



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Natural Resources Conservation Service



PENNSYLVANIA NRCS FY 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS



PENNSYLVANIA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides innovative conservation solutions to restore, enhance and protect Pennsylvania's private working lands.



Lindsey Bream (Left) reviews a Conservation Plan with Ben Peckman and his wife Sharon, recipients of the 2020 Aldo Leopold Conservation Award. Their operation, Slate Ridge Dairy Farm, resides in Franklin County, PA.



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PENNSYLVANIA NRCS FY 2020 INVESTMENTS ON PRIVATE WORKING LANDS

EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program		AMA Agricultural Management Assistance Program	
	48,388		440
	456		25
	\$22.7 M		\$353,054
CSP Conservation Stewardship Program		RCPP Regional Conservation Partnership Program	
	51,398		4,265
	168		28
	\$6.3 M		\$1.9 M
* Includes CSP and CSP-GCI		* Includes RCPP-EQIP	
CTA Conservation Technical Assistance		Symbol Key	
	149,807 *Acres planned		Acres
	1,109		Funding
			Contracts
			Plans

INITIATIVES

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)
\$3,511,121
Organic Initiative <i>(Certified & Transition)</i>
\$207,076
High Tunnel Initiative
\$345,691
Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)
\$341,653

TOP CONSERVATION PRACTICES APPLIED

Practice	Count	Measurement
Livestock		
Waste Storage	70	No
Heavy-Use Area	315,031	SF
Trails & Walkways	58,095	Ft
Stream Crossings	55	No
Fence	455,890	Ft
Roof Runoff	214	No
Prescribed Grazing	3,409	Ac
Agronomic		
No-till	3,212	Ac
Cover Crop	28,799	Ac
Nutrient Management	17,341	Ac
Soil Erosion		
Diversion	27,619	Ft
Waterway	69	Ac
Terrace	20,968	Ft
Lined Outlet	5,936	Ft
Buffers		
Herbaceous Buffer	26	Ac
Forest Buffer	3	Ac

PRESERVING PENNSYLVANIA'S LANDS

RESTORING A CREEKSIDE WETLAND

For Kristin and Keith Senecal, preserving their land was a priority. "A group of neighbors came together and thought, what could we do to protect our environment?" said Kristin Senecal.

The site sits on an inside bend of the Conodoguinet in Cumberland County, where the creek pushes westward against the bluffs, leaving floodplain wetlands to the east. Sometime before the 1930's, trees were cleared and the land was leveled, which removed the microtopography and vegetation that helped soak up excess water from spring rains. Ditches were cut into the lowest, wettest part of the site to help speed drainage. By the 1950's, the ditched area was left abandoned. The ditching effort proved to be ineffective and too difficult to maintain, so the area was left to revert to forest. The area eventually became a dumping ground for a local shoe factory, while the "drier" 13 acres remained in row crops.

The field was often too wet to plant crops and what was planted fell subject to beavers and deer. The Senecals were approached by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) with suggestions to improve the land and they were enthusiastic about restoring it into a wetland area through a Wetland Restoration Easement (WRE).

By restoring the area into a wetland, it will allow excess water to be absorbed, and will protect the farmland from flooding. The wetland will also provide habitat for wildlife and native plants.

The Senecals eagerly helped remove tons of shoe soles and other garbage to help the site qualify for WRE.

Once the NRCS wetland cadres examined the soils, plants, and hydrology of the site, it was deemed suitable for restoration. The site was surveyed, and designs, agreements, and management plans were developed; site showings were held, and heavy equipment was mobilized, ready to move soil.



PRESERVING PENNSYLVANIA'S LANDS

The plan involved restoring three shallow potholes, where most water averaged 18 inches in depth or less, per NRCS standards. Eighteen inches is about the depth a duck can tip-up to feed on the bottom. The shallow water and natural water fluctuations allow for vegetation growth and provides habitat for reptiles and amphibians.

Once the equipment was on site, construction was complete in less than a week. Temporary seeding and mulching were completed on the upland sites, which will be fall seeded with a native grass and forb mixture. The restored wetland areas were seeded with a wetland vegetation mix. Trees will be able to naturally regenerate on the site over time. One day

during a construction check, a mature bald eagle flew over, perhaps scoping out the area for a future nest site.

“We see ourselves as stewards of the land,” said Keith Senecal, “it was the right thing to do for the land.”

