

Bucks District receives DEP Urban Education Grant

by **Cathy Skwara, Bucks County CD**

The Bucks County Conservation District has been awarded a \$10,000 Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Education grant for a unique project designed to introduce hands-on environmental conservation and agricultural issues to urban and disadvantaged urban county residents. The program's main focus will be towards youth who have very limited access to "green spaces," environmental conservation activities and hands-on learning experiences.

The grant, to be supplemented by an additional \$10,000 grant from the Conservation District board of directors, will provide funds to work initially with families that have experienced catastrophic events (medical, financial, personal) resulting in the loss of their homes. Many have been forced to live in single rooms in motels, often in different neighborhoods, additionally stressing the family. Parents have jobs and their children attend school, but parking lots are about the extent of their free-time outdoor activity access.

These families receive basic living assistance and support from Aiding Our Neighbors, a Lower Bucks County faith-based organization. Presently there are about 75 adults and 50 children in this population, but their numbers continue to grow. In addition, the project will include children and their parents from the local school districts— through our environmental conservation and agricultural education programs planned for the school year.

Announcing the DEP grant, Acting Secretary Kathleen McGinty said, "Environmental education has become an increasingly important part of DEP's mission. Your interest and participation in this endeavor are deeply appreciated, and we are happy to support your efforts."

While the Conservation District will initially direct the environmental/agricultural educational programs toward these Lower Bucks County recipients, it will be expanded to reach other populations of disadvantaged urban Bucks County families in the future.

In addition to offering an understanding of the impact of their actions on their immediate environment and our natural resources, other goals of the project are to:

1. Increase literacy, awareness and appreciation of natural resources conservation, the environment and agriculture in this urban population, and

2. Enable and assist them in creating gardens for hands-on participation and reinforcement of the educational programs while also increasing self-esteem in the participants— and providing a source of fresh produce.

Working with the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service and the Bucks County Parks Department, among others, the Conservation District plan envisions using the gardening projects as outdoor classrooms for conservation education to demonstrate and promote its adoption as an educational tool for schools.

The initial project will offer specific programs during the school year and summer vacation periods, as well as field trips, computer experience and the compilation of a book that will record the group's activities and progress. At the expiration of the project, the gardens will remain in place for future use.



NEW! Delco Conservation District Website

by **Ed Magargee, Delaware County CD**

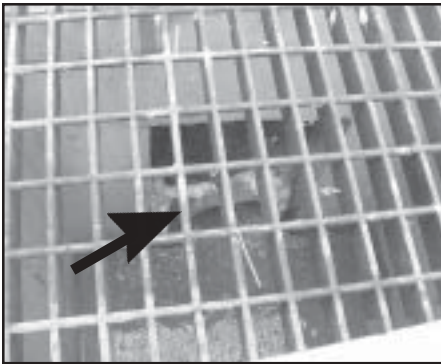
Delaware County Conservation District's new website is up and running. The site was made possible by a mini-grant from the PA Association of Conservation Districts and US EPA Section 319 Program. It offers resources to everyone in Delaware County including public, municipal, and contractual links. The site contains information on permits, Conservation District programs, watershed issues and programs, grants, education and outreach, links, and much more. Go to www.delcocd.org and explore this new tool.

As part of the grant, the district will provide space for the Delaware County Environmental Network website, which will include their newsletter and Resource Guide, along with other important and timely issues. The DCEN site should be available for viewing in a few months.

Beach Towels — an Alternative Best Management Practice?

By Brad Eldred, Chester County CD

During routine site inspections in January, I came across a problem that has been all too common this season, a faulty seal in a permanent riser. With a harsh winter of historical proportions, the freeze/thaw problems these field BMPs have endured has lead to many failures. So, as common practice, a Compliance Notice was issued requesting the seal be fixed.



After the five-day deadline to correct the violation, I returned to see that the problem had been attended to. However, the run-of-the-mill waterproof cement was not used to remedy the problem. Instead, I found that beach towels had

been pressed all throughout the voids in the seal. The towels were a nice variety of sizes and colors, in fact. After chuckling to myself, I photographed the “Alternative BMP” and contacted the owner. Although watertight until they get wet, beach towels will not be accepted as an Alternative BMP.

Don't Dump – Drains to Creek

by John Metrick, SEPA RC&D

The Southeastern Pennsylvania Resource Conservation and Development Council recently received a PA DEP Growing Greener Grant to purchase storm drain plaques that read: “No Dumping – Drains to Creek”. Soon these plaques will be on storm drains throughout the Darby watershed. Several municipalities participated in the program and will soon receive the plaques to place on their storm drain inlets. The methods of placement vary in each municipality. The plaques will also be seen throughout the greater Philadelphia region. These plaques help fulfill some of the requirements of the new NPDES Phase II permits for the participating municipalities.

The purpose of the program is to help prevent pollutants from being dumped into the inlets, which drain to streams. Most people believe these inlets go to storm sewers and then the treatment plant, but in reality they drain directly to creeks. Hopefully these plaques will raise awareness of this important issue. Participating municipalities in the Darby watershed include: Marple, Radnor, Darby Borough, Newtown, Sharon Hill, Collingdale, Ridley, and Swarthmore. Storm drain plaques are guaranteed to last ten years, much longer than the stencils that have also been used to mark inlets.


