

**BLAIR COUNTY  
CONSERVATION  
DISTRICT**

**SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:**

- Local Food Initiative promoting farmers' markets
- Buffer Planting Funds Still Available
- Water Quality Initiatives
- Hands-On Educational Activities

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# 2013 ANNUAL REPORT

## Bedford Street Property

In May of 2012, the Blair Conservation District purchased approximately 15 acres of property located at 10 Bedford Street in Hollidaysburg Borough.

The property is a wonderful mix of riverfront, floodplain, wetland and upland land uses and still hosts a 40 by 60 bank barn!

Throughout 2013, plans were solidified for the proposed uses for the property. Proposals include a Conservation District Office Building, perhaps large enough to accommodate partner agencies and a public meeting room. LEED certification is being considered as part of the proposed construction.

The existing special features associated with the floodplain and wetlands will be enhanced to include: an educational walkway, amphitheater, pavilions, wildflower gardens, vegetable gardens, native species plots and a riparian buffer located along

the 200 foot section of the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River.

Other permanent structures proposed may include a recycling center; a certified kitchen for the production of value added products and of course utilization of the 1920 era bank barn.

Structurally sound, the barn will remain and be enhanced to be utilized for storage, hosting of events and to serve as a reminder of Blair County's long history as an agricultural community.

Stay tuned in 2014 to follow the progress of the District Property!



**Barn located at Bedford Street Property**

## Outstanding Conservationist Award

Bill Anderson was awarded with the 2013 Outstanding Conservationist Award. Bill, through his work individually and with the Little Juniata River Association, has been instrumental in completion of numerous restoration, enhancement, easement and cleanup projects throughout the Little Juniata River Watershed.

To date, Bill and his many partners have: completed 8 stream bank stabilization sites protecting 1200 feet of eroding stream banks; planted over 1000

PA native trees and shrubs to enhance the forested buffer along the Little Juniata; acquired easements on over 5 miles of streamside property for fishing and boating access and participates in bi-annual trash pickup events along a 20 mile stretch of the River! Without Bill's leadership and vision, many of these projects may not have been accomplished.

The District was pleased to honor and recognize Bill for his continued role in bettering Blair County's environment!

The District Board has been honoring Outstanding Conservation Farmers, Citizens and Organizations since 1968.



**Bill Anderson is recognized by  
Board Members - Commissioner  
Tomassetti and Blaine Smith**

# Supporting Blair County's Number 1 Industry



**Frost Free Hydrants  
for watering within  
Grazing Paddocks**



**Juniata Farms Market**

**"To date, 44 farms  
totaling over 6,400  
acres have been  
preserved....."**

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 2013 for the design and construction of several Rotational Grazing Systems and also for comprehensive 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 the ag staff starting in 2012 and

continuing through 2017 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 to schedule a visit to your farm....please contact Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist at 696-0877 ext. 5.

## Local Foods Initiative

The Blair County Conservation District supports agriculture in all shapes and sizes. To help support direct-market farmers, the District created the Juniata Farmers' Market.. The Market has two locations. During the winter, the Market is at Wehnwood United Methodist Church. During the summer, the Market is located in the Rider Parking Lot at Penn State Altoona.

The goals of the market are many. We hope to improve the financial viability of small and medium farms and to provide enhanced opportunities for new and beginning farmers. For the community, we want to improve the access to farm-fresh foods.

The District met with many community stakeholders to help support this local food

initiative. We work with Blair County Chamber of Commerce, Altoona-Blair Community Development, Penn State University-Altoona, Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission, and Healthy Blair County Coalition. Together, we are working to improve the entrepreneurial outcome for farmers and bring more healthy foods to the community.

## Farmland Preservation

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

To date, 44 farms totaling over 6,400 acres have been preserved for agricultural use in perpetuity!

Blair County Commissioners allocated \$80,000 for

preservation efforts in 2013, which was matched with State Funds. The total allocation of \$379,972 allowed us to consider the purchase of the development rights on 2 farms in 2013.

The average easement value (the difference between the development value and the

farmland value as determined by an appraisal) for Blair County stands at approximately \$1,000 per acre.

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.

# Erosion Control and NPDES Permits for Ag



As with any other earth disturbance activity, erosion control and NPDES permitting is a requirement for agricultural activities according to PA's Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment Control.

