

A wide-angle photograph of a rural landscape. A light-colored gravel or dirt road curves from the bottom left towards the center. On the right side of the road, a large, leafless tree with a thick trunk and intricate branch structure stands prominently. A wooden fence with wire runs along the edge of the road, separating it from a green field. In the background, there are fields of golden-brown corn and a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



On the cover

This rural Westmoreland County intersection near Crabtree is emblematic of the world the District has been navigating since Covid.

The tried-and-true course that we've been on — the operational strategies that have led us so successfully to this point — are coming to the end of their relevance.

Post-Covid realities require us to steer in a new direction, recalibrating the way we deliver services, secure revenue, retain talent, and manage just about every other major area of operation.

Exactly which direction that is, however, still is not totally clear.

As we thoughtfully analyze the landscape, we know that the next decisions we make will take us into new territory, with its unexplored perils and opportunities. Our goal is to make a sound choice, and be ready.



Table of Contents

Program Accomplishments	
Stable Soils.....	4-7
Productive Farms	8
Clean Streams.....	9 -12
Healthy Forests	12-13
Sustainable Communities.....	14-18
Scientific Monitoring	19-21
Organizational Development	22-26
Above and Beyond Projects	27-29
Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Projects.....	30
2021 Donors and Sponsors.....	31
Financial Statement.....	31
Staff and Volunteers	32-33



The Road Ahead

There have been no shortage of challenges in the 40 years that I've had the privilege of managing the Westmoreland Conservation District, but those of the past two years have been like no others.

The way we deliver services, retain talent, secure revenue streams, and even determine the conservation programs we offer have all been markedly changed by the pandemic and its ripple effects.

Over these past months, our staff and board have spent long hours working to identify and understand the new operating realities, and to devise the best ways of addressing them.

One of the most foundational post-pandemic realities we face is curtailing the in-person, frequently one-on-one, way we deliver our services and work with our partners. This personal touch has been the District's hallmark and is largely responsible for success in building the level of trust that is essential to promoting the conservation ethic. Even if things eventually settle out into a hybrid of in-person and remote communication, our challenge is to find a way to build new effective relationships in the virtual portion of this world.

When we pivoted hard in 2020 to using remote meeting platforms, video productions, and other virtual ways of communicating, we also were confronted with an accelerated need to invest in these technologies. In 2021, every one of our core education programs, including the Envirothon, which historically has been a hands-on, outdoor competition for high school students, was offered virtually. Not one core education program was presented in-person.

This new reliance on technology, added to the speed with which it changes, and the other new ways of doing things that are on the horizon — such as the transition Pennsylvania is making to reviewing permit requests electronically* — make it clear that we will continue to need to make

significant, annual investments in this area for the foreseeable future.

In regard to our staff, they, like employees everywhere who were furloughed and/or worked remotely, have been reassessing their work-life balance. In 2021, retirements, other job opportunities, and changing work conditions resulted in the loss of 4 of our 18 District staff members, the most significant staff transition I can remember.

To retain talent, we need to be responsive to new worker expectations, which include not only satisfying levels of compensation and benefits, but a fulfilling work experience with autonomy and flexibility in a culture that is inclusive. These are things we will be focusing on in 2022.

We also recognize the need to look more critically than ever before at the stability of our revenue streams. In 2021, as construction activity picked up during the year, we saw some return in the amount of income we received from fees for service. And we had a very successful launch of a new major fundraising campaign.

Nonetheless, we recognize the need to take a hard look at every conservation program we offer, making sure that it not only meets the needs of Westmoreland County citizens, but that it also financially pays for itself. Unfortunately with some state-delegated programs, this has not been the case. We are planning to meet with our Pennsylvania delegation in 2022 to talk about this problem and to suggest ways to relieve this shortfall.

We also recognize the ongoing need for creative sources of funding to implement needed conservation projects and, on that front, we are preparing to formally investigate the possibility of creating a new a loan/grant fund for water-quality and stormwater management projects.

So, as you can see, the pandemic has prompted a lot of new ways of thinking and approaching the work to do.

Ron Rohall, our board chair, and I both thank you for the support you have consistently given the District, in good years and challenging ones. We are grateful to have you as partners in promoting conservation.



Gregory M. Phillips
District Manager/CEO

** We received our first electronic request for a permit in 2021.*

PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Stable Soils

HIGHWAYS AND ROADWAYS

Our senior erosion control specialist visited the **extensive rehabilitation work on Interstate 70** at least once a month during the year, ensuring that controls were in place to keep disturbed soil from finding its way into nearby streams.

This is the second year that PennDOT has been focusing its efforts on the roughly four-mile section of this highway that runs from the Yukon to the

Madison interchanges.

Several streams had to be relocated during construction of this section of I-70, and the impact of that was mitigated in part by the creation of a nearly six-acre wetland near Huntingdon Road in South Huntingdon Township.

The land for the wetland, which was already very wet and soft year-round, was carefully excavated and topped with native topsoil and planted with specific wetland plants.

The I-70 improvement project began in the fall of 2015 with a major redesign and upgrade of the Center Avenue/Interstate 70 interchange in New

Stanton. Every year since, work has been done on the interstate that involves replacing or rehabilitating bridges, upgrading interchange ramps, improving the roadway geometry, and improving interchange traffic flow.

The second year of the \$24-million **U.S. Route 119 reconstruction project** through the Borough of Youngwood was in full swing in 2021, and our senior erosion control specialist was regularly on site to ensure that conservation measures were in place to stabilize any disturbed soil and to control stormwater runoff.

The roadway project will ultimately not only improve traffic flow but also reduce the long-standing problem of speeding through the community. It includes two miles of full-depth reconstruction of four lanes through Youngwood, new asphalt roadway, ADA ramps, curbs and sidewalks, traffic signals, storm sewers, and substantial improvements to multiple side roads.

The project is scheduled to be completed in 2023.

Our erosion control specialist, the project contractor, and representatives from PennDOT held a pre-construction meeting in October regarding the stormwater and erosion controls that will be used in an upcoming project to **improve a portion of PA Route 981 near Mt. Pleasant High School** (also see Clean Streams, page 10).

The roadway work will disturb some 94 acres of earth, including nine acres that drain to a watershed that contains a high-quality stream in the Sewickley Creek Watershed.

Because of this latter situation, an individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System



A six-acre wetland was created near Huntingdon Road to mitigate the impact of moving a portion of a stream to create a new ramp on Interstate 70. Additional mitigation efforts from this highway project will be undertaken to improve the stream in Cedar Creek Park (see pages 17-18).

permit was required and special controls will be used in this project area to remove even higher-than-normal levels of sediment during construction.

Work continued during the year on PA Route 356 in Allegheny Township.

In addition to a 1.4-mile section of this route that was improved in 2020, a new section, to the south of the last year’s work area, began to be widened.

We had a pre-construction meeting about the 46-acre disturbance for this project in May and then clearing began.

Our erosion control specialist and senior erosion control specialist inspected work at the site during the year, which included completing a stormwater pond, a stream crossing, channels, and a new culvert.

As part of the project, a large hillside was opened up to provide better site lines for drivers, and the removed earth was taken to a nearly 10-acre waste site that was governed by its own permit.

We inspected this waste site as well, which is using channels to carry water to sediment traps, which control the runoff.

Along the Pennsylvania Turnpike in Donegal, the Turnpike Commission undertook a project to cut back a slope for safety reasons and our erosion control specialist inspected the four-acre disturbance to ensure that controls were in place and functioning.

A combination of compost filter socks, a swale at the bottom of the mostly rock slope, filter bags and existing inlets all made sure that sediment and stormwater were well controlled.

Some \$97,700-worth of improvements were installed on three completed dirt, gravel and low-volume road projects in 2021 (see map on page 30).

Improvements were completed on a section of one dirt and gravel road, Sugar Run Road in Saint Clair Township, and on sections of two low-volume roads, Liberty Hill Road in Hempfield Township, and Helen Road in Salem Township.

In addition, improvement work began on a section of a second dirt and gravel road, Claycomb Road in Ligonier Township. Some \$85,500 has been allotted for this road project, which is scheduled to be completed in 2022.

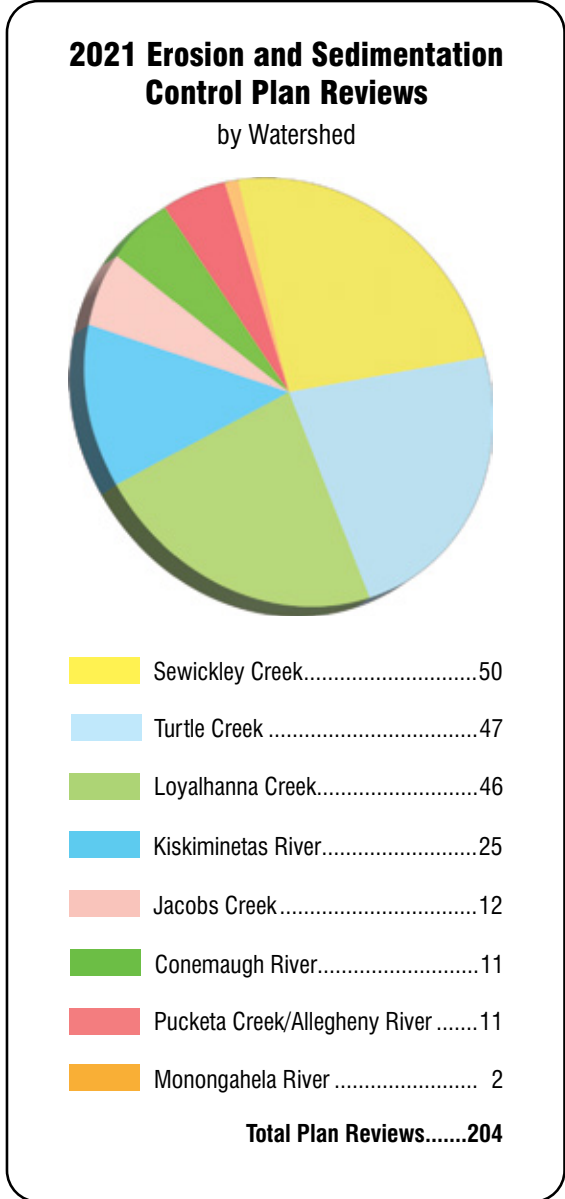
The 2021 work on **Sugar Run Road** is the third phase of improvements to be done on this road. This phase involved adding four grade breaks, four new cross pipes, and one foot of fill along a 300-foot section of road below the reservoir. Two previous phases of work on Sugar Run Road, in 2018 and 2019 combined, improved an approximately 1.5-mile stretch between the Sugar Run Dam and the access road for State Game Lands #42.

Improvements to Sugar Run Road have helped improve water quality in the reservoir, which supplies drinking water to customers in Westmoreland and Indiana counties, and in Poplar Run, a Pennsylvania Wild Trout Water that supports naturally reproducing populations of trout.

A half-mile section of Liberty Hill Road in Hempfield Township was improved with cross pipes, and sections of the nearby stream, Sewickley Creek, were stabilized.

The bulk of the work done on **a half-mile section of Helen Road in Salem Township** was adding fill — 1,000 tons of it — and underdrains. This work benefits Crabtree Creek.

