



# NRCS Helps Restore Wetlands in Lebanon County

In the spring of 2025, Randy Leisure, a long-time conservation advocate, successfully restored 15 acres on his property through USDA's Wetlands Reserve Easement (WRE) program. When asked how he heard about the WRE program, he said, *"My wife, Anne, and I have always been interested and concerned about the environment and using the best conservation practices we can. Our farm had been on the farm preservation waitlist for years. When I first heard about the WRE program at the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) regional meeting, I thought it might be a good fit for us."*

The easement is located in the Swatara watershed, a National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) area, where NRCS focuses cost-share assistance in the Swatara Creek. NRCS and the US Geological Survey are partnering to measure the water quality benefits of conservation practices. Practices such as wetland restorations exemplify the vital role that wetlands

play in preserving water quality, managing flood risks, and supporting biodiversity.

Randy Leisure's commitment to conservation is well-known among local conservationists and watershed groups. His leadership within the community, particularly through his many years of service with the Lebanon Conservation District, has made him a respected figure in environmental protection. The restoration of these wetlands enhances the ecological health of the Swatara watershed, which sets a powerful example for other landowners to follow in the future.

To celebrate and showcase this achievement, a Wetland Walk was conducted in May. The event brought together conservation partners, watershed groups, farmers, and the local community to explore the restored easement, observe the benefits it provides, and discuss the importance of wetland conservation.



This walk serves as an opportunity to encourage more landowners in Lebanon County to consider participating in the WRE program, helping to protect and restore the county's natural resources.

Randy's dedication to conservation continues to inspire efforts to expand wetland restoration and other critical environmental initiatives across the state. As the Wetland Walk approaches, Randy explained the importance of community events such as this one, saying, *"I would encourage others to take advantage of opportunities like wetlands walk to learn about the benefits of wetland restoration and the WRE program, as well as the many other programs offered by NRCS. Hopefully, they can make a difference and become part of the solution."* The hope is that Randy's success will inspire others to join the growing movement to protect Pennsylvania's environment, ensuring cleaner watersheds and healthier lands for generations to come.