The couple has since donated 20 acres of farmland across from the creek to the Cumberland County Farmland Preservation Program. In combination with their neighbors, a total of 170 acres of wetlands and farmland have been preserved.

Symbol Key



Acres



Funds

ACEP-ALE

Ag Conservation Easement Program -
Agricultural Land Easement

Enrollments



183



\$209,530

Closed/Acquired



580



\$755,403

ACEP-WRE

Ag Conservation Easement Program -
Wetlands Reserve Easement

Enrollments



17.7



\$127,394

Closed/Acquired



41



\$255,281



IMPROVING SOIL HEALTH

In 2020, NRCS released its three-year soil health strategic plan for Pennsylvania with the following objectives: increase technical expertise and capacity, improve soil health on cropland and pastureland, continue to build and strengthen partnerships, promote research on soil health, and continue education, outreach, and training.

Despite COVID-19 pandemic limitations, PA NRCS and partners conducted or participated in over 30 soil health related outreach events reaching at least 1,600 people. These included agricultural forums, grazing workshops, a farming conference for veterans, soil health days, a horse world expo, and several virtual events.

Technical capacity to provide soil health assistance increased by 50 staff and partner conservation planners. They received training during two blended Soil Health and Sustainability Trainings for Field Staff hosted by Pennsylvania's soil health cadre. Training was delivered through a combination of pre-recorded webinars, live virtual instruction, interactive discussion groups, and in-field assignments with assistance from NRCS's National Soil Health Division, the East National Technology Support Center, and the Employee Development Services.

NRCS field staff and partners worked hard to increase soil health on the ground. In 2020, Pennsylvania NRCS planned approximately \$2.1 million dollars of soil health practices on approximately 284,000 acres. Planned practices included conservation covers, crop rotation, cover crops, forage and biomass planting, mulching, nutrient management, prescribed grazing, and no-till. This is a four percent increase in acreage from 2019 levels.

NRCS strengthened its partnerships with like-minded public, private, and non-profit organizations by joining the recently formed Pennsylvania Soil Health Coalition. Created by the Stroud Water Research Center through a National Fish & Wildlife Foundation grant, the PA Soil Health Coalition aims to improve communication, increase collaboration, and increase effective soil health outreach efforts among all interested parties.

Pennsylvania NRCS continues to promote adoption of innovative technologies that will increase soil health practices through Conservation Innovation Grant awards (see the Conservation Innovation Grants section).

NATIONAL RESOURCES INVENTORY (NRI)

The National Resource Inventory (NRI) is conducted by NRCS to provide continuously updated information on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related resources on our nation's non-Federal lands. Nationwide, over 800,000 points have been sampled at various intervals since 1982. In FY 2020, there were 1,816 total segments evaluated and the Pennsylvania NRI team completed the local data collection of 903 segments throughout Pennsylvania from 2019 land cover aerial photography.

FOOD SECURITY ACT COMPLIANCE

- PA NRCS completed 979 Highly Erodible Land (HEL) determinations and 590 Wetland Conservation (WC) determinations in FY2020. NRCS has transitioned to largely electronic

SOIL HEALTH

coordination of workload and offsite protocols that allowed the agency to continue to respond to client requests despite COVID 19 social distancing requirements.

- In 2020, Pennsylvania NRCS fully implemented the use of automated geographic information system (GIS) – based wetland and HELC determination tools. Tools were updated to incorporate new national policy requirements for completing determinations. The automated tools bring greater efficiency, accuracy, and improved consistency to the letters, forms, maps, and supporting data organization.
- PA NRCS and the, Farm Service Agency (FSA) are working together to improve coordination of conservation compliance functions. In the spring of 2020, NRCS and FSA collaborated to provide two virtual trainings for nearly 200 field office staff across both agencies on wetland and highly erodible land compliance policy.

DELAWARE COUNTY SOIL SURVEY UPDATE

In 2020, NRCS's Soils and Plant Sciences Division began an update project of the Delaware County Soil Survey. This data was published in the 1960's and has not undergone a significant review since. Land use has changed, and some soil series concepts require revision. Field work completed in 2020 confirmed the need to establish a new soil series to distinguish between soils formed from light versus dark colored gneissic bedrock. Darker colored gneiss bedrock tends to have more minerals such as biotite, pyroxene, and hornblende than lighter colored gneiss geology. This results in different types of soils with potential land use implications. Approximately 5,000 acres of the county have been evaluated so far.



