

ON SOLID GROUND

2014 Annual Report



On the Cover

Our technical staff pose with some of the tools of their trade, including two new natural gas vehicles donated in part by Peoples Natural Gas Company, that help them promote conservation on farms, forests, and commercial and residential development sites throughout Westmoreland County.

(l-r): Stormwater management staff Matt Zambelli, Jim Pillsbury, Kathy Hamilton; forestry staff Tony Quadro; watershed and dirt and gravel road staff Chelsea Walker and Rob Cronauer; agriculture staff Dan Griffith; erosion and sediment control staff Jessica Thornton and Chris Droste.

The pictured location in Bovard is a former abandoned coal-mining site that the current landowner and the conservation district recently restored to health and the potential for reuse.

The work was done under Pennsylvania's Landowner Reclamation Program, which allows people to reclaim abandoned mine lands on their property for the amount of forfeited bonds.



Greg Phillips and Ron Rohall at Linn Run State Park

Dear Friend of Conservation:

Conservation activity is at an all-time high in Westmoreland County, as you'll see in the following pages.

We set new records in 2014 in our core conservation services, including erosion inspections and pre-application meetings.

And the number of "above and beyond" conservation projects we're managing is truly amazing – 12 major projects were under way in 2014, involving work ranging from conservation improvements on farms in the Beaver Run Watershed to retrofitting stormwater basins in Murrysville, Lower Burrell, and Penn Township.

This conservation work is considered "above and beyond" because it involves projects that are needed, but that had no funding to make them happen. So the District voluntarily applied for competitive grants and sought out other, nontraditional sources of funding for these projects. And we were very successful – bringing a total of some \$1.9 million into our county and getting these projects under way (see pages 2 and 3).

A key reason we've been able to attract additional funding and accomplish so much is because we operate from a position of relative financial security. Funding from Westmoreland County and the state

provide the core resources for our operations and we've added to that a strategic mix of support from private businesses, individuals, and foundations; as well as fees for service.

All of this has put our organization on solid financial ground, and allowed us to have the staff and the resources to make conservation a major influence in our region.

And to make sure that conservation continues to be a strong regional player well into the future, we launched a fundraising campaign in late 2014 to acquire the tools, planning, scientific support, partnerships, and functional capacity the District will need to continue to operate at high levels.

This "Sustaining Conservation" campaign seeks to raise \$1.2 million over two years to realize the majority and most immediate of those needs. Longer term, we hope to raise an additional one-half million dollars so that all the identified needs can be met.

You will be hearing more about this campaign over the next year or so. And as you have stood with us so many times in the past, we hope you will join with us once again to keep conservation strong.



Ronald J. Rohall
Chairman



Gregory M. Phillips
District Manager/CEO

“Above and Beyond” Conservation Projects

To be able to do conservation projects that are needed in our county, but that are “above and beyond” our funded, mandated duties, we seek out nontraditional sources of funding and apply for competitive grants from the state and federal government, and from foundations and organizations.

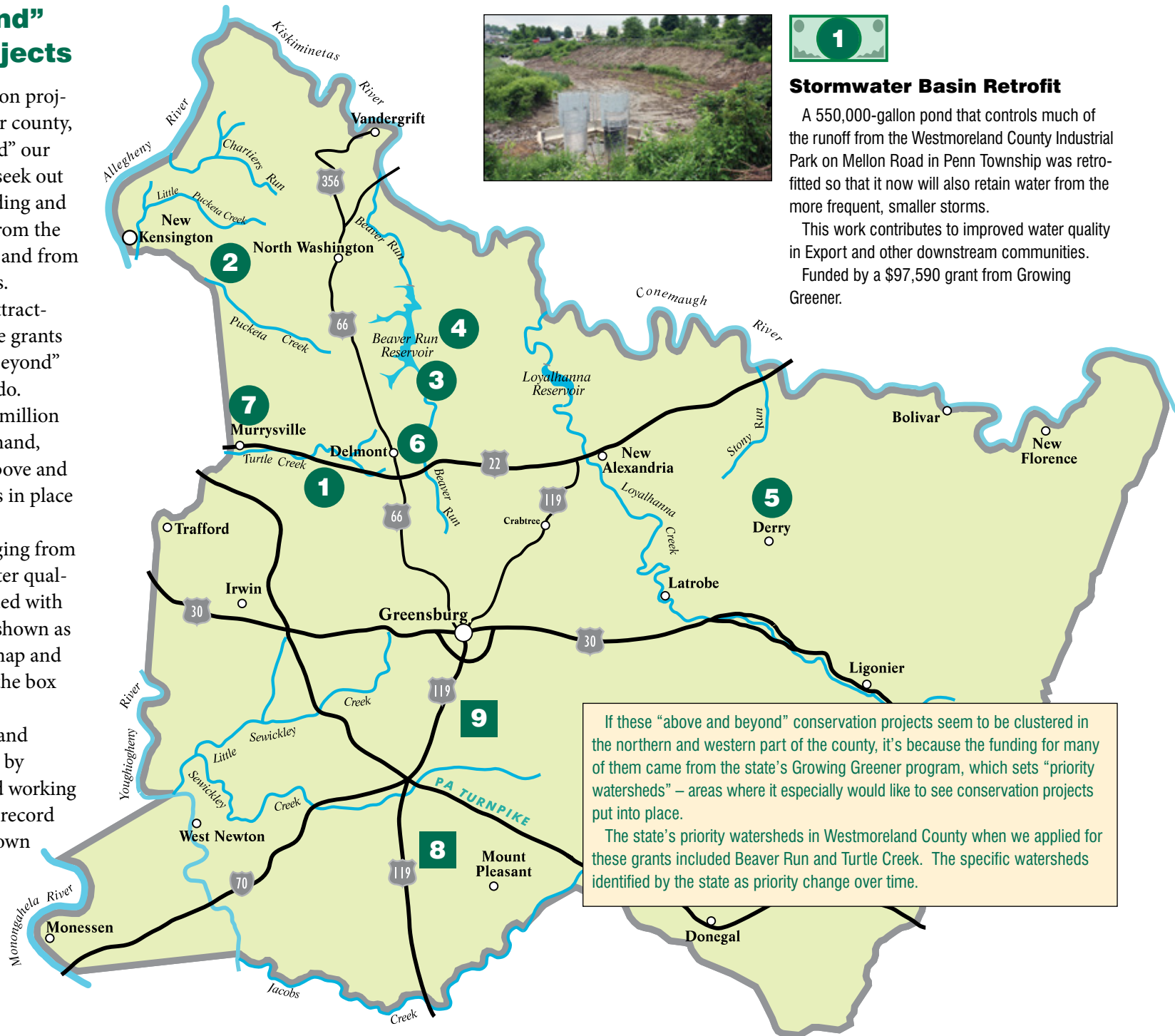
How successful we are in attracting funding and winning these grants determines what “above and beyond” conservation projects we can do.

