,950	25.98
#2 HDPE—Plastic	25,627	12.81	Mixed Paper	164,284	82.14
#4—Plastic	0	0.00	OCC (Cardboard)	556,921	278.46
#5 PP—Plastic	0	0.00	Hard Cover Books	15,718	7.86
#5 PP—Flex Bags	61,278	30.64	Soft Cover Books	8,447	4.22
Stretch Wrap	65,922	32.96	Aluminum Cans	813	0.41
Office Paper	14,972	7.49	Bi-Metal (Tin)	4,272	2.14
Newsprint	27,630	28.82	TOTALS:	1,068,397	534.20

2011 Tonnage: 106.58 Tons 2012 Tonnage: 202.44 Tons 2015 Tonnage: 534.20 Tons

2013 Tonnage: 297.18 Tons 2014 Tonnage: 448.08 Tons



2015 Recycling Totals—Other Programs

Material	Lbs.	Tons
Electronics	221,570	110.78
Lamps	10,612	EACH
Batteries	2,639	1.32
Oil Based Paint & Pesticides	700	0.35
Waste Tires	8,120	4.06
White Goods	22,489	11.24
Medicines	1,006	0.50
Household Hazardous Waste	6,331	3.16

Elk County Municipal Waste Enforcement Officer

The municipal waste enforcement officer position was established under a three way agreement between the Elk County Conservation District, Elk County Commissioners and Elk County Solid Waste Authority. This position was established to provide oversight and enforcement in activities related to illegal trash dumping, demolition permit issuance, and activities related to the community recycling center. The following is summary of those activities for 2015.

- David R. Stubber -

As the Municipal Waste Enforcement Officer for Elk County I worked 2189 hours and logged 4694 miles. There were 9 investigations with 9 closed by either investigation or criminal complaint. I inspected and approved 55 Demo permits and closed 42 in Elk County.

Other duties done over the course of the year included the monthly Electronics/Plastic collection, two Unwanted Medicines Collections, and a Household Hazardous Waste Collection. There were also two trash collections on North Paul Road with the students of the St.Marys Catholic Middle School.

In October 2010 we opened the Elk County Community Recycling Center located at 45 Heritage St. in the Stackpole Complex in St Marys. The center is open every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday as well as the 3rd Saturday of the month. We collect newspaper, cardboard, and paperboard, magazines, junk mail and office paper as well as #1 and #2 plastic bottles, #5 plastic, aluminum cans and bimetal cans. In 2015 we shipped 1,034,640lbs of recyclable materials that is 517.32 tons



2015 Financial Statement

Income

CDFAP Act 13 Sup. Admn. Assistant	430.72
CDFAP Dist. Manager & 1st Technician	63,769.19
CDFAP ACT Ag Technician	25,113.26
Act 13 - UGWF Block Grant	56,818.18
Watershed Specialist Grant	33,334.77
S/W Enforcement Officer (County)	46,373.64
County Allocation	24,500.00
E & S Review Fee Income	7,200.00
GP Permit Fees (Chap 105)	4,700.00
NPDES Permit Fees	6,500.00
Interest Income - CNB Savings	350.24
Miscellaneous Income	434.47
Misc. Income -- Mini-Grants	4,437.04
Misc. Income -- Workshop Registration Fees	120.00
Misc. Income -- Envirothon Donations	2,330.00
Misc. Income -- Jr. Envirothon Donations	530.00
Annual Trail Race/Clay Shoot/ Fundraiser Income	2,715.00
Mini-Grant Income -- ARIPPA	1,250.00
Dirt & Gravel Roads Program - Capital Advance	9,010.00
Water Monitoring Project	
Water Monitoring Proj. Stackpole-Hall Grant 2015	13,316.88
Water Monitoring Proj. '13 Sinnemahoning Grant	2,230.00
Water Monitoring Project	15,546.88
Dirt & Gravel/ Low Volume Roads Program	
Dirt & Gravel - Project Income	64,163.60
Low Volume Road - Project Income	16,000.00
Dirt & Gravel/LVR -	80,163.60
Dirt & Gravel/LVR - Adm. Income	
Dirt & Gravel - Admin.	8,020.45
Dirt & Gravel - Training & Edu.	8,020.45
Low Volume Road - Admin.	2,000.00
Low Volume Road - Training & Edu.	2,000.00
Dirt & Gravel/LVR - Admin.	20,040.90

