



## 2024 Annual Report





This publication marks the 75th Westmoreland Conservation District Annual Report. Above are some examples of past Annual Report covers. To see the reports from 1950 forward, [visit our website](https://www.westmorelandconservation.org/).





The advent of a new year is an opportunity to reflect on the one that has just passed. In 2024, we had the pleasure of celebrating a significant milestone - our 75th anniversary! This special “diamond” anniversary year served as a reminder to reflect on the many years that came before it.

The Westmoreland Conservation District was established in 1949 by a group of individuals who were passionate about agriculture, conservation, preservation, and water quality. It is often said that “nothing is certain except change”. While that may often be true, one thing has remained constant over the past 75 years: the same passion from 1949 still drives our organization to this day. Our guiding principle remains unchanged - We seek to help people use resources wisely. This is not just a catch phrase; it is the heart of who we are and is what guides us daily. It is also the foundation that will enable us to be successful in the next 75 years and beyond.

We appreciate you taking the time to review our annual report. Inside, you will find updates on recent projects and changes taking place in the world of conservation. You will also have a chance to reflect with us as we look back through the years at what has made the Westmoreland Conservation District successful.

From the Board of Directors, Associate Directors, and staff at the Westmoreland Conservation District, we thank you for 75 years of conservation success!

Ronald J. Rohall  
Board Chairman

Robert D. Cronauer  
District Manager/CEO

### Have Fun Finding the *District Diamonds*



There is a historic or current program photo with a diamond in the opening titles for each section of this report. Match that title diamond with the *District Diamond* description at the end of that section for some fun facts.



# Celebrating the Westmoreland Conservation District's 75th Anniversary

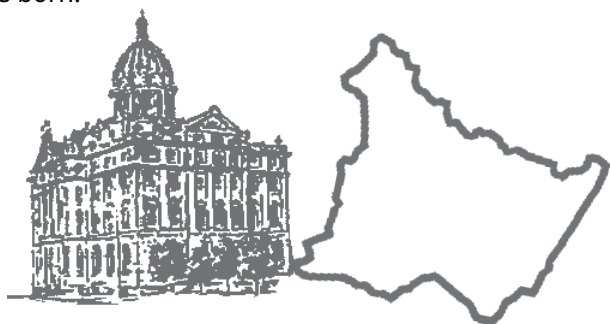
It is an old tradition to greet milestone anniversaries by tying them to a precious element. Silver marks a 25-year anniversary, gold marks 50 years, and a diamond marks 75 years. In 2024, the District reached its diamond anniversary, celebrating 75 years of helping people use resources wisely.



Historic Photo - NRCS

Conservation districts have been called “America’s Best Idea.” As part of the response to the soil loss disaster our country witnessed during the Dust Bowl of the 1930s, conservation districts were established to show people how to save soil and improve the quality of their land and water. Today, there are over 3,000 conservation districts across the country.

All of Westmoreland County was established as a soil conservation district on October 21, 1949 by a resolution of the Westmoreland County Commissioners at the urging of a forward-thinking group of farmers from the Beaver Run Watershed. Hence, the Westmoreland Conservation District was born.



## Polishing Our Diamond

How did the Westmoreland Conservation District relate to a diamond as it celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 2024? It took some creative reflection, but when you think about it, conservation is like a diamond. It’s multi-faceted and the benefits are crystal clear! A special version of the Westmoreland Conservation District logo, shown above, was developed to celebrate our 75th Anniversary.

Throughout 2024, a version of the 75th Anniversary logo appeared on our letterhead, website, social media, Constant



75th Anniversary promotional items included hats, glassware, raindrop rubber grippers, jackets and vests.



Contact email campaigns, displays and posters. It also appeared on commemorative items including etched glassware, embroidered hats, jackets and vests, and a water drop-shaped jar opener grip.

## Showcasing Our Legacy

The District updated a timeline which illustrated our progress moving forward from 1949. For the 75th Anniversary we simplified the timeline to focus on a special selection of milestones and accomplishments. The timeline was printed as a series of four, large horizontal posters on our in-house large format printer. These posters were displayed in the main hall of the barn during the 2024 Awards Celebration and remained on display until early 2025. [The timeline is also posted on the District website.](#)



*l-r:* Amy and Clint McChesney and Dianne and Kim Miller enjoy a conversation in the District barn during the Awards Celebration with the timeline posters in the background.

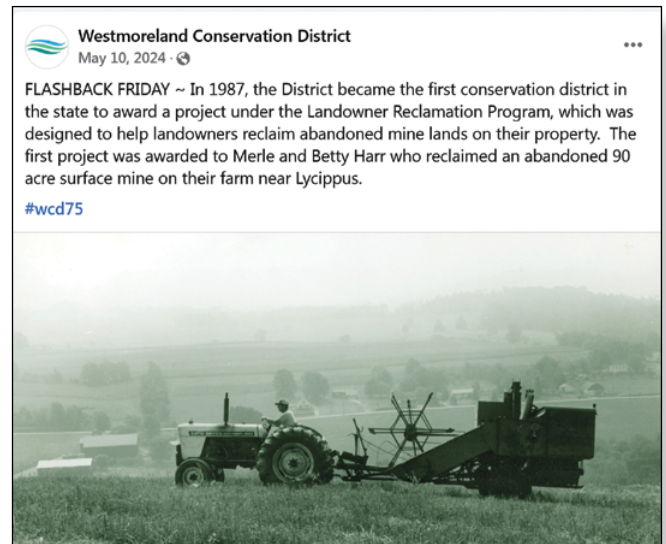
Adding to the nostalgic atmosphere of the Awards Celebration were two late 1940s Nash antique automobiles parked in front of the barn along with memorabilia from the era. This fun display was courtesy of Cris and Molly Detwiler, who stood by their Nashes dressed in apparel from the 1940s. They showed interested guests the unique features of their antique autos and talked about traveling on the road during the era in which the District was born.



Wearing a 1940s car salesman's hat, Cris Detwiler tells Awards Celebration guests Kevin and Grace Markum about he and Molly's 1946 Nash Ambassador Slipstream. The District was founded in 1949.

During 2024, we continued to showcase the District's historic legacy by posting pages on our website featuring all of the District Boards of Directors, District Landmarks Newsletters and Magazines, Envirothon team winners and Conservation Farmers of the Year since 1950.

Each week on Facebook, we posted a special 75th Anniversary feature called Flashback Friday which featured District historic highlights complete with great old photos and graphics.



Our Flashback Friday Facebook posts shared our conservation legacy, and covered a wide variety of topics.

## Inviting Artists to Color Our World

Donohoe Center has become an outstanding showcase for sound conservation practices – from the Stormwater Trail and permeable paver parking lots to the Arboretum and Pollinator Garden. What better way to celebrate the District's 75th Anniversary than to invite local artists to our conservation campus, where they could create paintings and artwork of things that catch their eyes?

Through the Westmoreland Land Trust we learned about Plein Air artists who visit a location and paint their works outdoors with their subjects in plain view. Plein air is French for "in the open air." Working with a local group of artists, we planned a Plein Air Paint Out event at the District and Donohoe Center.

Plein Air artists who registered for the District Paint Out could visit Donohoe Center as many times as they wanted to set up and paint. A reception exhibition and sale were then held in the J. Roy Houston Conservation Center (barn). Each artist could submit up to three works, which were juried for First, Second and Third Place Awards.

The District's Plein Air Paint Out event welcomed 14 participating artists, who rendered 37 paintings and pastels for exhibition. Depending on the painting media,



some pieces were delivered to the District with the paint still wet and drying. Hence the painter's term "wet sale" applied to our exhibition.

For the exhibition, the main hall of the barn was transformed into an artists' gallery. We were grateful to the Greensburg-Salem School District for loaning us their art display panels, which helped bring the exhibition to life. Associate Director Barbara McMillan and retired District Landscape Architect/Stormwater Technician Kathy Hamilton served as award judges.

The exhibition was open to the public and had a great turnout. Hors d' oeuvres and beverages included cheeses from The Creamery at Pleasant Lane Farms in Latrobe and wine from Bella Terra Vineyards in Hunker. A number of beautiful pieces were sold with ten percent of each sale

being donated to the District.

The award winners were as follows: First Place to Nancy Rusbosin for her oil painting "July 2024 Houston"; Second Place to Patricia Young for her pastel "Field of Wildflowers"; Third Place to Lynn Skoff for her oil painting "Quiet Corner" and an Honorable Mention to Sarah Gayle for her oil painting "A Path Worth Taking."

Special thanks to all who supported this unique premier event tying the arts to conservation. They go together quite naturally. [Visit our website to see more about this event.](#)



### **District Diamond**

Once upon a time, as people entered Westmoreland County on several major roads, they were greeted by wooden signs identifying our county as a Conservation District. This snow covered sign was atop Laurel Summit.

## **Plein Air Artists Paint Outdoors at Donohoe Center with their Subjects in View.**



Rich Santella is focused.



Flowers bloom on Doreen Currie's canvas.



Lynn Skoff blends her colors.



A great pastel subject.



Sarah Gayle paints near the barn's rain garden.



Pollinator garden colors done in pastel.



Rick Rauso's water color creations.



Audrey Howard's circle painting.



Becky Mormack paints with a palette knife.



Artist Nancy Rusbosin, center, talks art at the exhibition.



## Agriculture Conservation Helps Promote Productive Farms



Shrub Caging at R. Erdman Property for Riparian Buffer Tree Planting Project l-r: Dana Flowers, Richard Erdman, Chelsea Gross, Hank Bradish, Rob Cronauer, Allie Shreffler, Garrison Wehrle, and Sydney Williams

### Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP)

As of December 2024, all of Westmoreland County's initial ACAP funding has been allocated to 10 projects. Three projects have been completed and one project is currently under construction. There is a reserve of funding for possible project cost overruns and/or use for future projects. This year's state budget passed an annual transfer to the Clean Streams Fund of \$35 million to the State Conservation Commission for the ACAP program. It is estimated that the District will receive an annual allocation of approximately

\$493,000 to fund agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs). We are anticipating opening another application round early in 2025 to fund projects with our second allocation. We encourage farmers to reach out to us and invite us on to their properties to discuss any potential resource concerns.

### R. Erdman Riparian Buffer Tree Planting Project

This ACAP project (pictured above) was located in Salem Township within the Beaver Run watershed, classified as a



## Animal Walkway Improvement at the T. Matty Farm in South Huntingdon Township



**Before:** Eroded animal walkway.

High-Quality watershed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP). The project involved planting 325 trees and 114 shrubs to establish a 2.25-acre riparian forest buffer on what was previously cropland. The forest buffer was composed of a mixture of tree and shrub species planted within three zones – with zone 1 closest to the stream and having wetter soils to zone 3 towards the top of the slope and having dryer soils. Native tree species selected were assigned to specific zones based on their soil preferences. Tree tubes were installed around the tree species and wire cages were installed around the shrub species to protect them from deer browsing. The riparian buffer was completed within three days and will help reduce sediment and nutrient runoff to nearby waterways. A photo of this project was entered into the “Best ACAP Photo Award for 2024” and won (See article in “Awards & Recognitions” on page 30). The contractor for this project was FSF Conservation Contractors, LLC.