## NPDES Permitted Manure Storage Structure

Regulation changes that became effective in November of 2010, further defined the requirements for ag activities, to include cropland, animal heavy use areas, areas near streams and construction projects.

- Cropland—written plans are required that reflect current and proposed cropping to meet “T” or Tolerable Soil Loss over the rotation.

- Animal Heavy Use Areas—measures must be planned and taken to minimize erosion and sedimentation.
- Near Stream Areas—cropland within 100 feet of a river or stream shall have BMP's to minimize erosion—may include vegetated buffers or cover crops.
- Construction Permits—any proposed earth disturbance of one (1) acre or more will require an NPDES permit (except for plowing and tilling & animal heavy use areas). New farm buildings, manure storages, compost facilities, etc. will require “....Manure permitting.

*Management  
plans can be  
written by  
anyone using  
the State  
Format....must  
be kept on the  
farm....”*

## Manure Management Plans

All farming operations that generate and/or land apply manure or Agricultural wastewater, **Must** have a written Manure Management Plan. All farming operations that have an Animal Concentration Area (Brown area) and/or pasture also **Must** have a written Manure Management Plan. Farming operations include anyone who has livestock, whether you have 1 horse or goat in the back yard or

50,000 dairy cows. All livestock is included in the regulations. The Manure Management Plan can be written by anyone using the State Format and does not have to be submitted for approval, but must be kept on the farm and made available upon request. Please be sure you have these plans in writing and are following your plans to stay in compliance with the State Regulations.

The Blair County Conservation District is currently conducting State required farm **INFORMATIONAL** visits to discuss the requirements of these plans. If you wish to get further information, schedule your informational visit, and/or inquire about a training session, please call Rich Huether at (814) 696-0877 ext. 5.

## Pilot Project with Central High Ag Students

The Blair County Conservation District is teaming up with Central High School Ag students to prepare Manure Management Plans.

District Staff will teach a class of students how to write their own MMP over a 3 month period. In conjunction, we plan to hold evening training sessions for adults. We hope to have the students

learn how to write sections of the plan in class, and then utilize the students to assist the adult participants in the evening sessions.

There are several goals to the program:

- To have students leave the program with a completed MMP for their farm, or a farm of their choice;

- To have the adult farmers leave the training with a completed MMP;
- To provide students with job related skills and experiences.

If there is interest, we hope to introduce the program to other schools next school year.



**Central High Seniors  
participate in training**

# Erosion Control and NPDES Permitting



**Temporary Controls and Stabilization are critical to controlling erosion on site.**

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. Although the workload has slowed a bit with the slower economy, the flow of plan submittals seems to be on a rise.

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 2013, 24 General and 4 Individual Permits (located in High Quality Watersheds)

were processed. In addition, 65 Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control Plans were reviewed and approved based on the State's Chapter 92 and 102 Regulations.

29 complaints were logged and 85 inspections were conducted at earth moving sites.

Allegheny Township had the highest number of projects at 20; followed by the City of Altoona with 14 projects and Antis and Frankstown Township both having 12 sites.

## Dirt & Gravel Road Program

**"documented sediment pollution from under-managed road surfaces and drainage facilities...."**

Annually, the Conservation District receives an allocation of approximately \$20,000 for distribution to state or municipal entities for the repair and stabilization of Dirt & Gravel Roads within their jurisdiction.

The funding program was established due to the documented sediment pollution from undermanaged road surfaces and drainage

facilities on Dirt & Gravel Roads.

To attain funding, the project sponsor must become and maintain certification in the "Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance of Dirt & Gravel Roads" training.

Seven Blair County municipalities and the PA Game Commission maintain certified personnel for the program.

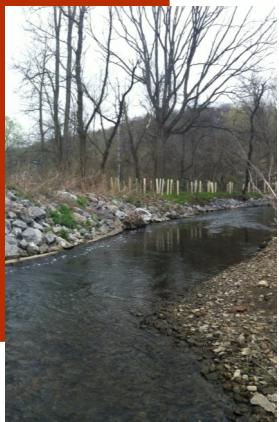
Applications are solicited annually and ranked for funding approval.

Two projects for road surface and drainage improvements were completed in 2013:

- ◆ State Game Lands #166 in Frankstown Township—\$9,104
- ◆ Wertz Road in Woodbury Township—\$2,800

## Buffer Funds Still Available

**Riparian buffer planting along the Little Juniata River.**



The Conservation District Allocated up to \$150,000 from our Wetland Mitigation Funds for the creation or enhancement of Riparian Buffers within Blair County.