TECHNICAL SOILS ASSISTANCE

NRCS Soil Scientists provided more than 2,230 hours of technical soil services in Pennsylvania in 2020. This affected over 269,000 acres and benefited approximately 4,100 people. Types of services included wetland determinations, conservation planner training, site evaluations for conservation practices, soil survey mapping, Farmland Protection Policy Act evaluations, Envirothon study materials and tests, a Virtual Hagerstown Soils Tour, PA Boot Camps, and soil health training and outreach events. The COVID19 pandemic presented supply chain disruptions to agricultural producers across the state. In response, PA NRCS collaborated with NRCS in West Virginia to develop an updated soil interpretation for evaluating sites for poultry disposal through composting. This interpretation was delivered through web soil survey in late May 2020.

MANAGING FORESTS AND WILDLIFE

FORESTRY ENHANCEMENT WITH THE CONSERVATION STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM

PA NRCS is continuing to see high levels of adoption of the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) for forestlands conservation. In FY 2020, 11,789 forestland acres were enrolled in CSP on 63 contracts. This covered \$1,105,791 in financial assistance obligations to non-industrial private forest landowners and operators throughout the Commonwealth.

CSP aids participants by helping them increase their level of forest stewardship. CSP offers forest managers an opportunity to enhance their operations while adopting conservation enhancements that can improve the conservation of natural resources, including improving forest health, increasing wildlife habitat, and enhancing water quality.

TABLE 1: FY 2020 TOP 5 CONSERVATION PRACTICES PLANNED ON FOREST LANDS

PRACTICE	ACRES
Herbaceous Weed Treatment	9,957
Brush Management	8,500
Forest Stand Improvement	2,746
Tree/Shrub Establishment	2,790
Early Successional Habitat Development/Management	727

BAT BENEFITS

NRCS also manages forest and wetland acres to benefit bat species like the Northern long-eared bat, the Indiana bat, the tri-colored bat, the little brown bat, and others. Our efforts include restoring forest ecosystems by both controlling invasive plants and releasing/planting native tree species, like shagbark hickories, that provide vital roosting cover for bats in the spring and summer months. Future work will include man-made roosting structures that should increase bat species' use of wetland easements and young-forest habitats.



Golden-Winged Warblers



1,325



21



\$742,013

Symbol Key



Acres



Contracts



Funds

NRCS HELPS HUNTING CLUB MANAGE OAK REGENERATION

Nestled in the middle of the Moshannon State Forest in Clearfield County, Pennsylvania lies 4,592-acres of forestland managed by the Punxsutawney (Punxsy) Hunting Club. The property had seen decades of growth but very little management since it was bought in the 1920's.

The landowners of the 84-member hunting club contacted NRCS to learn how they can manage more like their neighbors, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry and the Pennsylvania Game Commission, in order to restore the healthy diversity of their forest. "We want to begin to generate the oak trees on our property," said CQ Morrison, owner and member of Punxsy Hunting Club. "With a history of not properly managing our forest and with an abundance of deer, there is little to no oak regeneration."

The landowners, NRCS, and partner agencies worked together to develop a Forest Management Plan, which identified areas that were oak dominant and recommended conservation practices to help regenerate the forest.

Oak ecosystems have been particularly impacted on private lands in Pennsylvania. Proper ecosystem management is crucial for maintaining the health and incredible diversity of Pennsylvania's forests.