Our watershed team coordinated this road-improvement work because it is important to water quality. Eroding dirt and gravel from unpaved roads, and water runoff from both unpaved and



2021 Erosion and Sedimentation Control Inspections

by Municipality

Hempfield Township.....	46
Unity Township	29
Washington Township.....	29
Ligonier Township	26
Municipality of Murrysville.....	20
Allegheny Township.....	16
New Stanton Borough.....	16
Derry Township.....	13
Penn Township.....	12
North Huntingdon Township	11
Salem Township.....	11
City of Lower Burrell.....	8
South Huntingdon Township.....	8
East Huntingdon Township.....	7
Rostraver Township.....	7
Upper Burrell Township.....	7
Loyalhanna Township.....	6
Municipalities with five inspections or fewer	43

Total Inspections..... 315



Before (left) and after (right) improvements to a one-half-mile stretch of Helen Road in Salem Township. The profile of this low-volume road, near Crabtree Creek, was raised by adding some 1,000 tons of fill. More than 1,000 feet of underdrains also were installed.

paved roads, can harm the quality of local streams. The roads targeted in this program generally run very close to streams with high-quality water.

Funding for the road-improvement projects is provided by the Pennsylvania Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program.

During the year, the state program made an allocation of \$94,400 that will be used in 2022 toward the cost of two more road-improvement projects, one on Lauffer Mine Road in Salem Township, and one on Mountain View Road in Donegal Township.

COMMERCIAL

Toward the end of the year, we reviewed and approved plans for a **large commercial building project in New Stanton**, not far from the existing UPS complex.

The large site – all 176 acres – will be disturbed in the construction process, which began at the end of the year with the removal of trees.

Design plans for the site show construction of a one-million-square-foot building as well as access and parking for delivery trucks and tractor trailers.

A nearby road, Glenn Fox Road, also is scheduled to be widened in that area.

Construction activity was unusually high in **Westmoreland County's industrial parks** during the year.

We inspected the earthmoving for and construction of two commercial buildings on pad-ready parcels in Westmoreland County's newest industrial park, Commerce Crossing at Westmoreland in Sewickley Township.

And we inspected the construction of two more new buildings on adjacent pads in another industrial park, Westmoreland Technology Park II, which is near the former Sony plant in East Huntingdon and Hempfield townships.

The four projects combined disturbed almost 69 acres of earth, which then was properly restored and stabilized.

RESIDENTIAL

Our senior erosion control specialist inspected

earthmoving that was done to create and pave roads, the first step in developing a **new, 78-acre residential development called Broadview Estates in New Stanton.**

Some 145 lots will be available in this single-family-home community, served by both Dan Ryan Builders and Maronda Homes.

A little more than 10 acres in the community of **Wimmerton in Unity Township** was being prepared for new housing during the year.

Our staff regularly inspected activity at the site to be sure controls were in place as roadways were being created, lots were being prepared, and improvements were being made to an existing stormwater pond to accommodate the additional runoff from the new building.

Just down Route 30, another housing project, **Frye Farm Estates**, got underway in 2021 after a pre-construction meeting with our staff.

One stormwater management pond was put in place during the year on this 32-acre site, which will see more activity in 2022.

SERVICES

Our technical staff participated in **23 pre-application meetings and 29 pre-construction meetings** during the year, and both numbers are showing a gradual return to normal after Covid's chilling effect on local construction projects in 2020.

Our technical and administrative staff also participated in **five meetings** in which they provided an initial review of a client's plan and National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit paperwork.

This service helps resolve any issues regarding natural resource protection, and improve a project's

ability to obtain design approvals and permits, and pass construction inspections (see next item).

A major contractor on the I-70 project **lauded the District for its pre-submission review process**, which helped them "vet out our design and ensure permit completeness" before officially submitting the paperwork for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit.

The heavy highway and heavy civil construction services contractor went on to say that, thanks to the information they gained during this early review by the District, the application they ultimately submitted was reviewed quickly and "had almost no revisions needed to gain approval."

We introduced this new, early project review service in 2018 to help those who need to secure a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit for their project. It involves a one- to two-hour meeting in which we review the applicant's permit paperwork for completeness and their plan for adequacy of erosion and stormwater controls.

Two new Conservation Partnership Agreements were established this year, with Smithton Borough and South Greensburg Borough.

A Conservation Partnership Agreement is a document that outlines how the District and the municipality or township can work together to protect and conserve the area's natural resources.

We typically revisit/renew these agreements every five years. In 2021, we renewed 18 of them.

In a special effort started in 2017, we continued to **aggressively ensure that the final inspections were done on permitted projects, and that all administrative paperwork was complete.**

Notices of Termination are documents that

formally close out projects that have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit, and they establish responsibility for ongoing maintenance of any stormwater controls.

In these documents, the design engineer of a project is required to submit and certify drawings of the project as it was designed and as it was actually built, and the person or entity responsible for maintaining the project's stormwater management practices also has to sign it.

During 2021, our staff ensured that all of these steps were complete on a record number of 61 projects.

Notices of Termination are binding legal documents and are submitted to the District and recorded at the Westmoreland County Courthouse.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

We received a \$3,000 mini grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in 2021 to help **translate our in-person gravel and dirt driveway workshop into a video and printed guide.**

Initial research for the project began at the end of the year and our goal is to have the new materials available by the spring of 2022.

Productive Farms

The State Conservation Commission performed its every-four-year evaluation of our nutrient management and manure management program in September.

The evaluation looked at a number of aspects, including compliance and education and outreach, and determined that the District staff was doing an “outstanding job” of administering the program.

The State Conservation Commission has authority for implementing Pennsylvania’s nutrient management law (Act 38), and has delegated that authority to local conservation districts.

Our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician continued to work both virtually and, as possible, in person with members of the farming community during the year.

He worked with the owners of two farms to **review voluntary nutrient management plans** for their farms: Terry Matty, managing 285 acres in South Huntingdon Township, and Dave and John Yuris, managing 199 acres in Derry Township.

Additionally, the Yurises also developed an agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan for that farm.

Both nutrient management and erosion control plans help ensure that pollutants do not find their way into nearby streams and rivers.

Eleven distinct agricultural complaints were resolved during the year, including one that was carried over from 2020.

Ten involved manure getting into nearby waterways, including one that affected Beaver Run, which is the source of drinking water for some 150,000 people in Westmoreland County. The other complaint was

related to erosion control.

Our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician worked with each of the farmers to install site-specific conservation controls, such as stabilizing the animal walkway, regrading part of the barnyard, and creating erosion control and manure management plans.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

When we originally received a grant from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts in 2019 to **create an information program for horse farm owners**, our intent was to hold the event at a local horse farm.

Covid uncertainties kept delaying that idea, and so we ultimately made the decision to produce three short videos instead, one introducing the program, one on equine manure management, and one on pasture management.

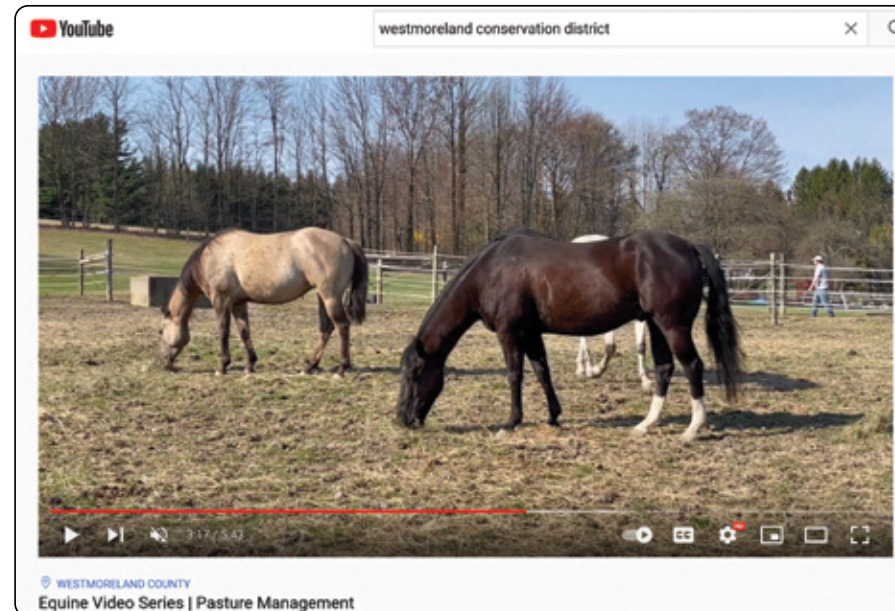
The short, 2- to 10-minute videos explain that horses are considered livestock under Pennsylvania

law, and so are subject to the same rules and regulations as other farm animals, including the need to have a plan for managing their manure so that it does not pollute area waterways. One of the videos explains how to create one of these relatively simple manure management plans.

We used a mail campaign to notify area farmers of the availability of these videos, which can be found on the District’s website and on our YouTube channel.

The **Soil Health Conference**, which had been held every year since 2004, was not held in 2021.

Since planning for this major annual event occurs the year before, and since 2020 was a year of great uncertainty regarding in-person gatherings, the committee opted to prepare a document with resource links on various ag practices and cover crops, and provide it free-of-charge through email and U.S. mail to some 120 farmers who have attended the conference in years past.



A frame from one of three new videos we produced for horse farm owners. The videos, explaining such conservation topics as manure management and pasture management, can be found on our YouTube channel.

Clean Streams

We continued to reach out to those Westmoreland County municipalities that were still working to develop and adopt a stormwater ordinance that is consistent with the technical requirements of the new Westmoreland County Integrated Water Resources Plan and Pennsylvania's state stormwater management law.

Although we originally had hoped that all 65 municipalities would have an ordinance in place by the end of 2020, the many other urgencies created by Covid understandably have slowed this work.

At the end of the year, 47 municipalities had a new ordinance in place.

We will continue to work with the remaining communities to help them draft a document that fits their specific conditions and also works with their neighboring communities to create partnerships to solve joint stormwater concerns.

The Integrated Water Resources Plan that we developed has a model ordinance that communities can use as a starting point for this work.

Late in 2021, the District received **two major foundation grants to implement needed stormwater management projects in Westmoreland County**: a \$100,000 grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation and a \$200,000 grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

Specific stormwater projects will be identified using our recent comprehensive Integrated Water Resources Plan which, among other things, identifies locations in Westmoreland County where inadequate stormwater management is causing harm to people and/or the natural resources, and the projects that could be installed to address each problem.

Projects will be site-specific and likely include a



Loyalhanna Creek in the spring – photo by Stephen Simpson

streamside buffer, infiltration parking lot, bioretention pond, and stormwater basin retrofit. Each will result in improved water-quality in the immediate area as well as in communities downstream.

In addition to the \$200,000 grant for stormwater management projects, the Richard King Mellon Foundation also awarded us **\$50,000 to study the feasibility of creating a fund that would give more ability to identify local stormwater management and water-quality improvement needs and install more projects in Westmoreland County.**

Adequate stormwater management is a key contributor to water quality and, unfortunately, it is severely lacking in many local communities. Older towns and cities, for example, often have a combined storm sewer system with smaller capacity, causing

sewage to overflow into the very creeks that supply drinking water and serve as recreation sites.

Not enough capacity to manage stormwater also creates a greater risk of flooding, with damage to property and threats to life.

