

BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- District Celebrates 55 Years
- Countywide Action Plan Developed
- Streambank Stabilization BMP's Funded

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2021 ANNUAL REPORT

2021 Annual Report

Blair District Celebrates 55 Years!

The year was 1966 - a gallon of gas cost \$0.32; a tube of toothpaste \$0.50; the average annual income was \$6,900; an average new car price was \$2,650; and the average new home cost \$14,200. Notable happenings in 1966 include: Miranda Rights came into being; Simon and Garfunkel released the "Sound of Silence"; "How the Grinch Stole Christmas" first appeared on TV; NASA launched Lunar Orbiter I, the first US spacecraft to orbit the moon; and the Blair County Conservation District was formed. **What a year!!**

Some of you reading this article may not have been born in 1966; some of you may have already started to forge your conservation ethic by 1966. Regardless of your status in 1966, we are pleased that you have joined us in 2021 and beyond to participate in our programs and to learn more about the Blair County Conservation District. **The mission of the District started with Agriculture and Soil Conservation.**

We have expanded our focus over the last 55 years to include programs related to Watershed Stewardship; Delegated programs of Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Pollution Control, NPDES review/permitting, and the Nutrient Management Program; Chesapeake Bay Program; Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads; Stormwater Management; Stream Restoration; Water Quality Monitoring; Urban Agriculture; and Conservation Education and Public Outreach all with the continuing focus of Agriculture and Soil Conservation.

The district had a change in leadership in 2021 as a result of the "retiring" of long term District Chairman Harold Bailey at the end of 2020. **Jim Biddle** was elected **District Chairman** at the reorganization meeting in January 2021. Jim originally became a board member in 1992 and started serving as Secretary/Treasurer in 2006. **Blaine Smith** started his service in 1995 and was again elected **Vice-Chairman**, a position he has held since 2006. **Gary Long**, started in 2006 to finish his father's term and appointed in 2007, was elected to fill the vacated **Secretary/Treasurer** position.

Also starting new in 2021, Cindy Bigelow was nominated and appointed by the Blair County Commissioners to serve a 4-year term as a farmer member to the District Board. Cindy is a lifelong farmer from Blair County and currently resides on her farm in the Williamsburg area. Cindy comes to the board with not only experience in agriculture but also with experience serving on related boards both county and regionally based. Turnover on the Blair County Conservation District Board is not frequent. We are looking forward to a long tenure for Cindy and the new leadership team!



Blair District Board of Directors circa 1976



**Cindy Bigelow
Appointed in 2021**

Planning Remains a Priority



Corn planted into harvested Triticale stubble at the Biddle Farm outside of Williamsburg. Erosion Control and Soil Health go hand in hand!

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

District planning efforts continued in 2021, preparing **4 Manure Management Plans** representing 250 acres and **6 Ag Erosion and Sediment Control Plans** for 358 acres. Over 1,400

producer contacts were made via mailings, status reviews, Nutrient Management Plan reviews and "Farm Inspections" as dictated by PA DEP within the Chesapeake 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 **8 plans and/or amendments** reviewed and approved; along with the review of **1 nutrient balance sheet** if manure is being imported to a farm.

A familiar face was hired at the end of 2021 to fill a vacancy left by the resignation of Stephen Dumm. Joshua Stoehr returned to the District to again fill the position of Resource Conservation Technician for Ag Programs. Josh is already trained in the preparation of Ag E&S Plans using

PAOneStop and will begin training toward his Nutrient Management Certification. We welcome Joshua back to the Conservation District and we are eager to have him begin planning efforts.

If you would like more information....contact Rich Huether or Joshua Stoehr at 814-696-0877 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 2021 the program preserved one farm totaling 84 acres and made an offer to a second farm for 104 acres, which will close in 2022. Blair continues to be one of the leaders in the Central PA Region with **57 farms and 8,475 acres preserved!** To date, just over **9.1 million dollars** has been provided to Blair County landowners interested in ensuring that their farmland remains in agricultural use for perpetuity.

Blair County Commissioners allocated \$100,000 for preservation efforts in 2021, the highest in our region. The State threshold was maintained at 38 million,

with the resulting State funds available to Blair County listed as \$296,798. County funds continue to be matched at an average of 3 to 1. Blair County received 0.78% of the total state funds.

The average easement value (the difference between the development value and the farmland value as determined by an appraisal) for Blair County stands at \$1,078 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 814-696-0877 ext. 5.

Blair County is a leader in the Central PA Region with 57 easements and 8,475 acres permanently preserved for Agriculture.....

