

## BLAIR COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **3-Year NFWF INSR Grant Completed**
- **Historic Barn and Farm Foundation Grant supports improvements at NWP**

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## 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

# 2024 Annual Report

## NFWF INSR Grant Completed

The end of 2024 marked BCCD's successful completion of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's (NFWF) Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) grant, a significant funding opportunity aimed at improving water quality in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This grant supported efforts to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff through agricultural best management practices, urban stormwater management, and riparian buffer restoration over the last 3 years.

Through this project, we leveraged existing funding programs and partnerships to accelerate water quality improvements across the Juniata Watershed. We collaborated with streamside landowners to complete 12 stream restoration projects, restoring 2.17 miles of streambanks. Additionally, we worked with eight landowners to establish seven acres of riparian buffers, planting nearly 2,000 trees and shrubs to enhance water quality and habitat. To strengthen green infrastructure initiatives and address long-term maintenance issues, we hosted a two-day professional workshop with Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professionals. This training connected consultants, municipal engineers, and agencies to build a regional network of green infrastructure experts. As a result, we connected with a local volunteer group who adopted two rain gardens, and we are planning to partner with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Huntingdon Conservation District to launch the Riparian Rangers program, focused on buffer planting and maintenance.



This grant also supported agricultural conservation by adapting best management practices from the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program to private farm lanes. We developed a new Farm Lane Stabilization cost-share program, completing 12 projects that stabilized 11,365 linear feet of farm lanes, reducing sediment pollution from farms.

Recognizing the importance of regenerative agriculture, we used this funding to strengthen a multi-county grazing network. We hosted five pasture walks and a two-day grazing event, engaging over 100 farmers across Blair, Bedford, Cambria, and surrounding counties. This initiative led to the formation of a dedicated grazing network committee to continue hosting events and fostering farmer-to-farmer mentorships.

This funding has made a significant impact, improving water quality, promoting sustainable agriculture, and fostering long-term environmental stewardship in our region!



Pasture Walk at George Lake's Farm

# Plans for Compliance and Funding



Planning continues to be the first step for farm compliance and funding programs on all agricultural operations.

The District again participated in the PA Assoc. of Conservation Districts Plan Reimbursement Program in 2024, providing **two landowners with a total of \$1,340 toward plan preparation**. PACD was allocated additional funds for the continuation of the program on a first come first serve basis. Funds are available for both new plans and the renewal of plans if required.

The District continues to write plans

on a limited basis for a fee and supports landowners preparing their own plans using the PA OneStop Program and the Manure Management Manual as the need arises. **During 2024, the District prepared 2 Manure Management Plans** representing 30 acres and **2 Ag Erosion and Sediment Control Plans** for 30 acres.

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

**5 plans and/or amendments** reviewed and approved; along with the review of **1 nutrient balance sheet** if manure is being imported to a farm.

The final and perhaps key component of planning and implementation is reporting. Staff continue to input plans into the state based PracticeKeeper System, and are now verifying existing and functioning practices with the end goal of calculating sediment and nutrient reductions.

Contact us if you would like more information about our agricultural planning programs and funding.

## 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 2024 the program preserved two farms totaling 286 acres** and worked on a third farm which will be presented to the State for approval in early 2025. Blair continues to be one of the leaders in the Central PA Region with **63 farms and 9,194 acres preserved!** To date, nearly **10.5 million dollars** has been provided to Blair landowners interested in ensuring that their farmland remains in agricultural use for perpetuity.

**Blair County Commissioners allocated \$148,616** for preservation efforts in 2024, also the highest in our region. The State threshold was maintained at 43 million, with the resulting State

funds available to Blair County listed as \$381,892. County funds continue to be matched at an average of 2.5 to 1. Blair County received 0.89% 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 \$1,138 per acre. However, the average easement value of current purchases is closer to \$2,200/acre.

The success of the program is a tribute to the commitment of the County Board and the relationship with the County Commissioners.