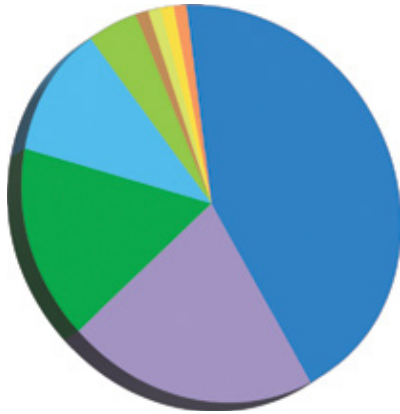
A fund for water quality/stormwater management projects would open opportunities for putting both more and more relevant stormwater management practices on the ground. It also will help ensure the sustainability of this important work.

We worked with Westmoreland County Community College to install stormwater management practices in a project to upgrade some of the school's largest student parking areas.

Infiltration swales and stormwater collection infrastructure were installed in several lots that are

2021 Stream Encroachment Permits Issued

by Category



Utility Line Stream Crossings.....	39
Temporary Road Crossings.....	19
Minor Road Crossings.....	14
Bank Rehabilitation, Bank Protection & Gravel Bar Removal.....	10
Fish Habitat Enhancement Structures.....	4
Intake and Outfall Structures.....	1
Agricultural Crossings & Ramps.....	1
Agricultural Activities.....	1
Small Docks & Boat Launching Ramps.....	1
Total Permits Issued.....	90

accessed from Armbrust Road and that sit on either side of Cherry Creek, a tributary of Sewickley Creek.

The parking areas on the northwest side of the stream also were fitted with some 20 canopy trees and a large, 900-square-foot rain garden.

These measures were completed in the summer. They will greatly benefit water quality in the Sewickley Creek Watershed.

In 2016, the District was part of an effort to stabilize some 700 feet of Cherry Creek’s streambank on the community college’s property.

With funding from PennDOT, we designed four best management practices to **control the increased volume of stormwater runoff that will result when work begins on PA Route 981 (the Laurel Valley Expressway) near Mount Pleasant High School.**

The designs for these stormwater management measures will be electronically submitted early next year to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection for review, approval, and the issuing of National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.



Our stormwater staff completed 74 reviews during the year. Each review includes a technical assessment of the adequacy and appropriateness of the proposed stormwater controls.

When approved, two of the proposed management practices — the step pool retention area and a storm basin retrofit — are scheduled to be done on the grounds around Mount Pleasant High School during 2022. The remaining two practices — the stream-bank restoration and the underground detention tanks – will be undertaken in 2023-2024.

These four practices will not only manage stormwater from the new roadway, but also runoff from the high school campus, which has never had any stormwater management. They also will eliminate the need to condemn property along the new highway to build detention ponds (also see Stable Soils, page 4).

The engineering consultant submitted a preliminary design during the year on a U.S. Department of Agriculture project to **address long-standing flooding problems in Scottsdale Borough and East Huntingdon Township.**

This “concept study” came after a series of planning meetings and site visits that numerous partners, including the District’s hydraulic engineer, participated in.

As proposed, certain aspects of this initial concept present a low cost/benefit ratio, so they are being re-examined and adjusted.

The number of **stormwater reviews we completed in 2021 was 74**, still down from the pre-pandemic normal range of 100.

We **handled 21 complaints related to stormwater** during the year.

Most of these have been caused because of poor decisions made years ago about how land was used, such as allowing someone to build a house on a floodplain, which is no longer permitted.



A number of existing basins in Hempfield Township were retrofitted during the year to improve their ability to manage stormwater. Left – Capacity is increased and the outlet structure is stabilized with some minor excavation. Right – Reducing the size of the outlet will allow the full capacity of the basin to be used during large storms.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The 2021 Engineers' Workshop, the District's annual flagship educational event, was held live, on-line over the course of four Fridays in March.

Topics included updates to both the Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 permit requirements, information on designing and building detention ponds, and guest speakers on the multi-year improvements to I-70.

Attendance was down a bit from past in-person workshops (325 unique registrations in 2021 versus the usual 350), and attendees were about evenly split in their preference of the virtual versus in-person format.

A live, on-line **municipal round table** in February

attracted representatives from almost half of Westmoreland County's municipalities (31 of the 65).

The new stormwater ordinance (see page 9) was the main topic of discussion in this format, which provided the opportunity for attendees to ask questions.

Our stormwater, erosion control, and education staff worked together to **present an education program for employees of the Municipality of Murrysville.**

The program looked at stormwater and water quality, and met the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's requirement for education in communities that have a certain population density (there are 670 communities in Pennsylvania who have these MS4 requirements).

Some 25 Murrysville employees attended the stormwater program, which focused on the best ways to manage stormwater in the course of their daily work, such as how to contain spills, clear obstructions from bridges and culverts, and remove pollutants from stormwater.

Our staff is planning to offer two more stormwater education programs for the general public in Murrysville in 2022. These programs will feature information on what stormwater is, why it needs to be managed, and things individuals can do to make a difference.

Our stormwater staff presented an **on-line slide show to individuals in Penn State's Master Watershed**

Steward program during the year.

The live program explained the basics of stormwater, water quality, and the management of runoff, and allowed time for questions and answers.

When the weather warmed, 15 of the master watershed steward candidates came to the District for a tour of the stormwater trail.

2021 Stormwater Plans Reviewed

by Municipality

Hempfield Township.....	16
Municipality of Murrysville.....	13
North Huntingdon Township	11
Rostraver Township.....	9
Mount Pleasant Township.....	7
Unity Township	7
Penn Township.....	6
Derry Township.....	5
Salem Township.....	4
South Huntingdon Township	4
Municipalities with three plans reviewed or fewer	33

Total Stormwater Plans Reviewed115

Healthy Forests

The District received its **first-ever permit request electronically**: a submission for a Chapter 105 stream crossing permit for a timber-harvesting site.

We have routinely reviewed and processed paper requests for these permits for many years, but receiving and responding in the electronic format – which is being adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection – presented a learning curve with new procedures to follow.

It also revealed the need to purchase larger computer screens so that we can adequately review the proposed project maps, some of which – like the current four-mile project area for the I-70 highway – are quite large and detailed.

Later in the year, we also received electronic requests for several Chapter 102 permits, which are needed for construction activities that disturb one or more acres.

Although the number of electronic permit applications we received in 2021 was small, the state plans to require that all applications be submitted that way by mid-2022.

We had **less direct information about active timber harvesting in the county** in 2021, due in part to a recent state policy ruling that said timber harvesters do not have to have their erosion and sediment control plans reviewed under the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law, which is a regulation the District operates under.

Reviewing timber harvesting erosion and sediment control plans was something we have done for years. It was a way for us to keep in touch with the logging community, to know where harvesting was taking place, and to ensure that proper erosion controls

were used before, during, and after tree cutting.

During 2021, we were able to get some information about logging activities in a number of other ways, including through those municipalities that have timber-harvesting ordinances, through the harvesters who applied for stream crossing permits (there were five of these during the year), and through our staff who observed harvesting sites in action when they were in the field on other matters.

Our forester **developed Forest Stewardship Plans for three landowners**. One was 119 acres in Hempfield Township; another was 92 acres in South Huntingdon Township; and the third was 93 acres in Donegal Township.

The Forest Stewardship Plan for the Hempfield Township site was spurred by a wetland mitigation project that was being done along Shrader Hollow Road, which parallels the Amos K. Hutchinson Bypass. The combination of conservation work provides additional environmental and wildlife benefits.

A Forest Stewardship Plan is a comprehensive document that looks out 10 years into the future. It divides a wooded property into stands or management units, each with its own objectives (such as enhancing the habitat for wildlife or increasing timber productivity) and then makes recommendations, sets priorities, and outlines the steps for action.

At the request of seven woodlot owners in the county, our forester **prepared a brief management plan for each of their properties**, offering general guidance on how to best manage their specific wooded stand in the near term.

One of these was for a long-time farmer in Hempfield Township who had harvested his 90 wooded acres about 15 or 20 years ago, and wanted to know if it was time to do it again.



Over the past two years, three landowners who live along Stony Run in Derry Township have stabilized nearly eight acres along the stream by planting a variety of vegetation. Their efforts will help improve water quality.

These seven woodlot owners represent a combined total of approximately 550 acres of trees in the county.

A record-high number of nine different property owners contacted our forester during the year to **assess and document the trees growing on their properties**. This assessment is required to apply for the state's Clean and Green program, which grants a reduction in property tax in exchange for keeping the land as forest.

Under Clean and Green, forest owners can harvest trees from their property but they can't develop it.

Ultimately, seven of the property owners who contacted us completed a Clean and Green application

in 2021. Their properties range in size from 262 acres in Sewickley Township to nearly 12 acres in the Municipality of Murrysville and, combined, they added some 630 acres to those in Westmoreland County already enrolled in Clean and Green.

An eighth Westmoreland County resident who has 150 acres in Penn Township began the enrollment process in 2021 and is scheduled to complete it in 2022.

Our forester is working with Bushy Run Battlefield to **restore a recently acquired 36-acre farm field to a wooded condition**.

The field is adjacent to this 213-acre historic site that commemorates the turning point in what is

known as Pontiac's War.

The owners of the historic site had already worked with our stormwater staff and plan to install two basins, one on either side of the main road in front of the property.

Six calls for **advice about selling timber** came in during the year and our forester provided this information, answered questions, and explained the benefits of involving a consulting forester in the process.

He also provided each person with a brochure of "Timber Harvesting Dos and Don'ts" created by Pennsylvania's Bureau of Forestry.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The **Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association** delayed its first meeting of 2021 until the fall and then offered three more before the year concluded.

Meeting topics included Westmoreland County's water resources and carbon capture programs.

The Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association encourages good management of woodlands for aesthetics, timber, water quality and control, wildlife habitat, plant propagation, and recreation.

Our forester attended **two on-line education events**: the Forest Health Insect and Disease Briefing hosted by Penn State University and the Pennsylvania Forestry Association's Virtual Symposium.

Topics covered at the first event included treating oak wilt, the American chestnut, and pollinators and pesticides. The second looked at using drones in forestry, creating story maps, and techniques for individual tree identification in forest inventories.

Sustainable Communities

On the last business day of 2020, the Pennsylvania Growing Greener environmental grant program announced the new projects it would fund, and the District was highly successful in capturing a number of these awards.

In fact, **we began 2021 with the promise of more than \$924,000 of funding for a yearly record of eight new Growing Greener projects throughout the county.** Here is a list of the locations and proposed projects.

- Brinkerton — conduct a variety of maintenance work at this mine water treatment site (see following detailed item)
- Derry Borough — plant trees and install a sediment forebay, permeable paving, and a rain garden at the municipal water authority
- Irwin — stabilize streambanks of Brush Creek and create infiltration parking at Irwin Park
- Lowber — research a long-term solution to the problem of storing the iron oxide removed from the water-treatment ponds (see page 15)
- Manor Borough — install rain gardens, permeable paving, and landscaping on a one-acre site that includes the borough offices, library, and parking lot
- Municipality of Murrysville — reduce historic flooding problems for some businesses along Route 22 and the Westmoreland Heritage Trail that runs behind them
- Municipality of Murrysville — implement the second phase of work to reduce stormwater runoff impacting Haymaker Run, a stream with high water quality (see page 15)

- Penn Township/Municipality of Murrysville — stabilize streambanks of Turtle Creek and a bridge abutment (see page 15)

Despite the large number of projects and new Covid-created challenges in obtaining supplies and scheduling work, we were able to begin work on all of these new projects during the year and also to complete two of them – the second phase of the project at the First Presbyterian Church in Murrysville to reduce stormwater impact on Haymaker Run, and the project to stabilization of the streambanks of Turtle Creek and a bridge abutment of the trail that crosses it. **These two projects are detailed in the following items, as are two more (Brinkerton and Lowber) of the eight Growing Greener projects** (also see “Above and Beyond,” pages 27-29).

