

LEHIGH COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT



SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER



CAITLIN HEFFNER joined the District in October 2015 as a Watershed Specialist. Her duties are to provide technical assistance with various watershed groups throughout Lehigh County. She graduated from Delaware Valley College with a Bachelor's Degree in Agronomy and Environmental Science. She recently earned a Masters Degree in Applied Geosciences with a concentration in Hydrogeology from the University of Pennsylvania. Prior to coming to the District, Caitlin worked for the Berks County Conservation District as the West Nile Virus Control Program Coordinator and an Agricultural Resource Conservationist.



ERICH SCHRAMM joined the District in November 2015 as an Environmental Educator. His duties will include producing outreach materials for the District and conducting environmental education programming throughout Lehigh County. Erich graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Physical Geography from East Stroudsburg University and attended graduate school at the University of Toledo. Before joining the District, Erich worked at Wilkes University where he was an Outreach Coordinator/Aquatic Biologist. He was in charge of developing and producing outreach materials regarding Marcellus Shale development, and led a team of coworkers and students on a biological survey of surface waters.

SUPPORT THE 2016 LEHIGH COUNTY ENVIROTHON BY EITHER BECOMING A SPONSOR OR VOLUNTEERING

The 2016 Lehigh County High School and Middle School Envirothon competitions are right around the corner! Approximately 200 students from 16 Lehigh County schools are expected to compete in the High School event on Tuesday, May 3rd and the Middle School event on Thursday, May 5th, both at the Wildlands Conservancy Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in Emmaus. The events run from 8:45 am to 2:00 pm. Students will be tested on their practical knowledge and application of aquatics, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and a current environmental issue (the 2016 environmental issue is invasive species). To learn more about the event or to become a sponsor, contact Caitlin Heffner, Watershed Specialist/Envirothon Coordinator at cheffner@lehighconservation.org or call 610-391-9583 ext. 25. To volunteer for one or both events, contact Erich Schramm, Environmental Educator, at eschramm@lehighconservation.org or call 610-391-9583 ext.21



2016 District Staff

William McFadden, District Manager
Kevin Frederick, Assistant District Manager
Cammy Kiechel, Executive Assistant
Kim Zieger, Lead Resource Conservationist
Garrett Cook, District Engineer
Holly Kaplan, Resource Conservationist
Kevin Castro, Resource Conservationist
Sean Anlauf, Resource Conservationist
Damian Painter, Ag Resource Conservationist
Caitlin Heffner, Watershed Specialist
Erich Schramm, Environmental Educator

2016 Board of Directors

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2016 Associate Director

Chris Stroehler

District Office

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www.LehighConservation.org

Conservation District office hours:
Monday - Friday
8:00 AM to 4:30 PM

Ask the District

Article submitted by Kim Zieger, Lead Resource Conservationist

Question: Do I need an NPDES permit for my single lot (from an older subdivision)? My disturbance is only .80 acres.

Answer: Most likely yes.

An NPDES permit is required for all earth disturbance 1.00 acres or greater BUT if your project disturbance is part of a larger “common plan of development” whose overall disturbance is 1 acre or greater, then it doesn’t matter what size your lot disturbance is. For example, we have many residential subdivisions that were created 10 or so years ago and NPDES permits were obtained but then the recession hit. Permits expired or were terminated because developers weren’t selling lots. Now the market is picking up again and lots are being sold. Because those individual lots were part of a larger “common plan of development”, each lot requires an NPDES permit even if the single lot disturbance is less than one acre. The single lot owner may obtain a new NPDES permit for their lot or the original developer (or bank if there was a foreclosure) could get a new NPDES permit for all the remaining lots at one time. Even if a person bought a lot 10 years ago and the developer no longer has any operational control over that lot, the lot still requires NPDES permit coverage if the lot owner wants to build on that lot today. Who obtains that permit is not determined by the District, only that the lot requires permit coverage.

Question: I have a driveway I installed last year, but now I am getting ready to build my house and that disturbance is only .90 acres. Do I need an NPDES permit?

Answer: Again, most likely yes.

