



# Elk Bugle

Volume 9 Issue 4 Winter 2021

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## Apply for our

## Conservation Scholarship

**Are you a student pursuing an education in an environmental field?**

The Elk County Conservation District is now accepting applications for our 2022 Conservation Scholarship.

Applications are due by **June 4th, 2022**

Find more details on how to apply, check out the flyer at the end of this issue!

The Conservation Scholarship is funded through the Annual Elk County Conservation Cup Golf Outing!



Above: 2021 Scholarship awardee, Anthony Whitaker, accepts scholarship Check from Russ Braun, ECCD Board Chairman, and Kate Wehler, ECCD District Manager



**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 .**

## District Manager

## Maddie Stanisch

## Resource Conservation Technician

## Micaela Lefever

## Watershed Technician

## Ryan Grimm

## Victoria Challingsworth

## Resource Conservation Technician



# Elk County Conservation District Receives Growing Greener Grant Funding

*Jones Township, PA-* The Elk County Conservation District was awarded a \$138,702 Growing Greener grant for the remediation of an acid mine drainage treatment system located in Jones Township. This treatment system was constructed in 2002 and helps to treat a tributary to Johnson Run, which is suffering from water quality issues due to two acid mine drainage discharges. Johnson Run drains to the Clarion River, so improvements from this project will be seen from Elk County down to Pittsburgh. Johnson Run is classified as a high quality stream and supports wild trout.

Since its construction in 2002, this treatment system has seen limited maintenance. If it weren't for the help of the landowners, the system would've lost its effectiveness long ago. After twenty years, however, water sampling provided us with clues that the system needs a little more maintenance than what the landowners themselves are able to provide. The treatment system is suffering from permeability and reactivity problems. This means that the water is having trouble flowing through the system and is not being fully

treated. If the system is not rehabilitated, metal concentrations in the water in Johnson Run will continue to increase and the water will become more acidic.

The treatment system is made up of two vertical flow ponds, a sedimentation pond, and a wetland. Vertical flow ponds help to neutralize the acid found in acid mine drainage and help to generate alkalinity. The sedimentation pond allows the water to slow down, which allows solids to "drop out" of the water. The wetland uses chemical and biological processes to further clarify the water.

For this project, the intake structure for the system will be replaced with a newer, more effective structure and the organic material in the vertical flow pond will be replaced to restore reactivity to the system.



# What's In our Water:

## Private Well Owner Workshop

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*Ridgway, PA*— On Thursday, March 31st, the Elk County Conservation District hosted a private water supply workshop at the Elk County Office of Emergency Services. Approximately 20 private well supply owners attended the workshop. Attendees learned about common water quality contaminants, basics of proper well construction, methods to protect wellheads from pollution, and how climate change can impact water wells.

Prior to this workshop, 22 private water supplies were tested throughout Elk County. A general water well analysis package was used, which tested for pH, calcium, iron, magnesium, manganese, sodium, total hardness, total coliform and E. Coli.

It was stressed in this workshop the importance of testing and maintaining your water well. It is important to test your water annually for

bacteria and every three years for pH, total dissolved solids, and local pollutants. A lot of water contaminants have no obvious symptoms and there are many water supplies that have never been properly tested. If you are interested in getting your well tested, the links below provide a list of DEP Accredited labs which can provide you with sampling bottles and instructions:

[Bacteria Sampling](#)

[Chemical Contaminant Testing](#)



Speaker, Danielle Rhea (Penn State Extension), discussing how many private water systems are located in Pennsylvania.

Financial and other support for the Private Water Supply Workshop has been provided by the Department of Environmental Protection's 2021 Environmental Education Grants Program.

# Elk County Awarded PACD Mini Grant for Adult Environmental Education Programs

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St. Marys, PA — The Elk County Conservation District is excited to have received grant funding from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). This PACD Non-Pont Source Pollution (NPS) mini-grant provides funding for Districts to provide environmental education programs for adults within their communities. Here in Elk County we plan to use our funding to put on 3 separate, unique workshops.

We plan to kick off the series with a workshop geared toward landowners with streams and wetlands on their property. This workshop will discuss streambank stabilization methods and the required permits for streambank stabilization and fish habitat structures. Implementing some of the simple measures we will discuss in this workshop can prevent property loss from erosion. With storm events only getting larger and more severe, this is problem that won't be going away, so we want to teach folks some ways fix it.