Total Income **405,667.89**

2015 Financial Statement

Expense

Payroll Expenses	158,265.04
Health Insurance	28,023.05
Vision Insurance	439.54
Dental Insurance	1,195.37
Retirement	11,006.89
FICA (Social Security) Company	9,774.05
Med. (Social Security) Company	2,285.79
PAUC - Unemployment Company	4,311.66
Workers Compensation	1,328.83
Travel Expense	6,798.27
Per Diem Expense	1,266.56
Registration Fees	425.00
Meeting Expense	207.97
Office Supplies	655.44
Advertising	50.90
Telephone	295.19
Dues & Memberships	1,933.00
Sponsorship Fees	200.00
Bank Charges	6.00
Act 13 - CDFAP/SAA Expenses	12,044.29
Envirothon Expenses	1,974.17
Jr. Envirothon Expenses	458.23
Annual Race/Clay Shoot/Fundraiser Expenses	1,306.78
Mini-Grant Expense -- ARIPPA	1,120.00
Misc. Mini-Grant Expenses	4,977.58
Misc. Workshop Expenses	268.10
Water Monitoring Project Expenses	9,418.98
Water Monitoring Project -2015 Stackpole-Hall Grant	3,213.41
Water Monitoring Project. -Colcom Foundation Grant	1,029.88
Toby Creek Watershed Assoc. - Brockway 2-Hr. Monitoring	588.00
Foundation for PA Watersheds	4,587.69
2015-Sinnemahoning Grant	964.88
Dirt & Gravel Road - Projects	4,741.97
Low Volume Road - Projects	14,500.00
Dirt & Gravel/LVR - Projects	19,241.97
Dirt & Gravel Road - Admin.	1,815.20
Dirt & Gravel Road - Training & Edu.	3,874.39
Low Volume Road - Admin.	604.90
Low Volume Road - Training & Edu.	973.45

Total Expense **287,511.47**

Net Income **118,156.42**

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
Marienville Ranger District
131 Smokey Lane
Marienville, PA 16239

Army Corps of Engineers
East Branch Lake
631 East Branch Dam Road
Wilcox, PA 15870

DCNR Bureau of Forestry
258 Sizerville Road
Emporium, PA 15834

DCNR Bendigo State Park
533 State Park Road
Johnsonburg, PA 15845

PA Dept. of Environmental Protection
North West Regional Office
230 Chestnut Street
Meadville, PA 16335

PA Dept. of Environmental Protection
Knox District Office
310 Best Avenue
Knox, PA 16232

PA Fish & Boat Commission
North Central Region Law Enforcement
1150 Spring Creek Road
Bellefonte, PA 16823

PA Fish & Boat Commission
North Central Region Outreach & Education
450 Robinson Lane
Pleasant Gap, PA 16823

PA Game Commission
North Central Region
P.O. Box 5038
Jersey Shore, PA 17740

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
478 Jeffers Street, Building 3, Suite D
DuBois, PA 15801

PA Association of Conservation Districts
25 North Front Street
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Headwaters Resource Conservation & Development
109 North Brady Street, 2nd Floor
DuBois, PA 15801

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
Allegheny Regional Office
159 Main Street
Ridgway, PA 15853

PA Department of Agriculture
Western PA Region
6 McIntyre Road
Gibsonia, PA 15044

PA Department of Transportation
Elk County Maintenance Department
32 St. Leo Avenue
Ridgway, PA 15853

US Fish & Wildlife Service
PA Field Office
315 South Allen Street, Suite 322
State College, PA 16801

North Central PA Regional Planning & Development
49 Ridgmont Drive
Ridgway, PA 15853

Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
266 Donohoe Road, Suite 110
Greensburg, PA 15601