



CONSERVATION TIMES

Newsletter of the McKean County Conservation District
17137 Route 6, Smethport, PA 16749
www.mckeancountypa.org

2009 Issue 3

Larry Stratton Awarded Conservation Partnership Award

The 50 Years of Conservation Partnerships celebration sponsored by the McKean County Conservation District, Penn State Cooperative Extension of McKean County, and the Farm Service Agency was highlighted by the presentation of the Conservation Partnerships Award to Larry Stratton, Smethport, for his outstanding dedication and commitment to conservation in McKean County.



Dave Stratton, center, accepted the Conservation Partnership Award on behalf of his father, Larry Stratton. The award was presented by McKean County Commissioners Joe Demott, left, and Al Pingie, right.

Larry started farming at an early age with about 10 cows. After graduating from high school he attended Penn State University and graduated with a Bachelors of Science in Dairy Production in 1960. After College he came back to the farm and expanded the herd to about 60 cows and continued to be a dairy farmer for over 50 years.

In the early years, oil well drilling and logging had left the land in a conservation ruin with roads being built straight up and down the hill because horses and bulldozers were the only things that traveled on them. Larry implemented conservation practices, constructed farm roads and implemented strip cropping that decreased erosion by following the contour of the land. He also installed diversion ditches and spring developments to decrease erosion by controlling where the water would flow in the fields. Crop fields were not the only areas he would focus; he would also improve the pasture by implementing a rotational grazing system that improved growth and fertility of the soil. While being a steward of the soil, he also convinced other farmers to improve their farming techniques. He always told many of the farmers that you only get one chance to keep the soil, so you should make the most of it.

Throughout his career, Larry has started and held offices in many of the local farm organizations which included the DHIA (Dairy Herd Improvement Association), McKean County Conservation District, ASCS (Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service), Penn State Extension and the McKean County Planning Commission.

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CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION



Above—District Chairman, Kerry Fetter give his presentation—also in the picture are (L-R) Director Blaine Puller and his wife Donna, Sandra Rhodes, ANF Vacation Bureau, Don Tanner, Penn State Cooperative Extension and Director Cliff Lane.

On October 29, the Conservation Partners meeting was held at the Masonic Center Temple in Bradford to celebrate 50 Years of Conservation Partnerships in McKean County. The event was sponsored by the McKean County Conservation District, Penn State Cooperative Extension of McKean County and the Farm Service Agency.

The catalyst for the meeting was the commemoration of the McKean County Conservation District's 50th Anniversary. Chairman Kerry Fetter explained that the District was organized at the request of county citizens to provide conservation of the soil, water and the prevention of soil erosion; to assist in watershed protection and flood prevention and to protect and promote the health and general welfare of the people of the county.

The McKean County Commissioners declared McKean County to be a soil conservation district on April 27, 1959 in accordance with the provisions of the "Soil Conservation Law" of 1945, Act 217 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The first meeting of the newly organized McKean County Soil Conservation District was held on August 19, 1959 with the founding board mem-

bers of Russell Comes, Paul Ostrander, R. E. Youngquist, Frank King and Arthur Lindquist.

Since 1959, Fetter stated "the District has worked with local and state government agencies, individuals, and organizations to preserve and protect the natural resources of McKean County. 50 years later, the District is at the forefront of some of the most challenging issues in the Commonwealth, playing a notable role in balancing development pressures, while ensuring protection of the environment."

In addition Fetter stated, "the District has been a Pennsylvania leader in promoting environmentally sound farm practices to the benefit of McKean County's agricultural community and the environment through nutrient management and agricultural education outreach." Fetter went on to say that the impact of the District extends beyond the farm into watershed protection, environmental education, and protecting public health through the West Nile Virus program carried out by an outstanding staff with recognized expertise.



(cont.) Above—Commissioner Director, Al Pingie, expresses support for the County's Conservation Programs

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF CONSERVATION (Cont.)

Guests of the meeting included Deborah Pontzer representing U.S. Congressman Glenn Thompson and County Commissioners Joe DeMott and Al Pingie who expressed their congratulations and gratitude for the agencies great conservation efforts for the past 50 years.

The current Board of Directors include: Kerry Fetter, Chairman, Larry Stratton, Vice-Chairman, Cliff Lane, Secretary/Treasurer, Al Pingie, County Commissioner Director, Ernie Hand, Blaine Puller and Chase Miles with Associate Directors of Steve Sherk, Jim McKean, Jim Larson and Bob Butters.