County	# of Easements	Acres	Avg \$/Ac	Co Allocation
Blair	57 Farms	8,475 Ac	\$1,078	\$100,000
Centre	58 Farms	8,522 Ac	\$2,335	\$ 89,548
Bedford	18 Farms	3,855 Ac	\$ 555	\$ 3,184
Cambria	22 Farms	3,352 Ac	\$1,040	\$ 7,000
Huntingdon	11 Farms	1,392Ac	\$1,249	\$ 50,977

Blair Countywide Action Plan

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Blair County worked diligently with our regional partners (Cambria, Fulton, Huntingdon Counties and the Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission) and consultant, HRG, Inc, to prepare a Regional Countywide Action Plan (CAP). Within each county, levels of reductions were proposed. Blair County is on track to reach our reduction goal of 585,000 pounds of Nitrogen via the 5 priorities listed below. Blair County has already met Phosphorus goals provided by the State's Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP); however all the practices listed below will likely provide additional phosphorus reductions. **Implementation funds will follow the completion of the CAP and Blair County is slated to receive \$166,470 in 2022.** Now is the time to bring those plans for Best Management Practices to the front burner! Cost-share funds are once again available through the Conservation District. Contact District Staff - Rich Huether, Joshua Stoehr or Chelsey Weyant to learn more.

BLAIR COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLAN (CAP)

What are the priority initiatives that improve water quality?

The Countywide Action Plan identifies many Best Management Practices (BMPs) that help improve water quality. Below are the five most cost effective BMPs that improve our local streams. Numbers represented below are representative of Blair County.



Cover Crops help to improve soil stability and soil health in agricultural operations. Increasing cover crops not only benefits water quality, but also helps to increase overall productivity of crop fields. Cover crops can be incentivized through payment programs in order to increase implementation.

Agriculture Conservation or AG E&S Plans are required by state and federal regulation when disturbing 5,000 sq. ft. or more of soil. Agriculture Conservation Plans are a great way to plan for farm sustainability and improve economic benefits through conservation practices. Conservation Districts and NRCS support in writing AG E&S and Conservation Plans.



Nutrient Management or Manure Management Plans are required by state and federal regulation for farmers and landowners who have farm animals. Nutrient Management Plans help with properly applying animal manure to maximize the benefits to soil health. Conservation Districts and NRCS support in writing Nutrient Management and Manure Management Plans.

Forest and Grass Riparian buffers are an excellent way to address flooding and provide additional habitat for wildlife. Buffers help to provide vital shade for in stream life, while also filtering nutrients and sediment improving water quality. Various existing programs help to fund the implementation of riparian buffers, while paying incentives to landowners willing to implement.



Manure Storage tanks are an excellent way to properly store excess manure until crops are in need of additional nutrients. Manure pits, stacking pads, in barn systems and other structures are a few examples of ways to properly store and handle manure. Many cost share programs are available to assist with funding of proper manure storage facilities.

Are you interested in becoming involved?

For additional information please visit [DEP Watershed Countywide Action Plan | Southern Alleghenies Planning & Development Commission \(sapdc.org\)](https://www.sapdc.org). If you would like to become involved in our process, please fill out the survey and we will be in contact with you. You may also reach out directly to the Blair Conservation District at (814) 696-0877 ext. 5.

Erosion Control and NPDES Permitting



**Compost Filter Sock
installed prior to Earth
Disturbance Activity**

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.

Did you know....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. Written plans are to be maintained on site and implemented. It is also important to note that many local municipalities have within their ordinances, the requirement of plan review and approval as part of their final land development authorizations.

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.

There was no shortage of workload related to development projects in 2021. Numbers remained consistent with previous years.

In 2021, **19 General and 13 Individual Permits** (located in High Quality Watersheds or with discharges to Special Protection Waters) were processed and/or approved. In association with those permits and including projects of less than 1 acre, a total of **81 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 **29 calendar days** for General NPDES Permits and **9 calendar days** for E&S Plan reviews.

Twenty five complaints were logged and **44 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 Tyne Blazier at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 if you are planning an earth disturbance project or observe sediment issues related to construction sites.



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 annually to both project and administrative funds. To date the ISC has completed a total of 19 projects that are reducing 611,818.05 lbs./yr. of sediment within Beaverdam Branch, Frankstown Branch, and Little Juniata Watersheds. This year the ISC partnered with Trout Unlimited and have approximately five stream restoration and bank stabilization projects planned for implementation in 2022/2023 reducing an additional 143,387.71 lbs./yr. of sediment.