**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 Huether or Donna Fisher at 814-696-0877 ext. 5.

*Blair County continues to be a leader in the Central PA Region with 63 easements and 9,194 acres permanently preserved for Agriculture.....*

County	# of Easements	Acres	Avg \$/Ac	Co Allocation
Blair	63 Farms	9,194 Ac	\$1,138	\$148,616
Centre	67 Farms	9,448 Ac	\$2,429	\$101,170
Bedford	18 Farms	3,855 Ac	\$ 555	\$ 4,478
Cambria	24 Farms	3,631 Ac	\$1,049	\$ 10,000
Huntingdon	12 Farms	1,616 Ac	\$1,256	\$ 18,114



# Blair ACAP and CAP Implementation Funds

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Agriculture is the Number One industry in Blair County and for the first time in a long time funding has matched the importance of agriculture to Blair County! The **Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)** legislation was passed in July 2022 committing 154 million dollars statewide for agricultural best management practices. Blair County is to receive a total of 1.679 million dollars over 3 years for the administration, design and implementation of BMP's. **In addition, 2024 saw the addition of dedicated funding through the PA Clean Streams Fund to add an additional \$740,000 for work in Blair County!** The District worked diligently to develop policies to effectively manage the program in Blair County. In order to allow a diverse distribution of funds, we have chosen to institute a cap of \$250,000 annually to a landowner and/or ag operation, as well as a maximum of 90% payment of any proposed project. We have instituted quarterly application rounds to solicit interest in the program and applicants are ranked within their round for funding consideration.

Construction ramped up in 2024 with the completion of two manure storage facilities, a grazing project and again, the District committed \$95,000 toward our Cover Crop Incentive Program whereby we reward good conservation practices with an incentive payment. In addition, the District allocated funds to two manure stacking sheds, a silo leachate collection system, a grazing system and to continue the Cover Crop Incentive into 2025. The District also utilized a portion of their allocation to pay for planning/technical assistance on a farm to start the implementation process for a beginning farmer in the county. **By the end of 2024, we had committed a total of \$1,289,845 (about 53% of our total funds) with payments of \$574,624 made for projects and another \$5,000 for technical assistance and administration.**

All eyes are on the PA State Conservation Commission (facilitator of the program at the state level), Conservation Districts and Pennsylvania's Farmers to efficiently and effectively utilize these funds for the installation of Best Management Practices with the ultimate goals of reducing pollution and maintaining the long term viability of our farms and farmland. We will do our part in Blair County! If you are interested in more information about the Blair County ACAP Program contact Rich Huether at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 or [rhuether@blairconservationdistrict.org](mailto:rhuether@blairconservationdistrict.org).



**One of two Manure Storages constructed in 2024**



**Cover Crops for Conservation and Soil Health**

The third round of **Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Implementation Funds** were received in Blair County in **2024 totaling \$200,000**. The District chose to utilize about half of these funds for a stream restoration project, designed by Trout Unlimited, that was "shovel ready" on Gillans Run just west of the Borough of Duncansville. Funds were also allocated to both our Cover Crop Incentive Program (\$33,000 allocated to 14 farms and 2,700 acres) and a new Riparian Buffer Incentive Program (\$52,000). To date approximately \$26,000 of the Buffer funds have been spent on the establishment of 4 acres of buffers at 7 sites across the county. A new application round is underway through March 2025. Finally, nearly \$12,000 was added to ACAP funds on a grazing project including: fencing, watering facilities and heavy use area protection.



**Modified Mud Sill used on Gillans Run to Stabilize the Streambank and Provide Aquatic Habitat**

The District applied for and received \$386,588 late in 2024 for use in 2025. We plan to continue our stream restoration, incentive programs and ag best management practice efforts with those funds. Stay tuned!

# 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.

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 coupled with the NPDES PAG-02 (General Permit) expiration on December 7, 2024. Any permittees whose project was still in progress or not terminated needed to file for a renewal. **Blair processed 37 renewals and 6 Notice of Terminations for existing permits.**

In addition, **14 General and 2 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 **106 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 **40 calendar days** for General NPDES Permits and **14 calendar days** for E&S Plan reviews.

**Thirty-nine complaints** were logged and **48 inspections** were conducted at earthmoving sites. 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 Devon Weyant or Nicole Matish at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 if you are planning an earth disturbance project or observe sediment issues related to construction sites.