Homeowners aren't the only ones who have questions about streams and wetlands! The District often gets calls from realtors regarding properties that have wetlands, streams, or storm water facilities on them. We know how difficult it can be to keep track of all the different rules and regulations, so we developed the idea for this workshop. It will cover all the questions we see frequently and allow realtors in our area to ask questions they have.

We will wrap up the educational programs with a Contractor BMP workshop. We historically have one of these workshops each year and see 50-70 contractors in attendance. This is a great opportunity to meet district staff and learn more about erosion and sediment control methods.

We're eager to be conducting workshops once again and can't wait to see everyone!



# The Best BMPs for Managing Spring Rains



Above photo showing mud tracked onto roadway; below photo showing a maintained rock construction entrance



## Seed & Mulch-

Did you know that mulch helps prevent soil erosion?

Mulch has many benefits in controlling erosion, including:

- ✓ Absorb rainfall impact,
- ✓ Increases infiltration rates
- ✓ Prevents soil moisture loss
- ✓ Provides a suitable environment for seeds to germinate
- ✓ Protect seeds from direct sunlight.

Seed mixtures appropriate for site conditions should be used and can be found in the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Manual.

## Rock Construction Entrances-

A rock construction entrance (RCE) is utilized when construction traffic will exit the project site onto any roadway, public or private. Entrances should be a minimum of 50 feet in length, minimum of 20 feet in width, lined with geotextile, and topped with 8" AASHTO #1 stone.

In high-quality watersheds, entrances should be 50 feet in length and include a wash rack. Extending the entrance to 100 feet may be considered in certain situations as well.

The large, loose stones help remove mud and sediment from the wheels of construction vehicles. The entrances also keep sediment and debris off the roadways, which can be hazardous to cars and motorcycles.

New rock should be added to an entrance as necessary, and a stockpile kept on-site for daily maintenance. In the event sediment is tracked onto the road, it should be removed and returned to the site.

A project site with seed and mulch





Sediment-polluted waters entering a clean stream

Unchecked sediment pollution can wreak havoc on fish populations. Sediment can clog fish gills and reduce oxygen absorption, causing an increase in susceptibility to diseases. The resulting turbidity from sediment pollution can impede visual predators from finding food.

Settling sediment poses a risk to the spawning areas of fish as well. The settling sediment coats the eggs within their nests, in turn suffocating them. This coating of sediment can also clog the spaces between gravel that is necessary habitat for aquatic life.



A brook trout in a clean stream

## How does sediment pollution affect aquatic life?

From an environmental standpoint, sediment pollution is Pennsylvania's largest water pollutant by volume. This type of pollution affects the environment at multiple levels, including water quality and aquatic life.

Suspended sediment increases the turbidity of water, causing it to become cloudy, reduces sunlight, which in turn reduces photosynthesis of aquatic plants. Through the reduction of photosynthesis, there is a reduction in available oxygen, which increases the temperature of the water. A change of just a few degrees can prove fatal to cold water loving species like trout.



Brook trout eggs nestled between the rocks of a fish nest

## How you can prevent sediment pollution-

Reduce erosion from disturbed construction sites through the use of BMPs, including rock construction entrances, seeding and mulching exposed soil, and cleaning up any sediment that leaves the site.

***Do your part to prevent sediment pollution!***

# WATER TANK RUN: LARGE WOODY DEBRIS PROJECT

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St. Marys, PA — Construction season started early here in Elk County! The Conservation District began our Water Tank Run Large Woody Debris Project on February 28th, taking advantage of a break in the weather to get outdoors. This project is located on state game lands #25 and involved installing approximately 20 Large woody debris structures.

Projects of this style are designed to improve aquatic health for fish, amphibians, and macro-invertebrates. Structures improve nutrient cycling in the watershed and improve overall stream health. In addition to those wonderful benefits, they are typically done on small streams high in the watershed. This allows for increased water retention during periods of high rain, reducing flooding downstream and increasing groundwater infiltration.