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 Weyant (814)-696-0877 ext. 5 or cweyant@blairconservationdistrict.org.

Coming soon....an upgraded and enhanced website for more information about Blair County Watersheds and Stormwater found at cleanblairwater.org.



**ISC Continues to
Design and
Implement
Pollution
Reduction Projects**

Municipalities by the Numbers.....

Plan and permit numbers are tracked by the County as well as by the Municipality. Complaints and inspections also are identified by municipality with copies of all correspondence provided to the specific municipality where the issue has occurred. The District appreciates the close working relationship that we have with our Blair County municipalities and we strive to keep them informed of our activities. As you can see in the table below, the workload is spread across the county with some obvious higher density townships where more development occurred in 2021. Many of our Boroughs are “built out” and earth disturbances may be limited, unless there would happen to be grading to clear lot(s). Inspections are conducted in response to complaints or as routine inspections on permitted or active earth disturbance sites.

Municipality	# Plan Reviews	Individual NPDES	General NPDES	Total Disturbed Acres	Complaints	Inspections
Allegheny	2	1	6	37.21	1	11
Antis	7	2	0	37.83	2	1
Blair	3	0	1	9.28	0	1
Catharine	0	0	0	0	2	1
Frankstown	3	4	1	31.91	3	6
Freedom	1	0	0	5.67	3	3
Greenfield	2	1	0	11.31	0	0
Huston	0	1	0	6.63	0	0
Juniata	0	0	0	0	1	6
Logan	9	2	4	153.51	2	6
North Woodbury	1	1	1	13.74	0	0
Snyder	5	0	3	16	4	3
Taylor	0	0	0	0	2	1
Tyrone	2	0	0	1.88	1	0
Woodbury	5	0	0	3.5	1	0
City of Altoona	3	0	2	6.47	2	3
Bellwood Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0
Duncansville Borough	2	0	0	0.960	0	0
Hollidaysburg Borough	2	0	0	0.81	0	1
Martinsburg Borough	0	1	0	4.34	1	0
Newry Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roaring Spring Borough	0	0	1	1.73	0	1
Tyrone Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0
Williamsburg Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0

Spotlight on the DGLV Road Program



**Drainage Project
7th Avenue
City of Altoona**

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 **\$183,883** for administration and projects in

2021. 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. One Dirt and Gravel Road (Baldauf Road in Tyrone Township) and 2 phases of a Low Volume Road (7th Avenue, City of Altoona) projects were completed in 2021.

The Blair District and Blair QAB also had a successful review of our program from the State Conservation Commission and the Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads. A Quality Assurance/Quality Control visit is scheduled every 3 years to assess the administrative and financial function and project work done in every county which receives money for the program.

Blair County met or exceeded expectations in all categories.

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 **63 sites for \$1,673,941**. We encourage all to become trained and get involved!



**Baldauf Road
Tyrone Township**

A training stipend of \$50/day/person is available to municipal officials or staff that participate in the ESM training from the Blair QAB. For more information, a funding application or [to find an in-person or virtual training session near you](#) contact Chelsey Weyant or Joshua Stoeher at 814-696-0877 ext. 5. Or visit the Center website at dirtandgravel.psu.edu

Certificates of Appreciation - 2022



Certificates of Appreciation were presented at our annual banquet held in October to three local groups, that through their own missions have assisted in advancing the District Mission.

(far left) Master Gardeners of Blair County; (left) Altoona Sunrise Rotary and the Kiwanis Club of Altoona (not pictured).

Thank You All!!

Stream Projects and Studies Underway

The District with the assistance of Senator Judy Ward's office was able to secure **\$250,000** through the **DCED Keystone Communities Grant Program** to provide watershed assessments and streambank stabilization/restoration projects through June of 2023.

Three watersheds were chosen for watershed studies based on impacts from urbanized areas: Gillans Run, which runs through Duncansville Borough; Spencer Run as it flows from Carson Valley to the intersection with the Beaverdam Branch of the Juniata River; and an Unnamed Tributary to Brush Run as it runs along Hawthorne Street south of Lakemont. Work is progressing on all three watershed studies with preliminary findings to be provided in 2022.

Also as part of the grant, we budgeted construction dollars to work in two areas. The first project was completed in 2021 and was a streambank stabilization project using modified mud sills and cross vanes to stabilize a portion of Gillans Run in Duncansville Borough. The work was completed by the John Kennedy Chapter of Trout Unlimited volunteers with equipment provided through Orchard Lane Excavating and installation assistance by the **Trout Unlimited Non-Point Source Technical Assistance Program** Staff who had designed and permitted the project with the District. District Staff and students from Saint Francis University were also involved "in stream." Completed within hours of Hurricane Ida moving through Blair County - the project stood its first test and remained functioning!