**Compost Filter Sock properly placed and staked downslope of an earthmoving activity is a best management practice used to limit erosion and resulting sedimentation on an Earth Disturbance Site and should be maintained until the site is fully stabilized.**



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. To date the ISC has completed a total of 33 projects that

are reducing 1,032,038.20 lbs./yr. of sediment within Beaverdam Branch, Frankstown Branch, and Little Juniata Watersheds. This year the ISC implemented 2 stream stabilization projects and a riparian buffer project through their partnership with BCCD, Trout Unlimited, and Trust for Tomorrow. In addition, the Beaverdam Branch Floodplain Restoration Project along with the Brush Run Streambank Stabilization/Floodplain Restoration Project have received permitting and are progressing towards construction in 2025. Through these two remaining projects, the ISC will achieve their sediment reduction requirement as well as laying the groundwork for future reduction goals.

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 Veyant at 814-696-0877 ext. 5.

**Trout Unlimited and BCCD Staff install a log cross vane (right) within Gillans Run.**



**ISC Continues Project Implementation and Strengthens Municipal and Conservation District Partnerships**

# Municipalities by the Numbers.....

Plan and permit numbers are tracked by the County as well as by the Municipality. Complaints and inspections are also 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 2024. Many of our Boroughs are “built out”; however, the large disturbed acreage in Hollidaysburg Borough is related to the permit renewal for the DeGol Industrial Center. We also saw multiple plans and permits for infrastructure improvements across the county. 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	15	0	7	31.97	4	7
Antis	13	0	4	30.09	7	7
Blair	9	0	7	72.20	0	1
Catharine	3	0	1	4.45	2	4
Frankstown	5	0	2	18.10	3	6
Freedom	1	0	1	11.01	4	4
Greenfield	7	2	2	43.39	1	1
Huston	1	0	0	0.86	0	0
Juniata	1	0	0	1.60	0	0
Logan	11	0	8	62.87	5	6
North Woodbury	5	0	1	24.12	3	3
Snyder	1	0	1	2.30	3	3
Taylor	5	0	4	48.07	1	1
Tyrone	2	0	0	1.45	2	2
Woodbury	3	0	1	8.32	0	0
City of Altoona	13	0	6	39.65	2	4
Bellwood Borough	2	0	1	3.91	0	0
Duncansville Borough	2	0	0	1.13	0	0
Hollidaysburg Borough	5	0	4	82.43	1	0
Martinsburg Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0
Newry Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0
Roaring Spring Borough	1	0	1	5.0	0	0
Tyrone Borough	1	0	0	0.96	1	1
Williamsburg Borough	0	0	0	0	0	0



# Spotlight on the DGLV Road Program



**\$100,000 Allocated for  
Dirt & Gravel Roads**



**\$83,388 Allocated for  
Low Volume Roads**

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 **\$183,388** for administration and projects in 2024/25. 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.

Two Low Volume Road projects were completed in 2024 - **Creps Road Phase 2 in North Woodbury Township and Spencer Creek Drive in Allegheny Township.**



**Creps Road Drainage - North Woodbury Township**



**Spencer Creek Drive  
Allegheny Township**



**Pipe Replacement Before and After**

Creps Road was a continuation of a project completed by North Woodbury Township in 2023 and consisted of drainage improvements at the intersection of Creps Road and Millerstown Road to effectively and efficiently convey stormwater. Total project cost for Phase 2 was \$77,882. The project on Spencer Creek Drive was the first project undertaken by Allegheny Township. A deteriorated corrugated metal pipe was replaced with a plastic pipe and stabilized outlet structure for a total cost of just over \$6,000.

A third site was contracted in 2024 as a Dirt and Gravel Road Project on Huntingdon Pike in Frankstown Township. This will be the first project completed in Frankstown Township.

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 in May of 2024. 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. District staff were commended in their financial tracking and reporting, as well as their education and outreach efforts and overall project management.**

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 **70 sites for \$1,989,403 on over 22 miles of roads.** We encourage all to become trained and get involved!



# 2024 Conservation Award



(L to R) Tom Ritchey and  
Jim Biddle, District Chairman

Annually the District recognizes an Individual, Organization, and/or Farm for service and achievements that support the District Mission to protect, preserve and enhance our natural resources through technical assistance and education. **In 2024, we chose Tom Ritchey for his Outstanding Service to the Ag Community in Blair County and beyond!**

Those of you in the FFA circuit will know Tom from his long tenure as the Vo-Ag Instructor and FFA Advisor for the Central Cove Chapter in Martinsburg. Tom's impact on the lives of many is evident in the success of his students.

The District had the opportunity to work with Tom and his students in the annual Land Judging and Public Speaking Contests. In addition, he was on board when we piloted a multi-generational Conservation and Manure Management Plan writing course, bringing the computer talents of his students with the agricultural knowledge of the local farmers!

