

BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **Harold Bailey
Honored**
- **Cover Crop Usage
Numbers Lead the
Region**
- **Streambank
Stabilization BMP's
Funded**

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**2020
ANNUAL**

2020 Annual Report

Thank You Harold Bailey!

The year was 1966 and the Blair County Conservation District was formed because a group of Blair County Citizens got signatures on a petition to take to the County Commissioners. One of those citizens collecting signatures was Harold Bailey, a young farmer from Roaring Spring. Little did he know that some 30 years later, he would join the Conservation District Board as a Director. Harold's first term as a Farmer Director began in January of 1997 and he served continuously through December of 2020. Harold was elected to be Vice-Chairman in 1999 and then Chairman in 2006, a position he held through his "retirement." Harold chose not to seek re-appointment to the Conservation District Board at the end of 2020.

Harold's leadership served the District well during his 24 years on the board. The District saw numerous changes in programs as well as a steady increase in staff. Harold was on the board as the District completed the Glenwhite Run Watershed Project, which significantly increased the water quality to the reservoir below the Horseshoe Curve. Harold was a strong supporter of an eventual Ag Service Center for Blair County, where potentially all "Ag Service" organizations could co-locate. To that end, he was Chairman as the District purchased property in Hollidaysburg, with thoughts of an office complex and educational area now known as NatureWorksPark.

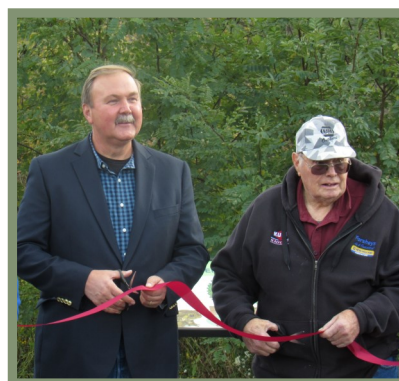
Harold your service has been commendable and your leadership admirable!



**(Left) Signing
Sales Contract
for Bedford
Street Property
May 2012**



**(Above) Harold accepting the District's
40th Anniversary Proclamation Jan. 2006
(Below) Harold with Commissioner
Terry Tomassetti in October 2019**



**(Left)
Ribbon Cutting at
NatureWorksPark
October 2020**

Planning is the Focus for Agriculture



Stabilized Cattle Crossing and Fencing on Plum Creek

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

District planning numbers doubled in 2020, preparing **17 Manure Management Plans** representing 926 acres (230 Animal Equivalent Units) and **17 Ag Erosion and Sediment Control Plans** for 923 acres. Over 800 producer contacts were made via mailings, status reviews, Nutrient Management Plan reviews and "Farm Inspections" as dictated by PA DEP for the Ches. Bay Watershed.

The District's delegation to review and approve Nutrient Management Plans (required for operations which meet thresholds related to the number of animal units per acre of ground available for manure application) resulted in 2 plans and/or amendments reviewed and approved; along with the review of 4 nutrient balance sheets if manure is being imported to a farm.

Construction funding continues to be primarily through our Partners. Staff assisted in the installation of two stream restoration projects on farms including stream crossings, 3,500 feet of fencing and planting riparian buffers in the Plum Creek and Clover Creek Watersheds.

Looking forward to 2021, the District in conjunction with Fulton, Cambria and Huntingdon Counties will be preparing a regional **Countywide Action Plan** to address the requested sediment and nutrient reductions related to the State's Watershed Implementation Plan. In Blair County, we have been assigned a reduction of 585,000 pounds of Nitrogen. Our Phosphorus reduction has already been met with existing practices. Agriculture will have a major role to play in our plan development. If you would like more information....contact Rich Huether or Stephen Dumm at 696-0877 ext. 5.

Region Leader in Farms Preserved

Blair County's Conservation Easement Purchase Program was approved in 1991. The Conservation District facilitates the program for the County of Blair.

In 2020 the program preserved one large farm totaling 259 acres and continued to lead the Central PA Region with **56 farms and 8,391 acres preserved!** To date, just short of **9 million dollars** has been provided to Blair County landowners interested in ensuring that their farmland remains in agricultural use for perpetuity.

Blair County Commissioners again **allocated \$120,000** for preservation efforts in 2020, second highest in our region. The State transferred 5 million from the Easement Purchase Fund this past spring reducing the State Allocation from 43 million to 38 million,

necessitated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. This reduced the funds available to Blair County and that coupled by the large tract ranked as number one only allowed for the purchase of one easement in 2020. The average easement value (the difference between the development value and the farmland value as determined by an appraisal) for Blair County stands at \$1,071 per acre. However, the average easement value of current purchases is closer to \$1,600 per acre.