More to come in 2022 with construction of stream stabilization and also a floodplain reconnect project along the lower section of Spencer Run.

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

Tyne Blazier and Chelsey Weyant pinning logs for the Gillans Run Streambank Stabilization Project



SFU students along with Orchard Lane staff and Phil Thomas, Trout Unlimited, install Cross Vane

(below) Finished Project in Gillans Run, Duncansville Borough



Interested in learning more about the streams in your area....the PA Fish and Boat Commission has interactive maps specific to streams, fishing regulations and more at (pfbcm.maps.arcgis.com/apps/PublicGallery/) or anyone can view a wealth of information (to include streams) through DEP's eMAP system found at [eMapPA \(gis.dep.pa.gov/emappa/\)](https://gis.dep.pa.gov/emappa/) and checking the "Areas POI - Regulated Facilities and Related Information" Layer.

Education and Outreach 2021



J.T. Bandzuh visits Williamsburg Elementary School to talk about changing seasons.

The Blair District continued to operate in a limited, virtual world for most of 2021.

As restrictions loosened, the newly hired Blair County Conservation District Educator, J.T. Bandzuh, visited Williamsburg Elementary School on October 25,

2021, to host an **“Animals of Halloween”** show and tell presentation. Pre-K & Kindergarten classes combined to listen to J.T. read *“The Leaf Thief”* and discuss Fall and the changes brought about during the season.

After story-time, J.T. introduced students to bats, owls, and spiders – explaining to students their contributions to their local environments. The lessons were taught through hand puppets, skeletons and mounts of bats and owls, as well as the inspection of owl pellets.

The Blair County Conservation District hosted their first annual **“NatureWorksPark Fallfest”** on October 16, 2021. The event aimed to be an immersive educational experience for the entire family and was planned after receiving a PA Department of Agriculture - Urban Agriculture Infrastructure Grant. Urban agriculture was the theme for the

event, which saw a dozen related vendors meet and greet guests. In addition to vendors, the event also featured pumpkin painting, live animals, and the Blair County Dairy Princess. Jean Sinal and Jody Wallace brought reptiles and a chicken to teach guests about native species and raising backyard chickens.

The District aims to make this a regular event with a rotating theme annually.

Call or email J.T. Bandzuh or follow us on Facebook for updates on programs and activities planned in 2022. We are looking forward to a fun and engaging year for Conservation!

Annual Wreath-Making Workshops

Always a popular event, the District again sponsored Wreath-Making workshops across Blair County in 2021.

In total, the 6 workshops hosted at libraries across the county produced 100 wreaths and used over 7,000 branches.

Materials for the wreath workshops were sourced fresh and locally for each workshop and included White pine, Scotch pine, Norwegian spruce, and Fraser fir. Other “natural” accessories were offered for ornamentation as well.

Proceeds from the workshops are attributed to our Conservation Education and Outreach Efforts.

Workshops fill up fast...follow us on Facebook to find our dates and locations for the next Holiday Season!



Wreath-Making workshop at Hollidaysburg Library (December 2021)

Turtles to Join the District



The Blair County Conservation District is set to receive three new additions in Spring 2022. Centre Wildlife Rehabilitation has agreed to gift the District three turtles to be used for educational purposes. The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission grants

possession permits for amphibian and reptile educators. A new turtle enclosure is set to be built at NatureWorksPark which will mimic their natural habitat. The turtles will be housed indoors during winter months.

The turtles are supported by the PACD Nonpoint (NPS) pollution grant via EPA. The turtles will be used as ambassadors of healthy waterways.

Wood Turtle (*Glyptemys insculpta*)

The wood turtle is an endangered species of North

America with a range along the northern East Coast to the Great Lakes. Wood turtles reach a length of 5.5 to 8 inches and weigh 1.5 to 2.5 pounds.

Eastern Box Turtle (*Terrapene carolina carolina*)

The Eastern box turtle is a vulnerable species of North America ranging from Maine to northern Florida and as far east as Texas and Oklahoma. Eastern box turtles reach a length of 4.5 to 7 inches and weigh up to 2 pounds. Like wood turtles, box turtles also hibernate during winter months.