Much-needed maintenance got under way during the year at Brinkerton, an eight-acre treatment site designed to remove iron oxide from the largest underground mine discharge in the Sewickley Creek

Watershed (2,000-4,000 gallons of water per minute).

With little maintenance since it was built in the mid-2000s, the site had become significantly overgrown. Twenty-foot-tall trees were growing around the equipment, for instance, and the access road was impassible. So the first thing we did was hire a professional company to treat the woody vegetation and the invasive plants, including Japanese knotweed, that had moved in.

With the site cleared now, we can move on to the next phases of the project in 2022 — laying pipe to pump out the iron oxide sludge that has built up in the settling ponds, and testing the aerators that had been installed close to the point(s) where the water is discharged from the underground mine.

The theory behind using aerators is that by artificially saturating the water with oxygen almost as soon as it comes out of the mine, iron oxide will form almost immediately. When the aerators aren't used, the iron doesn't begin to drop out of the water until days later, when it gets close to the end of its travels



Over the years, the Brinkerton mine-discharge treatment site had become significantly overgrown (left). As a first step in a multi-year maintenance effort, the site was cleared of the woody vegetation and invasive plants, including Japanese knotweed, that had moved in (right).



At the Lowber mine-discharge treatment site, an excavator is used to stir the iron sludge to speed its drying. Iron oxide is a pollutant that drops out of the mine water as it flows through the site's holding ponds. Periodically, it is removed from the ponds and stored on-site until it is dry enough to truck away.

through the wetland.

The work at Brinkerton is funded by a \$277,238 grant from Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program.

Like Brinkerton, Lowber is another site in the Sewickley Creek Watershed that uses a series of holding ponds to treat water from underground coal mines.

The ponds do their job very well. But the overall operation is hampered because **the site isn't large enough to physically store all the iron oxide that the ponds collect.**

The iron oxide comes out of the ponds as sludge, and it has to sit for up to two years until it is dry enough to be trucked away.

In 2021, we cut open three fabric containers of sludge — about 950 tons — that had been drying on the site for about a year. In that time, a lot of the water had seeped out and the sludge had taken on more of a “cake mix” consistency. But it was still is not dry enough to transport.

This is the crux of the operating dilemma at

Lowber. While a load of sludge is drying for close to two years, sludge building up in the treatment ponds can't be removed because there is no room to store and dry it. So the ponds are not cleaned out as often as they should be, and the capacity of the treatment area is reduced, perhaps by as much as 50%.

This storage problem is the subject of an in-depth study we began in 2021 in conjunction with the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association and Hedin Environmental, and funded by a Growing Greener grant of \$151,900.

One proposed solution is to fill in one of the site's treatment ponds, reducing the number of ponds from six to five, and to use the area where the sixth pond was to store iron oxide.

Work has been ongoing for the past several years to **improve the management of stormwater at the First Presbyterian Church in Murrysville**, which sits at the top of a steep slope above Haymaker Run,

a stream with high water quality.

In 2021, we used a \$29,800 Growing Greener grant to add to that stormwater management by installing some 60 feet of new pipe under the church parking lot, replacing pipe that had rusted and was no longer doing a good job of carrying water to the new retention basin we previously installed at the bottom of the slope.

We also widened an existing channel, and replaced an underground pipe that had deformed during installation with an above-ground, rock-lined channel leading to the detention pond. By now conveying this water above-ground instead of below, there will be fewer maintenance issues and any fixes that are needed can be done without the need to excavate.

Our watershed specialist oversaw a project that used a Growing Greener grant of \$35,000 to **stabilize a bridge abutment** that carries the Westmoreland Heritage Trail over Turtle Creek.

The force of the stream, over time, had caused erosion behind a portion of this abutment.

A large mud sill was installed in the stream to protect its banks from accelerated erosion and to direct the flow of the stream away from the abutment.

A mud sill is a series of 10-to 20-foot-long logs that are set into trenches, and built up Lincoln-log style, perpendicular to the stream flow. They are anchored, filled with rock and covered with dirt to create a natural-looking repair. An added benefit is that the opening underneath the mud sill provides habitat for fish.

The mud sill can be seen from the bridge, which is between mile markers 20 and 20-1/4 on the Westmoreland Heritage Trail.

The eight new Growing Greener grants awarded at the end of 2020 were not the only ones we were



Ribbon-cutting for the improved boat launch at Fifth Street in Seward. Pictured (l-r): Kelly Horrell, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy; Todd Vetere, St. Clair Township; Chelsea Walker, Westmoreland Conservation District; Rick Bloom, Conemaugh Valley Conservancy; and Chuck Steiner, St. Clair Township.

managing in 2021.

Because grant award projects often take several years to complete, we also had several projects under way that had been funded by Growing Greener prior to 2020.

These included a number of municipal stormwater basin retrofits in Hempfield Township, and a joint project with the Allegheny County Conservation District to manage stormwater runoff in Turtle Creek, a stream that flows in both counties (see following items).

Both of these projects were completed in 2021.

A multi-year project to improve stormwater management in one of Westmoreland County's most developed townships, Hempfield, concluded during the year with the **retrofitting of 13 stormwater basins**.

Originally, we had planned to upgrade 10 basins this year but actual construction expenditures were such that we were able to do three more.

Previously, in 2020, we had improved underground stormwater detention near Greensburg-Salem's Maxwell Elementary School and upgraded one stormwater basin.

All this work was done under a \$104,200 grant

from Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program and a \$10,000 investment by Hempfield Township.

Stormwater management practices were installed at the Monroeville Library in the last phase of a joint project we undertook several years ago with the Allegheny County Conservation District to improve water quality in the Turtle Creek Watershed, which falls in both Allegheny and Westmoreland counties.

At the library, we installed permeable pavement, a rain garden, several drains to eliminate water at the library entrance, and reverse angle parking to make the area safer for pedestrians.

Just like in the early days of conservation when one farmer would tell another about the benefits he realized from practices like plowing along the contour, an individual our watershed program manager worked with in 2020 told his neighbors about his positive experience with stabilizing a stream on his property by planting trees and shrubs.

Consequently, in 2021, we had the opportunity to **work with two additional landowners to install more plant buffers along Stony Run in Derry Township**, a stream whose water quality is designated as impaired by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

More than a dozen volunteers from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Penn State Master Naturalist and Master Watershed Steward programs, and First Energy helped to plant nearly 1,000 trees and shrubs on a total of nearly six acres over the course of three days in April.

The plants were selected because they were "multifunctional," meaning that they not only offered the conservation value of erosion control but also provided berries and nuts for birds, animals, and humans; and pollen for insects and bees (one of the homeowners has beehives).

Over the past two years, nearly eight acres along

Stony Run have been vegetated. Total cost for this work – some \$12,000 – was provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts’ Multifunctional Buffer Subgrant Program.

We continued to provide support to area conservancy, trail, and watershed groups in 2021.

Conemaugh Valley Conservancy

The District helped this organization design, bid, and oversee construction of **an improved boat launch area** to the Conemaugh River.

Previously, access to the river at Fifth Street in Seward was steep and primitive, making it difficult for kayakers and canoeists.

We designed a new, 500-foot-long switchback trail that provides a more level grade to the river and oversaw its construction as well as the construction of a small parking area.

The conservancy received funding for this project from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and the Community Foundations for the Alleghenies.

Turtle Creek Watershed Association

Our watershed specialist continued her support of the Turtle Creek Watershed Association, serving on the board and **helping to coordinate the annual fundraising rubber duck race**, in which people paid \$5 to float a plastic duck in an unnamed tributary of Tinkers Run that runs along the edge of Irwin Park in Irwin Borough.

As with so many things, Covid uncertainties delayed the event until September and the number of businesses willing and able to sign on as sponsors was down. But participant numbers continued to be in the range of 100, and the event raised just about the same amount of money as it had in previous

years (\$3,300).

Proceeds were split evenly between the watershed association and Irwin Borough, whose Irwin Park was the site of the duck launch, educational information, food and ice cream trucks, face painting, and a fire truck that visitors could observe up close.

Kiskiminetas Watershed Association

This watershed association got its **first website** during the year, thanks to our watershed specialist and members of the association’s board.

The new website offers all the customary information, and includes a map that shows the location of waterfalls, boat launches, and other areas of interest along the river.

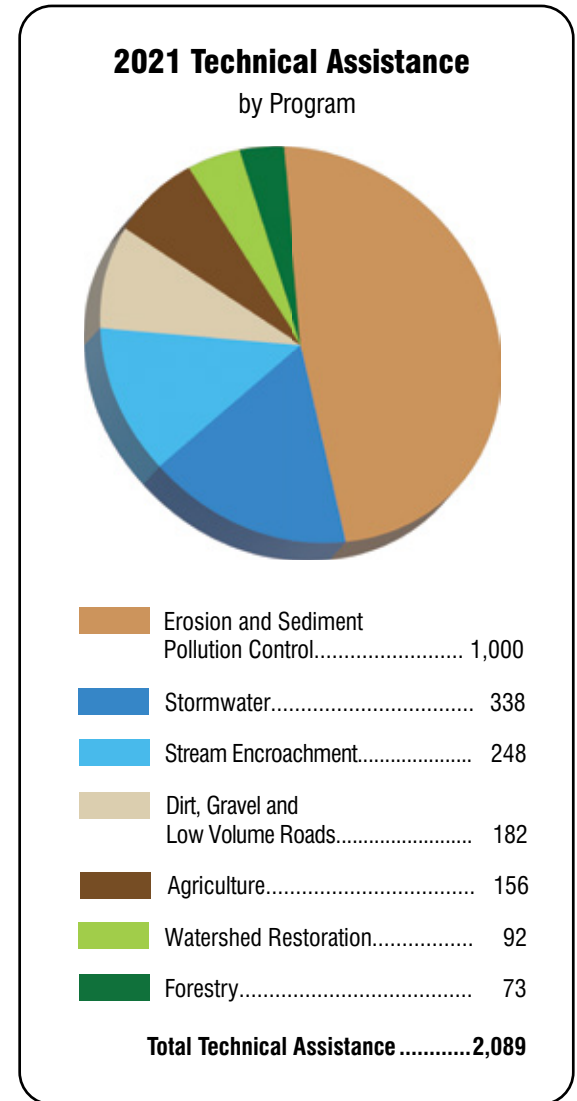
Since it is still fairly new, the website may not immediately come up in a Google search, but typing in kiskiwatershed.wordpress.com will get visitors there.

Cedar Creek in its eponymous park is the focus of an upcoming mitigation project we are undertaking in conjunction with PennDOT.

Streams or wetlands can be impacted to some



A large mudsill was installed to stabilize this area of streambank along Turtle Creek, and reduce the undercutting of a bridge abutment that carries the Westmoreland Heritage Trail over the stream (background).



degree during road construction and PennDOT offsets this impact by improving a stream or wetland somewhere else in the same watershed.

In this case, major work on Interstate 70 (see Stable Soils, page 4) affecting the Youghiogheny River Watershed is going to be mitigated by making improvements along Cedar Creek. Work will include stabilizing and restoring about 900 feet of the stream's banks, including a bend that has severely eroded very close to a well-used walking trail.

Our staff designed the mitigation project and prepared the bid package for this project in 2021 and work is scheduled to begin in mid-2022.