Up to \$15,000 may be granted to each project. Funding criteria, program and ranking details are available by contacting the District office or by visiting our website at blairconservationdistrict.org

To date, we have obligated funds to 4 projects across Blair

County. Projects may be done on public or private property and applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. A minimum 20% match is required by the landowner, of which at least 5% must be cash. The remaining match may be in-kind services.

# What is the MS4 Program.....



Polluted runoff is often transported through municipal stormwater systems where it is eventually discharged into streams untreated. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has

**Stormwater discharge into Mill Run**

established a municipal stormwater management program known as the **MS4 Program**. The program is intended to improve our Nation's waters by reducing the quantities of pollutants that stormwater picks up and carries into the storm sewer systems during a storm event.

Portions of 12 municipalities and the County of Blair hold a permit

to discharge their stormwater into local waterways. This permit requires the municipality to design a stormwater management program that reduces the discharge of pollutants to the maximum extent possible, that protects water quality and that satisfies the water quality requirements of the Clean Water Act.

The Conservation District has been working with the MS4 Workgroup to assist in education and has secured grant funds to assist in project implementation.

**County-wide**

**Monitoring**

**Plan to develop a**

**baseline for Blair County**

**Stream**

**Health!**

## Blair County Water Quality Baselines

Over the past three years the District has been putting together a County-wide stream monitoring plan, with the help of our many partners.

**Municipalities, water authorities, volunteers, students, and District staff** have been collecting data to develop a baseline for Blair County Stream Health.

Initially the program primarily looked at water quality parameters such as pH, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and nutrients. However, each year the program has expanded and now we are looking at quantities and species of fish and stream bugs, as well as assessing the existing stream habitat.

Baseline stream data is being collected in order to identify:

- ◆ streams of good quality in need of continued protection,
- ◆ streams of poor quality that may need restored, and
- ◆ changes in streams (good and bad) as a result of enhancement projects or pollution events.

## Volunteers log over 350 hours of Service

Eighteen dedicated volunteers have collected monthly water samples at 34 sites on 23 streams across Blair County! In addition to monthly sampling for a variety of water quality parameters, the group conducts quarterly flow data for their streams and biannual macro invertebrate assessments.

Starting as a group of "Senior" volunteers, the group has now

expanded to include younger citizens. John Kost and Frank Adamczyk are the most tenured volunteers with 12 and 11 years respectively.

Other individuals sampling in 2013 were: Bill McCloskey, Leonard Burns, John Dunkle, Ron Stacey, Jay Moore, Dave Kurtz, Gene Tyler, Dan Beck, Jerry Green, Paul Carlson, Nickolas Shawver,

Jonathan Kovall, Dalton Treon, Jon Graffius, Jake Gromiller and Kelley Kettermann.

For more information or to get involved—contact Jim Eckenrode, Watershed Specialist at 696-0877 ext. 5



**Water Monitoring Team honored by District Board and Staff at Annual Banquet**

# Environmental Education



**“Foot of Ten” Chick**

Six thousand, nine hundred and forty four kids and 4,492 adults....that's how many environmental education contacts that were made by BCCD staff in 2013!

Most of these contacts (except for several local TV spots) were hands on experimental learning in a small group setting.

135 different programs were conducted in 2013 to include: riparian buffers with middle and high school students,

hatching chicks in libraries, water festivals, field trips, Envirothon and a plethora of school programs. One of the most popular of these is “Animals of Halloween” and the newest called “Dirt”. It was a delight to see the children's excited interest in pawing through soil, discovering its multitude of living things.

It's not all kids stuff—workshops about source water protection, local foods, ag

issues and highway maintenance activities were presented by staff.

We could not provide contacts of this magnitude without partners—Albemarle Chemical Company, Altoona Water Authority, City of Altoona, Intermunicipal Relations Committee, Trout Unlimited, and the USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service to name a few.

## Annual Water Festival at the Mall

**“We strive to build environmental awareness, knowledge and commitment through hands on experiences...”**

2013 marked the 8th Annual Water Festival Event held at the Logan Valley Mall. The event is centered around EARTH DAY.

The District, in conjunction with our many partners, set up a variety of hands on, interactive displays related to conservation, water use and quality, natural resources, habitats and recycling. Each

year the theme may differ slightly depending upon the organizations and volunteers available.

