

SUSQUEHANNA COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# ANNUAL REPORT 2023



Barbara Edelman-Copper

"TO PRESERVE AND  
PROTECT OUR NATURAL  
RESOURCES"







# OUR MISSION

“To preserve and protect our natural resources” The mission of the Susquehanna County Conservation District is to promote stewardship of the land, water, and other natural resources; to make all citizens aware of the interrelationships between human activities and the natural environment; to provide assistance for current efforts in natural resource conservation; and to develop and implement programs which promote the stewardship of natural resources; while enlisting and coordinating help from public and private sources in accomplishing this mission.

# OUR VISION

The Susquehanna County Conservation District will be the premier conservation organization regarded by all citizens as a leader in innovative stewardship of our natural resources. The District will effectively inspire and foster the application of natural resource conservation. With passion, the District will engage citizens and protect the environment for future generations while encouraging profitable business enterprises.

# OUR CORE VALUES

The Susquehanna County Conservation District operates under the philosophy that the best way to advance the cause of conservation is to educate local citizens to become better environmental stewards. By building partnerships, providing technical assistance, and sharing information, we strive to achieve environmental compliance using common sense to build a culture of responsible stewardship.

Barbara Edelman-Copper



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# Board of Directors



Douglas Wood Jr.  
Chairman



Curtis Hepler  
Vice Chairman



Bill Bayne  
Treasurer



Elizabeth Arnold  
Commissioner Director



Ed Price  
Public Director



Brian Severcool  
Farmer Director



Bill Shay  
Farmer Director



Jim Kessler  
Farmer Director



Robert Fearnley  
Farmer Director



Lillian Theophanis  
Associate Director



Jack McKee  
Associate Director



Michael Oakley  
Associate Director



# In Loving Memory of Wayne D. Oakley

June 4, 1946 – April 9, 2023

Wayne was born on June 4, 1946 in Nicholson, Pennsylvania. Wayne was the son of Ivan & Helen Oakley and was the eldest of five children. Wayne graduated from Lackawanna Trail High School prior to joining the United States Air Force in 1963. During his 4-year tenure in the Air Force, Wayne served as an electrician and was stationed in Virginia, Colorado, and Texas.

After serving in the Air Force, Wayne returned to Nicholson and was blessed with two daughters, Julie and Sheila from his first marriage. In 1983, Wayne married Debbie Peruzzi and was blessed with three more children; Brandy, Saleta, and Michael. Wayne was also blessed with seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Wayne's family meant everything to him.

Wayne spent the early years of his career operating the family dairy farm in Nicholson. In 1994, he sold the farm and moved on to multiple careers as an electrician, a sewage enforcement officer, and a Proctor & Gamble Technician. After retiring at age 62, Wayne joined the Susquehanna County Conservation District as their No-Till Specialist. Wayne always said that working at the district was his favorite job. He spent 15 years maintaining and delivering all of the No-Till equipment to farmers throughout Susquehanna and surrounding counties.

Not only was Wayne a proud Vietnam Veteran, he was a devout Jehovah Witness and was a dedicated 60-year member of the Union Grange. Whenever anyone would ask how he was doing, his response would always be "Superrific".

We appreciate all of the hard work and dedication that Wayne provided to the district and he is missed by many.





# Our Team



**Jennifer Ramey**  
District Manager



**Don Hibbard**  
Program Coordinator



**Adrian Gregory**  
Administrative Assistant



**Jason Branning**  
E&S Technician



**Cheyenne Jenner**  
Chesapeake Bay Technician



**Nate Harpster**  
Watershed Specialist



**Peter Maxey**  
No-till Technician



**Devyn Voda**  
D&G Specialist



# A word from the District Manager

Greetings!

As I sit here reflecting on the past year, I cannot help but to be proud of all that we did here at our district. 2023 was another challenging, yet productive year for the district. It was a year of great accomplishments, progress, and partnerships. I am very proud of the staff, directors, and associate directors who dedicate an incredible amount of their time to conserve the natural resources of Susquehanna County.