In 2014, we had some \$1.9 million in nontraditional funding in-hand, and were using it to put 12 “above and beyond” conservation projects in place in our county.

Ten of these projects – ranging from education and outreach to water quality improvements – were funded with competitive grants. They are shown as numbers 1 through 7 on the map and as numbers 10 through 12 in the box on page 3.

The remaining two “above and beyond” projects were funded by PennDOT because of our good working relationship and proven track record with that agency. They are shown as numbers eight and nine on the map.

Some of the 12 “above and beyond” conservation projects span multiple years.





Municipal Stormwater Basin Retrofits

Three older municipal-owned stormwater basins in Lower Burrell were upgraded in 2014, and four older, municipal-owned stormwater basins in Penn Township were identified for upgrading in 2015.

Well-functioning stormwater basins help reduce the risk of flooding.

Funded by a \$128,000 grant from Growing Greener.

Funded by a \$129,945 grant from Growing Greener.



Beaver Run Road Improvement

About one mile of this private, interior road around Beaver Run Reservoir was improved to reduce erosion.

Reducing the amount of sediment entering the reservoir helps improve water quality for the 50,000 homes and businesses that get their water from this reservoir.

Funded by a \$70,000 grant from Growing Greener.



McGee Run Watershed Conservation Improvements

A variety of conservation measures will be installed on farms, in forests, and in developed areas throughout this watershed in Derry Borough and Derry Township.

Water quality in the 27-square-mile McGee Run Watershed and communities downstream will benefit.

Funded by a \$300,000 grant from the Commonwealth Financing Authority and a \$20,000 grant from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.



More Municipal Stormwater Basin Retrofits

Ten additional municipal-owned basins in Penn Township and the Municipality of Murrysville will be retrofitted over the next several years.

Well-functioning stormwater basins help reduce the risk of flooding.

Funded by a \$280,000 grant from Growing Greener.



Sherrick Run Improvements

A section of Sherrick Run in Mount Pleasant Township will be enhanced with micropools and plantings for habitat and wildlife. This work will help protect water quality in this stream, which is part of the Jacobs Creek Watershed.

Funded by a \$150,000 grant from PennDOT to mitigate the environmental impact of highway improvement projects in our region.



Westmoreland County Community College Cherry Creek

Several best management practices – including riparian buffer enhancements and stormwater infiltration – will be installed on the grounds of Westmoreland County Community College over the next three years.

This conservation work will enhance the water quality of Cherry Creek, which is a tributary of Sewickley Creek.

Funded by a \$231,000 grant from PennDOT to mitigate the environmental impact of highway improvement projects in our region.



Best Management Practices on Farms in Beaver Run Watershed

A variety of conservation best management practices will be installed on four farms in the Beaver Run Watershed.

Design work for the customized installations is under way. Practices to be installed include dry stack manure storage, heavy use areas, stream-bank fencing, and animal watering systems.

This work will help the viability of these local farms as well as improving water quality for residents in communities including Delmont and Washington and Salem townships.



Stormwater Management on Delmont Farm

Grassy swales will be installed at Shields Farm, a working farm as well as a recreation and festival site, which is uphill from the residential area of Delmont.

This work will significantly reduce erosion and flooding issues and improve water quality in Beaver Run Reservoir, the source of drinking water for 50,000 Westmoreland County homes and businesses.

Funded by a \$110,971 grant from Growing Greener.

EDUCATION

This work helps to raise awareness of good conservation practices with a variety of audiences throughout the county.



Headwaters of Turtle Creek Tour

This half-day bus tour for the public and news media gave a first-hand look at nonpoint source pollution in this watershed, which includes Export and Murrysville, and the conservation practices that are in place to reduce it.

Funded by a \$2,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.



Southwestern PA's Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater

This handy booklet shows homeowners how to assess their property to determine how much stormwater is generated, where it flows, and how to manage it.

When people implement stormwater management measures, there is less demand on the storm sewer system and so less need to raise taxes for new infrastructure.

The booklet also is available as a PDF on the District's website, www.wcdpa.com.

Funded by a \$4,700 grant from the Water Resources Education Network.



Best Management Practice Portfolio

This coming addition to the District's website will provide technical data on some of the many conservation best management practices that are in place throughout Westmoreland County to manage stormwater; restore watersheds; support agriculture; and improve dirt, gravel, and low-volume roads.

Funded by a \$3,000 environmental education grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.



Our erosion and sediment control staff – Senior Erosion Control Specialist Chris Droste and Erosion Control Specialist Jessica Thornton – both review plans submitted by developers to ensure that conservation measures are included and adequate for the site...as well as visit the construction sites to make sure controls are working as they should.

STABLE SOILS

One of the **largest pipeline projects to impact our county** was completed during the year.

Our senior erosion control specialist made some 15 trips to field inspect the work at the **Mariner East Pipeline**, a long, linear project that cut a 75-foot-wide right-of-way 50 miles from Houston Station in Washington County to Delmont in our county.

He ensured that the Westmoreland County worksites incorporated such conservation measures as diversions and water bars to take rain and snow melt off the disturbed soil at regular intervals and discharge it to stable areas.

In all, the project disturbed 386 acres in Westmoreland County in Jeannette, Murrysville, Penn Borough, and Rostraver, Salem, Sewickley, Hempfield, and South Huntingdon townships.

The pipeline began transporting ethane and propane from Western Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale region in November. It carries it east across our state, to a terminal near Philadelphia. About

half of the ethane and propane it transports will be exported to Europe.

A **pipeline replacement project** by Dominion also required a large number of regular field inspections during the year by our senior erosion control specialist.

The work, which began in 2013, involves replacing well injection lines in Jeannette and in Hempfield, Penn, and Salem townships.

This multi-year project ultimately will disturb about 48 acres of land due to clearing, excavation, regrading, and the installation of stormwater best management practices. The work is scheduled to be complete in 2015.

Commercial building activity was brisk during the year, with projects ranging from a new doctor's office building along Route 30 in Hempfield Township to a new Shop 'n Save supermarket and plaza in Youngwood.

Residential activity also has been picking up, with a community of villas started in North Huntingdon and another phase started in a housing plan in Manor.

In all, 122 different sites – ranging from a few to 40 acres of disturbance – were inspected during the year.

This resulted in a **record number of inspections by our erosion and sediment control staff – 330** – the most since 2010, when new regulations went into effect.