The success of the program is a tribute to the commitment of the County Board and the relationship with the County Commissioners. Interest in the program remains strong with at least a dozen landowners applying annually.

Applications received by October 15th of each year are ranked to be considered for funding in the following year. There is no cost or obligation for landowners to complete an application. For an application visit the District website or call Rich or Donna at 696-0877 ext. 5.

Blair County is a leader in the Central PA Region with 56 easements and 8,391 acres permanently preserved for Agriculture.....

County	# of Easements	Acres	Avg \$/Ac	Co Allocation
Blair	56 Farms	8,391 Ac	\$1,071	\$120,000
Centre	56 Farms	8,283 Ac	\$2,336	\$144,798
Bedford	18 Farms	3,855 Ac	\$ 555	\$ 7,073
Cambria	20 Farms	3,146 Ac	\$1,040	\$ 7,000
Huntingdon	10 Farms	1,169 Ac	\$1,284	\$ 7,070

Tillage and Cover Crop Survey - 2020

The Blair County Conservation District has been cooperating with the Capital RC&D to conduct Transect Surveys of the County since 2012. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate progress in reaching County and Statewide sediment reduction goals, and to provide accurate data on the adoption and use of conservation tillage systems. **The survey looks at tillage practices, cover crops, and land use at pre-established points on a pre-determined route. The data collected is crop type, percent crop residue, land use, cover crop and cover crop planting method.** Usually, the survey is conducted every 2-3 years and is done in the fall, with a follow-up completed in the spring.

The survey consists of driving a designated route and stopping at the designated points, approximately every 0.2 of a mile. The original Blair County route was 117.4 miles long with 509

County	Cropland	Cover Crop	% Covered
Blair	400 Points	283 Points	71 %
Huntingdon	431 Points	205 Points	48 %
Cambria	378 Points	174 Points	46 %
Bedford	441 Points	150 Points	34 %

points. However, some of the route has been changed due to loss of farmland to residential development. The route winds through Morrison's Cove, up and down Clover Creek and Piney Creek, then through Catharine Township, Sinking Valley, Scotch Valley and Turkey Valley.

Over the years, we have observed an increase in the use of no-till planting and cover crops. **Initially, cover crops were planted on corn fields taken off for silage. More**

recently, we are observing the planting of cover crops on later harvested crops such as corn for grain and soybeans. The most recent survey was conducted in the fall of 2020. Field observations were that more fields were cover cropped than ever before and fewer fields were conventionally tilled.

The 2020 Survey results are in and Blair County shows significant cover crop usage. Blair County stands at 71% of the points collected showed some form of "cover." **Research has shown that cover crops reduce erosion, limit nutrient pollution and have additional benefits of improving soil health and water quality!**

The Tillage and Cover Crop Survey is being reported for inclusion in the State's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP).

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.

Although everyone encountered challenges related to working during the Pandemic, the District continued to process plans, permits, inspections and respond to complaints in a safe and socially distant manner. In fact, our 2020 numbers were similar to years past.

All earthmoving activities over 5,000 square feet are required to have a written Erosion Control Plan. Cropland requires an E&S or Conservation Plan as do Timber Harvesting sites. Many local municipalities have within their ordinances, the requirement of plan review and approval as part of their land development approvals.

Sites involving a disturbance of 1 (one) acre or more are required to obtain an NPDES permit prior to commencement of the project.

NPDES permits are authorized and/or processed by the District.

In 2020, **15 General and 7 Individual Permits** (located in High Quality Watersheds) were processed and/or approved. In addition, **61 Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control Plans** were reviewed and approved based on the State's Chapter 92 and 102 Regulations. Processing times in Blair County average **20 calendar days** for General NPDES Permits and **10 calendar days** for E&S Plan reviews.

Thirty complaints were logged and 80 inspections were conducted at earthmoving sites and the pipeline project. Over 100 technical assistance contacts were provided to individuals, municipalities, consultants, developers and contractors.

Remember, planning and permitting should be done prior to the commencement of the earthmoving activity. Contact Steve Beach or Tyne Blazier at 696-0877 ext. 5 if you are planning an earth disturbance project or observe sediment issues related to construction sites.

"....Sites of one acre or more require an NPDES permit...."



Compost Filter Sock installed prior to earth disturbance activity

Spotlight on the DGLV Road Program



**Paver Placement of Driving Surface Aggregate (DSA)
Hemlock Lane
Catharine Township**

Undersized and Clogged Stream Crossing on Paw Paw Road Freedom Twp.



