



ANNUAL REPORT 2017





District Highlight

Strategic planning, succession planning, financial planning, business planning, estate planning. So many forms of planning are out there, it almost seems like we could plan ourselves to death. That may be true, as the planning process can be tedious and tiresome. But one of the most important parts of the plan is the execution, actually following the prescription which can lead to success.

In 2017, the Erie County Conservation District received a grant from PA Leadership Development to update its strategic plan – one that was originally developed in 2010. The grant opened the door to the board of directors and district staff to lay our plans for the future. Collaboration with our partners during our focus group sessions provided valuable insight on new approaches and goal setting for District programs.

As with many plans that are on the shelf, for them to be successful, they must be *active and used*. A plan is not known unless it is opened up and utilized. The phrase “Plan your work and work your plan” rings true here. Referencing our strategic plan in all that we do here at the conservation district keeps us to task and helps us strive to reach our goals and adhering to our Vision and Mission.

In Conservation,

Tom McClure

VISION STATEMENT

The Erie County Conservation District strives to become a leading conservation organization in Erie County to provide assistance, management, and education for the wise use of our natural resources.

MISSION STATEMENT

Erie County Conservation District is a service based organization providing for the conservation of natural resources and the creation of a healthy environment. We educate local residents, municipalities, landowners, educators, and organizations that are involved with or concerned about wise environmental stewardship.



ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Educational outreach is an important component to the Conservation District's service to the Erie County community. Each year our educational program reach more students, scouts, and general public through formal and informal programming.

- Hosted the PA Farm Bureau Mobile Ag Lab – 290+ students
- Hosted the high school county Envirothon – 130+ high school students
- Hosted the middle school Envirothon – 75+ middle school students
- Participated in TREC Youth Training Days for students
- Participated in the Imaginarium Expotarium educating families about watersheds and watercourses
- Participated in the Children's Water Festival at Penn State Behrend campus
- Worked with the Erie County Master Gardeners hosting the 2017 PumpkinWalk – 7,500+ visitors
- Piloted Nature Immersion program with Erie School District



4,910
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS

1,142
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL/
COLLEGE STUDENTS

930
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

14,468
TOTAL NUMBER
INVOLVED IN
OUTREACH



THE CHAPTER 105 – WATERWAY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Under the Chapter 105 Program, the District's delegated responsibilities include performing initial site investigations for complaints related to aquatic resources, providing education and information to the community regarding the Chapter 105 rules and regulations, and the processing of the General Permits within Erie County, of which over 60 were processed.

Additionally, over 40 complaints related to aquatic resources were investigated in 2017. The staff attempts to achieve voluntary compliance for violations noted in the field, to the greatest extent practical. More than 80% of the cases investigated were resolved via voluntary compliance. Unfortunately, that is not always possible and the District must forward the case to the DEP for enforcement action.

Through structured training events, or less formal individual meetings, over 200 incidences of assistance were provided to the community. We provide either technical and/or administrative assistance to design consultants, contractors, property owners, and state and local officials.



EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL AND NPDES PROGRAMS

The Chapter 102 program is the longest tenured program at the District. Initially the program was solely related to erosion and sedimentation control for earth disturbance sites, to minimize accelerated erosion and subsequent off-site sedimentation, including but not limited to pollution to Waters of the Commonwealth. Chapter 102 has evolved to address post construction stormwater under the National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) permitting program. The primary focus being protection of receiving watercourses and associated water quality.

The District continues to work closely with local municipalities in relation to local Act 167 stormwater ordinances, to minimize duplication of efforts, and reduce permit processing times. NPDES Permit processing times remain under the PA Department of Environmental Protection's recommended standard operating procedures. The District strives to minimize project delays related to permitting, to the extent practical.

All earth disturbances, including those associated with agricultural plowing and tilling, timber harvesting activities, and road maintenance fall under the scope of Chapter 102.

In 2017, the District provided technical or administrative assistance on more than 600 occasions, to individuals in the community, including municipalities, private property owners, developers, and consultants. One hundred ten E&S plans were approved, and 33 NPDES permits processed.