Delaware District offers mini-grants

by Ed Magargee, Delaware County CD

The following Mini-grants were awarded by the Delaware County Conservation District in Spring 2003:

- Boy Scout Troop 44 of Glenolden - Tree Planting
- Delaware County Bluebird Trail - Upgrading and Expanding of Nestbox Network
- Friends of Ridley Creek State Park - Education Initiative and Nature Trail Enhancement
- Friends of the Chester Creek Branch, Inc.- Outreach and Organization Improvement Project
- Chester, Ridley, Crum Watersheds Association - Replenishment of Chemicals for CRC Monitoring

The five grants totaled \$2200.00. This is the first of two rounds for 2003. The deadline for a next mini-grant program is October 30, 2003. For more information visit www.delcocd.org or call Bill Gothier at 610-892-9484.




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Reducing erosion on a dirt road



Municipal workers in Tincicum Township, Bucks County, unravel a roll of Terratex, a geotextile fabric, over the surface of a rural road as the first step in a new process designed to dramatically reduce erosion on dirt and gravel roads. At right, other workers lay the first of two coats of aggregate on top of the fabric, which will pro-

duce a firm and level driving surface that is expected to have a long-term positive impact on maintenance and labor costs. This one-mile dirt road is the first in Southeastern Pennsylvania to receive the newly developed treatment.



District employee recognized for watershed stewardship

by R. Kadwill, Montgomery County CD

Nathan Walker, Watershed Specialist at Montgomery County Conservation District was selected by the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy to receive their "Friends of the Watershed" Environmental Award for 2002.

Mr. Walker is being recognized for his personal dedication to watershed stewardship and his involvement as a partner, advisor, or volunteer in Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy conservation projects over the past several years. Some of the Perkiomen projects Mr. Walker has been involved in include stream buffer planting to reduce erosion and enhance water quality at Leshar Mill, Stormfield, and Knight Road. Informational sessions were conducted at Marlborough Elementary School, and also in Lower Providence Township on vegetative plantings at stormwater basins.

Application and receipt of grant funding through the League of Women Voters has enabled Mr. Walker to conduct public awareness workshops on Water Resources.

Funding through the Growing Greener Grant program has enabled Mr. Walker to work with Sebastian Riding Associates to develop a manure storage facility and to address surface water runoff into wetlands.

Mr. Walker has also participated in multiple stream clean-up activities in the Perkiomen watershed.

Mr. Walker received his award on February 27th along with other individuals who were recognized for their involvement in projects that have contributed to the conservation of the Perkiomen Creek Watershed.



Nathan Walker speaks to Mr. Coffey's Environmental Science class at Upper Perkiomen High School about water quality before helping them install a riparian buffer.



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Environmental Tips

Properly designed wetlands can control mosquitos

(by Robert D. Miller, agriculture liaison, Missouri Department of Conservation)



According to Miller, wetlands can actually reduce the mosquito population, contrary to what some people might think. "A healthy wetland provides habitat for many unique animals — including the natural enemies of mosquitoes," he explains. According to an Indiana Department of Natural Resources fact sheet, mosquito populations are held in check in healthy wetlands by certain birds, frogs, fish and insects that feed on mosquito adults and larvae. Wetland restoration projects can decrease mosquito populations by providing proper habitat for such predators. For example, when Essex County, Mass., restored a 1,500 acre wetland, the mosquito population dropped by 90 percent (Audubon Magazine, November-December 1996). Other states, such as New Jersey, have also been controlling mosquitoes the "natural way" by eliminating small, stagnant breeding depressions and using water management practices to increase mosquito predators. These "natural methods" reduces the cost of mosquito control over the traditional method of insecticide application by more than 97 percent.

When designing wetland restoration projects, considerations should be made up-front for mosquito control. This does not mean that projects should contain only deep or open water. On the contrary, projects with both deep and shallow waters that are somehow connected are generally preferable. Design projects with a variety of water regimes to foster the development of a variety of plants and animals that will naturally include mosquito predators, such as dragonflies, damselflies, water striders, backswimmers, predaceous diving beetles, topminnows and mosquitofish.

Mosquitoes can be further reduced with the erection of birdhouses that will attract insectivorous birds such as purple martins, tree swallows and prothonotary warblers. The addition of bat boxes is also a good idea. For example, a single little brown bat can consume 1,200 mosquito-sized insects in just one hour.



Prevent Road Salt Damage to Trees

Although road salt is a welcome icy-weather remedy to motorists, trees along the roadsides don't appreciate its harsh effects. Road salt hurts trees in two ways: Salt spray from passing cars can kill buds and twigs and disfigure both broadleaf and ever green trees and shrubs; and salt accumulation in the soil can cause abnormal fall color, needle-tip burn and browning that starts on leaves' edges and progresses toward their middle veins.

How can salt damage be recognized?