This is the fifth project we have partnered with PennDOT on. The first was an improvement along Cherry Creek in 2016.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

There continued to be so much uncertainty with Covid, particularly in schools, that the **Westmoreland County Envirothon was held in April as a virtual event.**

Five area high schools participated: Burrell, Derry Area, Franklin Regional, Norwin, and Southmoreland. Southmoreland had two teams and each of the other schools had one.

The student teams were given a series of natural resource questions provided by the Pennsylvania Envirothon. Teachers at the participating schools monitored the students as they took these Google quizzes, and their answers were sent to the state Envirothon headquarters to be graded.

First place in our county competition went to Norwin, second place to Southmoreland Team 1, and third place to Southmoreland Team 2.

The state Envirothon also was a virtual event this



Taking first place in the 2021 Envirothon was Norwin High School. Team members included: front – Teacher/Team Advisor Joyce Muchoney; back, l-r: Raveena Navalgund, Gabriella Conley, Emilie Horton, Lillie Jarosz, and Nicolas Markovina.

year and was held in May.

We offered a new outreach in 2021 — **a virtual career day for students in the schools that participated in the Envirothon** (see previous item).

Because the high school students participating in the Envirothon are interested in natural resources and will most likely soon be making some decisions about the next steps in their lives, we thought they might be interested in meeting some of the District's technical staff and learning what they do and how they prepared to do it.

The hour-long live event provided time for questions, including questions about the AmeriCorps program,

which our current watershed specialist used as a way to first gain employment with the District.

During the year, we began gathering information on 20 of the most commonly installed erosion- and sediment-control best-management practices, with the idea of **creating a field guide for contractors.**

With pictures and descriptions from actual installations, this guide will help contractors know with more certainty if practices are installed correctly.

We plan to have the guide completed and a workshop held (Covid conditions permitting) in 2022, thanks to a \$2,600 Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Education grant.

Scientific Monitoring

Our new engineer-in-training and watershed specialist undertook a **review of each of the 15 monitoring sites the District installed** over the past several years and found that some were no longer reporting data.

They physically removed two of the defective water-level sensors from area streams, cleaned, repaired, and replaced them.

The data from these monitors is regularly shared with area watershed associations and others whose work benefits from the information. During the year, the staff began working with a web-design



A water-level sensor and a rain gauge were installed near Four Mile Run in a partnership with Saint Vincent College.



A team of conservation agency and local school representatives conducted a survey of the fish population in Cedar Creek. They recorded both the total number of fish in this portion of the stream in Cedar Creek Park, as well as the variety of fish species present. This data is one way to measure the health of the stream.

The fish survey will be duplicated after the work to stabilize some of the creek's streambanks is completed (see pages 17-18). The results of the two surveys will be compared.

consultant to develop a way to share the monitoring data with the broader public.

We partnered with a professor at Saint Vincent College to **install a new sensor in a stream near the school**. The professor receives the data from the sensor and uses it as a teaching tool in his classroom.

He and his peers also used some of the District's other monitoring data to prepare a report on area water quality, which he shared with us.

At the end of the year, we helped the Turtle Creek Watershed Association apply to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for a grant to **purchase and**

install a second stream monitor in the Turtle Creek Watershed.

If the request is successful, we will work with the watershed association in 2022 to install this monitor and begin to collect its data.

On the mitigation projects we do with PennDOT, we continue to visit these sites after construction to monitor their effectiveness every year for five or ten years, depending on the type of project (stream or wetland).

In 2021, we **concluded five years of actively monitoring our first-ever PennDOT partnership project**, which stabilized some 750 feet of streambanks

along Cherry Creek on the campus of Westmoreland County Community College.

We also continued to monitor two stream sites — one along Sherrick Run and one on a section of Jacobs Creek — and a wetland near Acme Dam.

From early May through early October, our West Nile virus program technician collected **mosquito samples from 60 unique sites** throughout the county. These samples were forwarded to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to be tested for presence of the virus.

Only three of these many samples were shown to be positive in 2021 and, for the third straight year, no humans in Westmoreland County tested positive for West Nile virus.

We also **monitored the presence of blacklegged ticks**, whose nymphs are commonly known as deer ticks.

Alternating between two fixed sites one week and two random sites the next week, our West Nile virus program technician collected samples of nymphs and adults from mid-April through August.

Like the mosquito samples, these samples were sent to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to be tested for Lyme disease as well as for two other diseases that these insects can carry, *Anaplasma phagocytophilum* and Bayesian micro tissues.

Only three of the many samples collected tested positive, and only for Lyme disease.

We received 16 calls regarding troublesome mosquito situations during the year, including unmaintained pools, a pond, and reports of biting mosquitos, all of which we responded to and

resolved.

There also were a large number of calls regarding dead birds, a situation that was affecting Pennsylvania and at least nine other states during 2021.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has not determined a definitive cause for this sickness and mortality among the wild bird population, but has tested for and not found any evidence of West Nile virus.



A sample of black-legged ticks collected during our monitoring program. They are sent to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to be tested for Lyme and other diseases.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Our West Nile virus program technician gave a **presentation on our monitoring program** to representatives from Scottdale and Manor boroughs in April.

She also set up an information booth at the

Standard Flower Show, held at the library and on the diamond in Ligonier in July, and at the Westmoreland County Fair in August.

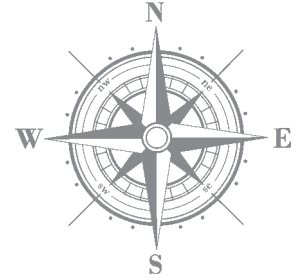
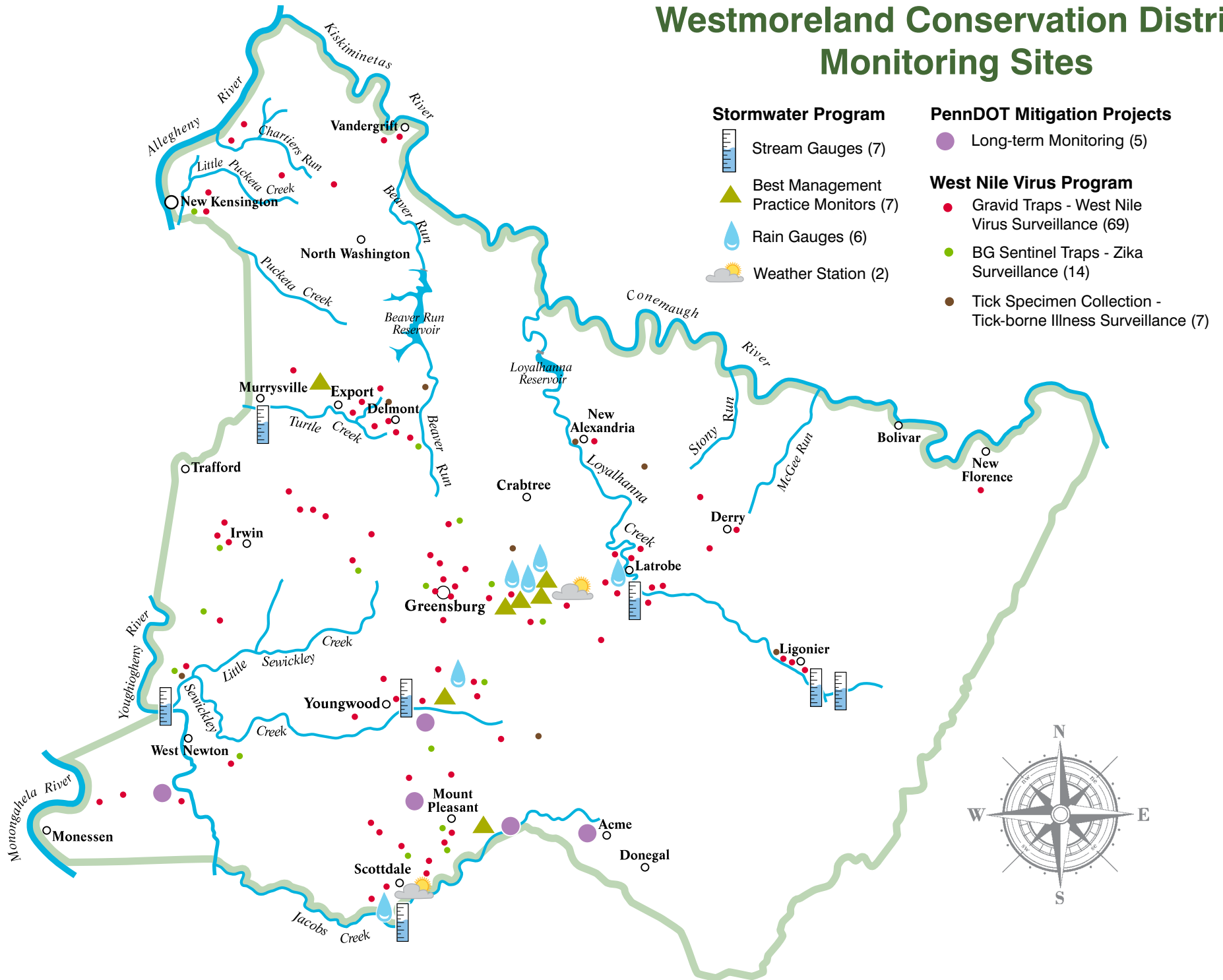
For the fourth year in a row, we partnered with Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling to **host an event where the public could turn in used and discarded vehicle tires**.

These tires are a major breeding ground for mosquitoes because they collect and hold rain water.

The response to this year's collection event was the highest ever, with 821 tires turned in for recycling (the previous high was 650 in 2019). In all, more than 2,400 tires have been collected since this annual event began in 2018.

We sent our **annual letter to municipalities** reminding them that they can help control the mosquito population by adopting an ordinance requiring the elimination of stagnant water.

Westmoreland Conservation District Monitoring Sites



ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Revenue began to slowly improve from the losses during the 2020 pandemic, but still continued to present a challenge.

To reduce costs, we continued the rolling staff furloughs started in 2020, and we eliminated the full-time conservation program technologist position. Annual salary increases were eliminated across the board.