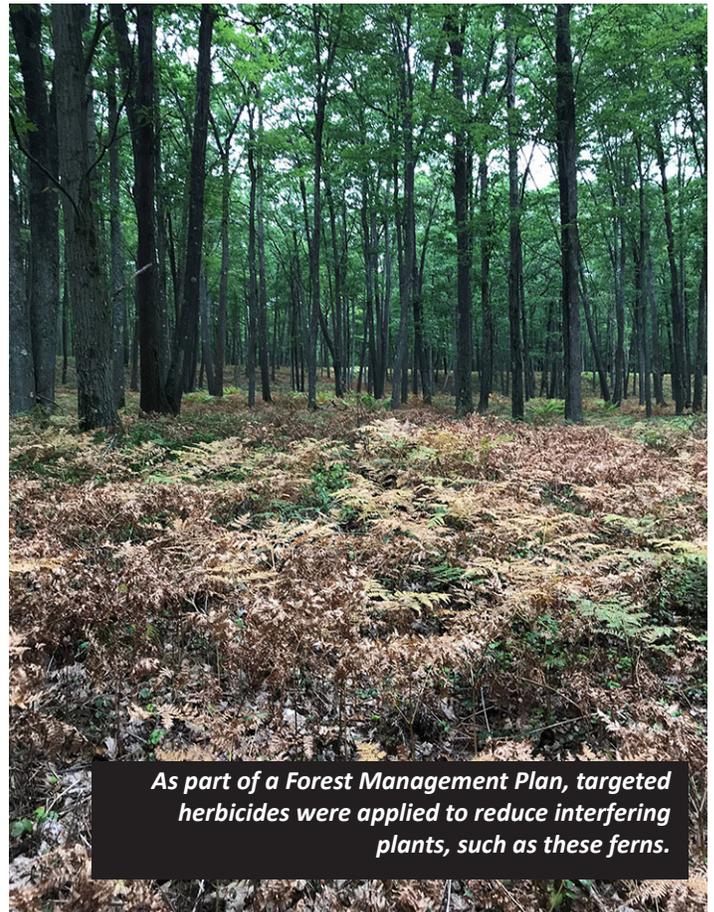
In 2018, the Punxsutawney Hunting Club received financial assistance through NRCS to help oak regeneration on 32 acres. In this area, new seedlings were suppressed by the hay-scented fern and stifled by the lack of sunlight. Targeted herbicides were applied to reduce the interfering plants, a cut was done to add desired light levels for oak regeneration on the forest floor, and an 8-foot fence was erected to protect the establishment of oak seedlings.

"It's encouraging to see the work that the Punxsy Hunting Club is doing on their property to increase oak regeneration and improve the health of their

forest," said Mary Baker, NRCS Forester. "With the ferns controlled and an exclusion fence in place, there is already oak regeneration occurring. The Punxsy Hunting Club continues to work toward their goals, as outlined in their Forest Management Plan and it will be exciting to watch the changes in their forest."

"Our experience with NRCS has been nothing but good," said Morrison. "NRCS walked us through the process and has always been very helpful."

Forest conservation and sustainable forestry are synonymous with the forestry professionals in Pennsylvania. Projects like the one with the Punxsutawney Hunting Club are helping to improve the sustainability of oak ecosystems and restore forest health and productivity.



As part of a Forest Management Plan, targeted herbicides were applied to reduce interfering plants, such as these ferns.

ENHANCING WATER QUALITY

NATIONAL WATER QUALITY INITIATIVE (NWQI)

NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality in priority watersheds with ag impaired streams through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). NWQI is currently being offered in the following Pennsylvania watersheds (because of the significant natural resource challenges they face):

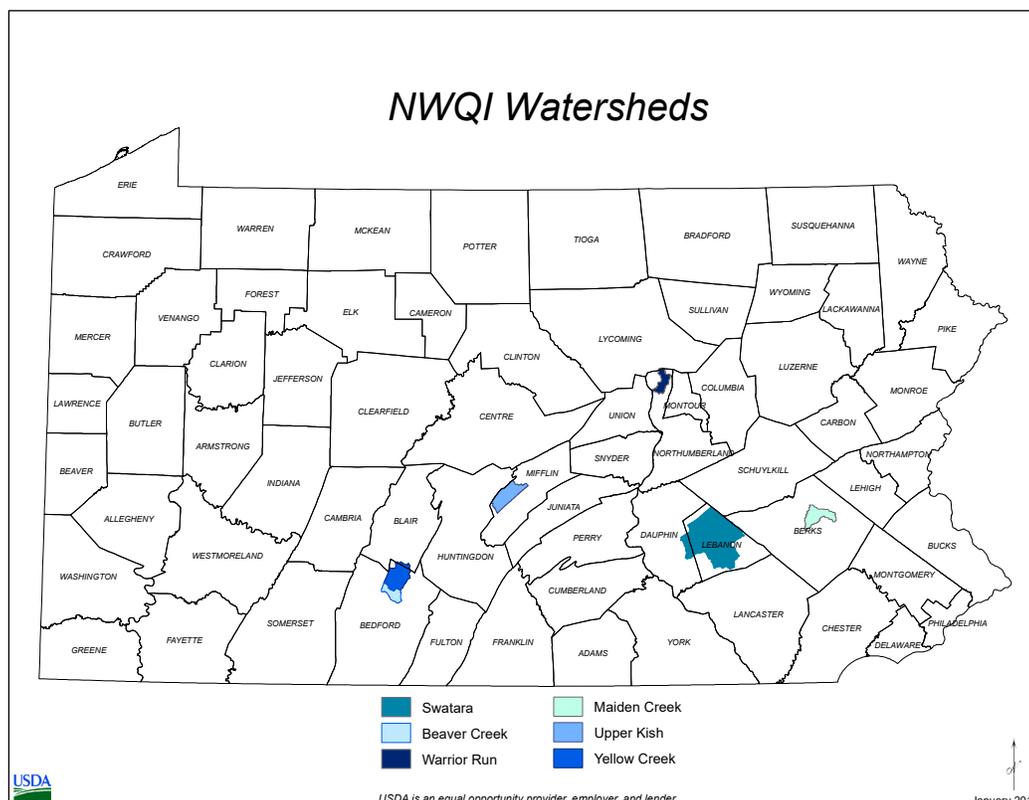
- Warrior Run
- Beaver and Upper Yellow Creeks
- Upper Kishacoquillas Creek
- Swatara Creek
- Maiden Creek