*The total project cost was \$11,715, with \$10,187 provided by ACAP funds and \$1,528 of match contributions from the landowner.*

### T. Matty Farm Animal Walkway Improvement Project

This ACAP project was located in South Huntingdon Township, within the Youghiogheny River Watershed. The project area flows into an unnamed tributary to the Youghiogheny River, classified as a Warm Water Fishery by PA DEP. As part of this project, approximately 3,520 square feet of animal walkway was improved by the addition of stone and three conveyor belt diversions. The conveyor belt diversions were installed to direct water off of the animal walkway before



**After:** Stabilized animal walkway with three conveyor belt diversions.

the water increased in velocity and caused erosion and sedimentation to waterways. The District worked with the farmer to address limiting cattle access to the adjacent pastures and channeling the animals onto the new stabilized walkway to help improve pasture health. This project was imperative in reducing the accelerated erosion and sedimentation occurring at the farm. Construction was completed by Competitive Edge Excavation, LLC.

*The total project cost was \$10,350 with \$9,000 provided by ACAP funds and \$1,350 of match contributions from the farmer.*



C. McChesney Farm roofed animal heavy use area with a manure staking pad installed to house beef cattle.

### C. McChesney Farm Improvement Project Phase I

This ACAP project is located in Derry Township within the Conemaugh River Watershed, classified as a Cold Water Fishery by PA DEP. Phase I of this project consisted of installing a 3,600 square foot roofed Animal Heavy Use Area (AHUA) with an additional 1,680 square foot roofed manure staking



pad. Prior to installing this new structure, the existing unstabilized animal concentration area was discharging nutrients and sediment directly to the stream. Gutters and subsurface drainage were also installed to help direct surface runoff and underground drainage around the roofed AHUA. Phase I of this project was completed in December. Phase II of the project is anticipated to begin in 2025 and includes additional BMPs such as streambank fencing, stream crossings, and watering troughs. Construction was completed by Mike Ament Construction, LLC.

*The total project cost of Phase I was \$439,732 with \$239,634 provided by ACAP funds and additional funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP).*

### **Poole Farm Manure Management Improvements Project**

This project is located on a dairy farm in East Huntingdon Township. For this year, work consisted of installing a circular 53,092 cubic foot concrete liquid manure storage; a 1,152 cubic foot reception pit; a 3,000 square foot concrete

heavy use protection area; a surface inlet with a 12 inch underground outlet with riprap protection; and 425 feet of stabilized access road with upslope subsurface drainage. The project also included replacing a farm access road culvert. Completing these BMPs will allow the farmer to apply nutrients when crops are ready to utilize them and eliminate mud on the farm, which will in turn reduce nutrient and sediment runoff to an unnamed tributary to Buffalo Run. Additional BMPs will be completed on the farm with assistance from the NRCS in 2025. Construction was completed by Mills Excavating.

*The total project cost was \$377,500, with \$123,195 provided by PA DEP Growing Greener funds and additional funding from the NRCS EQIP.*

### **J. Hoke Farm Roofed Animal Heavy Use Area/Agricultural Best Management Practices Improvements**

The District awarded engineering services to Larson Design Group to design a roofed AHUA with a manure stacking pad at the Hoke farm located in Mount Pleasant Township. Final project design and construction is anticipated to occur in 2025.

#### **Improvements at the Poole Farm in East Huntingdon Township**



Eroded alleyway between the two barns.



New concrete being poured to create a stabilized pad between the barns.



A concrete liquid manure storage tank and agitation prep pad.



Stabilized access road was installed to grant better access to the milkhouse, barns, and concrete liquid manure storage.





### Legislative Farm Tour at Gillis Family Farm

*l-r: Bob Graham, Farmer/Membership Chair of Westmoreland County Farm Bureau; Randy Gillis, Farmer/Westmoreland County Farm Bureau Director; Eric Nelson, Farmer/District 57 State Representative; Mike O'Barto, Unity Township Supervisor; Jill Cooper, District 55 State Representative; Robin Savage, District 55 Office Manager; Dean Reed, Westmoreland County Farm Bureau Director; Leslie Rossi, District 59 State Representative*

### Legislative Farm Tour

In August, District Manager/CEO Rob Cronauer and Agricultural Conservation Technician Allie Shreffler participated in the Westmoreland County Legislative Farm Tour hosted by the Westmoreland County Farm Bureau. The tour was

held at the Gillis Family Farm located in Salem Township. During this annual event, legislators and other participants gather to learn and discuss common problems that local farmers may face in their everyday operations.

### Ag Progress Days

Agricultural Conservation Technician Allie Shreffler and Erosion Control Specialist Jared Meharey volunteered their time at the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts booth during the 2024 Ag Progress Days. This event is hosted by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and is Pennsylvania's largest outdoor agricultural exposition, with more than 400 exhibitors from across the U.S. and Canada. This gave District staff the opportunity to network with other organizations and to provide farmers with valuable information and resources.



Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District's booth at Ag Progress Days, *l-r: Erosion Control Specialist Jared Meharey, Agricultural Conservation Technician Allie Shreffler*

### Southwest Pennsylvania Soil Health Conference

The conference took place at the Fred Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College. Many from our District were involved with planning and preparing the annual regional event. Approximately 85 farmers/agricultural agency personnel participated in the one-day event. The conference covered topics such as managing drought in PA corn production, managing invasive species in woodlots, nutrient cycling, and soil health under pastures, use of precision farming



technologies, a local farmer panel, and more. Farmers were able to network with vendors and other farmers or agency staff within the region. The District received a Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program mini-grant for \$675 and PA Grazing Lands Coalition mini-grant for \$500 to help fund the event. The Soil Health Conference Planning Committee consists of representatives from: U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service, State Conservation Commission, Penn State Extension, and Westmoreland, Washington, Indiana, and Fayette County Conservation Districts.



ACAP video title graphic.

## ACAP Video

The PA Southwest ACAP video was developed to promote the ACAP program and to provide outreach to farmers that want to learn more about the program. Developed by the District, Penn State Extension's Center for Agriculture Conservation Assistance Training, and the State Conservation

Commission, this video features ACAP project success stories from both the Westmoreland Conservation District and the Washington County Conservation District. Within our county, the Kitz Farm Streambank Fencing and Animal Heavy Use Stabilization Projects were showcased. [This video can be viewed on the District's website under "Agriculture".](#)



The Southwest Pennsylvania Soil Health Conference at Fred Rogers Center, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe.



A panel of farmers conduct an informative session at the Soil Health Conference, l-r: District Director Fred Slezak, Ron Carter, and Alquin Heinickel.

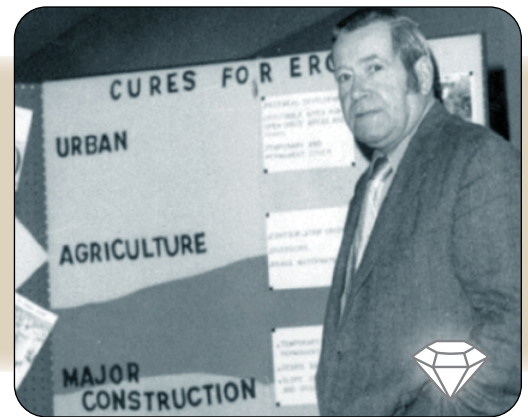


### District Diamond

Agriculture was the District's premier service program when it was established in 1949. Plowing fields in contour strips was one of the first soil erosion control best management practices promoted.



## Erosion and Sediment Control Help Keep Soil Stable and Water Clean



*Above:* The first sediment basin constructed at Valley Green Estates used to catch sediment laden water from the construction site.

*Left:* The outlet of the basin that leads into a riprap apron that helps with preventing erosion from the discharging water.

### Valley Green Estates

The District approved a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit for the Valley Green Estates project which will provide new residential housing in Hempfield Township. This residential neighborhood will replace the former Valley Green Golf Club golf course. The project consists of 121.68 acres of earth disturbance (the District's largest earth disturbance for the year) and includes construction of two basins, utility installation, and a

total of 135 housing lots. Part of the project includes pipe replacement that runs through the middle of the site from north to south. In order to keep the earth disturbance to a minimum at one time, the project has been divided into four areas. Once all work in one area is completed, the contractor can then move on to the next area. Township Line Run flows through the middle of the site and is protected by compost filter sock.





Construction of a proposed road and basin located in the middle of the Hempfield Township Municipal Complex and Weatherwood Park site along with one of the staging areas for the workers' trucks.

*Insert:* Digram of Weatherwood Park which will feature pickleball courts, a splash pad, playground, outdoor fitness and yoga areas, a walking trail, a pavilion and a building for restrooms and concessions.

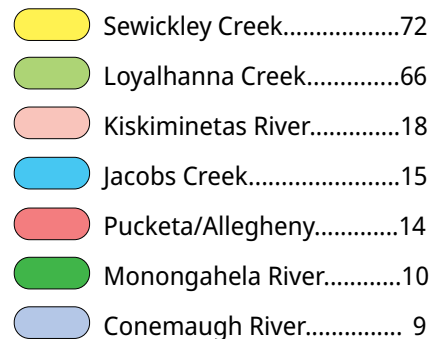
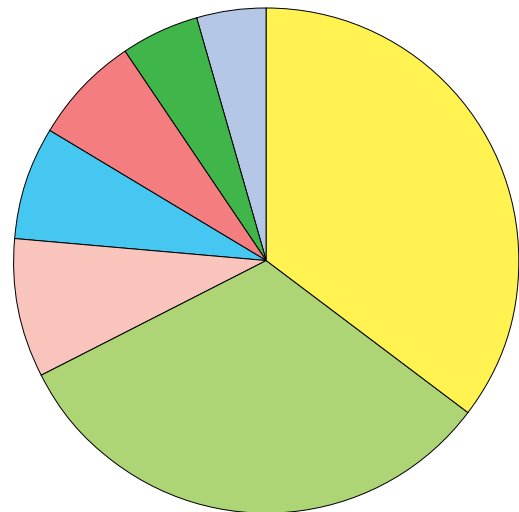
## Hempfield Township Municipal Complex and Weatherwood Park

The District reviewed and approved a NPDES permit for a new municipal building along with a new park in Hempfield Township. The park has a total of 44.8 acres of earth disturbance with plans to add biking trails, a water pad, multiple sediment/stormwater basins and several additional features. The primary best management practice used on this project is compost filter sock which controls sediment laden runoff from leaving the site.

### Jeannette Brewery

This project includes the demolition of the former Jeannette Brewery. The building is proposed to be completely torn down. Afterwards, the site will be restored with vegetative cover and a gravel lot. Compost filter sock has been placed

## 2024 Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan Reviews by Watershed



**Total 204**



around the perimeter of the site to protect the surrounding properties and storm sewers from sediment-laden water. This project is considered to be the District's first approved PAG-01 permit. The majority of permits approved by the District are PAG-02. PAG-01 handles permits for stormwater associated discharges on smaller construction sites while PAG-02 handles larger sites.



The Loyalhanna Trail in Derry Township.

### The Loyalhanna Trail Project

The first phase of the Loyalhanna Trail Project in Derry Township was completed this year. The trail extends from Oasis Road to Stone Lodge Road within Keystone State Park. As part of the project, seven stream crossings were installed, now enabling hikers and bikers to traverse portions of Keystone Run and other tributaries. Additionally, the trail was extended to continue underneath State Route 981. Near this area of the trail, a timber mat staircase was installed to provide easier access down a hillside. The next phase of the trail, already included in the original permit approved by the District, is currently pending, with the start of construction yet to be determined.

### Laurel Valley Golf Club Hole #7 Renovation

The District reviewed and approved a NPDES permit that involved the renovation of hole #7 within the Laurel Valley Golf Club located in Ligonier. The renovation started in late summer and by the end of the year the project was almost



Rerouting of a stream for renovation at hole #7.

complete. Work included stripping the old sod from the hole and replacing it with newer sod, changing the design of the green, and relocating sand traps/bunkers. Some ponds were removed, and one was constructed near hole #7 tee boxes. A unique aspect of this project was that a tributary to Loyalhanna Creek was rerouted through hole #7, which required a joint permit from the PA DEP and the Army Corps of Engineers.