600+

TECHNICAL AND
ADMINISTRATIVE
ASSISTANCE TO
COMMUNITY

110

E&S PLANS APPROVED

33

NPDES PERMITS
PROCESSED



Storey Road Before



Storey Road After



Whittaker Culvert

Dirt and Gravel Road Program - 2017

There are approximately 550 miles of dirt and gravel roads in Erie County. Each mile requires a level of maintenance and can present potential environmental impacts to our local waterways. The Erie County Conservation District assists municipalities through the Dirt & Gravel Road Program by administering funds to improve road bases, drainage systems and road surfaces.

Dirt & Gravel Road Projects

<u>Road</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Project Funds</u>	<u>In-Kind Funds</u>	<u>Total Project Cost</u>
Griffis [Cross-pipe replacements, Driving Surface Aggregate (DSA) application]	Elk Creek Township	\$41,700	\$6,821	\$48,521
Whittaker [Aluminum Box culvert replacement, cross-pipe installations, road bank enhancement]	Elk Creek Township	\$69,500	\$28,381	\$97,881
Old Meadville [Cross-pipe installation, grade-break installation, DSA application]	LeBoeuf Township	\$120,156	\$29,077	\$149,233
Storey [Cross-pipe replacements, DSA application]	Greenfield Township	\$77,267	\$19,868	\$97,135

2017 Totals

<u>Grant Funds</u>	<u>In-Kind Funds</u>	<u>Total Project Cost</u>
\$291,486	\$62,030	\$353,517





Low Volume Road Program - 2017

The Low Volume Roads program administered locally by the Erie County Conservation District concentrates road improvement efforts that provide an environmental benefit on paved, concrete or tar and chip roads with a daily traffic count of less than 500 cars. With this relatively new source of funding, the District was able to complete two projects in 2017.

Low Volume Road Projects

<u>Road</u>	<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Grant Funds</u>	<u>In-Kind Funds</u>	<u>Total Project Cost</u>
Talmadge [Stream Crossing culvert replacements]	McKean	\$26,142	\$40,143	\$66,555
Union-LeBoeuf [Under-drain installation, Full Depth Reclamation road stabilization]	LeBoeuf	\$70,032	\$ 7,973	\$78,005

2017 Totals

<u>Grant Funds</u>	<u>In-Kind Funds</u>	<u>Total Project Costs</u>
\$96,174	\$48,116	\$144,560

Talmadge Culvert



Union-LeBoeuf FDR



PA VinES

“Pennsylvania Vested in Environmental Sustainability”



The District continued the exciting new program available to grape growers in the Lake Erie Watershed. PA VinES (Vested in Environmental Sustainability) is a voluntary program that promotes sustainable viticulture practices through a grower Self-Assessment Workbook. The workbook looks at the economic and environmental impacts of grape production on each operation and serves as an educational resource for the grower.

PA VinES was originally launched through a partnership between the District, PA DEP, Penn State, and Cornell Extension, NRCS and PA Farm Bureau.

After the participant completes the workbook, they are eligible to apply for potential Growing Greener grant funds to install best management practices (BMPs) on their operation, such as cover cropping and stabilized access roads.

The goal of the program is to reduce the environmental impact of the approximately 10,000 acres of vineyards in the county by limiting the amount of sediments and excess nutrients that enter our Lake Erie tributaries.

Topics within the Self-Assessment Workbook

Vineyard Soil and Erosion Management

Nutrition Management

Vineyard Management

Weed Management

Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

Pesticide Management





Seedling Sale

2017 Tree Seedling Sale Gives Students Environmental Education

On April 28, 2017 the Erie County Conservation District conducted the 36th annual seedling sale to benefit educational programs. The money from this sale is used to support scholarships for the winning team to attend the Conservation Leadership School held at Penn State University each summer. The proceeds of the sale also help support the high school team that attends the state Envirothon competition and various educational programs and experiences for the public.

- Approximately 375 orders were filled
- Over 17,000 seedlings were sold
- Program profit totaling \$10,938.53. Thank you!





HEADWATERS PARK

Each year, the staff at the Conservation District look to the Strategic Plan and the Master Site plan to guide the goals of the year. Headwaters Park is always a project the staff looks forward to working on, envisioning a future for the Park and watching it develop over time into reality, for both current patrons and future visitors.