Our goal at NRCS is to improve water quality by preventing sediments and nutrients from reaching

streams and source water. The ultimate goal is for the water quality to be improved or for these streams to be removed from the ag impaired streams list.

In FY 2020, PA NRCS conducted outreach and implemented conservation practices in all the NWQI watersheds. Stream monitoring was conducted to establish baseline levels and will continue to track changes over time.

Of the watersheds listed, Swatara Creek and Maiden Creek watersheds are source water protection pilot projects aimed at protecting the source of public drinking water for communities.



FARMER HELPS ENHANCE WATER QUALITY ON THE UPPER YELLOW CREEK

Mark Baker owns and operates a farm in New Enterprise, Bedford County, PA. He custom raises 315 dairy heifers and crops 125 acres. Baker worked with NRCS to implement cover crop into his cropping system, and during that contract, he recognized the need to address his barnyard areas. Heifers had continuous access to approximately four acres of pasture. Large animal concentration areas existed from feeding, and the stream was utilized as a water source, which is a tributary of the Upper Yellow Creek.

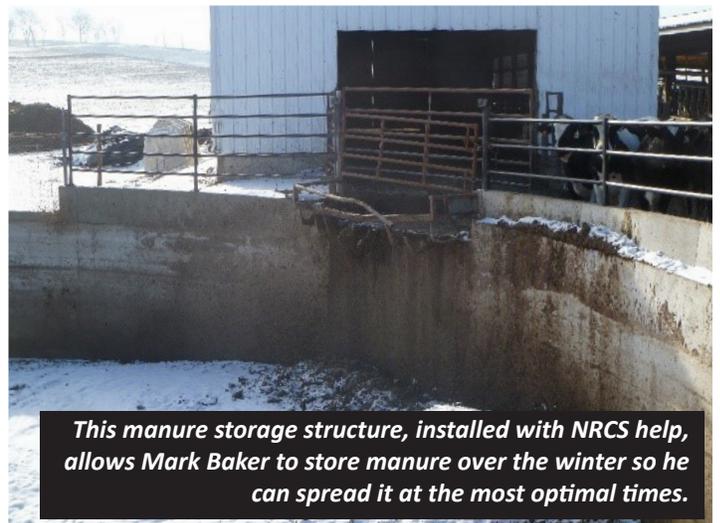
Baker decided it was time to address the issues and reached out to the NRCS office for help. We scheduled an inventory and evaluation which resulted in a two-phase project. Phase 1 addressed the barnyard located on the west side of the farmstead. Heifers were kept on approximately two acres and had continuous access. Best management practices to address the resource concerns included a 140' x 40' roofed heavy use area protection with a 56' x 40' waste storage facility along with streambank fencing.

Phase 2 addressed the barnyard located on the east side of the farmstead. Heifers were kept on approximately two acres and had continuous access on this side as well. To address the resource concerns, 4,360 square feet of heavy use area protection was installed adjacent to the existing concrete. This



allowed for manure to be pushed into the existing concrete storage. New push-off guards were installed on the concrete pit, and the chain link fence was replaced along with all safety signs. Streambank fencing was also installed to keep livestock from entering the water.