### District Diamond

Elwood Leslie was the District's first full-time Manager. He further developed and promoted the District's conservation programs and established a flood warning system for Westmoreland County.

### 2024 Erosion and Sedimentation Control Inspections by Municipality

Hempfield Township .....	36
Cook Township .....	16
North Huntingdon Township .....	9
Unity Township .....	9
Ligonier Township .....	8
Rostraver Township .....	7
Salem Township .....	7
Municipality of Murrysville .....	5
Penn Township .....	5
South Huntingdon Township .....	5
Allegheny Township .....	4
Borough of Irwin .....	4
City of Greensburg .....	4
Derry Township .....	4
Mount Pleasant Township .....	4
Washington Township .....	4
Total of municipalities with 3 inspections or fewer .....	20

**Total 151**



# Stormwater Management Helps Control Flooding and Maintain Water Quality



## Heavy Storm Damage along Pucketa Creek



Eroding streambank at Style-Rite Kitchens in Lower Burrell.



Eroded streambank and exposed sanitary sewer line in Washington Township.

## Westmoreland County Rainfall and Storms

Heavy rains in April were on one end of the stormwater spectrum while a prolonged dry spell in the later part of the year showed the necessity of taking the “long-term view” of our hydrologic cycle. Rainfall totals for 2024 were just slightly above normal, but two heavy storms in April caused significant flooding and damage in various locations throughout the county. Specific damage occurred in two locations in our county’s northwest along Pucketa Creek—an eroded and exposed sanitary sewer line along Route 366 in Washington Township and a streambank washed out to within a foot of a commercial building in the City of Lower Burrell. Numerous District staff worked on designs and specifications for repairing these two eroded locations. We anticipate that the work will be completed early in 2025 through a combination

of United States Department of Agriculture and PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) funding.

## Smithton Borough Streambank Stabilization Project

The project was funded primarily through the PA DEP Growing Greener Program along with in-kind and cash matches from multiple District partners. The stream that was the focus of this project was an Unnamed Tributary (UNT) to the Youghiogheny River. The water quality of this UNT was impaired by sediment deposition due to its eroding streambanks. Additionally, streambank erosion was threatening the integrity of several nearby structures.

The project involved stabilizing approximately 500 total feet of streambank at three different locations along the stream. Natural stabilization methods including riprap rock



## Streambank Stabilization in Smithton Borough



**Before:** An eroded streambank along an unnamed tributary to the Youghiogheny River.



**After:** The streambank area was stabilized with riprap.

placement, bank grading, and log vane deflectors were used. The first site was located near the Smithton ballfield. Due to the streambanks being nearly 15 feet in height, and because the ballfield fence was located less than a couple feet from the stream, the only means of stabilization was riprap rock placement. Riprap was placed methodically along the bank to protect the ballfield and prevent the fence from falling into the stream. The second site was located along three landowner properties. The streambanks at these locations were composed of a coal/coke refuse material that was being deposited into the stream during erosion and flooding events. To stabilize this site, the streambank was graded back to form a 3:1 slope and riprap rock was placed along the banks. Bank grading is a natural method of stabilization because it allows for a higher volume of water to flow through the channel and reduces the surface area of streambank that encounters the water. At the third site near an existing parking lot, riprap was placed and three log vane structures were installed. Log vane structures help keep the velocity of the water to the middle of the stream (as opposed to the streambanks).

A major component of this project was installing riparian buffers. Once all project sites were stabilized, 60 trees were planted to further stabilize the banks and to reintroduce vegetation. Tree species included Red Maple, Tulip Poplar, White Oak, Serviceberry, and American Sycamore. With the completion of this project, it is estimated that 10 tons of sediment, 30 pounds of Phosphorus, and 33 pounds of Nitrogen will be reduced from polluting the stream each year. A special thank you to all those involved in the completion of this project: Mills Excavating, Smithton Borough, South Huntingdon Township and the landowners.

*The total project cost was \$131,912 with \$110,410 match contributions from Growing Greener, \$9,090 cash match from Smithton Borough and \$5,000 from South Huntingdon Township, and in-kind matches - \$4,830 from the District and \$2,582 from Smithton Borough.*

### Mosaic Community Development Center Rain Garden

The District partnered with a non-profit after school program in the City of Jeannette known as Mosaic Community Development Center (MCDC) to construct a rain garden for educational purposes. MCDC provides Jeannette school district students opportunities for fellowship, tutoring, and other after school activities. The partnership between the District and MCDC was a great opportunity to teach youth the importance of conserving our land and water resources. MCDC had acquired a vacant building lot in hopes of starting a raised bed community garden and natural beautification area. The District wholeheartedly supported this vision and secured an educational grant and private foundation funding to construct a rain garden on the vacant lot for both functionality and educational purposes. District Stormwater Technician Hank Bradish designed a rain garden to collect surface water runoff from the vacant lot and discharge it to an existing stormwater inlet in the alleyway. In the future, MCDC intends to renovate an adjacent building and connect the roof water downspouts to the rain garden to further reduce stormwater runoff. The District worked with Competitive Edge Excavation, LLC to install the fully functional rain garden. The project also involved the design and installation of an educational sign that provides information



on the rain garden and describes its function.

Hank Bradish and District interns, Sydney Williams and Garrison Wehrle, helped MCDC students plant flowers in the rain garden and provided a lesson on how the rain garden works.

*Total project cost was \$14,288 with match contributions from PA DEP Educational Mini Grant for \$5,000, Katherine Mabis Mckenna Foundation for \$6,200, and in-kind match from the District for \$3,088.*

### Morosini Reserve Parking Lot Phase 1

The District completed the first phase of the Morosini Reserve Parking Lot project which will provide parking for the future expansion of the Westmoreland Heritage Trail (WHT). This project was funded by private foundation funds and was made possible by the District’s partnership with the landowner of the site, the Westmoreland Conservancy. The contractor for this project was Eveready Contracting, LLC.

The WHT is expected to run adjacent to the Westmoreland Conservancy’s property in the future and will connect communities across the county. WHT visitors will be encouraged to visit both the Westmoreland Conservancy’s Morosini Reserve and it’s trails to experience nature. The goal of Phase 1 was to form the foundational shape of the proposed parking lot. The project included clearing approximately a half-acre of brush, constructing a stone driveway, and installing a cross pipe under the driveway to allow for stormwater passage. The project also included

### 2024 Stormwater Plans Received by Municipality

Penn Township .....	13
Hempfield Township.....	12
North Huntingdon Township.....	8
Unity Township.....	7
Municipality of Murrys ville.....	6
City of Jeannette.....	5
Derry Township .....	5
Salem Township .....	5
City of Greensburg.....	4
Total of municipalities with 3 plans received or fewer .....	29
<b>Total 94</b>	

the installation of a grade break along the road at Morosini Reserve to prevent erosion rills from forming on the road surface and to direct stormwater runoff to the ditches that run along the road. Phase 2 will include the construction of

### A Rain Garden in Jeannette



*Center:* Stormwater Technician Hank Bradish and a young helper planting in the newly constructed rain garden.



a rain garden, parking spaces (two permeable and 16 regular), an underdrain, a kiosk, and concrete curbs.

Total project cost was \$29,150 with match contributions from Katherine Mabis Mckenna Foundation of \$24,954, and in-kinds match from the District of \$4,196.

Monitor Replacements and Maintenance

The District currently has 10 water quality monitors located throughout the county that collect water resource data such as stream temperature, depth, conductivity, volumetric water content, precipitation, and soil conductivity. This data is used by watershed groups and other District partner organizations. The monitors require routine maintenance in order to continue accurate data collection. Hank Bradish and interns Sydney Williams and Garrison Wehrle completed maintenance of these monitors.

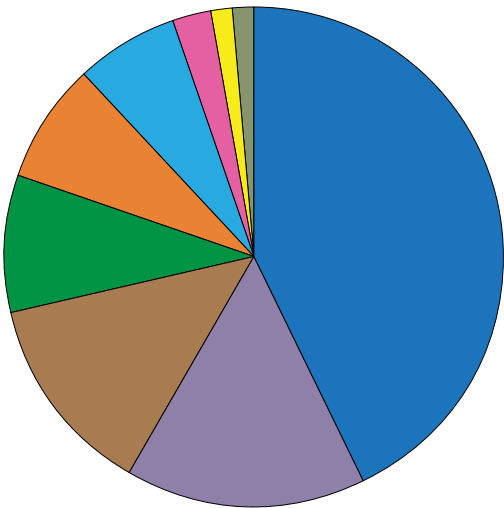
In April of this year there was a large storm that caused significant flooding throughout the county. The Sewickley Creek and Brush Creek monitors' data loggers required replacement due to this storm. The replacement monitors were installed at higher elevations to prevent them from being submerged in the future. The Turtle Creek monitor had a sensor malfunction and was equipped with a new functioning sensor. Lastly, the monitor at St. Vincent College installed at Four Mile Run required maintenance which involved cleaning out the accumulated sediment in order to ensure continual data collection.



District AmeriCorps Member Jacob Levendosky works on a water quality monitor installed along the Sewickley Creek.

2024 Stream Encroachment Permits Issued

by Category



Utility Line Stream Crossing.....	33
Bank Rehabilitation, Bank Protection & Gravel Bar Removal.....	12
Temporary Road Crossings.....	10
Minor Road Crossings.....	7
Intake & Outfall Structures.....	6
Fish Habitat Enhancement Structures.....	5
Small Docks & Boat Launching Ramps.....	2
Agriculture Crossings & Ramps.....	1
Agriculture Activities.....	1

Total 77



District Diamond

The Westmoreland Conservation District was the first District in Pennsylvania to implement a stormwater management program back in 1988. Photographer Stephen Simpson took this photo of a downpour and dramatic stormwater runoff in Donegal Township around 2012.



# *Watershed Restoration Builds Sustainable Communities and Conserves Our Resources*



## **Abandoned Mine Reclamation**

Past coal mining activities have scarred Pennsylvania's lands and waters with relics from a bygone era. Sadly, the most visible evidence that remains from this era are over 250,000 acres of abandoned mine lands, coal refuse piles and old mine shafts spanning 45 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Historic coal mining has also caused thousands of miles of streams to run orange for many decades.

In 2021, Public Law 117-58, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), was signed, providing Pennsylvania with \$244.9 million annually for 15 years. The Pennsylvania

Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP) Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) is authorized through the United States Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) to issue grants for the purpose of abandoned mine land (AML) reclamation and abandoned mine drainage (AMD) treatment or abatement under this bill.

Through this funding, the District was awarded a \$343,000 grant to design and permit the removal of 22 acres of coal refuse near the village of Bovard. The site is located just across from Twin Lakes Park in Hempfield Township.



Near the village of Bovard, and just across from Twin Lakes Park, lies 22 acres of coal refuse destined for removal.



This marks the District's first successful BIL grant award, which will fund Phase 1 "Design and Permitting" for site remediation. The grant will be used to retain an engineering firm to design a grading plan for site excavation, assess coal refuse disposal and soil remediation costs, conduct a site survey, prepare technical specifications and a bid package, and to obtain any required permits.

### Irwin Discharge

The District submitted a PA DEP AMD/AML Grant application for Phase 1 of the project, requesting \$421,251 in funding through the BIL initiative. Phase 1 focuses on developing a conceptual solution for treating the Irwin Discharge. For additional details on the Irwin Discharge, see the Biddle property writeup on page 34. In order to treat the discharge, the District must first assess the pollutant loading that is occurring. This will involve creating a water sampling plan to characterize the chemistry and flow of the discharge and to identify other potential AMD pollution sources in the area. This data will be utilized to design an effective treatment system in future project phases.



