



ANNUAL REPORT 2015





YEAR IN REVIEW

As the other 65 Conservation Districts in the Commonwealth keep a forward vision approach to tackling issues, meeting goals and completing projects, so does the Erie County Conservation District. We must maintain a focused outlook so we keep our finger on the pulse of the matters that surround us locally.

While always looking ahead, some reflection is required to make upcoming decisions. In 2015, the District said farewell through retirement to an outstanding individual, Earl Brown. As District Manager, Earl was an excellent example of servant leadership, countlessly putting others' needs before his. For nine years, Earl led the District through the installation and completion of many projects within Erie County. "EJ" was the friendly face of the District, and his work and dedication is greatly appreciated over his 24 years of service as a Director and Manager.

The year saw continued improvements to two and a half miles of dirt and gravel roads on seven different projects throughout the county. These road improvements enhance drainage and strengthen the driving surface to help the roads outlast the harsh weather our climate brings.

The Conservation District serves all of the approximately 278,000 residents in Erie County. We'll continue to offer education and assistance to area farmers and landowners through guidance and the installation of Best Management Practices (BMP's). Significant improvements were made to Headwaters Park in 2015, and more are to come in 2016. The cooperation of all of our partners has served us well, and the continuation of those partnerships will expand the efforts to increase the quality of our soil and waterways in Erie County and Northwest Pennsylvania.

In Conservation,

Tom McClure
District Manager



Creating new Park trail





ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

The District education program continues to grow each year, both in numbers and types of programs and events the Conservation leads and assist.

- Hosted the PA Farm Bureau Mobile Ag Lab – 300+ students
- Hosted the high school county Envirothon – 150+ high school students
- Hosted the middle school Envirothon – 50+ middle school students
- Participated in TREC Youth Training Days for students
- Worked with the Glenwood and Eastside YMCAs for summer programming – 350+ campers
- Worked with the Erie County Master Gardeners to host the 2015 PumpkinWalk – 1,500+ visitors
- Scheduled regular school programming throughout the year

3,396
ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL STUDENTS

550
MIDDLE/HIGH SCHOOL/
COLLEGE STUDENTS

1719
COMMUNITY MEMBERS

5,665
TOTAL NUMBER
INVOLVED IN
OUTREACH



THE CHAPTER 105 – WATERWAY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The District continued its delegated responsibilities associated with the Chapter 105 program. Aside from the review and acknowledgment of the Chapter 105 General Permits in Erie County, of which 68 were processed, the District provides education and information to the regulated community regarding rules and regulations associated with Chapter 105 and various permit processes. Through either structured training events or informal, individual meetings, the District provided over 300 individuals with routine education and/or assistance.

Additionally, the District serves as the first response to complaints regarding our waterways in Erie County. The District investigated 43 complaints, and either achieved voluntary compliance, our preferred method of resolution, or referred the complaint to the Department for enforcement.

EROSION AND SEDIMENTATION CONTROL AND NPDES PROGRAMS

The District continues to administer its most tenured program, the Chapter 102 program related to erosion and sedimentation (E&S) control and the National Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (NPDES) permitting program. It is anticipated that an updated Delegation Agreement with the PA DEP will be entered into in early 2016.

The District continues to work to improve water quality through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) that minimize accelerated erosion and subsequent associated sedimentation to waters of the Commonwealth, and maximize infiltration of stormwater.

Chapter 102 applies to all earth disturbances including those associated with agricultural plowing and tilling activities, timber harvesting activities, road maintenance projects, and development projects.



Dirt and Gravel Road Program - 2015

Erie County is taking great strides in implementing drainage, base and road surface improvements on its dirt and gravel roadways. Through more education and outreach efforts by the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads and the Conservation District, townships are becoming aware of the benefits the program offers.

Seven projects in four townships covered 2 ½ miles of roadway.

Here are the 2015 implementations:

- \$304,020 total project grant expenditures
- \$125,149 total in-kind contributions
- 7,770 tons of DSA placed
- 7,276 tons of road fill added
- 4,305 feet of underdrain added
- 3,324 square yards of geo-separation fabric added
- 2,617 feet of vegetative management
- 1,146 square yards of seeding and mulching
- 215 feet of diversion swales constructed
- 190 feet of circular culverts installed
- 9 grade breaks installed
- 9 new cross pipes installed
- 6 turnouts installed
- 4 stream crossings replaced
- 1 cross pipe replaced





HEADWATERS PARK MASTER SITE PLAN

The Master Site Plan for Headwaters Park was approved by the Board of Directors in March. Staff immediately began planning for initial improvements, including searching and acquiring funding for various projects. Work began immediately in numerous projects, and the District is very proud to exhibit several steps taken toward the maintenance and care of Headwaters in just seven short months.

- Planting of 600 Norway, red, and black spruce trees to begin a living buffer along the I-90 corridor
- Management of tree and grapevine population. Several key trees were felled to shelter the newly planted saplings and also create further wildlife sanctuary. Volunteers and staff also worked throughout the season to manage and eliminate much of the aggressive grapevine population.
- The gateway trail to the Park was re-graded and the surface improved to meet ADA requirements. It now boasts a permeable surface and several stormwater management BMPs to keep the trail stable year-round for visitors.
- The addition of a new information kiosk at the lower parking lot.
- The addition of safety lighting to the lower parking lot and power to the event pavilion.





AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES

The District currently participates in three agriculture programs. They are the Nutrient Management Program (NMP), Manure Management Program (MMP), and the Agricultural Conservation Technical Assistance Program (ACT). These programs provide assistance to farmers and landowners and help meet the goals of the agriculture program at the District. Bethany Fritz; the Ag specialist is available to assist farmers and landowners with their concerns. Several workshops and meetings are also hosted throughout the year.

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.

- 59 farms and approximately 7,500 acres are preserved in Erie County.
- One farm for a total of 82 acres was preserved in 2015

GROWING GREENER GRANT

The District received a \$443,000 Ag BMP Cost Share grant to assist landowners with installing BMPs on their farms. Construction will begin on several projects in 2016 . The grant will continue until 2018. The District plans to work with several farmers to install BMP's within the French Creek, Conneauttee and Eastern Erie County watersheds.



BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2015

John Hallenburg, Jr. – Chairman
Ronald Chapman – Vice Chairman
Tom McClure - Treasurer
Kathy Dahlkemper – County Executive
Bob Buhl – Farm Director
Deborah Phillips - Farm Director
Sue Moyer – Public Director
LeRoy Gross – Associate Director
Dan Hall – Associate Director
Edward T. DiMattio – County Council Liason
John Green – DEP Representative

CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF 2015

Earl J. Brown – District Manager
Gene Clemente – Technical Resources Manager
Brian Zeppenfeld - Coastal Zone Specialist
Bethany Fritz – Agriculture Specialist
Juliet Jones - Administrative Assistant
Kristen Currier - Environmental Educator
Joseph Hudson - Watershed Specialist

