

# 2015 Annual Report

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Increased funding for Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Roads
- Green Alternatives for Stormwater
- District to Celebrate 50 years of service in 2016

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## Bedford Street Property



**Completed Wetland Mitigation Project and Boardwalk - 2015**



Construction was completed on a 0.5 acre wetland mitigation project by the Sheetz Corporation in 2015. **This marks the first completed phase of our “Conservation Park”!** The wetland includes an elevated boardwalk that will connect with a proposed trail throughout the entire northern portion of the property. Sheetz contracted locally with Stiffler, McGraw & Associates for the design of the mitigation.

Grant submittals to cover the \$520,000 estimated cost for the Conservation Park were submitted in 2015 with over 100 letters of support received from all facets of our local community. Private citizens, cub scout packs, cooperating agencies and local legislators provided letters! We

certainly appreciate everyone’s strong support and are pleased to announce that we were awarded our first grant, a DCNR C2P2 grant for \$250,000 in early 2016. We are hoping for positive consideration of a DCED grant to complete funding for the project along with our local match of approximately \$20,000. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2017.

Our design team (Keller Engineers, Inc.; Baechle Architects; Michael L. Norris & Assoc. and Green Collar Consultants, Inc.—hired to assist the district in attaining LEED Gold certification) continues to fine tune our master plan and proposed sustainable building elements.

The next steps will be the enhancement of 1.5 acres of existing wetlands and the riparian forest buffer, preparation of required permits and solicitation for funds to build the proposed 6,000 sq ft District Office and Conference Complex. Community involvement in the project will be a priority.



**Proposed LEED Certified Office Building**

# Supporting Blair County Agriculture



**Stabilized Animal Watering Area & Trough**

Agriculture is the Number 1 industry in Blair County and the Blair District has a strong program to support agriculture.

The district was created by a petition from local citizens—mainly farmers—in 1966. Since then, we have implemented programs and projects to provide technical and financial assistance to farm landowners.

Funding through the Chesapeake Bay Program was

attained in 2015 for the design and construction of a Rotational Grazing systems on Blair County farms. Funds were also distributed for Nutrient Management Planning.

The district also serves as the reviewing entity for submitted Nutrient Management Plans, either volunteer or required by regulations and as the local contact for agriculture related complaints.

A major focus for ag staff in

Blair County and throughout the Chesapeake Bay Watershed is to conduct “Farm Visits” to inform local landowners of their regulatory requirements associated with Erosion Control and Manure Management. 100 visits are required annually of the Blair District staff.

If you would like more information regarding programs and funding available...please contact Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist at 696-0877 ext. 5.

*“To date, 48 farms totaling just over 7,000 acres have been preserved....”*

## Farmland Preservation

There is no shortage of interest in the Conservation Easement Purchase Program in Blair County.

To date, 48 farms totaling just over 7,000 acres have been preserved for agricultural use in perpetuity!

Blair County Commissioners allocated an all time high of \$120,000 for preservation efforts in 2015, which was matched with State Funds. The total allocation of

\$488,740 allowed us to consider the purchase of the development rights on 2 farms in Sinking Valley in 2015. Nearly half of the County’s preserved farms and acreage is in Tyrone Township, creating a nearly contiguous block of 3,400 acres of preserved ground!

The average easement value (the difference between the development value and the farmland value as determined

by an appraisal) for Blair County stands at approx. \$1,000 per acre. Which means that just over 7 million dollars has been paid to Blair County Landowners since 1991.

Annually, applications received by October 15th are ranked to be considered for funding in the following year. Application forms are available on the District website or call 696-0877 ext. 5.



Check out the new District hosted website for information about Blair County’s water resources. Learn about steps you can take, big and small, to make a difference in protecting your water.

**Visit [cleanblairwater.org](http://cleanblairwater.org) today!**

# Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Program



A 5-fold increase in funding for the Dirt and Gravel Road Program was received in 2015, made possible through Act 89 of 2013. Both a significant increase in funding for dirt and gravel roads along with a “Low Volume Road” component

## Cork Street, Newry Borough

meant that Blair County received \$180,817 for 2015 with similar amounts to follow in subsequent years.

The funding program continues to address sediment pollution from

undermanaged roads and drainage facilities on Dirt & Gravel Roads, and now allows for projects on paved Low Volume Roads (less than 500 vehicles per day).

Larger contracts can now be awarded with the increase in funds. Taylor

Township received \$56,000 for Burketstown Road and Newry Borough received \$8,300 for Cork Street. Our first Low Volume Road Project was completed in Duncansville Borough for a total cost of \$5,900 last fall.

To attain funding, the project sponsor must become and maintain certification in the “Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance of Dirt & Gravel Roads” training. A training event is planned at the Altoona Grand Hotel on April 26 & 27, 2016.

Applications are solicited annually and ranked for funding approval. For more information or to find a training session near you, contact Jim Eckenrode at the district office at 696-0877 X 5

## Erosion Control and NPDES Permitting

The Blair County Conservation District is delegated duties related to public information, plan review, permit issuance, complaint handling and inspections associated with earth disturbance activities in Blair County. Workload and the flow of plan/permit submittals remains steady—which is an indicator of the stronger economy.