We also set a **new record in 2014 for the most-ever pre-application meetings.**

Brisk Development Drives Record Number of Site Inspections

Commercial and residential development activity increased in 2014, as 122 different sites were inspected during the year.

This resulted in a record number of inspections by our erosion and sediment control staff – 330 – the most since 2010, when new regulations went into effect.

Some of the development sites that were completed or nearly so include the following.

Route 819/Route 119 interchange, North Huntingdon

Westmoreland Air Park, Unity Township

Artisan Plastic Surgery, Hempfield Township

East Pittsburgh Street Shopping Center, Hempfield Township

Kenny Ross Subaru, North Huntingdon

Sanitary Sewer Project, Lower Burrell

Loyalhanna Care Center, Derry Township

Express Scripts, North Huntingdon

Steel City Raceway, Salem Township

Shop 'n Save Plaza, Youngwood

These are voluntary meetings, initiated by the engineers, in which they meet with our technical and administrative staff to make sure that all the items needed to file an application for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit are included and complete.

Examples of the items that have to be included in a filing are a Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory Study, topographic maps of the proposed development site, and a soils map marked with the site of development.

These meetings save time because, when a filing is complete, it can move quickly to a technical review by our staff.

A new process has enhanced the technical review of individual permits under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

These permits are required when work is planned that could impact a high-quality or exceptional-value stream and, because of the sensitive nature of these waterways, the applications have to be reviewed not only by the District, but by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as well.

Rather than doing these reviews sequentially as we have in the past, we initiated a new process in 2014 in which we invite the DEP staff to join us in doing the review together.

The process is working well and the enhanced efficiency meant we were able to issue a record number of individual permits during the year, 14.



Millwood Road is the longest dirt and gravel road in Westmoreland County. It runs for some four miles across Chestnut Ridge between Derry and Fairfield townships.

As part of the \$300,000 state grant we received in

late 2013 to improve the water quality in the McGee Run Watershed, **we made improvements to about one-half mile of Millwood Road** in the fall, installing culverts and grade-breaks.

This work, which will reduce the amount of sediment getting into the nearby stream, was the first of many best management practices scheduled to be installed in this watershed over the next several years.



With funding from a Growing Greener grant, we helped the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County **make improvements to about one mile of the private, interior road system around Beaver Run Reservoir.**

Work included realigning culverts, installing conveyor belt diversions (made of used conveyor belts, bolted to treated lumber and buried in the road), and stabilizing the channel.

Beaver Run Reservoir supplies water for drinking, washing, and the many tasks of daily life to some 50,000 homes and businesses in Westmoreland County.



The District is working with PennDOT on **two mitigation projects**, one at the Westmoreland County Community College that is in response to the proposed New Stanton/I-70 interchange, and one near the intersection of Routes 31 and 119 in Mount Pleasant Township that is remediating a highway project in a watershed elsewhere in the region.

During the year, our watershed technician established long-term monitoring protocol for the two streams near these road projects – Cherry Creek and Sherrick Run.

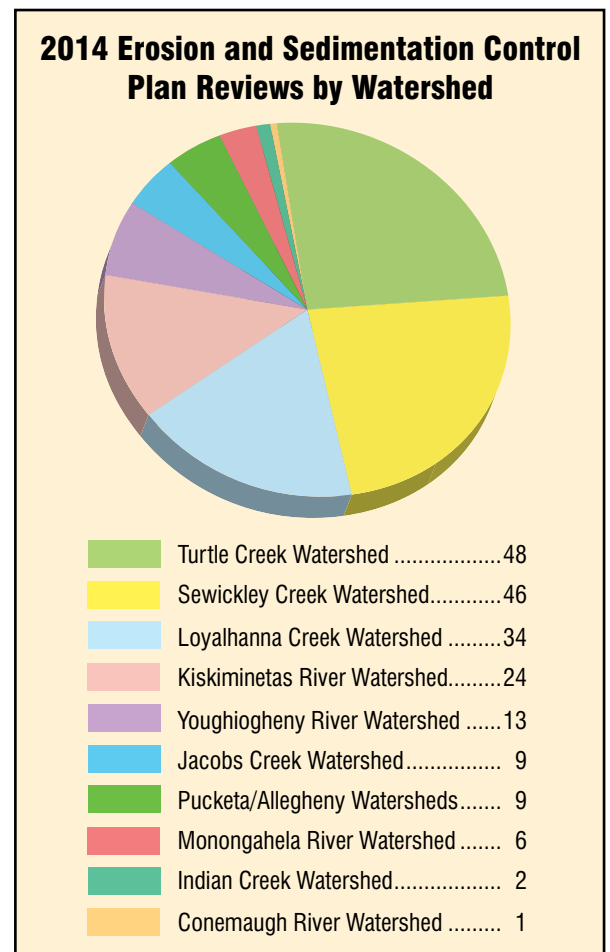
The first step was to collect baseline data of pre-existing conditions of each stream, and to perform

in-stream monitoring.

Once both highway projects are completed, annual monitoring of both streams will continue for at least five years to ensure the integrity of the waterways.

The **workshop we held for contractors** in mid-January was a great success, with some 60 people in attendance.

The half-day event featured presentations on practical topics, including information on which best management practices can be used in high-quality



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watersheds, working with engineers and the District, sequence of construction, permits and processes, utility stream crossings, stream bank stabilization, and the critical stages of stormwater management installations.

John Hardiman, excavating contractor, Darl Rosenquest, senior civil engineer with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and members of the District's technical staff gave the presentations.

Eighteen hardy souls came to our annual **municipal roundtable event**, but a major February snowstorm dampened attendance, especially for those who would be coming from the northwestern part of our county.

So we waited for a break in the weather and took the event to them.

Representatives from three municipalities in the northwestern part of our county joined our technical staff in the Allegheny Township Municipal Building for a discussion of regulation updates.

We once again held our **After the Storms: How to Repair and Maintain Gravel Driveways and Unpaved Lanes workshop**, which shows owners of unpaved driveways, farm lanes, and access roads how to make cost-effective repairs to damage caused by melting snow and rain.

We offered this workshop in March, and attracted a total of 25 attendees.

An added benefit of the workshop is that attendees can request to have one of our technical staff visit their problem site and offer specific repair recommendations.

Twenty of the 25 attendees at the March workshop requested this follow-up service.

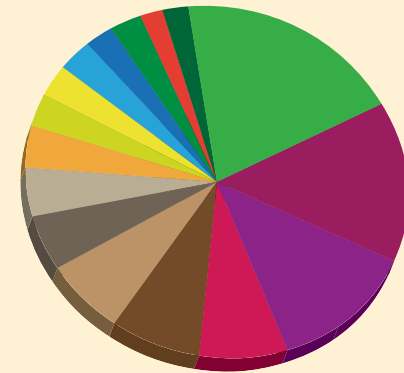


A long, steep access road on private property in New Alexandria shows the damaging effects of unmanaged water runoff (top) and (bottom) conservation improvements implemented by the owner after attending the District's driveway workshop.