The DG&LVR program continues to address sediment pollution from undermanaged roads and drainage facilities on Dirt & Gravel Roads and paved Low Volume Roads (less than 500 vehicles per day). Conservation Districts administer the program and are locally led by a Quality Assurance Board (QAB) in each County. Local People solving Local Issues!

Funding for the program remained strong. Blair County received \$182,607 for administration and projects in 2020. Program funds must be committed and spent within two years of allocation to maximize funds; thus it is important that both the municipalities and the District have a strong commitment to the projects that are chosen.

2020 saw the completion of several long awaited projects in Blair County. **Paw Paw Road** in Freedom Township was first considered in 2017. An undersized and clogged stream crossing was attributing to frequent flooding and road closures. The Blair QAB has a policy to fund stream crossing projects **if the existing opening is equal to or less than 13 square feet (equal to a 48 inch round pipe)**. The Paw Paw Road project fit the criteria and permitting for a 9 by 3.25 foot arched structure along with raising the road profile was initiated.

Additional cross pipes were added upslope of the crossing to control road side drainage. Construction on Paw Paw Road was completed in June of 2020.

Hemlock Lane in Catharine Township, was little more than a woods trail when first considered in 2016. **This road was improved in two phases** with multiple cross pipes and drainage work completed in 2018, followed by paver placement of Driving Surface Aggregate in 2020.

Any Blair County municipality that has received training in the Environmental Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) of Roads within the last 5 years is eligible for funding. To date, Blair County has funded **61 sites for \$1,593,000**. We encourage all to become trained and get involved!



**Hemlock Lane
Before and After**



For more information, a funding application or to find an in-person or virtual training session near you contact Chelsey Ergler or Stephen Dumm at 696-0877 ext. 5. Or visit the Center website at dirtandgravel.psu.edu



Paw Paw Road after Construction

Stream Projects and Designs Completed

The District wrapped up a Growing Greener Grant at the end of 2020 by completing 215 feet of bank stabilization along Poplar Run located in Newry. This was the last of three projects proposed in the grant received in 2016.

The total project cost for the Spring Run, Spencer Run and Poplar Run jobs was \$108,430 with \$81,800 coming from Growing Greener Grant (state) funds. The roughly **\$31,600 in matching funds** came from additional non-state grant funds, landowner contributions and the District's Riparian Buffer Funds.

The overall project served to **stabilize 455 feet of streambank** using a variety of Best Management Practices. In addition, **1,650 trees were planted** as part of the stabilization, with the majority being "live stakes" planted on the 15 foot high embankment at the Spencer Run site.

Erosion at the three sites was severe prior to the project completion and the resulting **sediment reduction was**

calculated at a combined total of nearly 50 tons per year. Increased water quality and enhanced aquatic habitat are also direct results of the project completion. The tree plantings at Poplar Run will also reduce nutrient loads to the stream by buffering.

Starting in 2020, the District has enlisted a **new source of Technical Assistance to complete designs and permits** for stream projects contributing significant sediment loads to the Chesapeake Bay.

We worked with **Trout Unlimited through their Non-Point Source Technical Assistance Program** to provide **8 proposals for streambank and in-stream practices** to limit erosion and sedimentation in Blair County waterways. Having "shovel ready" projects often increases our ability to find construction dollars from grants and other funding sources.

Questions related to our stream stabilization initiatives can be directed to Tyne Blazier or Chelsey Ergler by calling 814-696-0877 ext. 5.



**Poplar Run Streambank Stabilization
Before and After**



Since 2012, the Intergovernmental Stormwater Committee (ISC) of Blair County has been collaboratively combining resources regarding the MS4 Program. This past year the ISC continued implementing the Blair County Collaborative TMDL and Pollution Reduction Plan (PRP). This Plan encompasses a series of projects that will **reduce a total of 1.4 million lbs./yr. of sediment** within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed over the course of 5 years. With estimated costs determined in 2018, the ISC has begun to contribute

**1 of 6 Rain
Gardens at
PNG
Stadium**

annually to both project and administrative funds. This year the ISC, with DEP's Growing Greener Program, implemented **Green Infrastructure BMPs at PNG Stadium reducing 9,425 lbs./yr. of sediment.** Also, the ISC is actively developing plans for a select group of stream bank stabilization/restoration projects.



In addition, the ISC has begun the **Lakemont Park Lake Mechanical Dredging Project**, which will remove approximately **36,000 cubic yards** of material from the Beaverdam Branch Watershed.

The creation of Local and State Partnerships with the ISC has led to **new and innovative ideas/projects, developed educational platforms, enhanced recreational and habitat opportunities, and ultimately is improving the health of Blair County's and the Chesapeake Bay Watersheds.** For more information contact Chelsey Ergler at 696-0877 ext.5 or cergler@blairconservationdistrict.org.