All earthmoving activities are required to have a written Erosion Control Plan. Many local

municipalities have within their ordinances, the requirement of plan review and approval. Sites involving a disturbance of 1 (one) acre or more are required to attain an NPDES permit prior to commencement of the project. NPDES permits are authorized and/or processed thru the District.

In 2015, 19 General and 4 Individual Permits (located in High Quality Watersheds) were processed. In addition, 73 Erosion and Sediment

(E&S) Control Plans were reviewed and approved based on the State’s Chapter 92 and 102 Regulations.

42 complaints were logged and 123 inspections were conducted at earth moving sites.

The District also hosted a training for the regulated community in November at the Altoona Grand. The engineering community was well represented with 85 in attendance to learn from DEP staff. Additional workshops are planned for 2016.

“...Sites of one acre or more require an NPDES permit...”



Educational Signage at Hollidaysburg YMCA Project

## Funds for Stormwater Projects

The Blair District, working with the local MS4 Workgroup, received just over \$420,000 from the National Fish and Wildlife Federation (NFWF) to implement green infrastructure projects for the control of stormwater. The MS4 Workgroup is a collaboration of 13 municipalities located in the urbanized area of the County.

The first project constructed demonstrating a Rain Garden as a best management practice was completed at the Hollidaysburg

YMCA. With the assistance of the Borough of Hollidaysburg and plantings by Hollidaysburg Jr. High Students, the project and signage was completed this past summer. QR codes on the signs provide for enhanced education. Check it out!

Additional sites are planned throughout the County, all to include the local municipalities, schools and community organizations as appropriate. The overall goal of the project is to increase the knowledge base of all within Blair County related to Green Stormwater Alternatives.

# Environmental Education



Tree Giveaway at Sheetz Earth Day

The Blair County Conservation District offers a wealth of educational opportunities through its Environmental Education Specialist, Jody Wallace aka the “[Creature Teacher](#)” and the Conservation District Staff. Each year since 2012, the district’s **Environmental Education Programs has served over 10,000 people.**

Youth programs include a variety of hands on activities, experiments, songs, games, and often live animals. Because



of the hands-on nature of the instruction, most are designed for one classroom at a time but some can be adapted to large group audiences. Most programs last about an hour, this can also be adjusted to meet the needs and interests of the group. Each lesson's objective addresses one or more of the Pennsylvania Standards for Environmental Education and/or Science and Technology.

It’s not just kid stuff either! We do a variety of

adult programs including Manure Management Workshops, Water Quality Training, Cover Crop Workshops and Pollution Control training for Municipalities. A highlight the last several years has been participation in the Sheetz Earth Day event at their distribution center near Claysburg and Earth Day at the Logan Valley Mall.

To schedule programs contact Jody Wallace at 696-0877 ext. 5 or [jwallace@blairconservationdistrict.org](mailto:jwallace@blairconservationdistrict.org)

*“The District Board has been honoring Outstanding Conservation Efforts since 1968...”*



The District recognizes deserving individuals, companies or organizations for their Outstanding Service and Conservation Ethic at the annual banquet each October.

In 2015 we recognized an Outstanding Conservation Citizen and Volunteer. Teresa Futrick, from Tyrone, was presented with a certificate and tray forged from recycled aluminum for her work promoting conservation across Blair County.

Teresa has worked with the District to support our local foods initiatives and has been part of our Riparian Buffer Planting Projects with school

students. As a featured writer for the Altoona Mirror, Teresa has promoted conservation of our natural resources as well as highlighting Blair District projects and events.

Most recently she is advancing local knowledge of community rain gardens and rain barrels. As an accomplished artist, Teresa designs and creatively

paints rain barrels that the district uses for educational events and promotions. She also has provided an artist’s eye in the judging of our annual poster contest.

**The District was pleased to honor and recognize Teresa for her work to promote Community Conservation!**

**Left: Rain Barrel created and painted by Teresa Futrick  
Right: Teresa with District Chairman Harold Bailey**



# Blair County Envirothon



**Team  
“White  
Oaks”  
from  
Central HS**

The 30th annual Envirothon Competition was held on May 14th at Valley View Park. Our local event is co-sponsored by the Altoona Kiwanis Club. The contest is open to all Blair County Schools, grades 9 to 12. Six schools were

represented by 13 teams in 2015.

Students complete written exams as a team at 5 different testing stations.

Station topics are Aquatics, Forestry,

Soils, Wildlife and a current environmental issue. The 2015 current issue was Urban and Community Forestry.

Testing stations were staffed by regional resource professionals from the PA Department of

Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry; the USDA, Natural Resource Conservation Service; PA Game Commission; PA Fish and Boat Commission and the Conservation District.

First Place was won by the “White Oaks” team from Central High School. They went on to represent Blair County at the State Event.

Second Place was taken by Bellwood-Antis High School’s “Blue Team” and Third Place by the Altoona Area High School’s “Red Maples” Team.