As you will recall, conservation districts statewide received a substantial increase in state funding over the last few years. This additional funding ensures that we can continue to provide landowners and agricultural operations with technical and financial assistance focused on reducing the nutrient and sediment pollution reaching our waterways. Our Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) and Countywide Action Plan (CAP) have helped to achieve these reductions. As you read through this annual report, you will see that throughout 2023, district staff were able to implement many best management practices here in our county. The staff at SCCD have a drive within themselves to be stewards of our lands and assist landowners, municipalities, and farmers whenever possible.

The team at the district offers educational and outreach programs, technical assistance, program administration, project implementation, and other services to our local and surrounding areas. Our partner agencies also play a huge role in the work we do, and without them, we could not have succeeded in completing all of the projects we did in 2023.

I would like to say thank you to the amazing staff here at the district along with our partner agencies, county commissioners, directors and associate directors for supporting and guiding our efforts. The district looks forward to what 2024 will bring. Together, in conservation, we can do so much!

Yours in Conservation,



**"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together." - African Proverb**



# Thank You & Good Luck



**The Susquehanna County Conservation District would like to recognize our Commissioner Director, Elizabeth "Betsy" Arnold, Susquehanna County Commissioner, for all of the hard work and dedication that she has for our district and for Susquehanna County. During the last four years as a Commissioner Director, Betsy provided support and guidance to our board of directors and staff. Betsy will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best in her new chapter.**



**Alana McKeon was SCCD's 2023 Summer Intern. Alana relocated to Vestal, NY from Queens, NY. Alana is a junior at Binghamton University, studying Environmental Science with a concentration in Ecosystem Science. Hiking, biking, listening to music, and reading are some of Alana's favorite things to do. After college, she plans to pursue a career in ecology, conservation, and sustainability.**



# EROSION & SEDIMENT

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The Conservation District is delegated by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to administer the Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Chapter 102 regulations require that Best Management Practices (BMPs) are utilized during earth disturbance activities in order to minimize sediment pollution.

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Wetland protection and E&S controls at East Towanda - North Meshoppen 115kV Transmission Line Upgrade

**In 2023, District staff performed 51 E&S control plan reviews, processed 9 NPDES Permits, responded to 270 calls for technical assistance, performed 85 site inspections, and responded to 24 complaints.**



Stilling Basin/Energy Dissipater at Compressor Station 321 Upgrade

# DAM SAFETY AND WATERWAY MANAGEMENT

The Chapter 105 program regulates work in and around streams, wetlands, and other waterbodies with a focus on avoiding or minimizing impacts on the waters of the Commonwealth. Under a delegation agreement, the District administers general permits for various types of work in waterways; including wetlands and stream crossings, fish habitat structures, streambank stabilization, boat ramp and dock installation, intake and outfall structures, and utility line crossings.

District staff investigate complaints and provide regulatory and permitting assistance.

In 2023, District staff issued:

- 12 - Fish Habitat Enhancement Structures
- 13 - Dock Permits
- 10 - Bank Rehab, Bank Protection & Gravel Bar Removal Permits
- 5 - Intake and Outfall Permits
- 5 - Utility Line Stream Crossing Permits
- 1 - Minor Road Crossing Permit
- 2 - Temporary Road Crossing Permits

In 2023, district staff responded to 14 (105) complaints and 162 (105) calls for technical assistance.



Don Hibbard



# DIRT & GRAVEL ROADS

The mission of the Dirt & Gravel Road Program is to implement environmentally sensitive maintenance practices to reduce the adverse effects of a road on the environment. The projects provide long-term environmental benefits to Pennsylvania waterways while improving the public road system.