Tom was integrally involved in the Morrisons Cove Dairy show and countless other community endeavors. It was our honor and privilege to recognize Tom for his service!

## Stream Projects with DCED Funds



Stream Stabilization on an UNT to Brush Run

A stream stabilization project was completed on approximately 200 feet of an Unnamed Tributary to Brush Run, primarily on the Garvey Manor Property in Allegheny Township in 2024.

The project was designed and permitted by **Keller Engineers, Inc.** working with **Garvey Manor** as the primary landowner and fund by **DCED, Keystone Community Funds**. Construction was completed by **DirtWorks by Johnston** from East Freedom. This tributary is an urban stream where development had occurred in close proximity to the stream and where stormwater was contributing to flashy flows and bank erosion.

Stream stabilization with hard armor (riprap) along with several grade structures placed in the channel was utilized to reduce erosion and minimize stream velocities.

Remaining grant funds (\$22,000) is proposed for the design and permitting of another project on Spencer Run in 2025.

# Education and Outreach 2024

The Blair County Conservation District Educator, Lisa Haas, continues to make meaningful connections with students of all ages throughout Blair County. Building upon the 2023 year of outreach, in 2024 she assisted with 4th grade field trips at W.R. Grace Nature Trails with over 550 students, held 50 workshops at libraries and senior centers, which includes the much anticipated container garden workshop, Christmas wreath workshop, turtle talks and even an Herbology at Hogwarts event. Lisa also attended several festivals and farmers markets where she made over 500 contacts.

This year's new curriculum features an expanded array of STEM activities for students. One particularly popular presentation involved an in-class stream study. Collaborating with our Education Intern, Garrett Walk, we gathered macroinvertebrates from various streams and set up mini streams in the classroom using ice packs and bubblers. The students then utilized a stream study guide to assess the health of each stream.



This in-class event was presented in schools, STEM camps and libraries throughout 2024!

Another event gaining traction is the school bioblitz, made possible by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education grant. The inaugural event took place in the fall of 2024 at Altoona High School and was a resounding success. Students engaged in exploring local biology on campus, received guidance from John Kennedy Trout Unlimited on how to collect and identify macroinvertebrates from the stream, and set leaf packs to be examined in April 2025. They also learned to use iNaturalist to assist with scientific research. We are excited about hosting many more events in the upcoming year.



## Blair County Envirothon



**First Place Winner -  
Hollidaysburg HS  
"Team 1"**

Hosted on an early April day at Fort Roberdeau, fourteen teams from six school districts competed in the annual event.

The local event was sponsored by: Altoona Kiwanis, ISC, Leighty's Boot Outlet, Keller Engineers, Stiffler McGraw, Sheetz and the Blair Conservation District.



**Above - Second Place Winner -  
Central HS "Team 1"**



**Left - Third Place Winner -  
Central HS "Team 2"**



# 2024 Land Judging Contest

The annual Land Judging Competition aimed at FFA students saw participation from the Central Cove and Williamsburg Chapters from Blair County and for the first time ever we welcomed a school from out of the county, the Northern Bedford Chapter from Bedford County. The event was held at Jim and Carol Biddle's farm just south of Williamsburg. We had a strong contest with over 60 students participating. **First place was taken by Ty Uplinger, Second by Rylee Stultz both representing the Williamsburg Chapter and a tie for Third Place by Hope Dively and Danielle Heltzel, both representing the Central Cove FFA.** A total of only 2.65 points separated the top three places! The top finishers from **Northern Bedford were Makenna Showalter and Aaron Conley placing 24th and 25th** respectively. We expect to welcome out of county schools in the future as Blair County is one of the last counties or districts in the area to host a contest for our Chapters. The top three places will receive a plaque and each school will also have the opportunity to send their top students to the state contest in the Summer of 2025 if they desire.



2024 Land Judging Competition at Jim and Carol Biddle's Farm  
October 3, 2024

# Annual Poster Contest

The Blair County Conservation District again sponsored and facilitated the Annual Poster Contest. The theme for 2024 was "May the Forest Be with You Always." Entries were received in all but the senior high category (K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12) and cash prizes were awarded to 1st, 2nd and 3rd place entries in each grade category. We also provide the teachers of the winners with a monetary prize, since we realize that often teachers go above and beyond for their students! Winners were recognized at the District's Earth Day Event held at the Hollidaysburg Jr. High in April 2024.