*“.....students  
are required to  
judge test pits  
dug to expose  
the soil  
horizons and  
characteristics”*

## FFA Sponsored Contests



Annually the District, along with the FFA Chapters in the Bellwood-Antis, Central, Tyrone and Williamsburg School Districts, sponsor two contests specific to the Future Farmers of America Chapters.

Each spring a Public Speaking Contest is hosted at the county level in preparation for statewide

participation. The winner of the Blair County “Conservation” Speech was Brandon Decker from the Tyrone Area FFA.

The fall brings the annual Land Judging Competition. Mike and Carol Hoover hosted the 2015 event where the students are required to “judge” test pits dug to expose the soil horizons. Nearly 100 students converged on 4 test pits dug on the Hoover Farm,

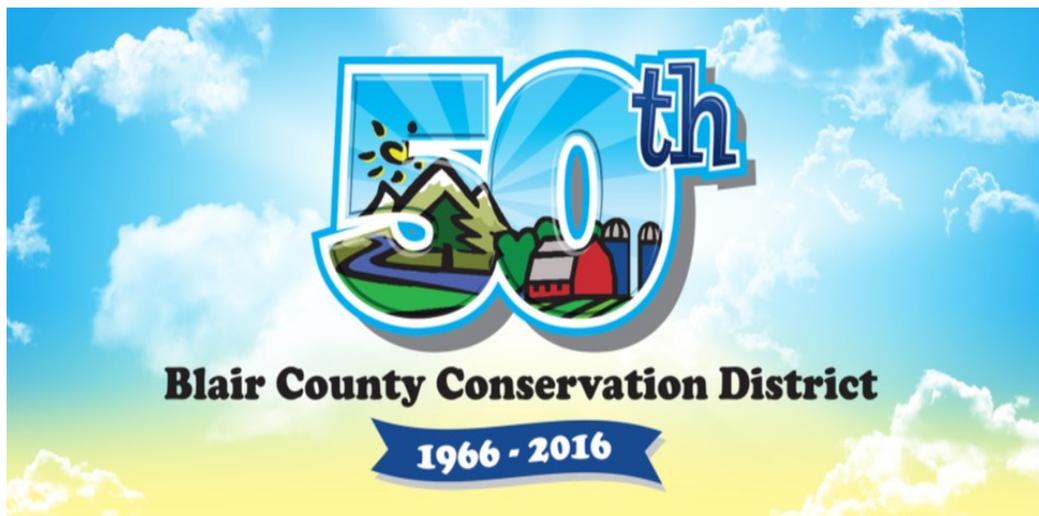
located in Sinking Valley.

A tie for First Place, with perfect scores of 300 points went to Aaron Clouse and Logan Williams, Central-Cove FFA.

Second Place was won by Eric Calhoun, and Third Place by Caleb Ferry, both from Central-Cove FFA.

**As a bonus, the students were treated to a tour of the**

**Stay Tuned for  
District Events  
to Celebrate  
50 Years!**





**Resource Conservation Since 1966**

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### Conservation District Board

Harold Bailey, Chairman  
Blaine Smith, Vice-Chairman  
Jim Biddle, Secretary/Treasurer  
John Morrow  
Alan Gearhart  
Gary Long  
Commissioner Terry Tomassetti

### Conservation District Staff

Donna Fisher, District Manager  
Margaret Angle, District Clerk  
Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist  
Jim Eckenrode, Watershed Specialist  
Beth Futrick, Ombudsman  
Chris Myers, Resource Conservation Technician  
Diane Thomas, Resource Conservation Technician  
also in contract with the district  
Jody Wallace, a.k.a. "the Creature Teacher"  
as the Environmental Education Specialist

## Conservation District Funding

The Blair County Conservation District receives funding from several sources to include: Local, State and Federal funds through grants and contracts.

Annual allocations are received from the Blair County Commissioners through the General Fund and the PA Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Protection.

Most recently, conservation districts across the Commonwealth have been written into the Act 13 Legislation related to the Marcellus Shale Development in Pennsylvania. Impact fees are collected from the industry and a portion of those funds are distributed to the Conservation Districts through both the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) and the State Conservation Commission (SCC).

PUC funds in 2015 were received as a block grant in the amount of \$56,818 per conservation district across the Commonwealth. The PUC funds in Blair County continue to be allocated for the development of the District Property on Bedford Street.

The SCC funds are distributed in base amounts plus a calculated portion of Unconventional Well Counts per county. Blair County received a base amount of \$75,676 plus an additional \$15,893 for our existing well activity. These funds are utilized to cost share salaries and administrative expenses.

It is important to note that the SCC base amount is not necessarily "new funds" but rather funds that were available previously through line item allocations in the commonwealth budget and are included in the state program funds.

### 2015 General Fund Budget

#### **Expenses:**

Salaries/Benefits	\$324,357
Rent/Insurances/Audit	\$ 30,550
Operating Expenses	\$ 89,000
Payment to County	\$ 33,000
Project Grants	\$100,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$576,907</b>

#### **Revenues:**

Beginning Balance	\$ 70,570
County Commissioners	\$132,899
E&S/NPDES Fees	\$ 20,000
State Program Funds	\$247,499
Grants	\$100,000
Misc. Revenue Sources	\$ 5,939
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$576,907</b>