The Irwin Discharge is one of the largest untreated abandoned mine discharge sites in Western Pennsylvania.

### Ligonier Lawn to Meadow Conversion Project

The Ligonier Lawn to Meadow Conversion Project successfully converted approximately 0.75-acre of previously mowed lawn area into a native pollinator meadow. The District partnered with the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD), the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC), a Watershed Forestry Specialist from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and a willing landowner to put this project on the ground. The lawn conversion program is administered by PACD to help



Tilling a previously mowed lawn prior to planting pollinator seed mix.

the Commonwealth achieve its goal of planting 5,000 acres of upland forest and 5,000 acres of meadow by 2025.

The pollinator meadow was established on private property located in Ligonier Township. The District partnered with FSF Conservation Contractors, LLC to till the site and prepare it for planting of the native seed mix. The "Showy Northeast Native Wildflower Mix" from Ernst Conservation Seeds was then spread once the ground was properly prepared. This project will substantially increase biodiversity in an area that was otherwise mowed lawn and will create much needed habitat for pollinators and other wildlife. Among their many benefits, native pollinator meadows are also more effective at absorbing stormwater and filtering pollutants from runoff.

*The total project cost was \$16,171. This included \$8,025 in construction costs, and \$8,146 of in-kind and cash match from the District and the WPC.*

### Macroinvertebrate Sampling

The District performs macroinvertebrate sampling to evaluate water quality throughout the county and to assess the effectiveness of restoration projects. The macroinvertebrates found in a waterbody can provide valuable insights on stream quality. For example, some organisms are more sensitive to pollutants than others, and when they are present, we can generally conclude that the stream is lower in or does not contain that pollutant. Our sampling process includes identifying and recording the quantities of macroinvertebrates present and then analyzing this data to determine





Macroinvertebrate sampling for PennDOT mitigation project monitoring, l-r: West Nile Virus/Conservation Technician Christina Edwards-McCune, AmeriCorps member Jacob Levendosky.

stream health. The District conducts macroinvertebrate sampling for various projects. We sample macroinvertebrates as part of our PennDOT mitigation project monitoring protocols. These mitigation projects are completed in partnership with PennDOT in order to help reduce the environmental impacts of their projects. We also collect samples to display at various educational events such as our annual county Envirothon and the Lowber Field Day hosted by Sewickley Creek Watershed Association.

### **Municipality of Murrysville Streambank Stabilization Project**

This fall, the District partnered with the Municipality of Murrysville to complete a streambank stabilization project to improve and stabilize approximately 725 total feet of streambank within the Turtle Creek Watershed. The goal of this project was to reduce erosion along the banks of two streams within the watershed: Turtle Creek, where approximately 400 total feet of streambank was stabilized, and an

Unnamed Tributary (UNT) of Haymaker Run, where approximately 325 total feet of streambank was stabilized. The contractor for this project was G. Salandro Excavating LLC.

Streambanks along Turtle Creek were stabilized at sites along the Duff Park Trail and the Westmoreland Heritage Trail. The streambanks at both sites were stabilized by grading and then placing large riprap along the banks. Single log vane deflectors were also installed. Native trees were planted at the Duff Park site to improve the riparian buffer.

Along the UNT to Haymaker Run at Bear Hollow Park, streambank erosion was becoming a threat to both the recreational aspects of the park and to an existing sanitary sewer line running parallel to the stream. Because the UNT to Haymaker Run is classified as a High Quality-Cold Water Fishery by the PA DEP, improvements to the stream were necessary for maintaining this status.

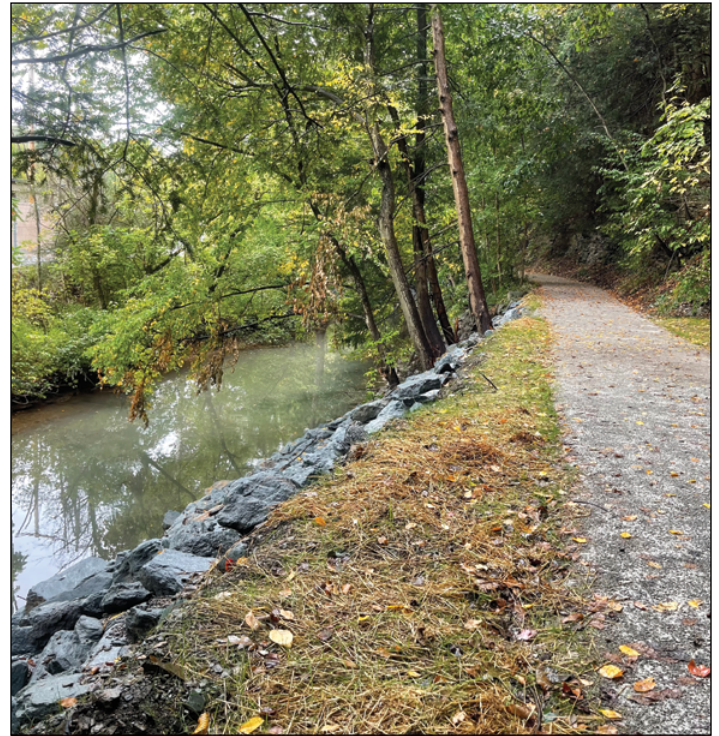
The stabilization of these streambanks was imperative to reduce the accelerated erosion occurring at these sites. Overall, improvements at these sites will provide many



## Stabilizing Streambanks along Turtle Creek in Duff Park, Murrysville



**Before:** Eroding, unstabilized streambank area.



**After:** The streambank area is stabilized with riprap.

benefits to both the Municipality of Murrysville and to the Turtle Creek Watershed as a whole.

*The total project cost was \$196,982 with \$163,185 from PA DEP's Growing Greener, \$31,548 cash and in-kind match from Municipality of Murrysville, and \$2,248 in-kind match from the District.*

### Jacobs Creek Dam Removal Project

The Jacobs Creek Watershed Association secured a watershed mini grant from the WPC and BHE GT&S, a subsidiary of Berkshire Hathaway Energy, to support the design and permitting process for the Jacobs Creek Dam Removal project near Freeman Falls. The District has partnered with

Jacobs Creek Watershed Association, American Rivers, and WPC to work through this project.

### Streambank Stabilization Resources for Homeowners

The District was awarded a \$2,107 PA DEP Environmental Education grant. District AmeriCorps Member Jacob Levendosky is leading the development of a video series and an educational handout to guide landowners on how to stabilize streambanks on their properties. Additionally, the District will host a future educational stream walk event in Irwin Borough to give landowners the opportunity to observe a streambank stabilization project firsthand.



Dam to be removed on Jacobs Creek near Freeman Falls.

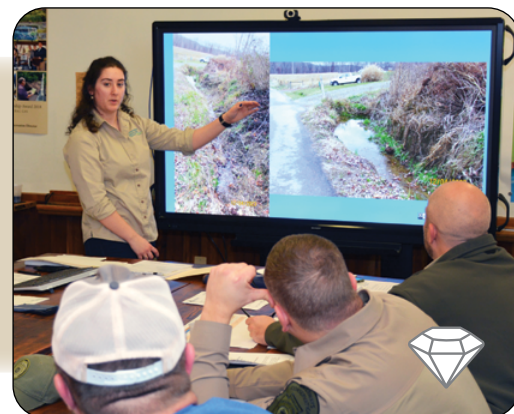


#### District Diamond

J. Roy Houston served as the District's Chairman for over 40 years through a time of tremendous change and growth.



## Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Road Improvements Control Erosion and Help Water Quality



For the 2024 grant round, the District received 12 applications - five for dirt and gravel roads and seven for low volume roads. The total requested amount for this application period was over \$670,000 for both dirt and gravel and low volume road projects.

Nine projects were approved and funded, encompassing eight different municipalities. Of the nine projects, six projects were low volume road projects totaling over \$251,000. Three projects were dirt and gravel road projects totaling over \$141,000. Four projects were completed this year and included work on Che Che Road in St. Clair Township; Mallard Lane in Ligonier Township; Beck Road in Allegheny Township; and Newhouse Park Road in Delmont Borough.

The four projects that were completed received over \$176,000; this does not include the municipal in-kind match which totaled over \$164,000. The remaining five projects approved received extensions and will be completed in 2025. Grant funding and municipal in-kind together totaled over \$340,000 funded on road projects.

In addition to the programs road projects, Water Resource Specialist Kelly Brestensky held multiple trainings and workshops including a Driveway Workshop, Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance Refresher, and a DGLVR Application Workshop. Kelly also annually presents to a Quality Assurance Board (QAB) for the DGLVR program. This local advisory board ranks applications for funding and

makes funding recommendations to the District board as well as assisting in developing local policy.

### Che Che Road, Dirt and Gravel Road Project

Che Che Road is located in St. Clair Township. Previously there were no drainage practices on the very steep road, which caused large amounts of erosion due to the velocity of runoff flowing down the gravel road and in the ditch line. All of the drainage from the road discharged into Shannon Run, a High Quality stream, which intersects with Che Che Road at the bottom of the hill. Three new cross pipes and two new through-the-bank pipes were installed to divert the water away from the stream. Fill was then added to the road to encourage the water to drain off the road to the newly created ditch line. As part of the project, the road was sealed with tar and chip surfacing to help prevent erosion and to stabilize the surface. Work was completed by Ligonier Construction.

*The total project cost was \$95,049, with \$59,600 provided by Dirt and Gravel funding and \$35,449 of in-kind match contributions from St. Clair Township.*



#### District Diamond

District Water Resource Specialist Kelly Brestensky conducts an annual Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Quality Assurance Board Meeting to evaluate program grant applications.

### Che Che Road in St. Clair Township



**Before:** Unstable gravel surface and eroding ditches.



**After:** Stabilized surface and ditch line.





Westmoreland  
Conservation  
District

75 YEARS  
1949-2024



**The 75th Anniversary Westmoreland Conservation District Staff, l-r:** Chrissy Edwards-McCune, Jen Novak, Chelsea Walker, Chelsea Gross, Allie Shreffler, Rob Cronauer, Laura Guskiewicz, Hank Bradish, Tammy Marsh, Tammy Woodward, Jacob Levendosky, Christie Sebek, Ryan Peckheiser, Kylie Schultz, Jim Pillsbury, Kelly Brestensky, Jared Meharey, Mark Jackson - *Antique auto display celebrating the 1940s era. The District was established in 1949.*  
*l-r: 1948 Nash Super 600, 1946 Nash Ambassador Slipstream, courtesy of Cris and Molly Detwiler*



# Mosquito Monitoring Protects the Health of the Public



## West Nile Virus Monitoring Program

Our West Nile Virus (WNV) Program is a part of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP) Mosquito-borne Disease Control Program. The goal of the program is to reduce public health risk from infected mosquitoes in Westmoreland County.

Mosquito Monitoring/Conservation Technician Chrissy Edwards-McCune had 15 WNV positive mosquito samples at 13 unique site locations. A total of 76 different sites were surveyed yielding 6,945 total mosquitoes trapped. Mosquito numbers were much lower than last year, likely due to drought conditions. Despite the lower numbers of mosquitoes collected, the virus activity remained very high throughout the state. As of December 2024, there were 61 reported human cases of WNV in Pennsylvania. That is triple the amount of 2023. Chrissy also investigated 18 complaints relating to dead birds, abandoned pools, and mosquito bites.

You can prevent mosquitoes in your yard, by eliminating any potential breeding grounds (for example, litter,

tires, buckets, kids toys, tarps, clogged gutters, pet dishes, bird baths, and flower pots), using Environmental Protection Agency approved repellents (for example, DEET, Picardin, and IR3535), and wearing long sleeves and pants - especially around dusk and dawn.