The disturbance of 1 acre is over the “life of the project”. The intent of that requirement is to prevent people from piecemealing their project. So if the acreage disturbed to build the driveway was .10 acres or greater, then an NPDES permit is required. You could not do .20 acres of disturbance one year and then .70 acres the next year and then .30 the next year etc....if the cumulative disturbance of the project is 1 acre or greater, then you need a permit.

Question: My project is on adjoining tax parcels, so I have .80 acres of disturbance on one tax parcel, and .70 acres on another parcel. I don’t need an NPDES permit, do I?

Answer: Yes, you do need a permit. Again, this is covered under “common plan of development”. The acre threshold is not tied into disturbance being on one tax parcel. It may be multiple tax parcels and it doesn’t matter if the tax parcels are adjacent or across the street or blocks away if the disturbance is related to a common plan. For example, a building is built with .80 acres of disturbance but the parking for that building is being created by a parking deck across the street and that disturbance is .70 acres. The building needs the parking and the parking wouldn’t be built without the building. The project’s disturbance is 1.50 acres and requires an NPDES permit.

Little Lehigh Creek Watershed Enhancement: Removal of Invasive Knotweed

Article submitted by Caitlin Heffner, Watershed Specialist

The Lehigh County Conservation District, in partnership with Seven Generations Charter School, Wildlands Conservancy, the Borough of Emmaus, and Penn State Extension, was awarded a Growing Greener Grant to restore an unnamed tributary to the Little Lehigh Creek and approximately .75 acres of adjacent land. The project, which is located between Seven Generations Elementary School and Middle School, involves removing invasive Japanese knotweed, stabilizing the stream banks, and planting a native riparian buffer with funding through the Growing Greener Grant and the Lehigh Gap Nature Center.

Seven Generations Elementary School students and teachers and project partners will help remove knotweed starting in May 2016 and continuing until 2018. Students will also assist with planting a native riparian buffer. The project will improve water quality in the Little Lehigh Creek Watershed through restoration and protection efforts, will increase fish and other aquatic life, and provide additional wildlife habitat.



Free Rain Barrel Workshop Saturday, April 2

Join the Lehigh County Conservation District, in partnership with Salisbury Township, South Whitehall Township, and Lehigh County Authority for an instructional rain barrel program. Learn the benefits of using rain barrels and how to install your barrel. Participants will receive a free rain barrel kit and installation instructions. It is the participant's responsibility to properly install and maintain the rain barrel system.

Saturday April 2, 2016 – Two half-hour sessions are available!

Session 1: 8:30-9:00 am

Session 2: 9:30-10:00 am

South Whitehall Township Public Works Garage

4444 Walbert Ave. Allentown 18104

The garage is located behind the municipal building. Use the driveway labeled "Police & Maintenance".



To register, contact Trissina Trusdell at trissinatrusdell@lehighcountyauthority.org with the subject "Rain Barrel Workshop" or call 610-398-2503. Please indicate which session you will be attending.

Financial and other support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Greetings from Penn State Extension!

Article submitted by Andrea Tessier, Extension Director, District 20

I am happy to take this opportunity to introduce myself as the District Director for Extension programming for both Lehigh and Northampton Counties. I have been on board for almost a year and a half. That time was spent meeting with farmers, industry leaders and area agencies to get a feel for how we can work together to serve the agricultural families and youth of the Lehigh Valley. For those not completely aware of the programs offered by Extension in Lehigh County, I would like to take this opportunity to provide a quick overview of our services. Many of you may or may not know that Penn State, as the Land grant University, is the organization allocated to provide the most up to date, research based information to the community. Penn State Extension has been actively serving Pennsylvania communities for over 100 years. Our mission is to provide customers with trusted, up-to-date, unbiased, science-based information delivered through high-quality educational programs. Penn State Extension aspires to be the most trusted agent of change responding rapidly with research-based solutions to life's challenges.