Programs & Workshops in 2022

The District has plans to conduct several workshops and programs in the upcoming year. Seasonal workshops and programming will take place seasonally at NatureWorksPark and libraries across Blair County. Workshops are to include: DIY Bird Feeder making in January-February, Turtle Talk in March-April, and Mother's Day Container Gardening in May.

Additionally, the District has shifted its "What's Hatching?" program from chickens to Monarch Butterflies. The programs will still take place in area libraries, but will focus on native species of plants and insects.

The District will hold its first Annual Earth Day Event (April 23)

at NatureWorksPark in 2022. The District aims to increase programming at NWP in 2022 and beyond.

The District increased its adult education and outreach in 2021. Plans to continue and expand this directive will carry into 2022 with seasonal programs, workshops, and events for all ages.

Annual Poster Contest and Envirothon

A virtual Envirothon Competition was held in 2021 with Altoona Area and Hollidaysburg High Schools participating. The "EcoStripes" team from Hollidaysburg (Torance Herr, Trevor Langenbacher, Jerica Walters and Tanner Stewart with advisor Andrea Walter) won the local event and represented Blair County at the virtual state Envirothon. An in-person event is planned for 2022 at NatureWorksPark!

Also on hiatus for the last several years, the Blair County Conservation District will welcome back participation in the Annual Poster Contest. The theme for 2022 is "Healthy Soil Healthy Life." Submissions are welcomed in Spring 2022. Call or email J.T. Bandzuh for more information.



What's Happening at Bedford Street



**Wetland Plant
Identification Signs
at
NatureWorksPark**

NatureWorksPark is open for business and as many indoor venues were still restricted to the public in 2021, the site became quite busy as a way to meet and greet in a safe manner!

Although programming was again suspended in 2021, the District and others continued project work. **Mitchell Hemminger, an Eagle Scout candidate from Troop 3031**, recruited volunteers, purchased materials, constructed and placed 23 **wetland plant identification signs** along our boardwalk. Josh Chestney of Stiffler McGraw offered technical support for the project. Thank you Mitchell and crew for your hard work and diligence!

Wrapping up in 2021, the District worked with numerous partners, to prepare and plant the last segments of the **riparian buffer demonstration areas**. The buffer is designed to be a multifunctional riparian site that includes five different buffer types: Edible, Floriculture, Pollinator, Wildlife Meadow, and Wooded Wildlife area. Special thanks to DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, Penn State Extension and Master Gardeners of Blair County. Workshops are planned in 2022 to highlight various ways a multifunctional buffer

can be managed and utilized. Workshops such as growing brambles for home growers to developing a cut-flower business are scheduled. Follow NatureWorksPark Facebook page to learn about these upcoming events. To provide on-going outreach to park visitors, installation of signage that includes QR codes is planned. The QR codes will allow visitors to open educational videos that highlight what is growing in the edible, floriculture, and wildlife areas of this buffer. Videos such as tapping trees for maple syrup and springtime preparation for a floriculture buffer are some of the upcoming video topics scheduled to be completed in early 2022.

Due to concerns for everyone's safety, reservations were not taken for the pavilions again in 2021; however, people made good use of the park throughout the season without reservations. In fact, the Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development



NatureWorksPark®

Commission installed a counter on a trail at the park in March of 2021. We were pleased to report that the **park averaged 31 visitors a day** from March through December with the peak month of visitation shown in April with an average of 51 people/day! Visitors were recorded in every month and peak visitation seems to occur steadily between 8 AM and 5 PM. Although Saturday and Sunday are the busiest days (17% and 16% respectively), all days record at least 11% of the traffic. In total over **11,000 visits** to the park were recorded in 2021!

Doggie waste stations were purchased and installed in 2021 and we appreciate the numerous and very courteous dog walkers at the park.

Another thanks to the Master Gardeners of Blair County for their Pollinator Garden, beautification plantings and upkeep throughout the park. Special Shout Out to the Blair County Highway Department and the Blair County Prison for mowing and general cleanup at the Park.

Stay in touch by visiting www.natureworkspark.org or **follow us on Facebook** or contact J.T. Bandzuh, Conservation Education Specialist at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 or email.

We've only just begun to explore the possibilities at NatureWorksPark. We hope that you enjoy it as much as we do.



Staff Recognition and New Staff Hired

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Beth Futrick - 25 Years of Service

One staff anniversary was recognized in 2021. **Beth Futrick has been with Conservation Districts for 25 years - first with Blair County and then Centre County and back to the Blair District in 2008.** She started as a Bay Technician with both Districts and returned to Blair County to serve the role as Ombudsman/Resource Coordinator. Since her return, Beth has also split duties as a Resource Coordinator, writing and facilitating numerous grants on a county and regional basis.