Winning posters at the local level are submitted to the PA Association of Conservation Districts with the possibility of reaching a national event.

Winners were: Leia Nelson; Gia Cohen; Claire Hovan; Callum Furry; Amylia Cook; Gavin Pooley; Connor Stere; Hrudaya Bhattu; Kate Moyer and Eva Kasper. Teachers recognized were: Rachel Cahill, Jamie Glass and Tara Kasper.

**Congratulations to all the 2024 Winners and their Teachers!**



# What's Happening at Bedford Street

**NatureWorks Stewards,  
Watching frogs,  
Water Festival,  
Barn Swallow in Nest**



**2024 at NatureWorksPark was a year of volunteerism, outreach and education initiatives.**

## Volunteerism

The Blair County Conservation District is dedicated to connecting community members with the natural world. To advance this mission, in 2024 we were proud to announce our volunteer program, NatureWorks Stewards.

This volunteer program has several key objectives. Firstly, it aims to promote community engagement in conservation by offering a variety of hands-on volunteer opportunities. These initiatives encourage local residents to actively participate in the preservation of the environment. Secondly, volunteering with the BCCD at NatureWorksPark provides individuals with rewarding experiences that foster personal growth and skill development. As volunteers learn and enhance their abilities, they simultaneously strengthen the community's environmental knowledge.

For our inaugural year, we are proud to say that we had regular volunteers through the summer and had great participation at all volunteer events.

## Outreach

The District received a Historic Barn and Farm Foundation Grant to replace windows and a portion of the barn floor in 2024. As a result we needed to provide alternate housing for our barn swallows! We collaborated with Eagle Scout candidate Jack Peterson to construct barn swallow nests, which were then hung on the side of our barn. Although the nests were installed after the swallows returned to the area, one nest was still utilized. This charming nest became the



**NatureWorksPark®**



**View from the Pollinator garden**

Photo credit: Pam Rose

home for two broods, each consisting of five chicks. Jack also created signage to let visitors know why we protect our swallows.

NWP was also host for 2 festivals at the park this year. The first was Family Fun Day with Canal Basin Park. We invited partners to come and do family friendly activities. Though it was incredibly hot, we had a nice turnout. And for our fall programming, we hosted a plant sale and fall wreath workshop with over 100 attendees.

## Education

Something else we're bubbling with excitement to resume is real, in the water, Water Festivals at the park! This year we hosted pre-K, elementary school, homeschool students and summer STEM camps. We rotated them through stations highlighting a search for macros, birds of the wetland, turtles, food webs, stormwater runoff, and

recycling. And everyone loved flipping rocks looking for crayfish!

Thanks to the CREP grant we offered the more seasoned crowd a variety of workshops to highlight numerous ways a multifunctional buffer can be managed and utilized. We relied on experts to teach the workshops including how to make and use botanical dyes, how to build a cut-flower business, practicing floral design, and plant native spring ephemerals to attract pollinators.

**Special Shout Out to the Blair County Highway Department, the Blair County Prison and P.S. Ext. Master Gardeners for weeding, mowing and general cleanup at the Park.**

Stay in touch by visiting [Natureworkspark.org](https://natureworkspark.org) or following us on Facebook or contacting Lisa Haas, Conservation Education Specialist at 814-696-0877 ext. 5 or email [lhaas@blairconservationdistrict.org](mailto:lhaas@blairconservationdistrict.org).



# District Staff - Recognition and New Staff

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## Tyne Blazier - 5 Years of Service

One staff anniversary was recognized in 2024. **Tyne Blazier was with the Blair Conservation District for 5 years, starting in January 2019.** Tyne was hired as a Resource Conservation Technician and also shared Watershed Specialist duties. Tyne received a 5 years of service certificate from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and will continue her district service in Huntingdon County. It was with regret and excitement that we accepted Tyne's resignation for her to accept the District Manager position in Huntingdon in April 2024. Best wishes to Tyne in her new District and Position!

**Nicole Matish** was hired to fill the open position of Resource Conservation Technician in August 2024. Nicole comes to us with a B. S. degree in Environmental Studies with a minor in Biology from Penn State; as well as GIS and mapping skills from her time working in the Blair County Assessment Office. Nicole quickly learned and will be responsible for duties in the E&S and NPDES programs and has already become a willing and valuable participant in our educational and watershed activities.