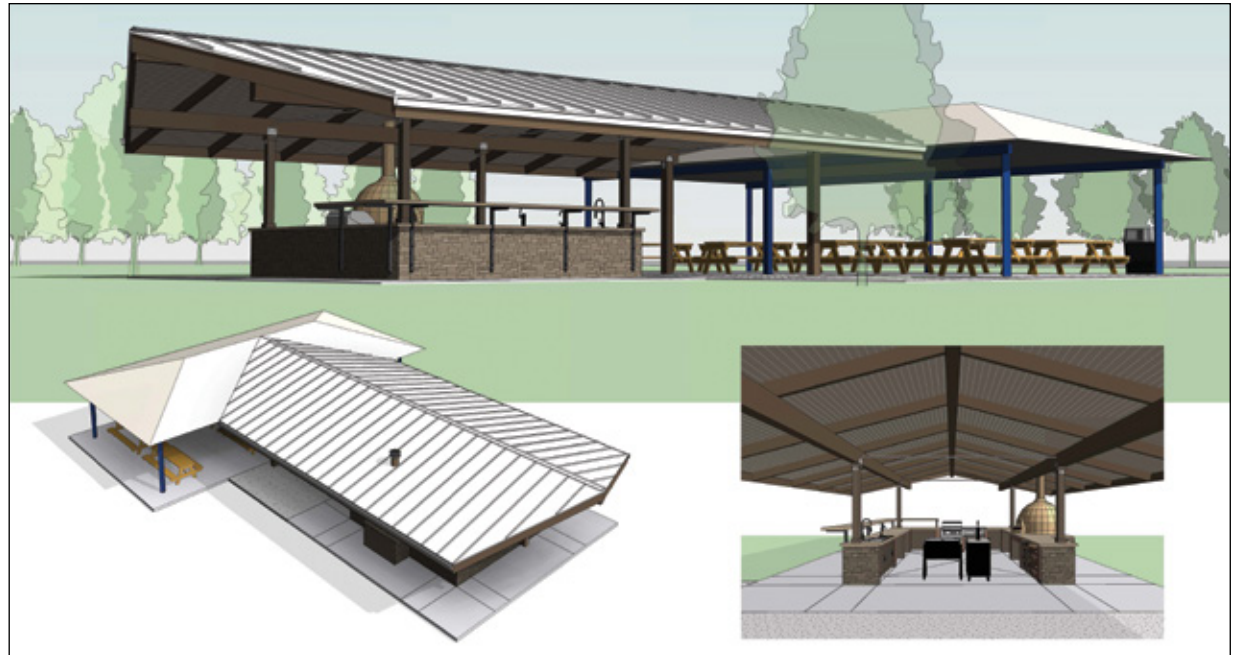
Funding for travel and in-person workshops was zeroed out for the second year in a row. And we suspended our annual staff participation in the Leadership Westmoreland program.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding that helped balance out last year's losses was not offered in 2021.

We were grateful that the **annual budget allocation we received from the Westmoreland County Commissioners held steady** at the same level as it was in 2020, and that area construction projects started to pick up again during the year because the revenue we receive from review fees for those projects increased along with their numbers (revenue from review fees dropped by some \$60,000 in 2020 due to the pandemic).

Fee income from timber-harvesting activities decreased by nearly two-thirds compared to 2020, due largely to a state ruling last year that harvesters no longer have to have their erosion and sediment control plans reviewed.

Likewise, a recent ruling that the state, rather than county conservation districts, will now be reviewing stream encroachment permits related to multi-county energy-transmission pipelines will limit our ability



Architect's rendering of proposed additions to the outdoor kitchen.

to generate revenue from this activity.

Corporate sponsorships held steady in 2021, bringing in some \$14,500. Peoples Natural Gas was again our major corporate sponsor, with its support of our annual awards ceremony (see page 23).

We **launched a major fundraising campaign** in the fall called *"In Good Stead,"* meaning secure and in a position of strength because, taken together, all of its planned investments will ensure that the Westmoreland Conservation District will continue to be a model conservation organization, providing technical expertise, building community partnerships, inspiring others to adopt the conservation

ethic, promoting effective conservation projects, and offering outstanding conservation programs.

The majority of the funds we hope to raise in this campaign will be directed to enhancing the District's core programs, specifically stormwater management and forestry, so that we can put even more of these needed conservation best management practices in place in our county.

Additional funds raised will address the District's capacity, technology, and physical campus needs.

By the end of this first year, we had raised a total of \$654,350 in monetary donations from two major foundations and several individual donors.

\$50,000 of this initial income will be used to study the possible creation of a loan/grant fund that would

encourage more stormwater management and water-quality projects to be put in place throughout the county.

In its **every-three-year review of our Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program** last year, the State Conservation Commission disputed our auditor's recommendation for how administrative and education expenses were accounted for and subsequently reduced our 2021-2022 fiscal year allocation from the program significantly.

From allocations of more than \$400,000 in each fiscal year since 2018, our 2021 allocation was reduced to \$184,000.

This will severely curtail how much work we can do on these special category roads, which are especially important to be well maintained because they run near and across streams that have high water quality.

New security was installed in our barn headquarters.

When we eliminated the receptionist position at the end of 2020, we no longer were immediately aware when someone entered the main floor of our building. And, although we did not experience any problems because of this situation, we recognized that it was prudent to do a better job of controlling and monitoring access.

The new security system does this by keeping the inside entrance doors secured. Visitors can open the exterior doors to enter the building and our main vestibule. But to go farther – such as into the meeting room or to a staff member's office – they have to push a call button and one of our staff has to come and physically open the door.

The entrance on the lower level of our building has always been for staff only. It now requires a fob for access. There is no call button.

The security system has a backup battery in the event of power outages. In 2022, we hope to augment it with several cameras.

We were able to **enhance the use of our new outdoor kitchen** with the purchase of 10 recycled-material picnic tables, six recycled-material garbage cans, and two recycling containers.

All came in handy during several warm-season events we hosted there, including a monthly 'bash' for all Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce members and our annual awards celebration (see following item).

At the end of the year, we received a \$300,000 grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, about half of which will be used to put the outdoor kitchen under roof, to physically connect it to the adjacent Eric Oesterling Pavilion (which was built several years ago by the Penn State Master Gardeners), to run a water line to it, and to add a storage shed to house some of the kitchen's equipment when not in use.

The Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation grant also provides funds to replace the 22-year-old wooden siding on the barn and to add a moisture-control barrier.

The Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce joined us as a guest of honor at our annual awards celebration in October, as it was selected to receive the 2021 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partner award.

The Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce and the Westmoreland Conservation District can trace their partnership back at least 45 years, to 1976, the year when J. Roy Houston served as the chair of both the Chamber and Conservation District.

It has been a long and positive partnership, resulting in many important projects that ben-

efit our community, including the development of "Reimagining Our Westmoreland," the county's current comprehensive plan for a more livable and prosperous community.

For the past four years, members of the District's technical staff have participated in the Chamber's Leadership Westmoreland program, a nine-month learning experience where they were introduced to leaders in key elements of our community, including businesses, health care providers, social service agencies, government organizations, educational institutions, and so on.

And, with roughly 1,000 members and an across-the-county reach, the Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce has been instrumental in helping the District promote its conservation ethic with non-traditional audiences, to form new and lasting partnerships, and to promote the use of more conservation best-management practices.

The John Starr Family, Starr Valley Farm also was feted at our annual awards celebration as the 2021 Conservation Farmer of the Year.

John, Margi, their five children, and John's father, Dick, have all been instrumental in turning a fallow, nutrient-depleted, overgrown farm into a model conservation operation that now produces some of the most sought-after grass-fed beef in the Greater Pittsburgh area.

It has taken the Starrs years of work and investment to get to this point, including implementing a number of conservation practices that help keep the animals healthy and the farm sustainable.

They regularly invest in soil health, and divided their organic grass pasture into paddocks for rotational grazing.

The Starrs tapped built wells throughout the property, making spring developments that supply eight water troughs with continuous, quality drinking water for the animals.



The Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce was selected to receive this year's J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award. Accepting the award was (left) Dan Galbraith, Chamber director, and Chad Amond, Chamber president and CEO. Presenting the award were (right) Ron Rohall, District board chairman, and Emil Bove, District board secretary.



The John Starr Family, Starr Valley Farms, was named this year's Conservation Farmer of the Year. Receiving the award from (right) Kim Miller, District board treasurer, were Margi Starr and John Starr.

They installed two stream crossings and thousands of feet of streambank fencing, both designed keep the animals out of the streams so that water stays clean.

Around the barn they created a heavy use area and added several animal walkways into the pasture so that the concentrated weight of the animals in these places will not create excessive soil erosion.

The Starrs have a Conservation Plan, a Prescribed Grazing Plan, and a Manure Management Plan for their farm. John served on the board of Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council for more than a decade.

After several waves of Covid and nearly a year of being largely unoccupied, our headquarters facility was in need of a deep cleaning.

We contracted with a professional cleaning company to do this work on all three levels, especially

targeting areas not reached in routine cleaning, such as high on the barn's walls, on the ceilings, and on the top of suspended lights. Windows were cleaned and carpets were shampooed.

The deep cleaning was done on weekends and in the evenings in January so not to disturb our staff, who were just beginning to return to spending more time in the office.

BOARD, ASSOCIATES & PARTNERS

Reappointed to our **board of directors** for his second one-year term was **Douglas Chew**, Westmoreland County Commissioner.

Jay Bell, associate director since 2019, was appointed to the board as a farmer director to fill the position formerly held by Conrad Donovan.

Jay is a Pennsylvania certified horticulturalist and founder/operations director of Bella Terra

Vineyards in Hunker.

Also after Conrad Donovan's passing, the board voted on a **new slate of officers**: Ronald Rohall, chair; Chuck Duritsa, vice chair; Kim Miller, treasurer; and Emil Bove, secretary.

Reappointed as associate directors were: Reid Crosby, John Hardiman, Larry Larese, John Lohr, William Mihalco, Robert Pore, John Turack, and Keith Walters.

Associate directors are non-voting members of our board.

Westmoreland Community Action became our newest nominating organization in 2021.

The countywide nonprofit organization, which provides services and assistance to help eliminate

poverty, has a number of associations with conservation and natural resources and offers the potential for new partnerships.

One of Westmoreland Community Action's social enterprises, American Architectural Salvage, is located on the Coal and Coke Trail in Mount Pleasant and that business has been supportive of the trail effort.

Also, much of the organization's work is in environmental justice communities – including Jeannette, Monessen, and New Kensington – which the District has targeted for conservation projects.

New employees in the United States Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service office are Kaycee Szymanski, soil conservationist, and Curtis Swiantek, soil conservation technician.

STAFF

2021 saw perhaps **the greatest number of staff challenges and changes our organization has experienced in a single year.**

In addition to continuing the rolling furloughs for active employees, two staff members retired, one staff position was eliminated, one staff member resigned, four staff members received promotions, and two new staff members were hired.

Our nutrient management specialist, **Dan Griffith**, and landscape architect/stormwater technician, **Kathy Hamilton**, both retired after serving with the District for 22 and 16 years respectively.

The funding shortfall forced us to make the decision to eliminate the conservation program technologist position.

We subsequently interviewed several local consulting firms and entered into a basic contract with **NETtrak of Irwin** to support us as needed with

the website portion of this former position's work.

Our West Nile virus program technician resigned to take a position with another organization.

Christie Sebek was promoted to technical programs administrator, and all three members of the watershed staff also were promoted.

Rob Cronauer was named co-assistant district manager and projects coordinator; **Chelsea Walker** was promoted to watershed program manager; and **Alyssa Davis** was promoted to watershed specialist.

We hired a stormwater technician/engineer-in-training, **Hank Bradish**, and an AmeriCorps member, **Kylie Schultz**.

Hank is a 2020 graduate of Geneva College with a bachelor's degree in environmental engineering.

He is an advocate of sustainability and stewardship, and has lived those principles in action in his family's South Greensburg glass recycling business.

Hank interned with the District during the summers of 2018 and 2019, obtaining experience in conducting bioassessments, surveying, and working with stormwater infrastructure.

New AmeriCorps member Kylie Schultz joined us in late November.

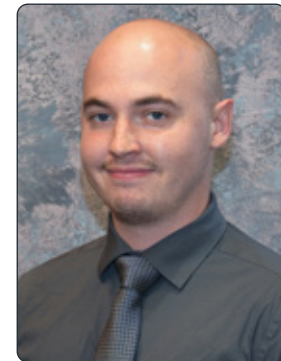
We were able to fill this position thanks to the federal government waiving the 50% cost-share requirement organizations usually have to provide toward its salary. For the current program year, which continues until August 2022, the government is providing the full cost of the position's salary.