Our senior erosion control specialist obtained certification as a Certified Environmental Safety Compliance Officer.

This additional training helps enhance his knowledge and effectiveness in implementing the erosion and sedimentation control program, including the Chapter 102 initiatives.

2014 Erosion and Sedimentation Control Inspections by Municipality



Hempfield Township	65
Townships with 5 inspections or fewer	53
Unity Township	43
North Huntingdon Township	26
Derry Township	25
Ligonier Township	25
Murrysville	17
Lower Burrell	15
Latrobe	11
Mount Pleasant Township	10
Salem Township	10
Penn Township	9
Rostraver Township	7
New Stanton	7
East Huntingdon Township	7



Dan Griffith (left), nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician, works with farmers throughout the county to do conservation planning and suggest best management practices to make their operations more productive.

PRODUCTIVE FARMS

In 2014, the District's nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician **underwent training to allow him to help farmers develop an agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan** for their farm when conservation planning assistance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service is unavailable.

He completed this training through an accelerated program developed by Penn State called PAOneStop.

PAOneStop also offers a website where the plan itself can be developed. Using this resource, our agricultural technician helped five farmers each create a viable plan in just several hours.

He also prepared a "how to" handout and shared it with 12 additional farmers who were interested

in using the website on their own to generate their agricultural erosion and sedimentation control plan.

Beginning in 2012, our District board has been working to **develop and refine an initial complaint policy** that details the ways the District will work with area farmers to cooperatively handle agricultural complaints here on the local level.

In 2014, we divided the original policy into two policies: one that addresses complaints related to erosion and sediment control, and one that addresses complaints related to manure handling.

Most of the conservation problems that we see on Westmoreland County farms are related to erosion – such as not having gutters on farm buildings and allowing water to run directly on to the barnyard or allowing livestock to trample down the vegetation along the edges of a stream.

The revised policies will go into effect in 2015 and will allow us to take enforcement action if the complaint is related to erosion issues and not addressed in a reasonable amount of time.

Unaddressed complaints related to manure management will be referred to the State Conservation Commission for enforcement.

In 2014, while operating under the original initial complaint policy, **our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician received eight complaints related to agriculture.**

None presented an immediate problem where pollution from the farm was impacting the community, and so he was able in all cases to discuss the situation with the farmer, suggest remedies, and achieve voluntary compliance.

Remedies included changing a cropping practice and installing temporary fencing to keep cows away from the edges of a stream until these areas can revegetate.

Our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician serves as the chair of the Agriculture Committee for Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council and, in that capacity, **he coordinated the 2014 Southwest Regional Pennsylvania No-Till Conference.**

Held in January at Saint Vincent College, the conference helps farmers increase profits, improve soil health, create less compaction and improve water retention by using the no-till method.

Speakers included Jim Hershey, president of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance and David Lamm, team leader for the Natural Resources Conservation Service's National Soil Health and Sustainability Team.

The annual event, which is the only one of its type in the state, drew more than 120 people.



In the field, stormwater staff members Kathy Hamilton, landscape architect/stormwater technician, and Jim Pillsbury, hydraulic engineer, use equipment to verify that stormwater best management practices are built according to plan specifications while Stormwater Technician/Landscape Designer Matt Zambelli runs computer models of proposed stormwater practices.

CLEAN STREAMS AND WATERWAYS

The Old Zider Store, an early 20th-century building at the crossroads of Route 30 and Nature Run Road in Laughlintown, is once again open for business and customers can park in a **new, permeable parking area designed by our landscape architect/stormwater technician.**

The five-car lot is made of permeable pavers, which infiltrate stormwater from the parking area. The installation also includes a handicapped-accessible serpentine walkway with a rain garden, which captures water coming off the building's roof.

This stormwater management work benefits nearby Furnace Run, which is a high-quality stream.

We were able to **obtain a grant to help a very dedicated group of volunteers who have created garden plots and a farm market in the City of Jeannette.**

The grant provides the materials needed to create a system to capture stormwater from a building roof near the garden plots and store it in containers on a raised platform. When water is needed, gravity will allow it to flow through hoses to irrigate the garden.

Prior to this, the volunteers had to haul water to the dozen 4-foot by 4-foot garden plots.

At capacity, the new system can capture and deliver 600 gallons of reusable rainwater.

The grant also will provide lumber and topsoil to improve the existing garden plots and to add six more.

The Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds

provided the grant. The District is providing the services of our hydraulic engineer and landscape architect/stormwater technician to design the stormwater system.

The Jeannette Farm Market garden project partners include Westmoreland Community Action, the Salvation Army, the Parking Authority of the City of Jeannette, and Bridges to Prosperity.



We've learned a lot about stormwater over the past 25 years, including the fact that it's actually not the big, "100-year" storms that cause the most damage to property and the environment, but the small, frequent ones.

That knowledge has many, including the District, taking another look at the design of older stormwater

ponds, such as the one in the Westmoreland County Industrial Park on Mellon Road in Penn Township.

Built 25 years ago, the pipe outlet of this pond had enough capacity, but the low flow opening meant water was just running in and out most of the time.

A grant from Growing Greener allowed us to retrofit the pond to change the outflow risers so that this big detention pond would also hold back the more frequent, smaller storms.

This 550,000-gallon pond controls much of the runoff from this industrial park and is the biggest one that the District has ever retrofitted.

Water quality in Export and other downstream communities also benefits from this work, which was done in cooperation with the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation.



Thanks to two other Growing Greener grants received in 2013 and 2014, respectively, we began a program in 2014 to retrofit other, older stormwater ponds owned by municipalities in the county.

The first of these two grants allowed us to upgrade three basins in Lower Burrell during 2014, and to identify four in Penn Township that will be upgraded in 2015.

For the second grant, we identified 10 additional municipal-owned basins in Penn Township and the Municipality of Murrysville, which will be retrofitted in 2015.

We renewed our agreement with the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors to conduct visits to local municipalities to review their flood plain ordinances.

In 2014, our technical staff, assisted by our technical programs secretary, provided this service to Derry Borough.

With the help of our stormwater technician/landscape designer and upgraded software through the Natural Resources Conservation Service, we have increasing ability to use technology to help us in our work.

The Geographic Information System, for example, can help us with construction project design

reviews, pond retrofit designs, and site surveying and analysis, including measuring how much water comes into a site and where it is going when it leaves.