They are constructed by selecting and felling trees to naturally create these structures in the riparian zone. Sometimes moving them into place using a manual winch is necessary to ensure proper placement. We're excited to have completed our Water Tank Run project and look forward to doing more like it in the future. Funding for this project was provided with a grant through the Cold Water Heritage Partnership.



# Bennetts Valley Elementary Stem Night

Bennetts Valley, PA— On March 2nd, Bennett's Valley Elementary provided their STEM activity night for students after taking a few years off due to Covid-19. There were a number of stations, discussing everything from papermaking to pollinators. The Conservation District was excited to participate and be providing hands on activities to the community.

Using the wildlife education kit provided to the District by the Pennsylvania Game Commission, we were able to show students the pelts of most Pennsylvania mammals. This education kit is a wonderful addition to our resources and allows a students and adults the opportunity to see and touch pelts of animals they wouldn't otherwise get to see. The kit also contains several skulls, as well as rubber models of animal tracks and scat. This makes it a fun way to challenge students to match up the pelt with the correct track or skull, and keeps students engaged and excited.

While at the event the District was able to share Pennsylvania's wildlife with over 75 people. It's always rewarding to see the children's and adult's faces the first time they feel the softness of a bobcat pelt or see what sharp teeth a skunk has!



Above: Pelts and skulls on display for students to see and touch

## MountainFest 2022

Ridgway, PA—Mountainfest has become a favorite event for folks looking for something to do as they wait for the weather to turn warm. The Elk County Conservation District attended this year's event on Saturday, March 5th, to present environmental education programs in the kids education section. The nice weather brought tons of people out and kept us busy!

Offering activities on furs, skulls, and tracks ID, as well as pollinators, the District reached over 200 people, both young and old! Displaying the furs from our education kit and sharing fun facts about the animals they came from intrigued even the most stoic attendees!

Adults were amazed to find that the opossum is the only marsupial in North America, while the kid's were surprised to see how much a raccoon paw looks like a hand!

Kids also decorated a compostable planter and planted seeds to start growing just in time for spring! They also spent time learning about the importance of pollinators for food production!



Above: Kids decorate planters made from compostable cups to take home

# THE AG-VENTURES OF RYAN GRIMM

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*Louisville, KY* — The Annual YF&R (Young Farmers and Ranchers) Conference was back to an in person event in Louisville, Kentucky, after having to be virtual due to the pandemic. As a member of the Young Ag Professionals group Ryan was offered the opportunity to attend this fantastic event!

The YF&R Conference gathers young agriculture leaders in their respective communities. This allows for these leaders to hear from world renowned keynote speakers, as well as, network with like minded individuals from across the country. Breakout tours were available for participants, which provided opportunities to visit unique operations, such as those which breed Triple Crown Horses. Ryan chose to visit the Louisville Slugger Bat Factory, where you can watch how a tree from Galetton, PA gets turned into the bat of choice for most of the MLB! Topics from the keynote speakers ranged from sustainable farming practices, to working with government agencies and mental health.



# ST. MARYS AREA TOURS THE ELK COUNTY RECYCLING CENTER

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St. Marys, PA— On March 22<sup>nd</sup>, Envirothon teams from St. Marys Area Middle and High School took part in an educational tour. The Elk County Community Recycling Center, in conjunction with the Elk County Conservation District and Greentree Landfill, provided lessons for the students on the current issue topic for 2022, Waste to Resources!



Over the course of the day, lessons touched on composting, landfills, recycling and included a tour of the Community Recycling Center.

Don Henrichs, manager of Greentree Landfill, provided a lesson for students about the landfill here in Elk County. Discussing landfill permitting, construction, and daily operations at the facility, students were able to grasp a better understanding of the landfill liner system and even see samples of the liner used during construction.

Bekki Titchner, Elk County Recycling Coordinator, led students on a tour though the center discussing the enormous variety of items that the Recycling Center takes, as well as where they are marketed and what they are often recycled into.