Kylie will be working with our watershed team on a number of administrative and field projects.

She is the second full-time AmeriCorps member to join the District. The first, Alyssa Davis, worked with us for two years under that program before being officially hired as watershed technician in



Jay Bell
Board Member



Hank Bradish
Stormwater Technician/Engineer-in-training



Kylie Schultz
AmeriCorps Member

Six members of our technical and administrative staff participated in 20 hours of on-line training during the year regarding electronic permitting, which the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is moving toward as a paperless way for engineers, developers, and others to submit plans that need Chapter 102 or Chapter 105 permits.

Under this coming new procedure, our clients will

upload all the documents that they normally submit to us in hard copy when they need these permits for a project.

Our technical staff will review the documents electronically and respond through the Greenport system.

The Department of Environmental Protection set a goal of transitioning to the paperless system for Chapter 105 general permits by mid 2022.

Seven of our staff members continued their continuing education through the on-line Clean Water Academy, which has resources compiled by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection that are specific to the work we do.

The seven took a combined total of 68 different classes, ranging from “Introductory Water Quality Standards” to “Compliance and Enforcement.”

All classes conclude with a test that the viewer has to pass to receive credit for attending.

Our hydraulic engineer is representing the District on the “Southwestern Pennsylvania Water Network,” a group that seeks to improve water quality in the upper Ohio River Basin by unifying the efforts of the various water-related groups and organizations in a five-county region.

With representatives from conservation districts, local municipalities, water and sewer authorities, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, local watershed and trail groups, and others, the group is seeking to connect resources and opportunities so that significant gains are made in improving local water quality.

After establishing a framework, the group plans to move next into selecting a host organization and a local coordinator for this effort, which is being funded by the Heinz Foundation and facilitated by the Water

Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Our visual communication specialist continued to learn more about the variety of tools and resources available for producing video communications.

With Covid continuing to limit in-person events, the District is increasingly turning to the video format for many of its communications and programs.

By using resources such as Envato Elements, which provides a library of music, video clips, stock images and templates at a reasonable monthly rate, we have been able to produce professional-quality videos on a budget.

After 20 years of outdoor service, the interpretive signs on our 16-station stormwater trail were replaced with new materials.

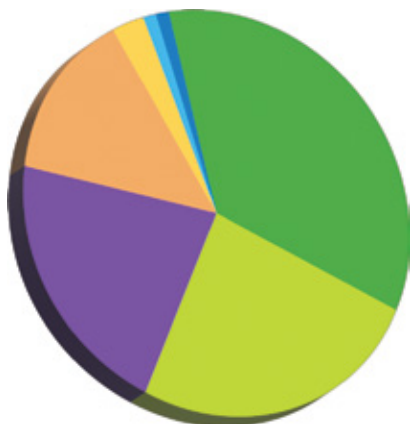
Our visual communications specialist also worked with the Penn State Master Gardener coordinator to develop individual vinyl magnetic signs for the various gardens on our campus as well as a new monument sign for the overall garden site.

Our visual communication specialist helped produce two issues of a newsletter for the 5 Star Trail and develop a logo for a state group, the Pennsylvania Abandoned Mine Land Campaign.



2021 Westmoreland Conservation District Funding

by Source



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.....	35%
Westmoreland County.....	25%
Review Fees.....	21%
Grant Awards.....	14%
Grant Administration.....	3%
Workshop Fees.....	1%
Sponsorships.....	1%

Above and Beyond Projects

To do conservation projects that are needed in Westmoreland County, but that are “above and beyond” our funded, mandated duties, we seek out nontraditional sources of funding.

This mainly involves applying for competitive grants from the state and federal governments, and from foundations and organizations. How successful we are in winning these grants is a major factor in determining how many “above and beyond” conservation projects we can do.*

In addition to competitive grants, we sometimes also receive nontraditional funding from mitigation funds, consulting fees, or contracts for “above and beyond” projects.

In 2021, we had a **total of \$2,328,100 from all sources of nontraditional funding in-hand, and were using it toward 20 “above and beyond” conservation projects** in our county. These projects are listed on this and the following pages.**

Competitive grants funded 18 of the 20 “above and beyond” projects shown in this section. The source of those grant funds and the dollar amount of the award are listed with each project.

Two projects – the Laurel Valley Expressway stormwater management and the Cedar Creek/Cedar Creek Park streambank stabilization – are not funded with competitive grants, but with mitigation money from PennDOT.

* Most of these grants are awarded directly to the District. Some are awarded to a partner agency(-ies) that we work with on the particular project. (See Partner Projects, next page.)

** Projects that had a specific, physical location in 2021 (in this case, projects numbered 1 through 15) also are shown on the map on page 29. Some of the “above and beyond” projects are multi-year efforts.

(not numbered on map)

Feasibility Study Stormwater Management/Water Quality Loan/Grant Fund

Countywide
\$50,000 Richard King Mellon
Foundation
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Grant received.

Community Specific Stormwater Management Improving Water Quality; Reducing Flooding

Various municipalities
\$100,000 Katherine Mabis McKenna
Foundation
\$200,000 Richard King Mellon
Foundation
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Grants received.

Field Guide and Workshop for Contractors Education Project

\$2,600 Department of Environmental
Protection Environmental Education
Mini-grant
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Information gathering underway.

Guide and Workshop on Maintaining Unpaved Driveways Education Project

\$3,000 Department of Environmental
Protection Environmental Education
Mini-grant
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Information gathering underway.

Video Workshop for Horse Farmers Education Project

\$2,500 Pennsylvania Association of
Conservation Districts' Nonpoint
Source Pollution Prevention
Educational Mini-grant
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Filming underway.

**1 Laurel Valley Expressway
Stormwater Management**
Mount Pleasant Township
\$485,800 PennDOT mitigation funding
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed designs on four best
management practices.

**2 Derry Municipal Water Authority
Stormwater Management
Sediment Forebay, Permeable
Paving, Rain Garden**
Derry Borough
\$113,500 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/20:
Finalizing contract documents with
the Pennsylvania Department of
Environmental Protection.

**3 Manor Municipal
Stormwater Management
Rain Gardens, Permeable Paving,
Landscaping**
Manor Borough
\$133,500 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Finalizing contract documents with
the Pennsylvania Department of
Environmental Protection.

Above and Beyond Projects

4 Hempfield Municipal Stormwater Management
Basin Retrofits and Underground Detention Improvement

Hempfield Township
\$104,200 Growing Greener
\$ 10,000 Hempfield Township
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Basin retrofits completed (underground detention improvement was completed in 2020).

5 First Presbyterian Church of Murrysville Stormwater Management
Replacing Pipe, Widening Channel

Municipality of Murrysville
\$ 30,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.
(Note: Over the past few years, other conservation measures were implemented on this project, thanks in part to a \$103,000 grant from Growing Greener.)

6 Turtle Creek Watershed Stormwater Management
Retrofitting Municipal Stormwater Basins; Installing Stormwater Best Management Practices

Various Municipalities in Allegheny and Westmoreland county
Partnership project with Allegheny County Conservation District
\$283,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.

7 Brush Creek/Irwin Park
Reducing Sediment and Pollution

Irwin Borough
\$86,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Landowner agreements secured; design underway.

8 Cedar Creek/Cedar Creek Park
Streambank Stabilization

Rostraver Township
\$136,000 PennDOT mitigation funding
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Project designed and bid package prepared.

9 Turtle Creek
Streambank/Bridge Abutment Stabilization

Penn Township
\$35,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.

10 Westmoreland Heritage Trail/Local Businesses
Reducing Flooding

Municipality of Murrysville
\$97,600 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Obtaining landowner agreements.

11 Lowber Treatment System
Iron Oxide Storage

Lowber
\$152,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
In-depth study began to find a solution

to storing the iron-oxide sludge.
(In 2020, two grants, from Growing Greener and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, were used to remove 1,000 tons of iron oxide and almost as much sludge.)

12 Brinkerton Treatment System
Iron Oxide Recovery

Brinkerton
\$277,000 Growing Greener
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Site clearing complete.

13 Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park
Invasive Species Treatment

Hempfield Township
\$ 3,800 Dominion grant
Project status as of 12/31/21:
On hold due to COVID-19 restrictions.

PARTNER PROJECTS

14 Stony Run Buffer Plantings
Three Properties Edged with Trees and Shrubs

Derry Township
Partnership project with Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and volunteers
\$12,000 Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Multifunctional Buffer Subgrant Program
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.

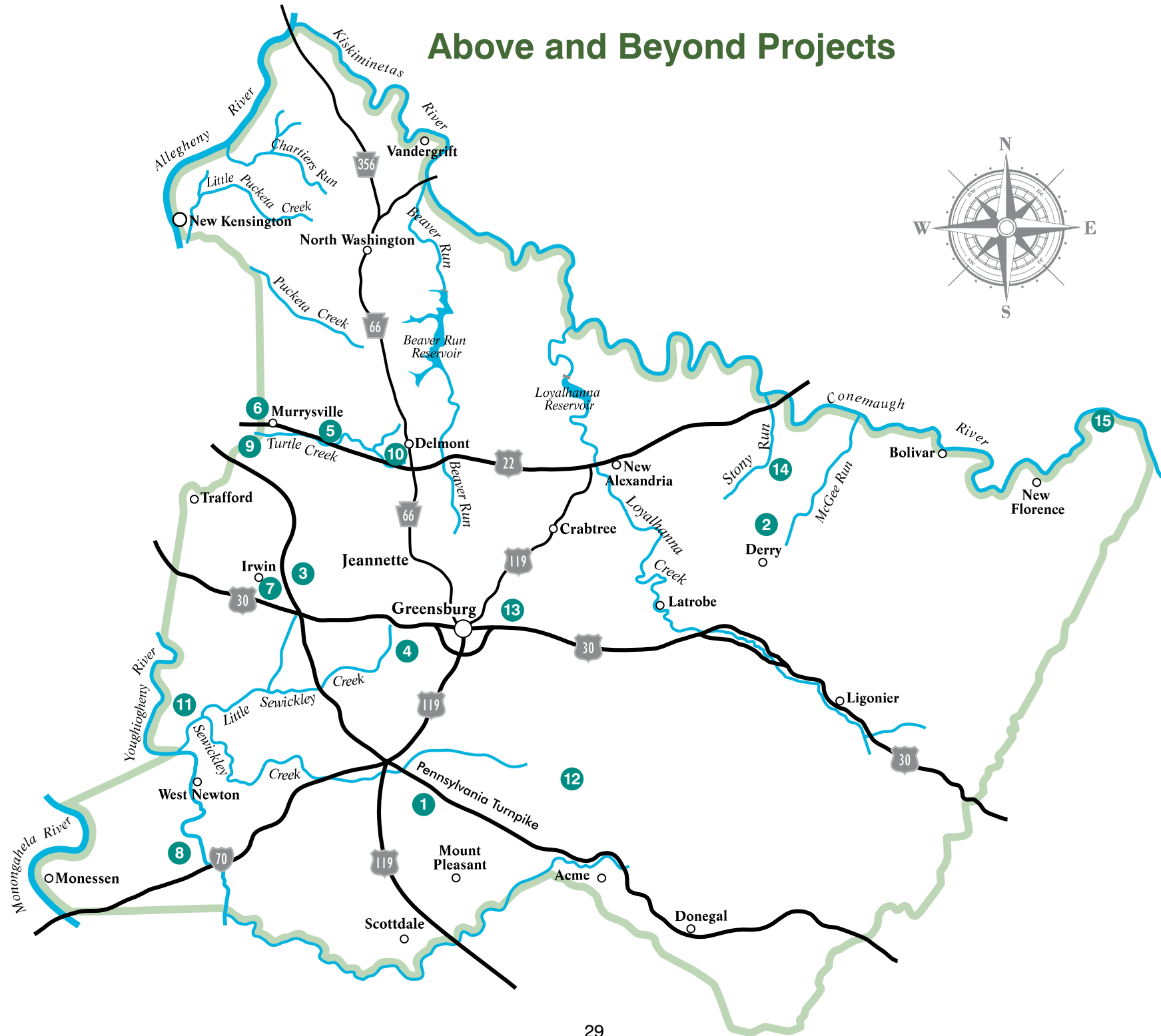
15 Seward Boat Launch
Improved Trail; New Parking Area

Seward
Partnership project with Conemaugh Valley Conservancy
\$5,700 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission
\$4,000 Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
\$ 900 Community Foundation for the Alleghenies
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.