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SCCD'S DIRT & GRAVEL  
ROAD PROGRAM FUNDED  
12 DIRT & GRAVEL  
PROJECTS AND 2 LOW  
VOLUME PROJECTS IN  
2023. 3 ROAD PROJECTS  
THAT WERE GRANTED  
EXTENSIONS WERE ALSO  
COMPLETED.

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After



Before

In 2023, SCCD provided funding for Wilcox Road in Auburn Township to provide many needed updates. They were able to build up the base of the road and improve drainage. Auburn Township will top with DSA in the spring. Another improvement made to this road included the installation of a french mattress to help support the roadbed in a saturated area. The installation of a french mattress included the use of geotextile, clean stone, and a compacted top to provide a smooth driving surface.



The Chesapeake Bay Program is a cooperative effort involving all of the jurisdictions in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, with a goal to reduce nutrient and sediment pollution by 2025. Pennsylvania is critical in this effort as 50% of the freshwater to the Chesapeake Bay flows from the Susquehanna River.

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed is one of the most extraordinary places in America, spanning six states and the District of Columbia. As the nation's largest and most productive estuary, the Chesapeake Bay and its vast network of more than 18,000 miles of streams, creeks and rivers, holds tremendous ecological, cultural, economic, historic, and recreational value for nearly 18 million people who live, work and play in the region.

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# Manure Management

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Do you own Livestock? The Department of Environmental Protection requires you to have a manure management plan even if it's one horse, goat, sheep, or chicken in your backyard. The Susquehanna County Conservation District can help you develop one. In 2023, technicians at the district inspected 52 farms and assisted farmers and landowners with the creation of 7 Agricultural Erosion & Sedimentation plans, 13 Manure Management plans and assisted with writing 1, Act 38 Nutrient Management Plan.



Jay B Pollock



# NO-TILL

The Susquehanna County Conservation District offers our No-till Program to area farmers and landowners. The purpose of the No-till program is to prevent soil degradation and erosion from wind and water by encouraging the planting of crops with no-till equipment and the use of fall cover crops while discouraging the use of conventional tillage practices. Soil disturbance caused by conventional tilling increases soil loss by erosion and hardpan layer formation due to soil compaction. Using tillage also decreases infiltration, water-holding capacity, and soil fertility.

Many landowners also take advantage of the No-till program. Landowners rent the No-till equipment to implement best management practices for wildlife habitat and quality deer management.



**IN 2023, THE NO-TILL  
EQUIPMENT PLANTED  
A TOTAL OF 900  
ACRES**

The district has 6 pieces of equipment available for rent. Rental equipment includes;

- Three no-till corn planters
- two no-till seeders
- one interseeder

Our No-till Specialist will deliver the equipment to your farm and assist in setting up the equipment. When finished with the equipment, our No-till Specialist will return to move the equipment to the next operation.



# WATER QUALITY



The purpose of our Watershed Program is to promote the stewardship of the water resources of Susquehanna County by coordinating watershed conservation projects and informing and assisting the general public. The general public includes individuals, businesses, private organizations, and government entities within Susquehanna County's ten watersheds. The Watershed Specialist is responsible for providing technical, informational, and organizational assistance that will improve watershed organization development and the quality and quantity of the commonwealth's surface and groundwater resources. The Watershed Specialist is a resource to both the public and private sectors.

## Riparian Buffers



A riparian buffer is a vegetated area near a stream or river placed in zones consisting of trees, shrubs, and perennial plants. Riparian buffers are helpful in controlling sediments, nutrients, and pollutants. Buffers also help control flooding and provide better aquatic habitats. Our Watershed Specialist works closely with the Keystone 10 Million Tree Partnership to receive free trees to plant riparian buffers on landowner property. The SCCD office is a designated dropoff site for public pickup for landowners wanting to plant trees on their own.