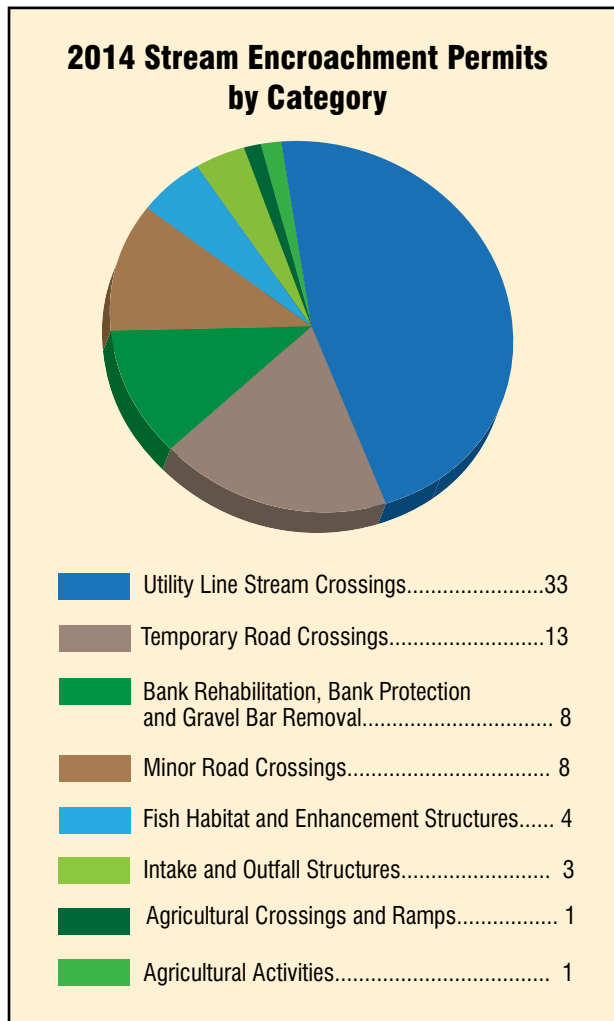


Thanks to a \$4,700 grant from the Water Resources Education Network to Penn's Corner Conservancy and Charitable Trust, we and other partners were able to adapt a stormwater guide originally done by a group in Lancaster County to the specifics of western Pennsylvania.

The booklet, **Southwestern Pennsylvania's Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater**, shows homeowners how to assess their property to determine how much stormwater is generated and where it flows. The booklet then suggests the best approaches



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to managing the stormwater, including rain gardens, pervious paving, a buffer of trees and shrubs, rain barrels, and more.

Some 7,500 copies of the Homeowner's Guide to Stormwater are scheduled to be printed in early 2015 and made available to local municipalities to share with their residents. Some two-thirds of municipalities in Westmoreland County are required to meet federal requirements in regard to stormwater management, one of which is public education and outreach. This booklet helps them meet that requirement.

The booklet also will be available on the District's website, www.wcdpa.com.

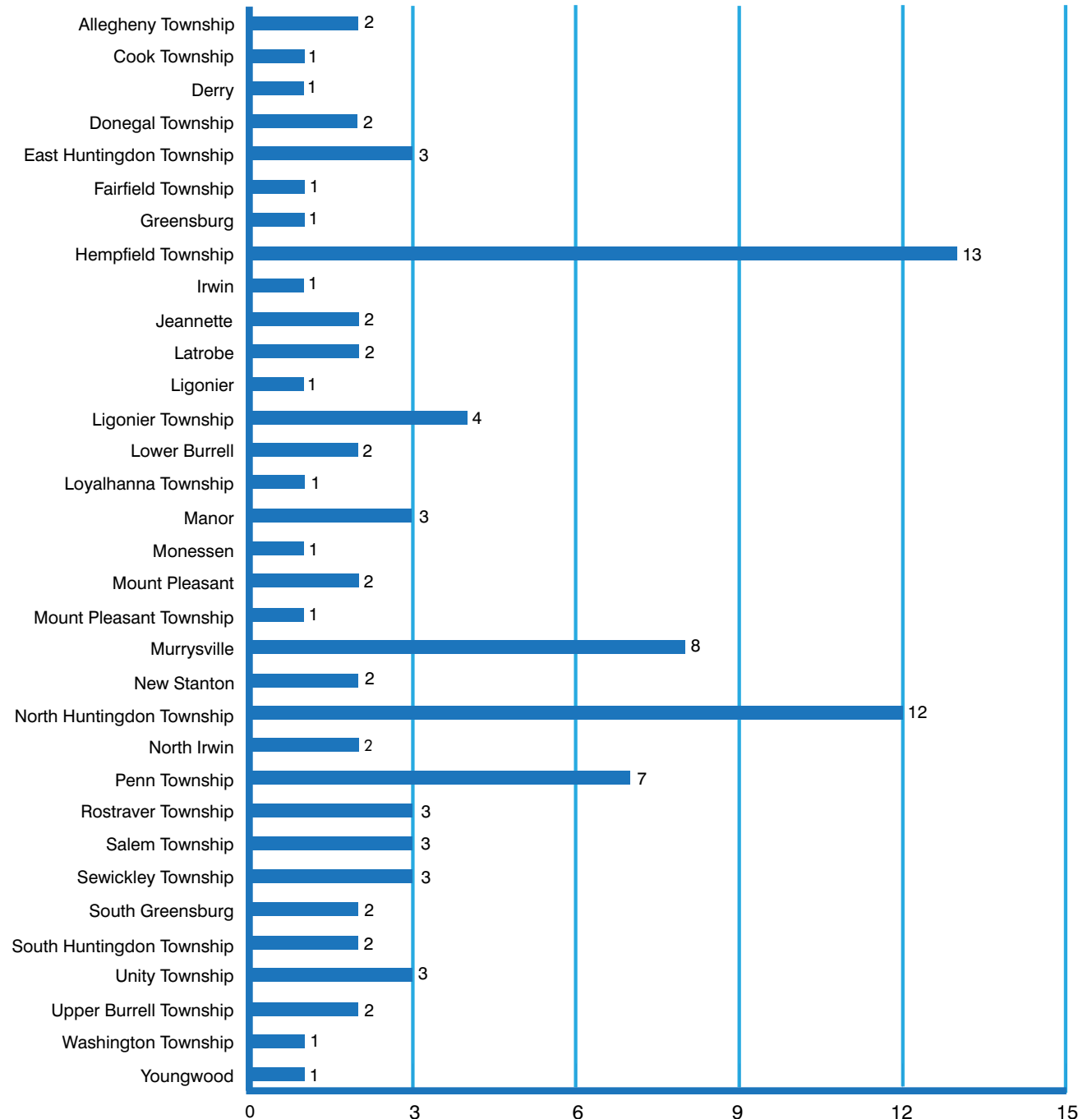
In addition to Penn's Corner Conservancy and Charitable Trust, partners on the homeowners' stormwater booklet were: Allegheny County Conservation District, Westmoreland County Planning Department, City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and Penn State Extension.