Past directors include: A.J. Harrington, Bill Ditty, Bill Getz, Bill Vandervort, Bob Harris, Bob Huss, Charlie Irons, Charles Osani, Donald Fortner, Ed Kocjancic Eugene Mitchell, Henry Milks, James O'Mara, Jim McKean, Joe Marquart, Joseph L. Cehovin, Larry Ross, Loretta Harrington, Mark Bierbower, Orion Freer, Paul Hoffman, Philip Eberl, Ralph Nelson, Ray Dillenbeck, Ronald Worden, Russell Weston, Sherwood Anderson, Syrus Tanner, Todd Silimperi and William G. McCann.



Above—Debra Pontzer, Aid to Congressman Thompson expresses gratitude to the agencies.

West Nile Virus Program Suspended

McKean County's comprehensive West Nile Virus Program came to a halt on September 1, as DEP suspended grant funding to 36 counties with active spraying and outreach initiatives. Although McKean County has participated in the PA West Nile virus program since its inception in 2001, it is not one of the 31 counties slated to continue receiving state funds due to significant cuts in the PA state budget signed on October 9, 2009.

The McKean County Conservation District took over the local program, coordinated by Watershed Specialist Heather McKean, in 2007. As stated by McKean, "It is unfortunate that we have had to end the mosquito surveillance and control program early this year. Although we have historically not seen high levels of West Nile virus in the county, the threat still exists and may increase without routine control of mosquito populations." As of now, the District has received no indication as to if or when West Nile Virus Program grant funding to McKean County will be resumed.

DEP has stated that it will provide very limited monitoring in the counties facing cuts if they have been historically associated with West Nile Virus transmission. If mosquitoes are found carrying the virus in these areas, the Department will take all necessary measures to reduce the mosquito population through larval or adult mosquito control. The virus has been detected in 24 PA counties with the first confirmed human case for 2009 reported in Luzerne County.

Without active spraying programs in place, local residents have been encouraged to eliminate standing water, stock ornamental ponds with larvae-consuming fish, and use appropriate repellants during mosquito season, which has finally come to an end for this year, but will return as soon as the first balmy days of Spring return in 2010.



2009 Stream Bank Stabilization and Habitat Improvement Projects



Above—Installation of modified mud-sill on Blacksmith Run

The District completed sixteen stream bank stabilization and habitat improvement projects this year. These projects have been implemented through the District's Stream Bank Stabilization Initiative and funded through DEP's Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative and the Stream Improvement Programs. Partnering with the Division of Habitat Management of the PA Fish & Boat Commission, District staff worked with multiple contractors

to install numerous structures including log and rock vane deflectors, log cross vanes, modified mud sill cribs and bank cover cribbing. Project locations spanned much of the County including Willow, Kinzua, Combs, East Branch Tunungwant, Kendall and Allegheny Portage Creeks, as well as Ice Pond Brook, Blacksmith Run and Bolivar Run.

In addition, through partnership with the District, the McKean County Juvenile Probation Boondock's crew completed the installation of 5 improved cover deflectors and 5 multi-log deflectors along Marvin Creek as part of ongoing efforts to provide stabilization and habitat improvement along the entire stretch running through the former McKean County Poor Farm. As with past Boondock's projects, all devices were installed by hand with exceptional results. To date, nearly 1500' of stream improvement has been completed through the Boondocks Program along this stretch of Marvin Creek.



With another dozen projects tentatively planned for 2010, District staff are encouraged by the performance of the 30 projects installed during these first two years of the Stream Bank Stabilization Initiative. Structures are holding up well and performing as designed, with some sites already showing improved trout numbers, according to local fisherman.

Stream Assessment Project Begins

McKean County Conservation District has partnered with Trout Unlimited's Eastern Abandoned Mine Program to conduct an assessment of several streams impacted by coal strip mining in the southeastern corner of the county. The streams included in the assessment are Parker, Hamlin, Railroad, and Scaffold Lick Runs. District staff will assist Hedin Environmental, subcontracted by Trout Unlimited, in conducting the abandoned mind drainage (AMD) assessment field work. In addition, Trout Unlimited and District staff will work together in completing the biological survey which includes conducting benthic macroinvertebrate and fish sampling. Samples will be collected at pre-established locations at regular intervals over the next 12 to 13 months.