- **Winter:** look for "witch's brooms" (cluster of twigs growing out of branch ends) on deciduous trees, yellow tips to evergreen needles.
- **Early Summer:** look for marginal leaf scorch on deciduous trees, yellow, brown, or fallen needles on evergreens—especially on the side toward the road.

To prevent road-salt damage to your trees and shrubs:

Avoid de-icing salts — Use coarse sand to help make sidewalks and driveways less slippery. If you must use salt, use as little as possible.

Flush the soil with water in the spring when it thaws. This should send salts beyond the trees' root zones, where they can't harm the trees.

Keep your plants and trees healthy — A healthy plant is better equipped to survive salt spray and accumulation.

Use barriers — Protect sensitive plants with plastic fencing, burlap or snow fencing.

Choose the right trees to plant —

Plant salt-tolerant species:

Common persimmon
White ash
Honeylocust
Eastern red cedar
American Holly
Goldenraintree
White poplar
White oak
Black locust

Do not plant the following trees and shrubs in highly salted areas.

Red maple	White pine
Black walnut	Douglas fir
Norway spruce	White spruce
Sugar maple	Pin oak

Montgomery District welcomes new Board members!

by **Jeanette Jansen, Montgomery Co. CD**

The role of the Board of Directors is to evaluate local needs and set priorities for the Conservation District. Currently, the main focus is Chapter 102 erosion and sediment control. At this time, Montgomery County Conservation District would like to introduce three new members to our board.

H. Kirk Horstman, PE is a consulting civil engineer who resides with his family in North Wales. He has worked on site design and environmental projects in southeastern Pennsylvania for 23 years. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.

Shawn O'Rourke is a local farmer with 700 acres of cash crops. He is a graduate of Delaware Valley College with a bachelor's degree in Agronomy. Also Shawn owns Environmental Landscape Services Inc., which operates compost sites for East Norriton, West Norriton, and Norristown Borough.

Charles Wismer is the third new member elected to sit on our board. Charles is an active resident in Trappe Borough. The Mayor of Trappe in the late 1970's, Charles has always been a dairy farmer. He served on many committees such as Trappe's Planning Commission and Pennsylvania State Grange.

Finally, thanks to all of our board members for their time and commitment.

Contractor Training in Chester County

by **Dan Greig, Chester County CD**

The Chester County Conservation District has held a series of training workshops for contractors on implementing and maintaining their erosion and sedimentation control BMPs. The district has provided training for over 70 people from companies and agencies such as PennDot, DiMarco Construction, Lyons & Hohl, and Technivate. Conservation district staff members including Gaye Lynn Criswell, Jim Subach, Brad Eldred, Chris Andes and Joe Sofranko have visited the contractors, at their request, with power-point presentations. Our presentations include wetland identification, understanding the district's inspection report, an overview of the district's role, the importance of the pre-construction meeting and keeping the weekly inspection log. The presentations are usually interrupted with questions, which then turn into a positive dialogue between the contractors and district staff.

We believe that the training sessions have greatly aided in attaining voluntary compliance and helping the site contractors understand the district's role. Though the conservation district is currently suspending any more training's due to the beginning of the busy field season, we hope to return to it at a later date including a large training for the South East Region.

New Employees

Chester County Conservation District

Elbert Wells, a native of Arkansas and a 1966 graduate of the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, was hired as a Resource Conservationist in the Chester County Conservation District.

Mr. Wells has a degree in Agronomy from the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff. After Elbert retired from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with 37 years of service, the District hired him to write Resource Management Plans.

Elbert worked for NRCS in Berks, Mercer, Monroe, Carbon, Warren and Forest Counties before moving to Chester County in 1974 where he and his family have made their home. Elbert was District Conservationist in Chester County from 1974 to 1989. He was on loan to DEP, Bureau of Water Quality Management for two years where he helped to develop a Water Quality Management Plan for the Red and White Clay Creek Watersheds in Chester County and New Castle County, Delaware. The Water Quality Management Plan for the Red and White Clay Creek Watershed turned into a PL-566 Water Quality Land Treatment Project that the two Districts are currently implementing. Elbert's latest position with NRCS was Supervisory District Conservationist and Team Leader for Bucks, Montgomery, Northampton and Lehigh Counties.

Maureen A. Ford, a resident of Exton, PA and a graduate from West Chester University, has been hired as an Administrative Assistant in the Chester County Conservation District.

She recently worked for Bishop Shanahan High School in Downingtown, PA where she served as the Director of Institutional Advancement for four years. She has accumulated over twenty-five years of office and project management experience. Her primary responsibilities will be logging the Erosion and Sedimentation plans, managing the DocSTAR program, serving as the liaison to the webmaster of Chester County, and providing support to the Office Manager.

Cindy A. McLendon, a resident of Rising Sun, MD, has been hired as an Administrative Assistant in the Chester County Conservation District. She has thirty years of work experience in various types of office settings and for the past fifteen years has worked in office administration and accounting. She is our front desk person and will also be responsible for the processing and issuing of the General NPDES Permits.

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