The Susquehanna County Conservation District partnered with volunteers from the Susquehanna Community Development Associations Garden Club and the Ten Million Trees for Pennsylvania, to conduct a conservation planting in Oakland Township. This site was the location of the largest dam removal in the state. Heavy machinery had left its mark on the river and the shoreline where the 16ft high dam once stood. The goal of this project was to plant various species of trees and shrubs that would help stabilize the newly shaped banks and also offer long-term habitat benefits for wildlife. Volunteers helped put over 100 plants in the ground in an area that was less than an acre. Staff from the conservation district were grateful for the opportunity to work with such great volunteers. We look forward to seeing how this site will mature and bring new opportunities for recreation along the Susquehanna River.



# AG LAND PRESERVATION



The Farmland Preservation Easement Purchase Program was developed to strengthen Pennsylvania's agricultural economy and to protect prime farmland from being lost. The program enables state and county governments to purchase conservation easements through a joint fund of state and county money.

The Susquehanna County Conservation District administers the Agricultural Land Preservation Program for Susquehanna County. To be eligible, farms must be located in an agricultural security area; be contiguous acreage of at least fifty acres or contiguous acreage of at least ten acres in size and utilized for a crop unique to the area. As of December 2023, 37 farms have been preserved in Susquehanna County.

## GROWING GREENER

Growing Greener remains the largest single investment of state funds, in Pennsylvania's history, to address Pennsylvania's critical environmental concerns of the 21st century.



In 2023, SCCD completed a watering system using GG funding. This project supplies water to a herd of 35 beef cattle being pastured in a 70-acre rotational grazing area. Water is pumped from a well to a storage tank located at the top of the pasture. It is then gravity-fed to two strategically placed watering troughs. The watering troughs are surrounded by an engineered gravel pad that protects the ground from heavy animal traffic. This system was needed to provide a water source to pastured animals.

# COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLAN



The Susquehanna County Conservation District implemented many CAP projects throughout 2023.

CAP implementation funding was used to cost share the installation of a milkhouse wastewater treatment system at a dairy farm in Dimock Township. Milk and wastewater used to clean the milking equipment is collected in a two-tank system. The milk and wastewater are then pumped to a sprinkler head that disperses the liquids to a vegetated treatment area. This area is where nutrients can be absorbed by managed vegetation preventing it from reaching local waters.

## AGRICULTURAL CONSERVATION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) was created through the Clean Streams Fund established by the FY 2022-2023 Pennsylvania State Budget. ACAP provides financial and technical assistance for the implementation of best management practices on agricultural operations within the Commonwealth.

This ACAP funded project in Bridgewater Township included best management practices that provided the operator with a system design to house 35 Animal Equivalency Units (AEU's) and manure storage. This ACAP project totaled 8142 square feet.



Animal confinement structure



# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

## Eco-Explorers Day Camp

On Tuesday, August 1st, Susquehanna County kids ranging from ages 8-12 visited the Susquehanna County Conservation District office to get their hands dirty, explore the forested areas, and to learn about wildlife and aquatic insects. The kids even got to meet some of those animals up close and personal. Our first Eco-Explorers Day Camp was such a success that we are already planning for 2024. A huge thank you to the following volunteers, presenters, and donors who contributed to this event: Pocono Wildlife Rehabilitation and Education Center, Friends of Salt Springs Park, Dave Taylor (SC Beekeepers Assoc.), PA DEP, NRCS, Coterra, & Price Chopper.



## 165th Harford Fair

Each year SCCD participates in the Harford Fair. This year's booth featured a trivia poster and prize wheel, giveaways, a rain barrel display, a garden pond, macro-invertebrates, and literature.





# EDUCATION & OUTREACH



**Gavin Bewley**



**Alex Empet**

Each year, the Susquehanna County Conservation District awards two, Susquehanna County graduating seniors who are pursuing a career in the agriculture or environmental field with a \$1000 scholarship to assist with college expenses. Each applicant is required to write an essay of their choice and the SCCD board of directors determine who the recipients are based only on the essay and how it is written. On May 25, 2023, District Manager, Jennifer Ramey, had the opportunity to attend the senior awards day ceremony at Mountain View High School where she presented the two scholarships to students who will be attending college this fall. The recipients of the 2023 Susquehanna County Conservation District Scholarship were Alex Empet and Gavin Bewley. Alex will be attending Suny Cobleskill studying Dairy Production and Management. Gavin will be attending Penn State University studying Dairy Science. Congratulations to all of the 2023 Susquehanna County graduates!

## 4-H Day Camp



SCCD Watershed Specialist, Nathan Harpster, and Penn State Master Watershed Steward, Jeremy Leaidicker, were invited to conduct sessions as part of the Susquehanna County 4-H One Day Camp. Children spent time taking notes on gradient changes and recording varying times for features to take shape on a Stream Table. They got to learn about streambank erosion and how materials get deposited on floodplains. The kids impressed us with their attention to detail and desire to learn about the forces at play. Getting hands-on with resetting the stream substrates was one of their favorite parts of the activities!

## Conservation Corner Radio Broadcast

The SCCD has a radio segment called Conservation Corner which covers a variety of topics including: events, wildlife, district programs, environmental topics, and interviews. The Conservation Corner radio broadcast airs every Thursday at noon on WPFL channel 96.5. The show is also streamed on Spotify and iTunes. You can also visit our website to listen to archived broadcasts. 40 shows aired in 2023.

## Farm and Home Day



Farm and Home Day is hosted by Penn State Extension and is a great way for farmers and landowners to gather and to see what opportunities are available in Susquehanna County. SCCD directors and staff are always on site to help educate.



# EDUCATION & OUTREACH

## Contractor & Logger Workshop



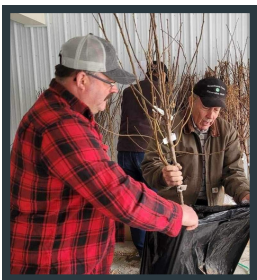
On October 5th, the district hosted its annual Contractor & Logger Workshop at the Susquehanna County Public Safety Building. Many township officials, loggers, and contractors listened to guest speakers from the Penn State Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies, PA 1 Call, The Fish & Boat Commission, and Susquehanna County Conservation District. After the workshop, attendees enjoyed a delicious complimentary BBQ lunch.

## Science Fair



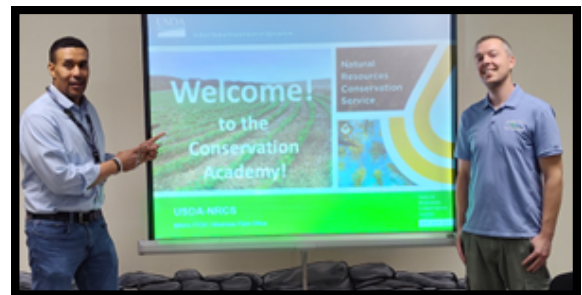
Don & Devyn interacted and engaged with students at the Elk Lake Elementary School Science Fair. Students had the opportunity to learn about aquatics and wildlife.

## Annual Seedling Sale



Our Annual Seedling Sale took place on April 22nd. Directors and staff gathered together to disburse 5300 seedlings that were pre-ordered for the sale.

## Conservation Academy



NRCS & SCCD partnered to teach a two part course called "Conservation Academy" for the MAHS Adult School. Forestry, permitting, and high tunnels were some topics of discussion.



# Interpretive Trail & Grounds

The Susquehanna County Conservation District received an environmental education grant from PA DEP, which was used to construct an interpretive walking trail on the property in which the district is located.

The interpretive trail feature points of interest are:

- Pollinator garden featuring native species
  - Live stake nursery
  - Moss garden
  - Bee Hive Demo
- User access to a tributary of Pettis Creek

The trail will be open to the public in spring 2024. The goal of this project is to foster community engagement, promote environmental stewardship, and endorse outdoor activity for all residents of Susquehanna County and beyond. Be on the lookout for more updates on this project.



Construction began in June



Live stake garden was planted



Pollinator gardens were tilled, seeded, and mulched



A bee apiary was installed by the Susquehanna Beekeepers Association



In October, the construction of our new pavilion was completed.





# ENVIROTHON



The Susquehanna County Conservation District held its annual county Envirothon competition on Friday, April 28th at Elk Mountain Ski Resort Inc. Twenty-nine teams from five Susquehanna County School Districts participated in testing related to the topics of Aquatics, Forestry, Soil and Land Use, Current Issues, and Wildlife.



This year's 1st place team was the "The Woodpeckers" from Montrose High School. This team is coached by advisor Anthony McKennas.



This year's 2nd place team was the "The Swamp Donkeys" from Elk Lake High School. This team is coached by advisor John Pierson.



This year, District staff took the top Susquehanna County Envirothon teams on an overnight kayaking trip along the Susquehanna River. The crew spent the night at Smyrl Lodge located at Camp Lackawanna. In the morning, students kayaked down the river to Tunhannock.



130 high school students from four Susquehanna County schools met at Salt Springs State Park to explore topics related to aquatics, forestry, wildlife, soils, and renewable energy. Students were joined by experts from the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pennsylvania Game Commission, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and staff and board members from SCCD. The event is held each fall to prepare students for the countywide spring Envirothon competition. The Susquehanna County Conservation District would like to thank all our partner agencies and volunteers who make this event a yearly success. We would also like to thank Pump N Pantry Convenience Stores for their generous donation, which helps feed all of our attendees. A big thank you also goes out to Friends of Salt Springs Park, who graciously allows us to hold this event at the park each year!



# NRCS

The USDA-NRCS Montrose Service Center personnel administered Farm Bill Programs focusing on the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Additionally, NRCS provided technical support for the Farm Service Agency's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

In fiscal year 2023, NRCS Susquehanna County received 26 EQIP and 7 CSP applications and wrote contracts for 17. The funded contracts included:

- Cropland Contract – (2) \$58,900
- Forestry Contract – (2) \$18,536
- Forest Management Plans – (4) \$15,272
- Comprehensive Nutrient Management Plan Contracts – (2) \$25,959
- CSP Forestry Contracts – (6) \$177,228
- CAP Ag Lands Contracts- (1) \$21,000

In 2023, Susquehanna County under CREP, NRCS, and FSA had 164 landowners covering 1,548 acres under contract. The benefits of CREP include the reduction of soil erosion, improved water quality, improved wildlife and fisheries habitat, and increased income on marginal land.



**Ain Welmon, District Conservationist,  
inspecting CREP plantings**

In 2023, the NRCS staff participated in a variety of diverse educational programs. The USDA and FSA agencies provided displays and attended many countywide events. These events included Farm & Home Day, Study Day, Crop Day, meet and greet events and a Woods Walk. Informational press releases were published in local print media.



# USDA-NRCS STAFF



**Ain Welmon**  
**District Conservationist**



**Deborah Basalyga**  
**Soil Conservation  
Technician**

---

## DEP- NORTHEAST REGIONAL OFFICE FIELD STAFF



**Caitlin Skibiel**  
**Conservation District  
Field Representative**

# PFBC & DCNR STAFF



**Ty C. Moon**  
**PA Fish & Boat Commission**  
**Waterways Conservation Officer**



**Austin Noguera**  
**Service Forester**  
**PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources**  
**Bureau of Forestry**  
**Pinchot State Forest**



**Michael Antonishak**  
**Service Forester**  
**PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources**  
**Bureau of Forestry**  
**Pinchot State Forest**

# LARSON DESIGN GROUP



**Joshua E. Glace, PWS, CPESC**  
**Associate Project Manager**  
**Environmental Services**



**Teah E. Gray, WPIT**  
**Sr. Environmental Technician**  
**Environmental Services**





# **Susquehanna County Conservation District**

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