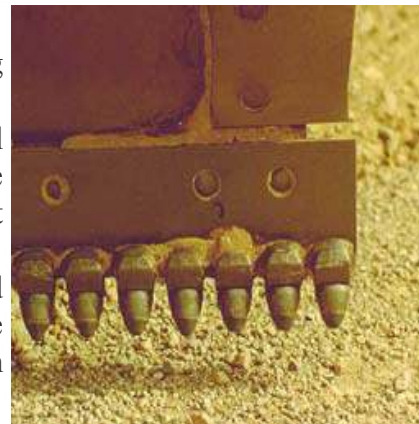
An early stream site reconnaissance and initial round of sampling have been completed on Parker, Hamlin and Railroad Runs, while DEP is currently working on developing a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) design for Scaffold Lick. After receiving the initial sampling results, Hedin Environmental will development a monitoring plan, create necessary maps, review and interpret all data and develop AMD assessment reports for Parker, Hamlin, Scaffold, and Railroad Runs.

The overall goal of this assessment is the development of restoration plans for each of the affected streams. The project is funded through DEP's Bureau of Water Supply and Wastewater Management which solicited project proposals under Sections 205(j)(1) and 604(b) of the Federal Water Quality Act of 1987 and the Headwaters RC&D Council's Sinnemahoning Watershed Grant Program.

Carbide Toothed Grader Blade Available for Townships

The McKean County Conservation District has recently purchased a carbide toothed grader blade for townships to use in maintaining their dirt and gravel roads. Rotating carbide tipped blade systems have freely rotating carbide bits that offer several benefits when grading unpaved road.

- ◆ Durability—the individual carbide steel cutting bits rotate with the vibration and abrasion of grading operations.
- ◆ Cutting Effectiveness—compared with traditional straight blades, carbide tipped blade systems are more effective in cutting hard surfaces and typically cut deeper with each pass.
- ◆ Increased productivity—Final grooming of the graded road can be accomplished with the carbide-tipped blade system eliminating the aggregate separation/segregation typically associated with time consuming raking.



This service is offered free-of-charge and the four 3-foot sections should accommodate most township graders. For more information or to reserve the grader blade, contact Carol Riedmiller at 814-887-4002.

Directors

Kerry Fetter—Chairman
Larry Stratton—Vice Chairman
Cliff Lane—Secretary/Treasurer
Al Pingie—Commissioner
Blaine Puller—Farmer
Chase Miles—Farmer
Ernie Hand—Public

Associate Directors

Jim McKean
Steve Sherk
Jim Larson
Bob Butters

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Vision: The McKean County Conservation District will encourage all citizens to adopt a way of life which results in conserving, protecting, and practicing the wise use of our natural resources.

Mission: The McKean County Conservation District will provide leadership, education, and guidance to ensure the wise use and protection of our valuable natural resources.

The McKean county Conservation District was organized at the request of the County residents. The County was declared a District by the board of County Commissioners on August 19, 1959, according to provisions of the Soil Conservation Law of 1945, Act 217 of the General Assembly, as amended. This Act gives districts broad powers to provide services, employ and manage staff, charge fees for services, own and manage property, and authorizes Commonwealth agencies (including Counties) to cooperate with District in carrying out programs.

The primary goal of the District is the development, improvement and conservation of the County's Soil, water and related resources as well as educating the community in various conservation and environmental practices and methods.

The District is administered by a board of seven (7) Directors—three (3) farmer members, three (3) public (non-farmer) members and one(1) County Commissioner. District Directors are appointed by the County Commissioner from a list of names submitted by countywide nominating organizations. The Commissioners also designate one of their members to serve as a Director.

Preparing for Deregulation

Recently, Dr. Dennis Buffington from the Dept of Agricultural Engineering at Penn State University shared information concerning electricity deregulation in Pennsylvania. Electricity rate caps will expire for Pennsylvania Power and Light on December 31, 2009 followed by Penelec and Allegheny Power on December 31, 2010. These changes could spell rate increases of 25 to 30% for the average Pennsylvania consumer. There are several steps you can take now to mitigate the impact.

- ◆ Document how much energy you currently use and when you use it
- ◆ See how you can modify you load profile by shifting electricity usage to off-peak periods
- ◆ Establish and maintain a record of paying your electrical bill on time

More information is available at the PA Utility Commission's website at www.puc.pa.state.us and from Jim Clark, Extension Educator, at the Penn State Extension Office in Smethport, PA.