**PNG Retaining Wall & Rain
Garden**

What's Happening at Bedford Street



Osprey Nesting Platform
At
NatureWorksPark

NatureWorksPark is open for business and as many places closed to the public in 2020, the site became quite busy in a socially distant sort of way!

Although programming was cancelled, the District and others continued project work. **Ethan Shanafelt, an Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 3034**, recruited volunteers, scheduled materials and equipment, constructed and placed an osprey nesting platform at the wetland edge late last fall. Look to the right as you head down the trail to the large pavilion to see the platform. An eagle even circled the area as the scouts worked on the project! Let's hope that someone calls it home in the spring.

Also continuing in 2020, the District worked with partners, as the situation allowed, to prepare and plant additional segments of the riparian buffer demonstration area. Six different buffer types to include: Edible, Floriculture, Pollinator, AgroForest, Wildlife Grass and Wooded Wildlife areas are planned. Four of the buffer areas have been completed with assistance from DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, PS Extension and Master Gardeners of Blair County. The remaining buffers as well as spot planting and sign development are planned for 2021.



Ribbon Cutting - October 8, 2020



NatureWorksPark®

Special thanks to the Master Gardeners for their beautification plantings and upkeep throughout the park and to the Blair County Highway Department and the Blair County Prison for mowing.

The pavilions were not rented in 2020; however, a fee schedule for pavilion rental has been developed and will be implemented when we are able. Reservation will be made by contacting Bonnie Young at

814-696-0877 ext. 5 or info@natureworkspark.org. As a reminder, there are no electric or water facilities. Portable, accessible restrooms are available in season.

We have only just begun with the opportunities at the park. Stay in touch by visiting www.natureworkspark.org or follow us on Facebook or contact Suzanne Black, Conservation Education Specialist at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 or email sblack@blairconservationdistrict.org



(above) Masked District Staff Distribute Trees

(below) Even rainy days are beautiful at NWP
Photo by Karen Smith from Facebook



Staff Recognition and New Assignments

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Donna Fisher and Rich Huether Recognized for Years of Service by PACD, Inc.

Two staff anniversaries were recognized in 2020. **Donna Fisher has been with the Blair County Conservation District for 35 years.** She started in 1985 as an Ag Technician working on the Clover Creek Watershed Project and became Blair County's first full time District Manager in 1987.

Rich Huether was recognized for 20 years of service. Rich was hired in June of 2000 as the Ag Technician and has elevated to the title of Ag Conservation Specialist. Rich's duties have expanded as state delegations changed and he is an integral part of the Blair County Farmland Preservation Program.

Both were presented with years of service pins from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

Diane Thomas, Watershed Specialist chose to seek another opportunity outside of the District in June. We thank Diane for her 5 years of service to the District and wish her well in her new endeavor.

The Watershed Specialist duties were reassigned to several existing staff in lieu of hiring to fill the position. Chelsey Ergler has picked up the primary duties associated with our water monitoring program and she and Stephen Dumm have divided the Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road duties. Tyne Blazier has picked up duties in support of our Watershed Groups and Watershed Projects and assists with the water monitoring efforts.

Meet the Rest of the Team

This is a good opportunity to reacquaint you, the reader, with the rest of the District staff.

Beth Futrick, Ombudsman started for the second time (serving first as a Bay Tech) with BCCD in 2008.

Suzanne Black, Conservation Education Specialist began her part time service in 2016.

Stephen Dumm, Resource Conservation Technician and **Chelsey Ergler**, Stormwater Coordinator started July and August 2017, respectively.

Bonnie Young, Administrative Assistant began her career with the District in March of 2018.

Steve Beach and **Tyne Blazier**, both Resource Conservation Technicians started in January of 2019.



District Staff (L to R) Bonnie Young, Chelsey Ergler, Tyne Blazier, Beth Futrick, Donna Fisher, Rich Huether, Stephen Dumm and Steve Beach. Suzanne Black is not shown.