# Spring has Sprung at the West Creek Wetlands!

## Are you interested in volunteering in your community?

If you answered yes, consider joining the Elk County Conservation District at our West Creek Wetlands work night on May 11th @ 6pm. Located on West Creek Road in St. Marys, the West Creek Wetland Learning Center (WCWLC) is open to the public and boasts a pavilion, native pollinator beds, a walking trail, and wetland viewing dock. The Elk County Conservation District manages the property on behalf of the County and as with anything, the management takes time and work! We can always use extra hands. Now that spring is here and the snow is gone, it's time to get out and get things in order for the summer season. We'd love for you to be a part of that! While there is work to be done it's always an enjoyable time with a good crew. Some of the work we have lined up for work night involves hanging new butterfly habitat, replacing broken bluebird boxes, repairing the gate and parking lot and doing some basic trail maintenance. We hope to see you there! Dress for the weather and bring work gloves!

## Local Girl Scout Troop Donates Bluebird Boxes

St. Marys, PA— On April 7th, District staff met with Girl Scout Troop 36887 at the West Creek Wetlands. As part of their wildlife habitat badge the troop made their own bluebird boxes! After construction they were looking for a location in our community to donate and hang the boxes. We are so thankful they thought of the West Creek Wetlands.



The walking trail at the wetland facility already has several boxes but a few of them are in poor condition and need replaced. We're excited to replace them and we hope that the troop will come back in the summer to see if any new residents have moved into their birdhouses!



# 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!

It's no secret that online shopping has become more and more popular over the years, with that the amount of packaging that comes into the average household has increased as well.

But did you know that your packing material isn't garbage? Much of that packing material can be recycled right here at the Elk County Community Recycling Center!



Left: Bubble mailers like this can be recycled! They are made of film plastic, which the Elk County Community Recycling Center accepts.

Below: Some paper mailers are not recyclable because they are a combination of paper and plastic products. Others, like the one below, are held together using a puffed glue that also acts as a protectant!



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

### **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

### **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—**Secretary



Follow us on Facebook at:

**Elk County (PA) Conservation District**





# *Elk County Conservation District Scholarship*

The Elk County Conservation District (ECCD) is accepting scholarship applications from High School seniors within Elk County, or current College or University students whose permanent residency is within Elk County.

Scholarship amount: \$500

Review the information below and submit your application no later than June 4, 2022 to [ECCD@countyofelkpa.com](mailto:ECCD@countyofelkpa.com) or mail them to 850 Washington St, St. Marys, PA 15857

## ***Qualifications:***

- Applicant must be an Elk County High School senior or College student that will enter or is currently enrolled in an undergraduate program, who will be continuing their education with the intent of majoring in conservation, environmental science, forestry, agriculture, engineering or related studies.

***Students applying for scholarships will be required to submit all of the following:***

- ✓ Completed Application
- ✓ Career Plans
- ✓ Essay
- ✓ Personal Record
- ✓ Volunteering Experiences
- ✓ Letter(s) of recommendation

**Contact Ryan Grimm at (814) 776-5388 to request an application!**



3<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL  
**CONSERVATION  
CUP**

**July 30<sup>th</sup>**

**BAVARIAN HILLS  
GOLF COURSE**

4 PERSON SCRAMBLE

**\$70 :NONMEMBER**

 **\$50 :MEMBER**

**\*REGISTER BY JULY 22 TO GUARANTEE MEAL AFTERWARD\***

REGISTRATION: 8:00 AM  
SHOTGUN START: 9:00 AM

CASH PAYOUT, SKILL PRIZES,  
50/50, AND RAFFLE ITEMS

**MAIL REGISTRATION TO**

**850 WASHINGTON ST  
ST MARYS PA 15857**

**EMAIL REGISTRATION TO**

**[RGRIMM@COUNTYOFELKPA.COM](mailto:RGRIMM@COUNTYOFELKPA.COM)**

**814-776-5388**

**\*All proceeds benefit Elk County Conservation District Scholarship and environmental education\***

# West Creek Wetlands Work Night



Looking to make difference in  
your community?

Join the Elk County Conservation District and volunteers at the West Creek Wetlands to help us whip the wetlands into shape for the summer season!

We will tidying up after winter, trimming back shrubs, hanging new bluebird boxes, and fixing up the parking lot. There will be activities for individuals of all activity levels.

**When:** Wednesday May 15th @ 5pm

**Where:** West Creek Wetland Learning Center  
West Creek Road, St Marys PA  
(across from Wilson Road)

**Who:** Everyone is welcome! Individuals under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian