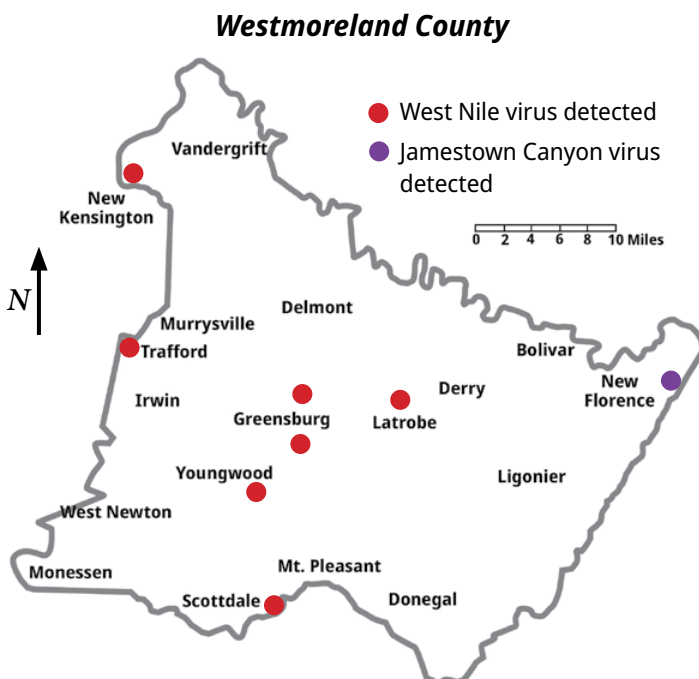
## Jamestown Canyon virus

In 2024, Westmoreland County confirmed its first positive mosquito sample for Jamestown Canyon virus (JCV) at a location in New Florence Borough. To date, JCV was documented in 13 Pennsylvania counties since monitoring began in 2022. JCV is transmitted to people through the bite of infected mosquitoes, but from different species of mosquitoes than those that may carry WNV. Pennsylvania is home to 30 mosquito species that can possibly transmit JCV, which prefer to bite mammals such as deer, elk, and people. These mosquitoes favor wetland habitats, grassy, woodland pools, and floodplains. JCV is a neuroinvasive pathogen. Many people infected with it do not have any symptoms, but rare symptomatic cases do occur. These symptoms include fever, fatigue, and headache, or severe disease including encephalitis or meningitis.

Please visit PA DEP's Vector Management website for more information: <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Program-Integration/Vector-Management/Pages/default.aspx>

## Tire Recycling Event Revamped

Since the beginning of the WNV Program in Westmoreland County (2017), the tire recycling event was held at the local recycling center, Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling, in Unity Township. The event would discount \$1 off the regular price the center charged to recycle tires. Most of the recyclers came from the boroughs, municipalities, and townships that neighbored the recycling center. Therefore, this past spring the District took a new approach to help others who are further from the center, to recycle their tires. We approached Washington Township with our idea and they agreed for us to use their maintenance facility. They were







Washington Township tire recycling event yielded 870 tires!

thrilled with us bringing the event to them, and offered to cover a portion of the cost for recycling the tires. The event yielded 870 tires, making this year's event a great success! Thank you Westmoreland Cleanways and Washington Township for such a successful event.

## Westmoreland Fair

Each year, our WNV Monitoring program sets up an educational booth at the Westmoreland Fair, where the public can receive informational pamphlets on mosquitoes and ticks as well as free mosquito dunk samples. This year, with the help of Mark Jackson, our Visual Communications Specialist, the booth had a new attraction - a "face in hole" banner with a mosquito on it. The public was encouraged to be photographed as a mosquito and use the QR codes on the banner to link them to the District website's WNV Surveillance page.

## Ticks in our County

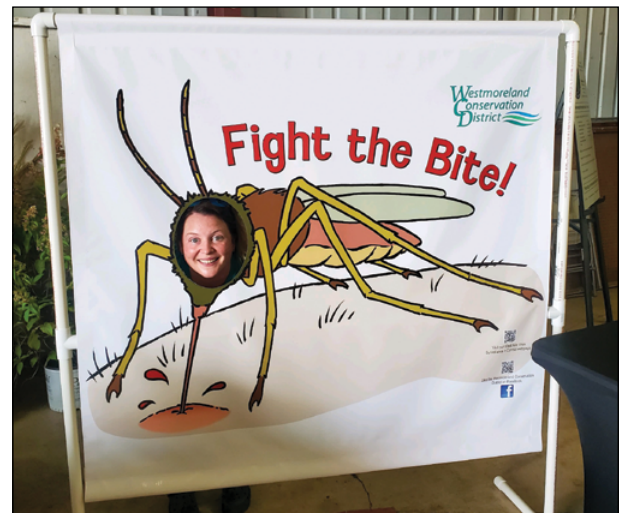
Blacklegged ticks (*Ixodes scapularis*), also known as deer ticks, were the only species collected this year in our county. The number one pathogen they tested positive for was Lyme disease (*Borrelia burgdorferi*).

You can reduce tick activity near you by keeping playground equipment, decks and patios away from yard edges and woods. Ticks prefer wooded areas, tall grass or brush, the edges where woods and lawns meet, leaf litter, and



Tire recycling event volunteers - top row in truck, l-r: volunteer Karissa Arnold, District Staff - Mosquito Monitoring/Conservation Technician Chrissy Edwards-McCune, Stormwater Program Technician Hank Bradish, Water Resource Specialist Kelly Brestensky, bottom row, l-r: District Intern Sydney Williams, District Intern Garrison Wehrle, AmeriCorps Member Sarah Poklembo, and AmeriCorps Member Emma Sprowls.

wood piles where small mammals live. Protect yourself further by treating your clothing with Permethrin or using DEET as a repellent for your bare skin. Always remember to read the labels before applying repellants!



A cartoon photo op with Mosquito Monitoring/Conservation Technician Chrissy Edwards-McCune at the Westmoreland Fair.



## District Diamond

The District's West Nile Virus Monitoring Program started trapping and testing local mosquito specimens in 2017. Tick specimens are also monitored for Lyme Disease to help keep watch on public health.



# District Education and Outreach Build Conservation Awareness and Advocacy



## Municipal Roundtable & Engineers Workshop

The District provided multiple educational opportunities for natural resource professionals, municipal officials and staff, and students. The annual Municipal Roundtable updated participants from 23 different communities on conservation topics that impact their residents, including recently completed District projects in various communities, the importance of conservation partnership agreements, and a presentation about the PA One Call program. Our annual Engineers' Workshop continues to be a big draw with nearly 400 participants from 15 different counties attending over the two-day event. In addition to regulatory updates, participants learned about riparian buffers, successful stream crossings, and the managed release concept. They also had the opportunity to talk with several vendors showing off the latest in stormwater management and erosion control products.

## Envirothon

Twenty-one teams from 11 local high schools competed at the Westmoreland County Envirothon in April. This annual event, held at Twin Lakes County Park, tested students' knowledge about wildlife, forestry, land use, aquatics, and this year's current issue topic – renewable energy for a sustainable future. The winning teams were Derry Area High



PA Game Commission Officer Shawn Barron works with his canine partner Ayla during a tracking demonstration at the Envirothon.



**2024 Envirothon First Place Team** - Derry Team One, *l-r*: Austin Kolano, Hermione Lehosky, Celia Graef (student teacher), Carly Rippole, (advisor), Makayla Rudy, Timmy Miller, and Jax Klapchar





Pedaling for Conservation bike ride participants in front of the Mount Pleasant history mural at the beginning of the Coal & Coke Trail.

School team 1 (first place), Norwin High School team 2 (second place), and Kiski Area High School team 2 (third place). Students also learned about the role of the Game Commission's K-9 program from Officer Shawn Barron and his canine partner, Ayla. Ayla demonstrated her tracking ability by finding a bullet casing that had been placed in a field earlier that day by one of the officers. Students were captivated by Ayla's tracking ability and charm. The Westmoreland County Envirothon was sponsored by Smithfield and Apex Energy.

### Pedaling for Conservation

Participants pedaled along the Coal and Coke (C&C) Trail in Mount Pleasant for our second conservation bike ride. Jim Pillsbury gave an overview of stormwater issues in the watershed, Chelsea Walker talked to cyclists about a streambank stabilization project along Shupe Run, and Chrissy Edwards-McCune discussed the West Nile virus monitoring that takes place along the trail. Alex Busato from the Jacobs Creek Watershed Association gave an overview of wildlife in the area and talked about the impacts of mining on the watershed. The bike ride was led by District board member and avid cyclist, Emil Bove.

### Mosaic Community Development Center

Funding was received from the PA Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP) Environmental Education Grants Program to create a stormwater education program for the Mosaic Community Development Center's (MCDC) after school program in the City of Jeannette. Staff used an



At one of the informative stops during the Pedaling for Conservation bicycle tour, Watershed Program Manager Chelsea Walker gives a presentation on a Shupe Run streambank stabilization project along the Coal & Coke Trail.

Enviroscape to show students how stormwater flows across the landscape and transports pollution to our waterways. Students learned new terms like buffers, rain gardens, and stormwater. Each student received the book "Let's Build a Rain Garden" to learn about the functions of rain gardens. They built their own rain garden models using plastic bottles, rocks, soil, seeds, and drinking straws, and they watched their rain garden plants grow. District staff also





AmeriCorp Member Terry Stewart teaching students how stormwater flows across a landscape.



Watershed Specialist Kylie Schultz building rain gardens with students.

designed and created a demonstration rain garden as part of their community garden. Students helped plant flowers in the garden and learned how to take care of it in the future. *For more information on this project, refer to the Stormwater section of this Annual Report on page 14.*

### Student Visitors

Our staff presented information about conservation districts and career opportunities in the natural resource field to high school and middle school students. Thirty-six students from Southmoreland Middle School and 15 students from Burrell High School arrived at the J. Roy Houston Conservation Center for fieldtrips. Students heard about the origin of the District barn, toured the outdoor demonstration projects, participated in a macroinvertebrate

sorting exercise, learned about mosquito and tick-borne illnesses, and looked at an erosion control plan. Students from Jeannette High School were unable to make the trip to the barn, so Education Programs Coordinator Jen Novak took the presentation to them and spoke to forty-five students in their ecology class.

### Internship Program

We continued to help college students gain valuable work experience by hosting two interns during the summer. One of our interns was funded through a program of the Workforce Investment Board of Westmoreland and Fayette Counties. The Experience Works! PLUS Internship Program matches young adult interns with local organizations to provide them with relevant career experience in their field



Sorting of macroinvertebrates after a kick-net survey, l-r: Watershed Specialist Kylie Schultz, Intern Sydney Williams, and Intern Garrison Wehrle.



of study to help prepare them for the workforce. This was our second year hosting an Experience Works! PLUS intern. Garrison Wehrle, an Environmental Resource Management major from Penn State University, and Sydney Williams, an Ecology major from Susquehanna University, assisted staff with a variety of tasks including setting mosquito traps, planting riparian buffers, and cleaning vehicles. Garrison and Sydney also helped develop educational materials about the importance of moths as pollinators. Their moth mini-posters and brochure were shared with the Westmoreland Pollinator Partnership and were on display at a variety of educational events around the county. These publications are available for download on our website.

## Annual Report

The 2023 Annual Report theme “Changing Landscapes” focused on District accomplishments through the staff’s points of view. Staff faces have changed considerably over the last few years as a result of retirements and new hires. The report cover featured a group photo of the staff standing in front of the District barn headquarters. On the inside front cover was a key identifying each staff member in the photo along with their title. The report was a 36 page, plus cover publication. It was posted on the District’s website as an interactive PDF with live hyperlinks. A link to the report was then included in a Constant Contact email campaign and also posted on Facebook. A run of 500 full color Annual Reports was also commercially printed. They received a limited distribution by U.S. Mail and were also distributed in person at District workshops and events.



The District’s new Chevrolet Colorado trucks display their branding.

## Conservation Directory

Technical Programs Secretary Tammy Woodward once again helped update the District’s *Westmoreland County Conservation Directory*. Early in 2024, she reached out to conservation-related agencies and organizations, and public officials to make sure their Directory information is current. The updated 44 page booklet was then posted on the District’s website. In addition, copies of the Directory were printed in-house as needed.

## Social Media Outreach

Education Coordinator Jen Novak created and shared 188 posts on the [District’s Facebook page](#) in 2024.

Jen also coordinated 12 Constant Contact email campaigns, which were sent out to general and special focus audiences.

We continued to populate our [YouTube Channel](#) with informative videos like the District’s [Stormwater Trail series](#), which was completed and posted in March 2024.

The District also continues to maintain a LinkedIn page.

## Displays and Branding

A collection of historic wooden water and sewer pipe sections were assembled into an attractive interpretive display, which was installed on the main stairwell walls at the District barn headquarters.

An interactive “Fight the Bite” photo-op cartoon poster featuring a giant mosquito was produced for the West Nile Virus awareness display at the Westmoreland Fair. *See page 25.*

Two new District Chevy Colorado pickup trucks got their branding with colorful door wraps featuring the District logo over a Stephen Simpson photo of Jacobs Creek.

## Partner Support

We continued to assist the Five Star Trail and the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association with their newsletters. We also assisted with the Sewickley Creek Watershed’s Cruise for Conservation by providing graphic design services for promotional fliers, dash plaques and awards.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority asked us to help update and coordinate a reprint of *The Homeowner’s Guide to Stormwater* booklet for a special event they were hosting.



### District Diamond

The annual Engineers’ Workshop is the District’s most popular education program. For decades, this workshop has been sharing important environmental and conservation insights with regional professionals who work with land development.



## Awards and Recognitions Both Received and Presented



### The District receives a Photo Award at the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) 1st Annual Conference

Non-Point Source Manager Chelsea Gross and Agricultural Conservation Technician Allie Shreffler attended the 2024 ACAP Agriculture Conservation Conference located in State College. The conference was a three-day event hosted by Penn State Extension's Center for Agriculture Conservation Assistance Training (CACAT) and the State Conservation Commission. The conference included networking, farm visits, workshops, and presentations. At the conference, the District was awarded the "Best ACAP Photo Award for 2024." The photo was taken from the R. Erdman Riparian Buffer Tree Planting Project and depicts shrub caging efforts to protect seedlings from deer pressure and damage. The photo was taken by District Visual Communications Specialist Mark Jackson. *See page 5.*



Conservation District Trash Award Champions, *standing l-r:* Stormwater Program Technician Hank Bradish, Mosquito Monitoring/Conservation Technician Chrissy Edwards-McCune, Water Resource Specialist Kelly Brestensky, *kneeling, l-r:* Intern Sydney Williams, Agricultural Conservation Technician Allie Shreffler, Watershed Specialist Kylie Schultz

### Conservation District Trash Champions

For the past four years, Elk County Conservation District has challenged all Pennsylvania conservation districts to pick up trash during the months of April and May. The conservation district that picks up the most trash in their own county is the winner.

Our District won this state-wide competition by collecting 11 tons of trash this year! Our staff picked up trash along two roadways for a total of 1.5 miles. Staff collected 32 bags of trash, 6 tires, and 1 TV, for a total of 650 pounds of trash. Staff also held a tire recycling event that collected 870 tires totaling 21,750 pounds. *For more information on the tire recycling event, refer to the West Nile Virus Monitoring Overview section of this annual report on page 24.*



*l-r:* Chelsea Gross, Non-Point Source Manager, and Allie Shreffler, Agricultural Conservation Technician, accept the Best Photo Award at the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) First Annual Conference. Photo by Jesse Bussard, Marketing Coordinator for CACAT.



## Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Ann Rudd Saxman District Directors' Award

Charles Duritsa, the District's Vice Chairman, recently received the Ann Rudd Saxman Conservation District Director Excellence Award at the PA Association of Conservation District's (PACD) annual conference in State College.

The award is given to a conservation district director or associate director for their outstanding volunteer efforts, which have furthered the activities and accomplishments of conservation districts on a statewide basis. Chuck is the current secretary for the PACD, having previously served



*l-r:* PACD President Dennis Beck, PA Department of Agriculture Executive Deputy Secretary Greg Hostetter, Charles Duritsa, PA DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley, PACD North Central Region Director Dr. Robert Shannon

as president and vice president. He also has volunteered his time helping the Westmoreland Land Trust, Turtle Creek Watershed Association, Rivers of Steel National Heritage Corporation, and Ohio River Basin Consortium for Research and Education.

## 2024 District Conservation Farmer of the Year Award

Marla and Todd Frescura, along with their sons Dante and Evan, were recognized as the District's 2024 Conservation Farmer of the Year. The Frescura family manages a 100-acre organic dairy farm in Latrobe that supplies milk to Horizon Organic. The cows – 60 Ayrshire and Milking Shorthorn – are pasture-based and rotated daily between one of 53 paddocks constructed on the farm. The cows are milked twice a day, and the milk is shipped to Horizon's facilities in New York and Virginia.

The farm was originally purchased in 1948 by Todd's grandparents, Thelma and the late Roy Kemerer, and run as a conventional dairy farm. In the mid-1990s, Roy placed the farm in an agricultural conservation easement to protect the land from development.

Todd purchased the farm in 2008, and began the process to transition the operation to an organic dairy farm. In 2016, the farm was officially certified organic. Todd follows stringent requirements to keep his farm compliant with organic certification protocols and receives multiple inspections each year.

## 2024 Conservation Farmer of the Year - Marla and Todd Frescura, Dante and Evan



*l-r:* District Directors, Bill Doney, Fred Slezak and Emil Bove present the 2024 District Conservation Farmer of the Year Award to Marla and Todd Frescura and their sons Dante and Evan.





*l-r: District Manager/CEO Rob Cronauer congratulates Todd and Marla Frescura on receiving the 2024 Conservation Farmer of the Year Award.*

Over the years, the Frescura family has established several best management practices including installing gutters and dripline drains on the barns, creating a grassed waterway, and installing animal heavy use protection and animal walkways to reduce erosion.

Todd has worked with the conservation district to establish a volunteer nutrient management plan in the past and keeps the farm's manure management plan up to date. The family protects the local waterway – which is part of a designated High Quality watershed – by keeping the cows out of the stream, which means that Todd has to haul water out to the cattle.

Future projects include creating a 3-acre pollinator planting buffer, constructing additional fencing, stabilizing animal walkways, and adding water hydrants.

According to Non-Point Source Manager Chelsea Gross, "The Frescura family takes pride in the conservation practices that they have implemented to protect the High Quality watershed."



The Frescura's cows are pasture-based and rotated daily between one of 53 grazing paddocks on the farm.

## The District's 2024 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award

The Richard King Mellon Foundation (The Foundation) was recognized with the District's 2024 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award. The Foundation, based in Pittsburgh, was established in 1947 by Richard King Mellon who had an interest in conservation and preservation of the natural environment along with protecting wildlife. The Foundation provides funding through its conservation program for projects related to habitat conservation, stewardship, activation, and sustainable communities.

Over the past several decades, with the generous assistance of the Foundation's grant program, the District has been able to implement numerous conservation projects that have positively impacted the region by improving water quality and restoring habitat. Examples of some recent projects include the following: stormwater basin retrofits at Ligonier Valley School District; streambank stabilization and tree plantings along Shupe Run next to the Coal and Coke Trail; parking lot and streambank stabilization at a park in Irwin; a stormwater pond to control runoff at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve; and stormwater retrofits – including establishing rain gardens, adding permeable pavement, and planting trees and shrubs – in Manor Borough.

The Foundation has been a friend to conservation in Westmoreland County by providing funding to many additional like-minded organizations such as Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation, Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling, Westmoreland Conservancy, and the Loyalhanna Watershed Association.



The Foundation recently helped rehabilitate this parking lot in Manor Borough with rain gardens, trees, shrubs and permeable pavement to help control stormwater and add greenspace.



### **District Diamond**

The District's first Conservation Farmer of the Year Award was presented in 1953 to James Torrance of Franklin Township. The farm is now the Manordale housing development.



## The District's Mission Relies on People and Partners



District Staff learn aspects of the contracting business from Adam Eidemiller, Inc. employees during the 2024 Field Day, l-r: Chelsea Walker, Joey Mangini, Brandon Batistella, Tom Ciesielski, Kelly Brestensky, Sydney Williams (intern), Chrissy Edwards-McCune, Christie Sebek, Garrison Wehrle (intern), Allie Shreffler, Chelsea Gross, Jim Pillsbury, Hank Bradish, Ryan Peckheiser, Kylie Schultz

### Staff Field Day

Work related to each of our District programs often relies heavily on completing administrative tasks, keeping up to date on regulatory changes, reviewing policy manuals and standard operating procedures, etc. We recognize that real life application and field knowledge is invaluable to what we do. As such, District staff were able to participate in a "Staff Field Day" to gain personal, hands-on experience in the field.

Employees from local excavating contractor, Adam

Eidemiller, Inc., spent the day with District staff, discussing aspects of the contracting business such as what it takes to run the business, erosion and sediment plans from a contractor's perspective, and what goes into responding to bid documents. District staff toured the facility and were introduced to the various types of equipment used on earthmoving sites. This experience provided valuable field knowledge for all who attended and will help us when working with future contractors. We thank Adam Eidemiller, Inc. for spending the day with us!





Ribbon cutting to celebrate the Turtle Creek Watershed Association's acquisition of the Biddle property. This large abandoned coal mine refuse site will be converted into a treatment system for the nearby Irwin discharge, the largest abandoned mine water discharge by volume in Western Pennsylvania. *l-r:* Karen Rose Cercone, Ed Zinkan, Paul Whealdon, Jason McCabe, Chrissy Edwards-McCune, Commissioner Doug Chew, Craig Barras, Rob Cronauer, Chuck Duritsa, Commissioner Sean Kertes, Kylie Schultz, Bill Mihalco

## Partnering with AmeriCorps

Since 2017, the District has recruited AmeriCorps Members to aid in spreading our mission and helping people use resources wisely. This year, the District continued the tradition and welcomed Jacob Levendosky aboard for the 2024-2025 term.



AmeriCorps is a national service movement that gathers motivated individuals who are seeking to improve the quality of their community and supports those individuals in their work. The District partners with Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps, a local initiative of AmeriCorps serving Southwest and South Central Pennsylvania, to find volunteers from our area willing to make a difference. Having a person dedicated to advocating for environmental stewardship has proven beneficial for the productivity of the District and provides a formative learning experience for the AmeriCorps member during their term.

Since the start of Jacob's term in August, he has assisted with installing and maintaining stormwater monitors across the county in coordination with Stormwater Technician Hank Bradish. Jacob also hosted a tree planting, recruiting volunteers from the community to help complete the final

stages of multiple grant-funded conservation projects. Additionally, Jacob assisted with a trash pickup along Story Road in Export in partnership with the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County.

The District looks forward to what can be accomplished as the year progresses and hopes to continue supporting the AmeriCorps mission for the benefit of Westmoreland County.

## Purchase of Biddle Property for Abandoned Mine Reclamation

The Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners (County Commissioners) announced a partnership with the Turtle Creek Watershed Association (TCWA), kick-starting the first step of a long-awaited cleanup project at the Irwin Mine Discharge. Located along the border of Irwin Borough and North Huntingdon Township, this site is one of the largest untreated abandoned mine discharge site in Western PA in terms of flow and pollutant loading, averaging 9 million gallons of discharge per day. The discharge currently contaminates Brush Creek, turning the water orange, impacting water quality, and disrupting aquatic life.

Funding assistance from the County Commissioners, The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County, and The Pittsburgh Foundation enabled TCWA to acquire a 50-acre parcel located in the village of Biddle, North Huntingdon



Township. This property will become the location of the future water treatment system that will eliminate the untreated mine water from the discharge. Now that TCWA owns the property, the District and its partners can move forward with planning, developing, and managing the next phases of the project. The District will also provide key support by researching and acquiring funding sources.

Upon project completion, the successful treatment and return of clean water to this area will restore approximately 11 miles of Brush Creek, from Irwin to Trafford, and further downstream by way of Turtle Creek into the Monongahela River.



Dredging sediment from Mammoth Lake, Mammoth County Park.

## Restoring Mammoth Lake

The District assisted with steps to set in motion a potential \$1 million project at Mammoth Park. Throughout the years, park visitors have expressed concern over the amount of sediment building up within Mammoth Lake. This sediment has been accumulating due to natural erosion since the lake was constructed in 1969. The task of removing over 50 years' worth of sediment will require significant planning, effort and resources. After discussing the best course of action to move forward, staff from the District and its partner organization, Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation, determined that conducting a pilot dredge first would allow us to gain valuable data to prepare for such an undertaking.

## Recycling Program

This year marked the first full year of recycling at the District since the recycling program revamp occurred in 2023. All of the District's recycling is transported to Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling in Unity Township. As of the end of December, the District had recycled 98 boxes of paper, 359 cardboard boxes, 60 large garbage bags of plastic containers, 349 glass containers, 23.5 large garbage

bags of cans, and 77 plastic bags. The District also recycled miscellaneous items including batteries, postage meters, a coffee carafe, and Christmas lights.

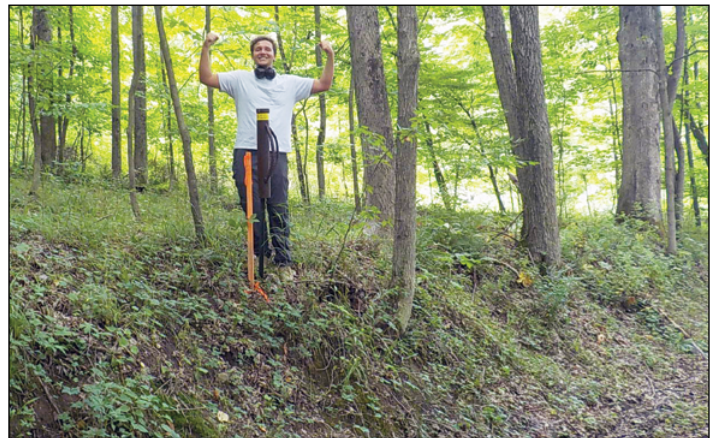
Thank you to our AmeriCorps Member Jacob Levendosky for continuing to support this program and for creating new signs for our recycling containers.



Jacob Levendosky loads a District vehicle with recyclable materials for transport to Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling.

## New Parking Lot Westmoreland Heritage Trail

Intern Garrison Wehrle assisted with a project located along the Westmoreland Heritage Trail (WHT). The Regional Trail Corporation (RTC) was able to purchase a 5-acre section of land running beneath and adjacent to the WHT near the Sara Steele parking lot trailhead in Slickville. This section of land had previously been leased by the WHT. Garrison assisted with marking out the property boundaries of this newly acquired land.



Intern Garrison Wehrle installing a property stake.

## Urban and Community Conservation Grant Award

The District received a \$10,000 Urban and Community Conservation Planning Grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts and the Natural Resources Conservation Service Grant Initiative to explore the need for



urban agriculture in the county.

With this funding, the District will identify Westmoreland County's underserved communities, assess their needs, and connect with local partners and organizations that can assist with promoting and expanding agriculture in urban areas.

Jordan Pallitto from The Hill Group, who has knowledge and experience working with underserved communities, has been retained to gather information from the public. This grant is the first step toward building future urban agriculture projects in the county.

## Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce

For the fourth consecutive year, our District headquarters hosted the Leadership Westmoreland Youth Academy, a five-

day program of the Westmoreland Chamber of Commerce that gives outstanding high school juniors and seniors a chance to meet and observe area business, government, and community leaders. This has been a beneficial partnership for us as it gives both the students who attend, and the leaders who come to speak, the opportunity to learn more about the District and the benefits of conservation. Watershed Program Manager Chelsea Walker and Watershed Specialist Kylie Schultz provided an overview of the District's mission and programs. Additionally, the Westmoreland Pollinator Partners (WPP) delivered an educational presentation on beekeeping and the importance of pollinators. Students then observed bee hives at the bee boxes on the District's campus. Beekeeping suits provided by WPP allowed participants to see these pollinators up close.

## The Leadership Westmoreland Youth Academy with the Westmoreland County Beekeepers Association



Getting a close look at the busy beehives at Donohoe Center.



Beekeeper Jerry Rolla shows a honey comb section of a hive.



Members of the Youth Academy in beekeeping garb with District staff members and *2nd & 3rd from the right: Westmoreland County Chamber of Commerce President & CEO Dan DeBone and Leadership Westmoreland Consultant Grace Markum*



## Facilities

The remaining open loft in the District barn headquarters was enclosed and renovated into new office spaces. District Director Kim Miller supervised the project utilizing historic, repurposed Chestnut siding and wooden framed windows to match the appearance of the adjacent enclosed loft offices. Updated wiring, lighting and carpet were also installed. The renovation began in December 2023 and was completed in March 2024.



Newly enclosed barn loft offices. Covering the Outdoor Kitchen.

Our outdoor kitchen received a welcomed finishing touch as the Nicewonger Awning, LLC completed the new roof by installing a custom-made fabric cover over the aluminum framework. This will provide shade and shelter from the weather to anyone using the kitchen.

## New District Staff Members



Erosion Control Specialist Jared Meharey

Jared Meharey graduated from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with a bachelor's degree in environmental studies and geography, along with a geographic information systems certificate. He previously worked for the Loyahanna Watershed Association in their Youth Conservation Corps, where he helped maintain local state lands and parks. Additionally, Jared worked at the Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Mine Safety office in New Stanton, where he utilized GIS software to create comprehensive maps for various mines across southwestern Pennsylvania.



AmeriCorps Member Jacob Levendosky

Jacob Levendosky is the District's newest AmeriCorps Member. Jacob is a recent graduate of Penn State University where he majored in biology. While at PSU, he worked as an intern with environmental organizations such as the Jacobs Creek Watershed Association and Three Rivers Waterkeeper. Jacob is making the most of his year-long service term by assisting District staff with various projects, gaining on-the-job experience for his future career in conservation.

## Hall of Honor Inductee - Conrad Donovan

Conrad "Connie" Donovan was inducted into the District Hall of Honor at the April 2024 District Board Meeting in a ceremony unvailing a memorial plaque.

Connie was a conservation ambassador known for the lighthearted cheerfulness he brought wherever he went. Connie began serving on the Westmoreland Conservation District board in 1995 as a farmer director. In 1998, the board appointed him treasurer, a position he held until his passing in 2021.

Connie was devoted to conservation and made significant and long-term contributions throughout his 26 years on the Westmoreland Conservation District board. He was always present and active at District meetings.

Visit the Hall of Honor in the main hall of the District headquarters (barn) to learn more, or [visit our website](#).



Conrad "Connie" Donovan



## District Diamond

75 years of helping people use resources wisely





as of 2025

J. Roy Houston Conservation Center, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, PA 15601

724-837-5271

[westmorelandconservation.org](http://westmorelandconservation.org)

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Ronald J. Rohall

*Chairman*

Charles Duritsa

*Vice Chairman*

Kim Edward Miller

*Treasurer*

Emil Bove, PLS

*Secretary*

Jay Bell

William Doney

County Commissioner

Douglas W. Chew

Paul R. Sarver

Fred J. Slezak

## **ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS**

Daniel Carpenter

Bruce J. Corna Jr.

Reid Crosby

Richard Ebert

Kathleen Fritz

Lawrence Gasparato

John Hardiman

Larry Larese

John Lohr

Barbara D. McMillan

William Mihalco

Nicole Miller

William Roberts

Theresa Gay Rohall

Thomas Sierzega

Joshua Spano

John Turack

## **STAFF**

Robert D. Cronauer

*District Manager/CEO*

Laura Guskiewicz

*Accounting and Human Resources*

*Administrator*

Mark Jackson

*Visual Communications Specialist*

Tammy Marsh

*Administrative Assistant*

Janette Novak-Mitchell

*Education Program Coordinator*

James W. Pillsbury, MS, PE

*Hydraulic Engineer*

Chelsea Walker

*Watershed Program Manager*

Hank Bradish

*Stormwater Program Technician*

Kelly Brestensky

*Water Resource Specialist*

Kylie Schultz

*Watershed Specialist*

Terry Stewart/ Jacob Levendosky

*AmeriCorps Members*

Chelsea Gross

*Non-Point Source Manager*

Christina Edwards-McCune

*Mosquito Monitoring/Conservation*

*Technician*

Ryan Peckheiser

*Erosion Control Specialist*

Jared Meharey

*Erosion Control Specialist*

Christie Sebek

*Technical Programs Administrator*

Allie Shreffler

*Agricultural Conservation Technician*

Tammy Woodward

*Technical Programs Secretary*

## **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**

Jay Bell

Emil Bove, PLS

Gisela Carmenaty

Paul Cinkan

Rob Cronauer

William Doney

Rich Ebert

Dana Flowers

George Gaffron

Chelsea Gross

Dustin Heeter

Amy McChesney

Vince Mangini

Terry Matty

Kim Edward Miller

Laurel Rush

Paul Sarver

Allie Shreffler

Tom Sierzega

Fred Slezak

Mimi Thomas-Brooker

## **AGRICULTURE COMPLIANCE**

Jay Bell

Rob Cronauer

William Doney

Rick Ebert

Chelsea Gross

Kim Edward Miller



Paul Sarver  
Allie Shreffler  
Fred Slezak

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

Andrea Halfhill  
Mark Jackson  
Lauren Jones  
Janette Novak-Mitchell  
Madison Raviart

## **DIRT, GRAVEL AND LOW VOLUME ROADS PROGRAM**

Kelly Brestensky  
Matt Kauffman  
Ronald Rohall  
Curtis Swiantek  
Chelsea Walker  
Daniel Wilson

## **EROSION CONTROL COMPLIANCE**

Emil Bove, PLS  
Rob Cronauer  
Charles Duritsa  
Chelsea Gross  
Bill Mihalco  
Kim Edward Miller

## **FORESTRY**

Edward Callahan  
Michael Doucette  
John Hilewick  
Anthony Quadro  
Ronald Rohall

## **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS**

Emil Bove, PLS  
Commissioner Douglas W. Chew  
Charles Duritsa  
Ronald Rohall  
Fred Slezak

## **TECHNICAL PROGRAMS**

Emil Bove, PLS  
Hank Bradish  
Rob Cronauer  
Dana Drake, PE

Christina Edwards-McCune  
Kathleen Fritz  
Duane Goodsell  
Chelsea Gross  
Emily Mallisee  
William Mihalco, PE  
Les Mlakar  
Janette Novak-Mitchell  
Ryan Peckeiser  
James Pillsbury, MS, PE

Doug Regola, PE, PLS  
William Roberts  
Ronald Rohall  
Christie Sebek  
Doug Siler, PE  
Tamira Spedaliere  
Bill Utzman, PE  
Chelsea Walker  
Damon Weiss, PE  
Tammy Woodward

## **Thank You to Our Public Officials Who Allocate WCD Annual Funding**

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, and other programs.

County funding has been instrumental in helping us attract significant additional dollars for conservation improvements throughout Westmoreland County.



### **Pennsylvania State Legislators Representing Westmoreland County**

Representative Jill Cooper  
Representative Eric Davanzo  
Representative Abby Major  
Representative Eric Nelson  
Representative Brian Rasel  
Representative Leslie Rossi  
Senator Joe Pittman  
Senator Patrick Stefano  
Senator Kim Ward



### **Westmoreland County Commissioners**



Westmoreland County Commissioners  
*left to right:* Douglas W. Chew,  
Sean Kertes, Ted Kopas

### *Westmoreland Conservation District 2024 Annual Report Team*

District Staff members - Rob Cronauer, Christina Edwards-McCune, Mark Jackson, Tammy Marsh and Consultant Andrea Halfhill. Sincere thanks to the entire District Staff for their contributions to this year's report.



## 2024 District Donors and Sponsors

### DONORS

#### FRIEND

\$2,500 to \$4,999

The Wilson Group

#### SPONSOR

\$1,000 to \$2,499

Charles and Judy Duritsa

#### PARTNER

\$500 to \$999

Kim and Dianne Miller

#### ASSOCIATE

\$250 to \$499

Richard and Maryann Herd

Bill and Kathy Mihalco

Joseph and Mary Louise Tarara

West Hempfield Presbyterian Church

#### DONOR

Up to \$249

Emil Bove

Tania DePue

Kimberly Edwards

Lisa McClellan

Nancy McDowell

William McKee, Jr.

David Minicucci

Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club

### IN-KIND DONATIONS

All Saints Brewing Company

Cris and Molly Detwiler

Kitz Family Farm

Logan Family Farms

McChesney Farm

Pleasant Lane Farms

### SPONSORS

#### SPONSOR

\$1,000

EQT Corporation

Smithfield Support Services Corporation

The Markosky Engineering Group, Inc.

#### PARTNER

\$500 TO \$999

Adam Eidemiller Inc.

Apex Energy, LLC

Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.

LV Tech

Westmoreland Community Action

#### ASSOCIATE

\$250 TO \$499

Fahringer, McCarty, Grey, Inc.

Pleasant Unity Supply, Inc.

The Wilson Group

#### DONOR

Up to \$249

Antonacci Design Associates, Inc.

Botanical Society of  
Westmoreland County

Gibson-Thomas  
Engineering Company, Inc.

Mount Pleasant Township Supervisors

Morris Knowles & Associates

Opst & Associates, LLC

Jim and Sarah-Jane Pillsbury

Sewickley Creek Watershed Association

Turtle Creek Watershed Association

Westmoreland Bird and Nature Club

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling

Westmoreland Conservancy

Westmoreland Land Trust



#### District Diamond

In 1999, District Director Kim Miller (center wearing a blue shirt) supervises the setting of the main support beam from the original 1880s bank barn, upon its reconstruction as an energy-efficient green building and new headquarters of the Westmoreland Conservation District.



## District Finances

### 2024 Income

State Funding .....	\$1,946,409 .....	49%
County Funding.....	\$ 700,000 .....	18%
Fees for Services .....	\$ 468,806 .....	12%
State Grants .....	\$ 344,860 .....	9%
Program Administration ....	\$ 269,270 .....	7%
Other .....	\$ 112,869 .....	3%
Education .....	\$ 53,279 .....	1%
Grants & Contributions .....	\$ 36,520 .....	1%
Total	\$3,932,013.....	100%

### 2024 Expenses

Operations .....	\$1,667,731 .....	55%
Grants.....	\$1,348,353 .....	44%
Education .....	\$ 24,879 .....	1%
Total	\$3,040,963.....	100%



### District Diamond

Our dedicated District Managers set the pace over the years working with our Staff, Board of Directors and community:

1. Dairy farmer Calvin Gerhard was hired as the District's first Executive Assistant in 1968 after the District became independent from the Soil Conservation Service.
2. Elwood Leslie became full-time Executive Assistant in 1970. His title changed to Executive Director in 1976 and finally to District Manager in 1981. He further promoted and expanded District programs.
3. Manager/CEO Greg Phillips provided the District with great vision, drive and outreach from 1984 to 2023.
4. Our current Manager/CEO Rob Cronauer is strengthening the District for the future with focus and common sense.



# MAWA

MURRYSVILLE AREA WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

MAWA promotes the enhancement of environmental quality throughout the watersheds of the Murrysville and Export areas of southwest Pennsylvania

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



Antiques - Vintage - Collectibles Visit us on Facebook



**POWERFUL**  
solutions



**INNOVATIVE**  
designs

**WE PROUDLY  
PROVIDE**

- CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES**  
STRUCTURES + BRIDGE INSPECTION + ROADWAY + TRAFFIC
- ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**  
SCIENCES + ENGINEERING + CULTURAL RESOURCES
- CONSTRUCTION SERVICES**  
INSPECTION + MANAGEMENT

**PHONE**  
724-238-4138

**EMAIL**  
info@markosky.com

**LOCATIONS**  
Ligonier, PA + York, PA  
Steubenville, OH + Charleston, WV



# Ward & Christner, P.C.

Attorneys at Law

John N. Ward  
Barbara J. Christner  
April M. Schachtner

15 North Main Street  
Greensburg, PA 15601

724-834-2102 • FAX 724-834-3813

## TOGETHER WE THRIVE



FOR MORE INFO:



(724) 834-1260  
(800) 816-0022



[westmorelandca.org](http://westmorelandca.org)



**12,294**  
crisis  
response/  
call-in  
responses



**1.4M**  
totaling taxes  
refunds, 745  
individuals  
assisted



**145**  
people in  
housing  
programs



# FMG

## FAHRINGER, McCARTY, GREY, INC.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  
CIVIL ENGINEERING  
AND LAND SURVEYING SERVICES

1610 Golden Mile Highway  
Monroeville, Pennsylvania

[www.fmginc.us](http://www.fmginc.us)

Telephone: 724-327-0599

## GROUNDBREAKING SOLUTIONS, EARTHSHAKING RESULTS

- Spring Development Install/Repair
- Heavy Use Area Installation
- Concrete Prep/ Finish
- Sewer Tie-In
- Utility Install/ Repair
- Tri-Axle Services
- Site Development
- Trenching
- Grading
- Retaining Walls
- Lawn Installation
- Site Clearing
- Septic System Installation/ Repair
- Stormwater Management



**CE**  
COMPETITIVE  
EDGE  
EXCAVATION

CALL CODY FOR A CONSULTATION



**724-454-3164**



MT. PLEASANT, PA

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.



## Cresta Renovations

Tom Mikan | 135 Hidden Valley Rd  
Mikanthomasj917@gmail.com | Ligonier, Pa 15658  
724.689.3267

Fully insured - All work is guaranteed







## *Developer & Contractor*

*Since 1925*

**GENERAL CONTRACTING • EXCAVATION • SITE GRADING • UTILITIES**

**(724) 837-4300 - Office • (412) 551-6060 - Mobile**  
**GREENSBURG, PA**



## **Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.**

John J. Frydrych, M.S., P.E., CDP | Principal  
Civil & Environmental Consultants, Inc.

4350 Northern Pike, Suite 141, Monroeville, PA 15146

direct 724.387.6368 office 724.327.5200 mobile

412.491.2076

[www.cecinc.com](http://www.cecinc.com)

## **Morris Knowles & Associates, Inc.**

**Engineers - Planners - Scientists - Surveyors**

*Providing Professional Services Since 1916*

Municipal  
Engineering

Stormwater  
Management Design

Landscape  
Architecture

Environmental  
Engineering

Civil Site  
Development

Land Development  
& Permitting

Surveying

Water & Wastewater  
Management Design

**1740 Golden Mile Highway, Suite 101, Monroeville, PA 15146**

**(724) 468-4622 • [www.morrisknowles.com](http://www.morrisknowles.com) • [info@morrisknowles.com](mailto:info@morrisknowles.com)**





# LUTTERMAN EXCAVATING, LLC

1813 State Route 819  
Greensburg, PA 15601

[luttermanexcavating@hotmail.com](mailto:luttermanexcavating@hotmail.com)

**Demolition, Paving & Excavating  
Redi-Rock Retaining Walls**

**P: 724-668-2021 F: 724-668-2025**



## HOST TO POST WORKFLOW SOLUTIONS

Benefit from a 30-year track record of streamlining business processes, increasing employee productivity and decreasing costs.

**The only locally owned and accredited certified  
MBE of its kind located in Western Pennsylvania.**

**Douglas Beck**, Director of Business Development

**The Wilson Group, LLC**

147 Delta Dr | RIDC Park | Pittsburgh, PA 15238

414-979-2120 [dbeck@thewilsongroup.com](mailto:dbeck@thewilsongroup.com)



## About Us

Gibson-Thomas is a full-service civil engineering firm providing everything from transportation, traffic, municipal, and water treatment services, to construction and NBIS bridge inspections. We have over 160 professionals to guide your project from the design process through construction.

**Quality  
Engineering  
Services  
Since 1916**

### Environmental Services

Erosion Control Designs

Stormwater Management Waterway

Permitting

Wetland Delineations

**SCAN  
ME! >>**



[gibson-thomas.com](http://gibson-thomas.com)





## **YOUR TRUSTED CONSTRUCTION & LANDSCAPE SUPPLY PROFESSIONALS**

**www.AMENTCONSTRUCTION.com**

**724-879-4197**



LVTech is your One-Stop IT Support Team!  
Since 2000, LVTech has been the choice for  
small business, offering an array of technology  
services to meet your ever-growing IT demands.

- Managed IT Services
- IT Support & Maintenance
- Security Services
- Network Infrastructure
- Phone Systems
- Cloud Services

---

**Greensburg • Johnstown • State College**

---

**Toll free (855)-LVTech-1  
588-3241**

**Website**





## Our Front Cover Plein Air Painting Story



Local artist Nancy Rusbosin played a key role in planning, promoting and coordinating the District's first-ever Plein Air Paint Out event to help celebrate the District's 75th Anniversary. See pages 3-4.

One of the subjects Nancy chose to paint was the historic stone water trough and old-fashioned hand pump within the native plant landscaping in front of the District's J. Roy Houston Conservation Center barn. Titled *"July 2024 Houston"*, this captivating painting won first place at the District's Plein Air artist exhibition. District Manager/CEO Rob Cronauer then reached out to Tim Wood, owner of Aquatic Edge, who originally installed the stone trough and pump, to tell him about the painting. Tim purchased the painting, and so a beautiful water quality conservation symbol has come full circle.

## The 2024 Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors



l-r: Fred Slezak, Chairman Ron Rohall, Westmoreland County Commissioner Doug Chew, Vice Chairman Charles Duritsa, Paul Sarver, Treasurer Kim Miller, Jay Bell, Secretary Emil Bove, Bill Doney



J. Roy Houston Conservation Center  
218 Donohoe Road  
Greensburg, PA 15601  
724-837-5271

wcd@wcdpa.com [www.westmorelandconservation.org](http://www.westmorelandconservation.org)