New District Website to be Launched

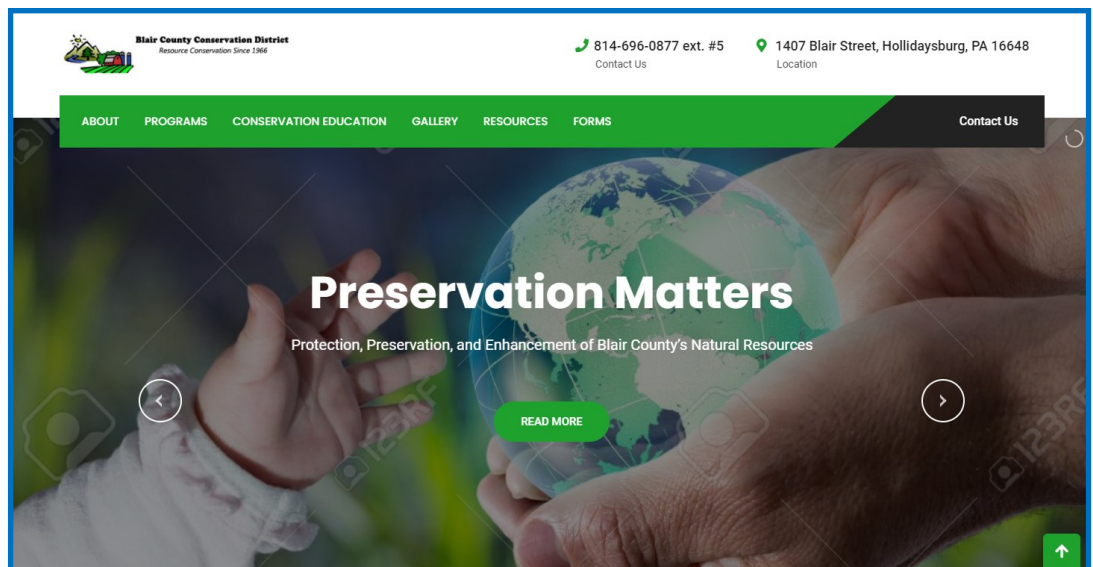
District Staff worked with Pam Mitchell of Keystone Connect, in Altoona, to complete an overhaul of the District Website in 2020.

Consideration for ease of use in finding Program Forms and Resources was paramount in our effort.

Look for the new site in February 2021!

Find us at....

blairconservationdistrict.org





Resource Conservation Since 1966

1407 Blair Street

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Phone: 814-696-0877 ext. 5

Fax: 814-696-9981

E-mail: bcd@blairconservationdistrict.org

www.blairconservationdistrict.org

www.natureworkspark.org



2020 Conservation District Board

Harold Bailey, Chairman

Blaine Smith, Vice-Chairman

Jim Biddle, Secretary/Treasurer

John Morrow

Alan Gearhart

Gary Long

Commissioner Bruce Erb

2020 Conservation District Staff

Donna Fisher, District Manager

Bonnie Young, Administrative Assistant

Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist

Beth Futrick, Ombudsman

Diane Thomas, Watershed Specialist

Stephen Dumm, Resource Conservation Technician

Tyne Blaizer, Resource Conservation Technician/WS

Steve Beach, Resource Conservation Technician

Chelsey Ergler, Stormwater Coordinator/WS

Suzanne Black, Conservation Education Specialist

Conservation District Funding

The Blair County Conservation District receives funding from several sources to include: Local, State and Federal dollars 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.

Conservation districts across the Commonwealth continue to receive funds via 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 2020 were received as a block grant in the amount of \$59,828 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 \$81,250 to include \$15,149 for well activity, as the formula changed to include "spudded wells" within the last 15 years. These funds are utilized to cost share salaries and administrative expenses (both for the District and Farmland Preservation Programs).

Continuing in 2020, the District held an agreement with the Intergovernmental Stormwater Committee (ISC) to employ a Coordinator and facilitate the operation of the committee. Nine municipalities and the County of Blair, that are required to obtain Federal MS4 permits for stormwater facilities, make up the ISC. The agreement with the ISC outlines their contribution of up to \$100,000 annually for administration through 2023. The District budgeted \$56,500 toward staff expenses in 2020.

The County of Blair contributes 21.2% of District revenues, the State 40.3%, the ISC 8.0% and District Fees, Reserves and Misc. 11.5% of the operating budget. Grants are budgeted at \$100,000 but often exceed budgeted amounts. In 2020, project funds reimbursed through grants administered by the District totaled \$263,147.

2020 General Fund Budget

Expenses:

Salaries/Benefits	\$482,951
Rent/Insurances/Audit	\$ 32,750
Operating Expenses	\$ 58,400
Payment to County	\$ 33,000
Project Grants	\$100,000
Total Expenses	\$707,101

Revenues:

Beginning Balance	\$ 30,108
County Commissioners	\$154,390
E&S/NPDES Fees	\$ 20,000
State Program Funds	\$284,638
Grants	\$100,000
ISC for Staff Expenses	\$ 56,500
Blair CWF/Reserve	\$ 44,115
Misc. Revenue Sources	\$ 17,350
Total Revenues	\$707,101