We are excited to welcome Nicole to our team!



## New Staff Hired

**Nicole Matish, Resource Conservation Technician for E&S/NPDES and WS Duties**

## Meet the Rest of the Team

**Donna Fisher**, District Manager started with the District in 1985.

**Rich Huether**, Ag Conservation Specialist started in June 2000.

**Beth Futrick**, Ag Ombudsman and Resource Coordinator started for the second time in 2008.

**Chelsey Weyant**, Stormwater Coordinator/ Watershed Specialist started in August 2017.

**Bonnie Young**, Administrative Coordinator started in March 2018.

**Devon Weyant**, Resource Conservation Technician started in May 2022.

**Lisa Haas**, Conservation Education Specialist started in February 2023.

**Sarah Oreskovich**, Resource Conservation Technician serving both the Ag and Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Programs started in June 2023.

## Beyond the County Border

BCCD staff continue to support statewide and regional initiatives and programs. **Rich Huether** serves on the State Conservation Commission Nutrient Management Advisory Board. **Lisa Haas** continues to serve on the State Envirothon Board and **Beth Futrick** is the local contact for the developing Southern Allegheny Food System. **Great Work All!**



## 2024 Earth Day Event

The Conservation District hosted our annual Earth Day Festival at a new location and in collaboration with the Blair Regional YMCA, bringing in larger crowds than in past years. The Hollidaysburg Area Junior High

School gymnasium perfectly held 25 local vendors, conservation organizations, live music, crafts, and the District's animal ambassadors—Betty, Woody, and Rip. Community members learned the importance of preserving the environment, challenges the environment faces, and ways to make improvements through interactive activities and conversing with conservation leaders present at the event.

The District hopes to bring in more vendors for 2025 as they celebrate their 25th Earth Day Festival Anniversary!



**Resource Conservation Since 1966**

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[www.natureworkspark.org](http://www.natureworkspark.org)



### 2024 Conservation District Board

Jim Biddle, Chairman

Blaine Smith, Vice-Chairman

Gary Long, Secretary/Treasurer

John Morrow

Alan Gearhart

Cindy Bigelow

Commissioner Amy Webster

### 2024 Conservation District Staff

Donna Fisher, District Manager

Bonnie Young, Administrative Coordinator

Rich Huether, Ag Conservation Specialist

Beth Futrick, Ombudsman/Resource Coordinator

Chelsey Weyant, Stormwater Coordinator/WS

Tyne Blazier, Resource Conservation Technician/WS

Devon Weyant, Resource Conservation Technician

Lisa Haas, Conservation Education Specialist

Sarah Oreskovich, Resource Conservation Technician

Nicole Matish, Resource Conservation Technician/WS

## 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 2024 were received as a block grant in the amount of \$70,278 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. Thanks to the Legislature and the Departments of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, a significant increase originally received for district staff and administrative costs in the State 2022/23 Budget was continued in 2023/24! Blair County was allocated \$203,765 to be utilized to cost share salaries (for 6 staff positions) and administrative expenses (both for the District and Farmland Preservation Program).

Continuing in 2024, 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 make up the ISC. The agreement with the ISC outlines their contribution of up to \$100,000 annually for administration through 2024. The District budgeted \$53,000 toward staff expenses and support in 2024.

The County of Blair contributes 19.4% of District revenues, the State 44.5%, the ISC 5.6% and District Fees, Reserves and Miscellaneous 9.3% of the operating budget. Grants are budgeted at \$200,000 or 21.2% but often exceed budgeted amounts.

### 2024 General Fund Budget

#### **Expenses:**

Salaries/Benefits	\$552,800
Rent/Insurances/Audit	\$ 47,000
Operating Expenses	\$ 63,100
Property Expenses	\$ 47,000
Payment to County	\$ 33,000
Project Grants	\$200,000
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$942,900</b>

#### **Revenues:**

Beginning Balance	\$ 35,000
County Commissioners	\$183,127
E&S/NPDES Fees	\$ 29,000
State Program Funds	\$419,215
Grants	\$200,000
ISC for Staff Expenses	\$ 53,000
Blair CWF/Reserve	\$ 11,558
Misc. Revenue Sources	\$ 12,000
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>\$942,900</b>