Nearly 300 people joined us for the **2014 Engineers' Workshop** in late March at Saint Vincent College.

This year's workshop focused on stormwater, and offered a keynote address on Integrated Watershed Planning: A Means to Affordable Water Quality.

Speakers included engineers Brandon Vatter and Robert Weimar from Hatch Mott MacDonald and James Stitt, sustainability coordinator for the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority.

2014 Stormwater Plans by Municipality





Forester Tony Quadro (center) works with woodlot owners in the county, helping to develop a plan for stewarding their property according to the way they want to use it, such as for wildlife habitat, for timber, and so on.

HEALTHY FORESTS

Our forester **completed three forest stewardship plans for area residents** in 2014. Each focused on a different benefit of managing woodlots, based on the owner's goals.

In Ligonier Township, he prepared a stewardship plan designed to enhance the wildlife value of a seven-acre woodlot of fairly mature forest just off Route 259.

On Two Mile Run Road in Ligonier, new owners of a 50-acre woodlot asked for a stewardship plan to guide them in the best way to harvest the timber and create food plots for wildlife.

The owners also asked the District's watershed specialist for a plan on how to manage erosion problems on the existing dirt roads and install best management practices.

In South Huntingdon Township, our forester prepared a stewardship plan to help the woodlot owner treat the invasive plants that were overriding a portion of her 28-acre property and restore it to productive conditions.

A forest stewardship plan is a comprehensive document that provides a detailed management plan, based on the owner's objectives, and a 10-year schedule of activities.

Once a woodlot has a forest stewardship plan, it may be eligible for cost-share money to implement certain practices recommended in that plan.

Our forester also **prepared 13 basic forest management plans** for woodlot owners in the county.

This type of plan is less extensive than a stewardship plan. It provides a document of general

stewardship recommendations, developed after a visit to the woodlot with the owner.

During the year, **our forester participated with loggers in eight pre-harvest meetings.**

These meetings are an opportunity for the District to recommend the use of specific best management practices to reduce erosion on the timber site.

When good conservation controls are in place before a timber harvest starts, there is less impact on the soil and water.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

Our technical staff spent a good deal of time during the year on work related to a 950-megawatt **electric-generating station that Tenaska**, a private, independent energy company headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska, is proposing to build and operate in South Huntingdon Township.

Dozens of plan reviews, plus plan revisions, meetings, and site visits were handled by our erosion control, stormwater, and technical administration staff.

In addition, because the project drew so much public attention, our technical staff and District manager/CEO participated in an open house, hosted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, to offer information on the District's role in making sure that waterways and soil were not adversely impacted by the construction of the plant.

At the end of the year, the District had issued all of the erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, and Chapter 105 permits needed by the project.

Our technical staff will continue to be closely involved – doing on-site inspections for erosion and stormwater control – once construction, scheduled for 2015, begins.

We continued to make progress toward the **creation of a county-wide Integrated Water Resources Plan**.

This document will provide guidance for municipal officials and developers on critical stormwater issues, including flooding, property damage, stream erosion,

and habitat loss.

Other outcomes of the plan could include enhancements to drinking-water quality, sewage and septic system improvements, and better management of water's role in development, agriculture, and recreation.

After initial discussions with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in 2013 on using a less-costly plan-development approach developed by York County, we worked during 2014 to obtain buy-in from the Westmoreland County Department of Planning and to gather information on creating the plan, which is expected to take three years.

We included the plan development, estimated to cost some \$300,000, as a line item in the fundraising campaign we prepared late in the year (see page 14).

State-initiated changes to the **Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program** became effective in 2014, infusing more money in this work and broadening its scope to also include low-volume, public roads that are paved or tarred and chipped. Low-volume roads are those traveled by fewer than 500 vehicles per day.

As a result, Westmoreland County was allocated some \$423,000 for fiscal year 2014-2015 to repair these roads, and every municipality in the county now has roads that are eligible to apply for this program. (The 2013 allocation was \$28,000 and did not include low-volume paved roads.)

Municipalities submit applications to a three-person panel that includes representatives from the District, the Fish and Boat Commission, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In the fall of 2014, the panel received 10 applications related to dirt and gravel roads and selected three of them. They also received 20 applications for low-



Watershed Technician Chelsea Walker and Watershed Specialist Rob Cronauer head toward a local stream to gather baseline data on the fish, microinvertebrates, vegetation, and streambed prior to the start of work to remove a coal refuse pile (background). The District has begun gathering pre- and post-conservation work data as a way to quantify the beneficial impact of these practices.

volume, paved roads and selected seven.

We anticipate that work to improve these selected roads will begin in 2015, pending release of funding by the state.



Improving dirt and gravel roads – such as the work being done here to raise the road profile and install under drains – not only makes traveling easier for motorists, but also benefits water quality by reducing the amount of sediment in nearby streams.



Thanks to a partnership with the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, we were able to **install data loggers in McGee Run in Derry Township and Derry Borough**, a stream the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection lists as being “impaired,” meaning it is polluted with sediment, siltation, and nutrient loading.

The data loggers will monitor the conditions of the stream, gathering data on such measurements as conductivity, water level, and temperature, every 15 minutes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The District has a multi-year state grant to improve the McGee Run Watershed by installing a variety of conservation measures from each of its

programs – forestry, erosion control, stormwater management, agriculture, and dirt and gravel roads.



We began to develop a **portfolio of information about some of the many successful conservation best-management practices that have been installed in our county**, with the goal of making this information available on our website.

Information on an initial group of 20 working practices will be accessible on the website in 2015, and each will provide technical details on its construction, including materials used and cost to install; its benefits; and the District staff person to contact. Stormwater management; watershed restoration; agriculture; and dirt, gravel, and low-volume roads practices will be featured.

A \$3,000 environmental education grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is funding this work.

Our new watershed technician **helped advance the work of area watershed associations** by, among other things, helping the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association obtain a permit to create a larger parking area at the Lowber abandoned mine drainage treatment site, and applying for a grant to help revitalize the Turtle Creek Watershed Association.



More than 20 people joined us for a **half-day-long bus tour of the upper Turtle Creek Watershed** in late September. This watershed, which spans both Westmoreland and Allegheny counties, was the first in the region to form a watershed association (incorporated in 1970).