One aspect that has remained constant is the Poster Contest Display and Awards ceremony. “Where Does Your Water Shed?” was the theme for the 2013 Poster Contest hosted by the Conservation District in conjunction with the Altoona Water Authority.

The contest is open to all Blair County Schools, kindergarten to 12th grade. Over 200 posters from 5 schools were received in 2013. All posters were hung for a week long, public display in the Logan Valley Mall common area prior to the Water Festival Event. The awards were then presented during the Festival by Commissioner Terry Tomassetti.

## School Riparian Buffer Plantings

**Kentucky Avenue Tree Planting 2013**



Starting in 2010, the district began partnering with local municipalities and school districts to develop and implement a lesson plan related to floodplains, water quality and riparian buffers.

Classroom presentations introduce the concepts of watersheds, stormwater, floodplains and buffers. The culmination is a day long tree planting event. Students, teachers and parents planted over 500 trees on two floodzone “buyout” parcels located within the City of Altoona in 2013.

As a special ceremony—a “time capsule” is prepared for each site—packed by the students and planted beneath a tree at the closing of each event.

Interested in participating ....contact Jody Wallace at 696-0877 ext. 5. New planting sites and schools are being sought!

# Blair County Envirothon



The 28th annual Envirothon Competition was held on May 9th at Fort Roberdeau Historic Site in Sinking Valley. Our local event is co-sponsored by the Altoona Kiwanis Club. The contest is open

**“Team Tree Bark” from Claysburg-Kimmel HS**

to all Blair County Schools, grades 9 to 12. Six schools were represented in 2013.

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 2013 issue was Grazing Lands and Pasture Management.

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 “Team Tree Bark” from Claysburg-Kimmel High School. They went on to represent Blair County at the State Event.

Second Place was taken by Central High School “Bunnies” and Third Place by the Central High School “Butterflies” 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 Harpster from the Tyrone Area FFA.

The fall brings the annual Land Judging Competition. Mill Hill Farms in Williamsburg hosted the 2013 event where the students are required to “judge” test pits dug to expose the soil horizons and characteristics.

Over 100 students converged on 4 test pits dug on the Biddle Farm located south of Williamsburg.

First Place with a perfect score of 300 points was taken by Nathan Smith, Central-Cove FFA -

Second Place by Laura Ritchey, Central-Cove FFA and -

Third Place by Benjamin Decker, Central-Cove FFA.

# Albemarle Chemical Company Host Field Trips

Albemarle Corporation from Tyrone aides the furtherment of Environmental Awareness and Education. Albemarle employees have created an extensive system of interpretive trails and observation points on a section of land adjacent to their factory. They have opened the nature area to the public and invite visitors to come and enjoy their facility.

Starting in 2010, a connection was made with the Blair County Conservation District. The company now serves as the host to local 5th Grade students for day long, outdoor education experiences led by District Staff and Volunteers. To date, 14 field trips totaling over 600 students and adults have participated in hands on learning related to “Wildlife,

Woods and Wetlands”. Albemarle also generously donates funds for lunch and travel stipends to the schools. Without these funds, many schools may not be able to participate.



**Bird boxes line the edge of the wetland habitat at Albemarle Natural Area**



**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**  
**Andy Gonsman, Resource Conservation Specialist**  
**Beth Futrick, Ombudsman**  
**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.

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 2013 were received as a block grant in the amount of \$37,879 per conservation district across the Commonwealth. The PUC funds in Blair County have been allocated for the development of the District Property on Bedford Street.

The SCC funds are distributed in base amounts plus a calculated portion based on Unconventional Well Counts per county. Blair County received a base amount of \$64,468 plus an additional \$6,158 for our 6 wells. 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.

### 2013 General Fund Budget

#### **Expenses:**

Salaries/Benefits	\$ 311,339
Rent/Insurances/Audit	\$ 30,350
Operating Expenses	\$ 45,700
Payment to County	\$ 33,000
Project Grants	\$ 59,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$479,389</b>

#### **Revenues:**

Beginning Balance	\$ 56,923
County Commissioners	\$124,608
E&S/NPDES Fees	\$ 31,500
State Program Funds	\$190,475
Grants	\$ 70,000
Misc. Revenue Sources	\$ 5,883
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$479,389</b>