Because of the large number of "Above and Beyond" grant projects we had in process in 2021, and because of the difficulties in obtaining project materials and scheduling work that have come about since Covid, we made the decision not to apply for any additional Growing Greener grants during 2021.

We will revisit this decision in 2022, and we anticipate that we will apply again for funding at that time.

Above and Beyond Projects



2021 Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Projects

These projects are put in place under a standing District program.

They are funded annually by the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program.

The Pennsylvania legislature established this program to eliminate stream pollution caused by water runoff and sediment from roads.

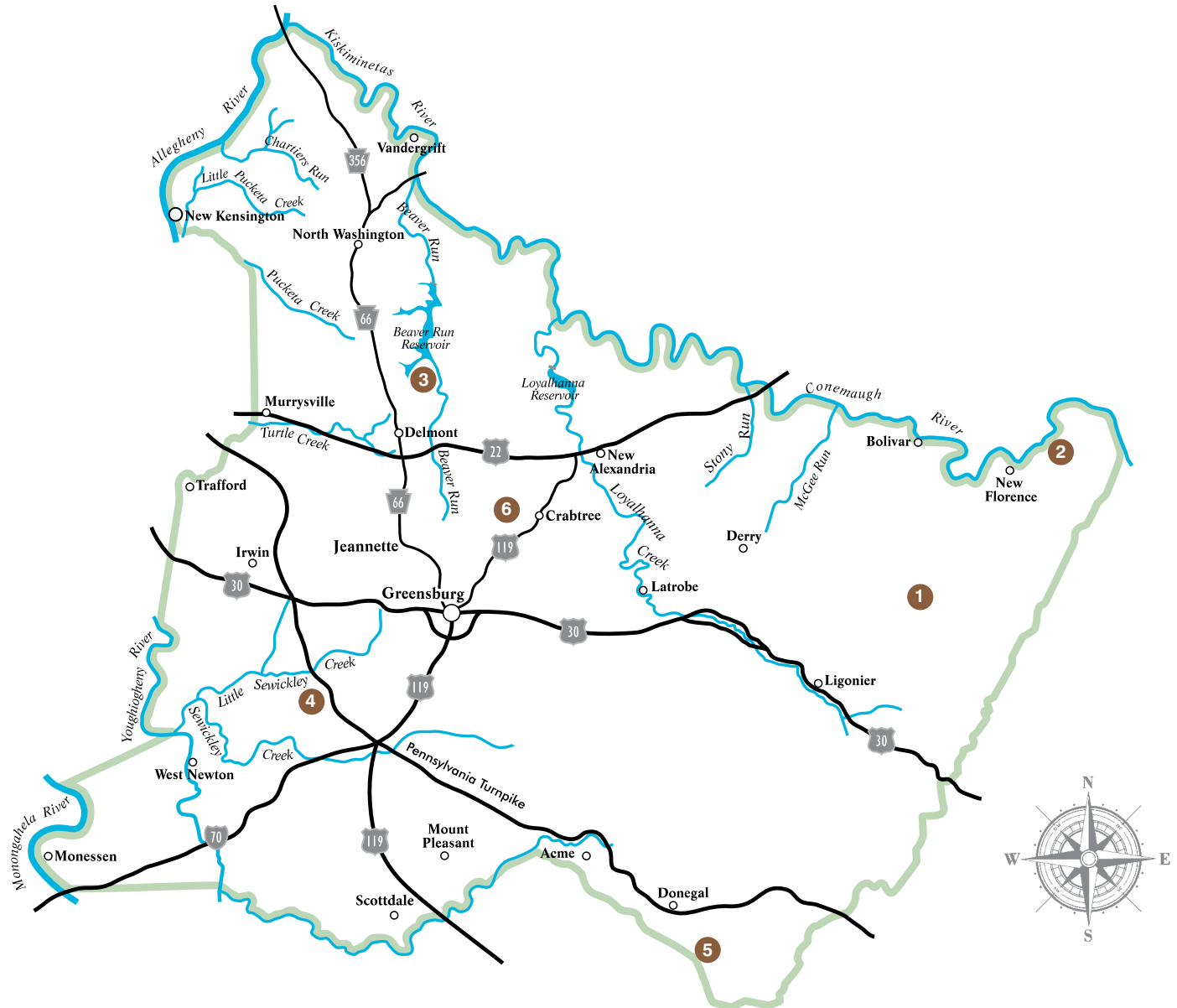
Money for this program is allocated to conservation districts by the State Conservation Commission, based on the number of miles of dirt, gravel and low-volume roads in a given county.

DIRT AND GRAVEL ROADS

- 1 Claycomb Road**
Ligonier Township
Loyalhanna Creek Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Funds allocated; work begun.
- 2 Sugar Run Road**
Saint Clair Township
Conemaugh River Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.

LOW VOLUME ROADS

- 3 Lauffer Mine Road**
Salem Township
Beaver Run Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Funds allocated.
- 4 Liberty Hill Road**
Hempfield Township
Sewickley Creek Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.
- 5 Mountain View Road**
Donegal Township
Indian Creek Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Funds allocated.
- 6 Helen Road**
Salem Township
Loyalhanna Creek Watershed
Project status as of 12/31/21:
Completed.



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Financial Statement

Concise Statement of Financial Position

Combined Funds - December 31, 2021

ASSETS

Cash	\$ 1,444,780
Grants Receivable.....	\$ 183,133
Capital Assets	\$ 52,663
Prepaid Expenses.....	\$ 9,249
Total.....	\$ 1,689,825

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities	\$ 242,350
Net Assets	\$ 1,353,512
Long Term Liabilities	\$ 93,963
Total.....	\$ 1,689,825

Concise Statement of Activities

Combined Funds - Year Ending - December 31, 2021

SUPPORT

Westmoreland County	\$ 671,685
State Grants	\$ 806,734
Administrative Services.....	\$ 86,133
Consulting, Planning & Fees	\$ 499,975
Room Rental/Interest	\$ 3,034
Unclassified Operating Revenues	\$ 15,615
Grants & Contributions	\$ 565,905
Special Projects/Intergovernmental.....	\$ 18,985
Total.....	\$ 2,668,066

EXPENDITURES

General Conservation	\$ 1,546,823
Specific Projects	\$ 679,175
Debt of Service Payment	\$ 4,042
Other	\$ 89,898
Total.....	\$ 2,319,938
Excess of Revenue.....	\$ 348,128
Proceeds from Sale of Capital Assets ...	\$ 210
Net Change in Fund Balance.....	\$ 348,338
Fund Balance - Beginning	\$ 1,051,039
Fund Balance - End	\$ 1,399,377



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Assistant District Manager/Project Coordinator

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Fiscal Administrator

Sandra Dzendzel
Director of Administration

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Mark Jackson
Visual Communications Specialist

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Hydraulic Engineer

Hank Bradish
Stormwater Program Technician/Engineer-in-Training

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Senior Erosion Control Specialist

Samantha Dull
Erosion Control Specialist

Chelsea Walker
Watershed Program Manager

Chelsea Gross
*Nutrient Management Specialist/
Agricultural Conservation Technician*

Vacant
*West Nile Virus Program Technician/
Conservation Technician*

Tammy Woodward
Technical Programs Secretary

Kylie Schultz
AmeriCorps Member

Educational Staff

Janette Novak-Mitchell
Education Program Coordinator

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

These committees are made up of community volunteers, District board members, associate board members, and staff members. We very much appreciate all the volunteers who provide their professional expertise and give their time to help develop and sustain the District's programs.

AGRICULTURE

William Doney
Chelsea Gross
Dustin Heeter
Kim Edward Miller
Gregory Phillips
Jason Pontillo
Robert Pore
Tony Quadro
Laurel Rush
Paul Sarver
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Fred Slezak
Curtis Swiantek
Kaycee Szymanski

AGRICULTURE COMPLIANCE

William Doney
Chelsea Gross
Anthony Quadro
Paul Sarver
Fred Slezak

**Thank you to our state legislators
and county commissioners,
who allocate funding every year for the District.**

COMMUNICATIONS

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Karen Jurkovic
Janette Novak-Mitchell
Gregory Phillips

**DIRT, GRAVEL AND LOW
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Curtis Swiantek
Chelsea Walker
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Chelsea Walker
Tammy Woodward

State funding supports many of the core conservation programs we offer, including programs delegated to us by the state in agriculture, post-construction stormwater management, erosion and sedimentation control, and dirt, gravel, and low volume roads.

County funding has been instrumental in helping us attract significant additional dollars for “above and beyond” conservation improvements throughout Westmoreland County (see pages 27 - 29).



**Pennsylvania State Legislators
Representing Westmoreland County**

- Rep. Bob Brooks**
- Rep. Eric Davanzo**
- Rep. Carrie Lewis DelRosso**
- Rep. George Dunbar**
- Rep. Eric Nelson**
- Rep. Leslie Rossi**
- Rep. Jason Silvis**
- Rep. Ryan Warner**
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**Westmoreland County
Commissioners**



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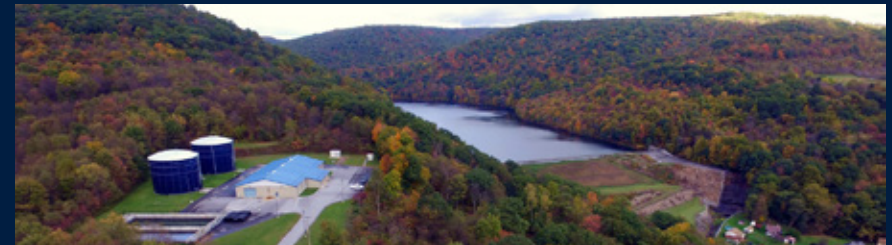
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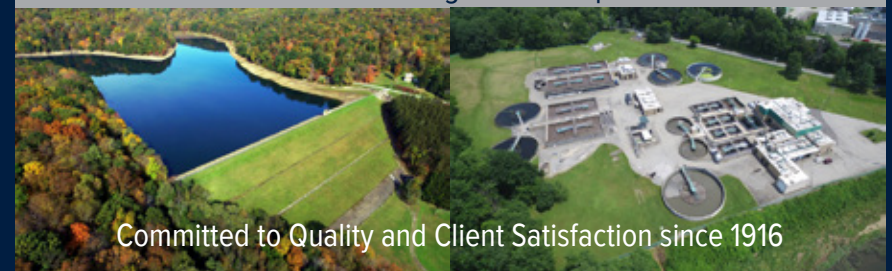


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