

Lehigh County Conservation District

2015 Annual Report



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Kevin Castro- Resource Conservationist
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Garrett Cook-Engineer
Damian Painter-Agricultural Resource Conservationist
Caitlin Heffner-Watershed Specialist
Erich Schramm-Environmental Educator

"A dynamic partnership of conservation professionals providing quality service to protect Lehigh County's diverse natural resources through leadership, technical assistance, education, land protection, promotion of sustainable development, and protection of water and soil quality."

EROSION & SEDIMENT POLLUTION CONTROL PROGRAM

The Conservation District's main focus is water quality, and the largest activity to impact water quality in Lehigh County is the earthmoving associated with land development. While acreage under construction is smaller than agricultural acreage, the amount of acreage removed from vegetative cover and the length of time it is exposed makes this activity much more susceptible to accelerated erosion and sedimentation. LCCD has accepted certain program responsibilities from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to lessen this impact. These include reviewing Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Pollution Control Plans, inspecting earth disturbance sites, responding to E&S related complaints, and providing public information and education. LCCD reviews E&S plans according to DEP guidelines to determine the adequacy of proposed Best Management Practices (BMPs) on earth disturbance sites. The plans are reviewed to determine whether they satisfy the Pennsylvania Clean Stream Law and the accompanying erosion control regulations, commonly known as Chapter 102. E&S activities for the year are summarized in the accompanying table.

Resource Conservationists inspect active earth disturbance sites in Lehigh County to insure that the E&S plans are followed and that BMPs are properly installed, maintained, and functional.

LCCD staff also responds to complaints from county residents and/or municipal officials concerning earth disturbance activities. These complaints are handled by site inspections and the owner is notified of necessary compliance measures. Complaints that do not fall within LCCD's jurisdiction are referred to the appropriate agency.

LCCD seeks voluntary compliance from owners or developers to correct violations. BMPS that are not properly implemented or are insufficient to control erosion and sedimentation are considered violations. They are found when conducting inspections or responding to complaints on earth disturbance sites. When owners or developers fail to comply with the regulations, the District initiates the administrative conference. LCCD forwards the collected penalties to the Commonwealth's Clean Water Fund.

2015 Chapter 102 & NPDES Program Accomplishments	
E&S	
New Plans Received	129
Total Plans Received	283
Plans Reviewed	283
Site Inspections	196
Complaints Resolved	37
General NPDES Permit Applications	30
General Permits Issued	27
Individual NPDES Permit Applications	38
Individual Permits Recommended to DEP	47
Individual Permits Issued by DEP	42
Administrative Conferences	4
Penalties Collected	\$38,822.25

NPDES

The District, in conjunction with PA DEP, administers the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permits for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities. For all earth disturbances resulting in 1 acre or greater, an NPDES Phase II permit is required. If the site drains to a High Quality or Exceptional Value watershed, an Individual Permit is required. If it drains to non-special protection waters, a General Permit is required. NPDES Permit activities are summarized in the previous table.

In addition, the NPDES permitting process includes a requirement to address Post Construction Stormwater Management (PCSM) concerns with a submission. The PCSM Plan should provide design features and BMPs that will manage any net increase in stormwater runoff volume occurring after the completion of the project. It should be designed to maximize infiltration technologies, eliminate (where possible) or minimize point source discharges to surface waters, preserve the integrity of stream channels, and protect the physical, biological and chemical quantities of the receiving surface water. The Lehigh County Conservation District is one of few Districts in the State that has a delegation agreement with PA DEP to conduct engineering reviews of the Post Construction Stormwater Management (PCSM) Plans.

AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS

The Agricultural Resource Conservationist serves the agricultural community of Lehigh County by developing soil conservation and manure management plans, providing technical assistance for the implementation of Best Management Practices (BMPs), facilitating financial assistance from various sources, reviewing Act 38 Nutrient Management plans, responding to complaints, and educating both the agricultural community and the public. In addition, through a delegation with Northampton County and the State Conservation Commission (SCC), the Lehigh County Conservation District reviews Act 38 Nutrient Management plans for Northampton County.

In 2015, twenty soil conservation plans were developed, covering 632 acres. The Lehigh County Conservation District also reviewed five Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans which regulates the spread of nutrients on over 500 acres of farmland. Five complaints related to soil erosion and sedimentation or nutrient pollution on agricultural fields were addressed.

WATERSHED CONSERVATION

The Watershed Specialist provides technical, informational, and organizational assistance to improve the quality and quantity of the Commonwealth's surface and groundwater resources. The focus of this work is on the creation, implementation, and coordination of plans and strategies to restore and protect local watersheds.

During 2015, the Watershed Specialist implemented a number of conservation projects. 70 rain barrels were assembled and given out at a March rain barrel workshop. Work also began on the installation of an environmental laboratory at a local middle school.

Funding was secured for several projects, including a 2016 rain barrel workshop and an invasive species removal/riparian buffer planting project along an un-named tributary to the Little Lehigh Creek. Grant proposals were also submitted to secure funding for an assessment of the Little Cedar Creek watershed and other watershed projects including the removal of invasive species, stabilization of streambanks, and establishment of native riparian buffers.

OUTREACH/EDUCATION

The District staff carries out seminars, workshops, and other education and outreach programs through the Watershed Program, the Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program, and the Agriculture Program.

Envirothon

The 2015 Lehigh County High School and Middle School Envirothon competitions were held on April 28th and April 30th, respectively. Both events were held at the Wildlands Conservancy Pool Wildlife Sanctuary in Emmaus. Over 200 students from 16 Lehigh County Schools participated. Emmaus High School won the high school event and the students moved on to the state competition held at University of Pittsburgh Johnstown and Windber Recreation Park.



School & Youth

LCCD carried out numerous hands-on presentations to local schools and summer camps and participated in public events relating to watersheds, water pollution, the water cycle, stream erosion, and water quality, including the annual Lower Milford Elementary Earth Day Celebration stream study, shown at left.

Adult Education

The Lehigh County Conservation District conducted a manure management workshop and helped farmers develop four manure management plans for small farms. LCCD also addressed the public at several township meetings and attended the Penn State Crop Conference held annually in Allentown. LCCD was able to speak to 120 farmers about the need for a manure management plan at the Crop Conference.

The Lehigh County Conservation District administers the County's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit on their behalf. During 2015, LCCD, in partnership with the Center for Watershed Protection, conducted an Illicit Discharge Detection & Illumination workshop for the County's 25 municipalities. 49 municipal representatives attended the workshop.