Accomplishments in 2017 include:

- 900 foot trail expansion in the western section of the Park
- Completion of parking lot kiosk, including interpretive watershed maps and a free lending library
- Continued management of invasive phragmites in the eastern wetlands
- Transforming sections of managed lawn to native meadows





AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The goals of the Agriculture program in Erie County are:

- Assist farmers and landowners with nutrient management planning
- Assist farmers and landowners with planning and implementing best management practices (BMPs)
- Provide technical assistance to minimize soil erosion for landowners and farmers
- Assist with all concerns related to agriculture
- Assist with farmers and landowners with conservation planning
- Assist farmers with constructing manure management plans

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

The District continues with the Farmland Preservation program in Erie County. The program provides funds for the purchase of conservation easements from owners of quality farmland. The funding will allow more farmland to stay in agricultural use for perpetuity.

- 65 farms and approximately 8,400 acres are preserved in Erie County.
- One farm for a total of 120 acres were preserved in 2017.

GROWING GREENER GRANT

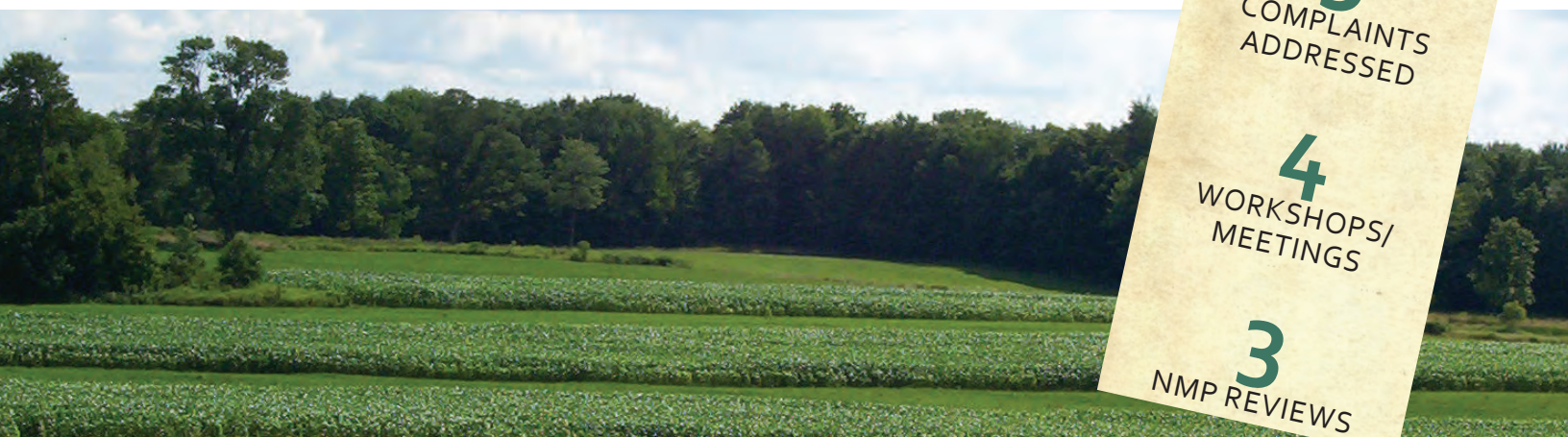
The District received a \$443,000 Ag BMP Cost Share grant to assist landowners with installing BMPs on their farms. In 2017 planning was underway for two large projects to be completed in 2018. The grant will be finished in the fall of 2018. The District is working with several farmers to install BMP's within the French Creek, Conneautsee, and Eastern Erie County watersheds.

200+
FARMERS REACHED

5
COMPLAINTS
ADDRESSED

4
WORKSHOPS/
MEETINGS

3
NMP REVIEWS



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017

John Hallenburg, Jr. - Chairman
Ronald Chapman - Vice Chairman
Bob Buhl - Treasurer
Sue Moyer - Secretary
Kathy Dahlkemper - County Executive
Deborah Phillips - Farm Director
Dean Curtis - Farm Director
Dan Hall - Associate Director
Edward T. DiMattio - County Council Liason
John Green - DEP Field Representative

CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF 2017

Tom McClure - District Manager
Gene Clemente - Technical Resources Manager
Kristen Currier - Environmental Educator
Bethany Fritz - Agriculture Specialist
Joseph Hudson - Watershed Specialist
Amanda Shreve - Office Manager
Brian Zeppenfeld - Coastal Zone Specialist



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