Beth received a 25 years of service pin from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and was recognized at the October District Banquet..

District Staff and Dogs at NWP (L to R) Stephen Dumm, Donna Fisher, Beth Futrick, Rich Huether, Tyne Blazier and Suzanne Black. Dogs are always welcome at NatureWorksPark and may be found in the District Office from time to time!

Stephen Dumm, Resource Conservation Technician chose to seek another job opportunity outside of the District in October. We thank Stephen for his 5 years of service to the District and wish him the very best in his new endeavor. Also serving 5 years, Suzanne Black, Conservation Education Specialist tendered her resignation and relocated this past summer. She worked part time through September to transition to the new educator. We also wish Suzanne all the best.

J.T. Bandzuh was hired as the part time educator in August. J.T. comes to us with a B.A. from UPJ in Geography & Political Science, a Master of Science in Geography from Virginia Tech and is pursuing his Doctorate in Philosophy in Geography from Florida State University. He also was serving as an AmeriCorp Member with the Cambria Conservation District.

Joshua Stoebr was hired back in December to fill the vacancy in the Resource Technician position related to our Ag programs. You may remember Joshua -

he served as an Americorps Member and District Technician from 2016 to 2018, working to complete Ag E&S and Manure Management Plans. Joshua comes to us with a B.S. degree in Environmental Health and Safety from Slippery Rock University and most recently was employed by PA Rural Water Assn.

Meet the Rest of the Team

Donna Fisher, District Manager started with the District in 1985 as an Ag Technician and became the District Manager in 1987.

Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist started in June 2000.

Chelsey Weyant, Stormwater Coordinator started in August 2017.

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

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



Spotted Lanternfly Program and Funding



Blair County was added to the quarantine list for Spotted Lanternfly in 2020 and the first task that the District accomplished was attaining a permit through the PA Department of Agriculture to operate vehicles within a quarantine area. All staff received instruction on the identification of the insects and processes involved in operating vehicles within Blair County and across the State. A **\$10,000 education and outreach grant** was received by the District in 2021 to conduct workshops and continue distributing resources related to the need for permits and control of this invasive insect. Three workshops are planned for Spring 2022 and will include the distribution of circle traps to participants for their attendance. Traps and signage are also proposed at NatureWorksPark. Penn State Extension has taken a lead on education and outreach. Visit their website for more information **or to report a sighting.**



Resource Conservation Since 1966

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www.blairconservationdistrict.org

www.natureworkspark.org



2021 Conservation District Board

Jim Biddle, Chairman

Blaine Smith, Vice-Chairman

Gary Long, Secretary/Treasurer

John Morrow

Alan Gearhart

Cindy Bigelow

Commissioner Bruce Erb

2021 Conservation District Staff

Donna Fisher, District Manager

Bonnie Young, Administrative Coordinator

Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist

Beth Futrick, Ombudsman/Resource Coordinator

Stephen Dumm, Resource Conservation Technician

Tyne Blazier, Resource Conservation Technician/WS

Steve Beach, Resource Conservation Technician

Joshua Stoehr, Resource Conservation Technician

Chelsey Weyant, Stormwater Coordinator/WS

Suzanne Black and J. T. Bandzuh,

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 2021 were received as a block grant in the amount of \$61,922 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 and NatureWorksPark.

The SCC funds are distributed in base amounts plus a calculated portion of Unconventional Well Counts per county. Blair County received \$98,348 to include \$15,674 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 2021, 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 2021.

The County of Blair contributes 22.9% of District revenues, the State 38.6%, the ISC 8.5% and District Fees, Reserves and Misc. 9% of the operating budget. Grants are budgeted at \$100,000 but often exceed budgeted amounts.

2021 General Fund Budget

Expenses:

Salaries/Benefits	\$439,325
Rent/Insurances/Audit	\$ 37,650
Operating Expenses	\$ 57,400
Payment to County	\$ 33,000
Project Grants	\$100,000
Total Expenses	\$667,375

Revenues:

Beginning Balance	\$ 40,000
County Commissioners	\$153,217
E&S/NPDES Fees	\$ 22,000
State Program Funds	\$257,275
Grants	\$100,000
ISC for Staff Expenses	\$ 56,500
Blair CWF/Reserve	\$ 35,733
Misc. Revenue Sources	\$ 2,650
Total Revenues	\$667,375