Penn State Extension has offices in every county across Pennsylvania responding to local needs with high quality programming. In Lehigh County, we offer programs that support both established and beginning farmers, farm market managers and those interested in homesteading. We also serve businesses in the green industry with programs designed for landscapers and nurseries to ensure their continued success. Penn State trains and manages volunteers who serve the home gardener. Volunteers also serve community and townships that have an interest in the health of our watersheds. Our office also works to mitigate the threat of West Nile Virus through education, monitoring and treating those areas most likely to harbor the disease carrying mosquitoes. This coming year we are working with the county to assist in the control of the Gypsy Moth, a threat to our northern residents. We are also actively involved in the imminent threat on our southeast border of the Spotted Lanternfly and are working hard to educate not only the public but also township supervisors on how to address this threat in the event of quarantine. Penn State Extension is well established and active in strengthening communities through our thriving 4-H youth development program, childcare provider training and the work we do to build up family health. All of this programming is successful through the collaborative effort between our office and area agencies. We feel we are most beneficial when we work together toward the common goal of a stronger, healthier and thriving community. Over the next year I will provide an update from one of our program areas in order to provide you with more information on the good work we are doing to better serve the residents of Lehigh County. I look forward to this continued communication and as always, welcome your input on how we can better serve you!

USDA Funding Assistance for Equine Operations

Article submitted by Lisa Jon Trinidad, Management Assistant/Veterans SEPM

What Assistance is Available?

- Short-term contracts to assist producers and/or landowners with applying conservation practices such as prescribed grazing, stream buffers, nutrient management, and watering systems, where there is a resource concern to be solved.
- Technical assistance to help producers carry out the conservation practices.
- Practice payments to reduce the cost to the farm operation.

How Do I Know if I Qualify as a Producer?

- The applicant or the operator must be an agricultural producer engaged in the production of live-stock or other agricultural products and must have produced at least \$1,000 annually on the applicant's farming operation.
- Owners of farms who are not the operator may qualify.
- New and beginning producers may receive a higher payment rate and may receive advanced practice payments of up to 30% for materials for construction when work can begin immediately.
- New and beginning producers are those who have not had a farming enterprise continuously for the past 10 years. If a farmer has filed a Schedule F with their federal income tax return for the past 10 consecutive years, the farmer is not considered new or beginning. All partners in the operation must meet the new and beginning farmer criteria.

What Producers May Not Qualify?

- Producers who only board horses or only have horses for pleasure.
- Producers who have had a previous EQIP contract cancelled based on a lack of adequate performance.

How and When Does a Producer Apply?

- Contact your USDA NRCS office at the Bethlehem Service at 610-625-8392 Ext. 3.
- Request a conservation plan.
- Complete an application for one of the cost share or incentive programs.
- The programs have a continuous signup.
- Contracts are awarded until funding is gone.

Si necesita asistencia técnica o usted sabe de un agricultor que necesita asistencia en español sobre los programas de USDA NRCS, por favor póngase en contacto con María al 215-453-9527 ext. 109 o por correo electrónico a María.GorgoGourovitch@pa.usda.gov.



FARMLAND PRESERVATION NEWS

Article submitted by Jeffrey Zehr, Director of Farmland Preservation

Since 1989, the Lehigh County Farmland Preservation Program has been assisting landowners to protect farmland from being converted to other land uses. As of January 1st of this year, 266 farms with a total of 21,659 acres of farmland have been permanently protected with agricultural conservation easements in Lehigh County.

Once a farm is preserved with a conservation easement, the landowners can continue to farm their land, rent it to a farmer, sell it, or pass it to their children. The property deed will forever contain the preservation restrictions. Agricultural conservation easements allow one new residential structure to be built on the preserved land for use by the landowners or for immediate family members. New farm buildings are also permitted, but no more than 10% of a preserved farm's area can be covered with buildings.

Across the Commonwealth, 58 counties have farmland preservation programs. There have been 4,892 farms with 516,415 acres preserved in Pennsylvania as of 12/10/15. Lehigh County ranks fifth in the Commonwealth in the number of farms and the number of acres preserved. Nationwide, Pennsylvania is ranked 1st in the number of farmland acres preserved. The deadline for submitting a farmland preservation application for the 2016 funding year is Thursday, March 31st. Call Diane Matthews-Gehringer at 610-391-9583 x14 or Jeff Zehr at 610-391-9583 x15 for an application form or for more information.