Participants saw a number of conservation practices in action – from erosion and sediment controls at a commercial development site in Delmont to stream-

bank stabilization efforts along the high-quality waterway, Haymaker Run.

They also learned about continuing challenges in the watershed, such as the Irwin Discharge, which is the largest abandoned mine drainage discharge in Westmoreland County in terms of flow – 9,000,000 gallons per day...and about planned new amenities, such as the 10-mile Turtle Creek Trail, which will run from Export to Trafford and through the beautiful Turtle Creek Gorge.

Funding and other support for the tour was provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Our 2014 Envirothon achieved record participation, with 95 students representing nine area schools.

In addition to the customary topics of forestry, soil and land use, wildlife, and aquatic ecology, this year’s environmental issue focused on sustainable agriculture.

A local farmer was at the event to talk to the students about his conservation management of a small farm.

Winners of the 2014 Envirothon were: First Place – Norwin High School Team 1; Second Place – Yough Senior High School Team 2; Third Place – Greater Latrobe High School Team 2.



= “Above & Beyond” Project



In addition to technical staff, the District operates with the support of (left photo, l-r, back) Visual Communication Specialist Mark Jackson, Education Program Coordinator Jen Novak, Receptionist Sandy Donovan; (l-r, front) Director of Administration Sandy Dzendzel, Fiscal Administrator Karen Barnhart; and (right photo, l-r) Technical Programs Secretary Christie Sebek, and Technical Programs Administrator Kathy Fritz.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

We continued to work hard to ensure that the District can meet the area's demand for conservation services by **strategically managing the complex financial formula that runs the District.**

The second year of state allocations from the Unconventional Gas Well Fund helped significantly to make up for other income shortfalls in 2014 and, combined with increases in the fees we charge for erosion and sedimentation and stormwater plan reviews, allowed us to add two greatly needed technical staff people.

Funding from Westmoreland County, although reduced in 2014, still provided the core resources for our operations, but recent increases in state

funding (from the Unconventional Gas Well Fund and allocations for Dirt and Gravel Roads (see page 12)) have made state funding an almost equal contributor to the District's revenue.

In 2014, we spent a good deal of time **planning for the future, with the goal of ensuring the long-term viability of conservation.**

We identified a variety of tools, planning efforts, scientific support datasets, partnerships, and functional capacity improvements that, if procured, would position the District strongly for the next several decades.

This effort formed the basis of a \$1.5-million "Sustaining Conservation" fundraising campaign launched late in the year.

- The campaign identifies six major areas of focus:
- enhancing client services and staff capacity,
 - creating education demonstrations of stormwater management and forest stewardship,
 - undertaking a county-wide Integrated Water Resources Plan,
 - obtaining science-based data on the effectiveness of conservation measures and the impact of conservation on quality-of-life,
 - updating the conservation campus to attract more public notice and accommodate more events, and
 - strengthening new partnerships in agriculture and energy.

Although the campaign was only a few months old at the close of 2014, it had realized gifts totaling \$230,000 from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, Peoples Natural Gas, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

The McKenna Foundation gift gave us the ability to advance a much-needed expansion of our technical office and work space. Shortly after its receipt, we had a completed, approved floor plan designed and a building permit secured.

Work will begin in 2015 to reconfigure existing space and convert the roofed carport into dedicated conference space for client meetings and offices for our growing technical staff (see 16).

Peoples Natural Gas and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection **provided major financial support that helped us to purchase two Ford F150 pickup trucks and convert them to also run on compressed natural gas.** Peoples Natural Gas also donated a slow-fill natural gas fueling station – the first such station ever donated by the company in its 18-county service territory.

Our technical staff drive an average of 18,000 miles every year in the course of their work. Although only a limited amount of data had been compiled by year end, we anticipate that our average fuel cost savings could reach as much as \$1,500 a year from operating these two trucks on compressed natural gas, which also has less environmental impact than gasoline.

2014 was the first full year that the **Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation had responsibility for management of the GreenForge building.**

We signed an agreement in late 2013 giving IDC responsibility for such things as finding tenants, negotiating leases, and day-in/day-out building maintenance, including snow removal and pest control.

IDC staff routinely do this type of work for other properties throughout the county, so it was a natural fit.

The arrangement also benefits the District by allowing our administrative staff to concentrate on doing what they do best – conservation.

We still have oversight responsibility for this unique green building on our campus and District Manager/CEO Greg Phillips and District Board Member Kim Miller both retain their seats on the GreenForge Board of Directors.

2014 also saw the successful negotiation and signing of a long-term lease by **the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture to rent some 3,000 square feet of office space in GreenForge.**

The department's Region 4 Office, which serves Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland counties, will occupy the space for 10 years beginning in 2015, with two options to

renew for an additional five years each.

The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture is a great addition to our campus, which also is home to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agency and, of course, the District's nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician, whose work also supports local agriculture.

Completion of the District's 2013 audit, begun in 2014, was delayed due to the District's board decision to **bring the process into compliance with the Governmental Accounting Standards Board Statement 34.**

GASB contends that separate accounting and financial reporting standards are essential for governments because they operate differently from business enterprises.

Although conservation districts are quasi-governmental agencies and, in Pennsylvania, are not required to implement GASB 34 as long as it is addressed within their audit, the district board voted to adopt this accounting method, beginning with the 2013 audit, which was contracted with Delisi, Keenan & Associates, P.C.

Because it was not completed in time to be included in the 2013 annual report, the accounting firm's report – 2013's Financial Analysis of the District as a Whole – was made available on the District's website, www.wcdpa.com.

As our technical staff get involved in designing and overseeing construction of a growing number of conservation best management practices all across the county, **our board initiated two new policies.**

One is a construction bidding policy that requires that our board approve construction costs at a public meeting. The policy also requires that the lowest

reasonable bid be selected for any project costing more than \$20,000.

The other new policy lays out a stipulation that those we do work for must agree not to hold us responsible for any loss, damage, or legal liability that might be incurred in the course of that work.

The new policies help protect our staff and District, in addition to the professional liability insurance that covers our technical staff.

Dorothy Stoner, Barbara and David McMillan, and Adam Eidemiller, Inc. were honored for their conservation achievements at our annual reception in September.

Dorothy, who ran a model dairy farm in Unity Township with her husband, Richard, for more than 50 years, and was a vocal advocate for keeping dairy farms viable, was posthumously inducted into the Hall of Honor.

Barbara and David McMillan, owners of a 95-acre property in Donegal Township, were recognized as the Conservation Farmers of the Year for their use of conservation best-management practices in small-scale agriculture.

And long-time District friend and family owned company, Adam Eidemiller, Inc. received the J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award for its strong support of conservation and the District. In addition to incorporating best management practices and state-of-the-art conservation measures in its own projects, the company has partnered with the District to install conservation measures in communities such as New Kensington, and has provided major in-kind services for the District's campus and lead sponsorships for its operations.

The open-house type reception at our conservation center also celebrated the 65th anniversary of the founding of the Westmoreland Conservation

District.

Peoples Natural Gas Company is the event’s major sponsor, and the company also underwrites the J. Roy Houston Partnership Award.

We hosted two breakfasts at our conservation center during the year, and invited our many partners to join us.

The two-hour, informal events were designed to give people a chance to spend some casual time together networking, discussing projects, and, ideally,

discovering ways to leverage resources.

More than 70 partners joined our staff at the two events, held in June and December.

Ron Rohall, chairman of the District’s Board of Directors, was appointed by the governor to the State Conservation Commission in 2014.

Ron will serve a four-year term on the 14-member commission, whose primary mission is to ensure the wise use of Pennsylvania’s natural resources.

The commission provides support and oversight

to Pennsylvania’s 66 county conservation districts, including the Westmoreland Conservation District.

Ron has been active for many years as a volunteer with the State Conservation Commission, as well as with the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts. He has been a volunteer with the Westmoreland District for more than 20 years.

In response to the growing demand for conservation services, **Jessica Thornton and Chelsea Walker joined the District in 2014 as erosion control specialist and watershed technician, respectively.**

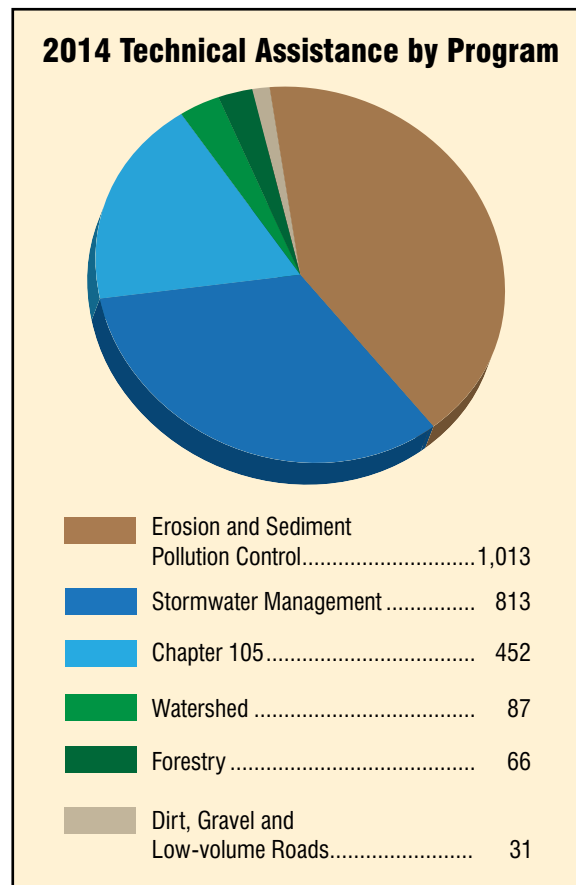
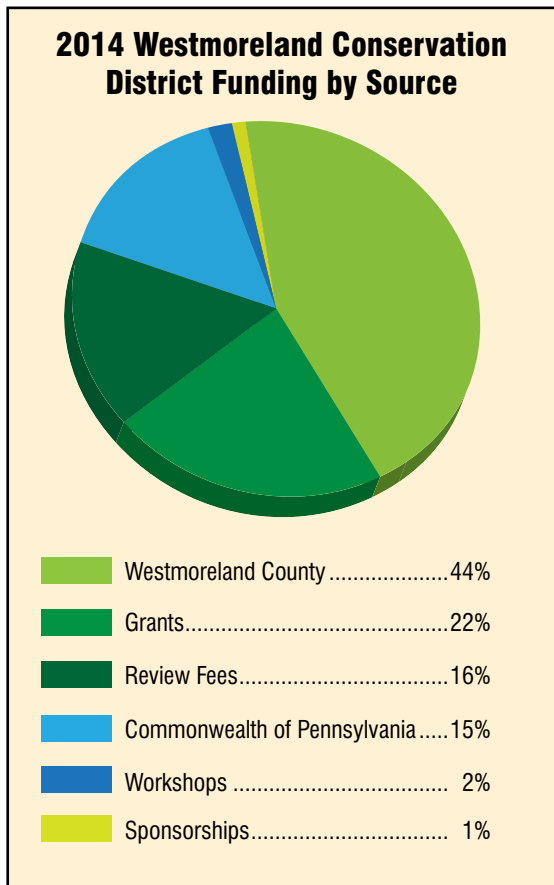
Jessica has a Bachelor of Science in environmental science from the University of North Carolina Wilmington and one year of professional stormwater and erosion control experience with Alpha EMC, a South Carolina company that works with builders and land developers.

Chelsea graduated from the Pennsylvania State University with a Bachelor of Science in agriculture and had several years’ of professional experience working with the Armstrong Conservation District as an AmeriCorps member.

Jessica reports to our assistant district manager/technical programs director and Chelsea reports to our watershed specialist.

Other **staff realignments** included new reporting in the stormwater program area, with our landscape architect/stormwater technician, our stormwater technician/landscape designer, and our technical programs secretary all now reporting directly to our hydraulic engineer.

Our 2013 annual report included detailed maps of Westmoreland County’s watersheds and more charts and graphs that we have ever included before. Much of the credit for making all of that possible



goes to **Ralph DeStefano**, a student at the **University of Pittsburgh** who has been interning with us during summer breaks from his environmental studies.

In 2014, we also had **Grace Pesselato**, a student at Pitt-Greensburg, interning with us. She did a great deal of maintenance on the stormwater trail.



The District has received solid financial and in-kind support from the Westmoreland County Commissioners ever since its founding in 1949. The county's annual budget allocation provides the core resources for our work and helps us attract additional funding — such as the \$1.9 million for “above and beyond” projects (see pages 2 and 3). Pictured current Westmoreland County Commissioners are (l-r): Ted Kopas, Chuck Anderson, Tyler Courtney.

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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.

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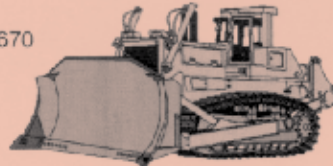
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The Westmoreland Conservation District has proven itself to be a good steward not only of our region's natural resources, but of its own financial resources as well. Solid county and state funding and a diversified income stream have put the District on solid ground, and allowed it to effectively address major local conservation needs, such as cleaning up our largest environmental problem — pollution from abandoned coal mines — and building a model program to manage stormwater in local communities.



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