Since making these improvements to the pasture and farmstead, Baker is working with the Bedford County NRCS office to implement advanced nutrient management practices, and it is a showcase farm for producers interested in working with NRCS.





EMERGENCY WATERSHED PROTECTION

EWP WORK COMPLETED IN FY 2020

Beginning in October 2019 through June 2020, PA NRCS and eight local sponsors completed work on an additional 44 sites that were affected by the August 2018 Presidentially declared EWP event. A total of 29 sponsors covering 95 sites were repaired over a two-year period. The total construction cost was \$5.16 million, with NRCS providing 75 percent, or \$3.86 million, and PA DEP providing the remaining balance of \$1.3 million.

NRCS truly appreciates all the effort required by the 29 local sponsors located throughout the 13-county

area. Sponsors are required for funding eligibility. They incur additional costs related to land rights, the bidding process, acquiring DEP Emergency permits, and other administrative duties.

Listed in Table 2 are all of the sponsors and associated number of sites addressed per county. This covers the entire life of this EWP event from August 2018 through June 2020.



Completed Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) site in Susquehanna County.

TABLE 2: SPONSORS AND SITES BY COUNTY OVER THE LIFE OF THE AUGUST 2018 EWP EVENT

County	No. of Sites	Sponsor(s)
Berks	3	Berks Co. Conservation District Colebrookdale Borough Fleetwood Borough
Bradford	26	Bradford Co. Conservation District
Columbia	14	Columbia Co. Conservation District
Lackawanna	2	City of Scranton
Lebanon	1	Annville Township
Lycoming	5	Lycoming Co. Conservation District
Northampton	1	Northampton County
Northumberland	3	Northumberland County
Schuykill	12	Port Carbon Borough Ashland Borough Gordon Borough Frackville Municipal Authority Schuylkill Co. Conservation District Schuylkill Co. Municipal Authority
Sullivan	1	Sullivan Co. Conservation District
Susquehanna	23	Forest Lake Township Liberty Township Little Meadows Borough Apolocan Township Choconut Township PA-DCNR Great Bend Township Hop Bottom Township
Wyoming	1	Nicholson Borough
York	3	Hellum Township Dover Township
Total	95	28

DAM REHABILITATION

PENNSYLVANIA DAM REHAB PROGRAM

In the 1960's through the 1980's, NRCS assisted with the design and construction of over 80 flood control dams across Pennsylvania. These dams currently protect the homes and public infrastructure below them. Since their construction, the dams have detained millions of gallons of runoff that would otherwise contribute to downstream flooding. While built to be state-of-the-art at the time, rainfall amounts and dam safety criteria have changed since the construction of the dams. Many of these structures are over 50 years old and have reached the end of their project life. Some were originally built as Significant Hazard dams and have now been reclassified as High Hazard dams.

In 2012, Pennsylvania was selected as one of 12 states to engage in the PL-566 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act Rehabilitation program. Pennsylvania NRCS has been diligently working with eight sponsors in the national effort to rehabilitate their dams, ensuring that flood control dams built under the PL-566 program are safe and meet current dam design criteria. An initial funding of over \$11 million helped start the process of doing initial dam assessments on almost 70 sites, planning on nine sites, design on five sites, and construction on two sites.

One successful project of 2020 was the construction of the Brandywine Creek PA-436 Hibernia Dam rehabilitation

in Chester County. The Hibernia Dam provides tremendous benefits to the community including flood control, improved water quality through sediment and erosion control, recreation, municipal water supply, and incidental wildlife habitat. Working with the project sponsor, Chester County Water Resources Authority, NRCS constructed a new rock filter toe, regraded the downstream bench, and installed a concrete cutoff wall in the auxiliary spillway. These structural repairs will increase the integrity of the dam and significantly lower any risks to public safety and health.

The engineering work was done using several engineering firms selected from the National Indefinite Delivery Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) process. The private engineering firms conducted the planning, design, and construction quality control. PA NRCS engineering, its National Water Management Center (NWMC), and its National Design, Construction, and Soil Mechanics Center (NDCSMC) staff reviewed and commented on all the work in the various phases and were also involved with working with state regulators and keeping the sponsors involved and informed.

In FY 2020, 17 site walks of the dams were completed. One dam is ready for construction and awaiting sponsor funding. Design work is in progress on six rehabilitations with one to begin construction in the summer of FY 2021. One new plan, which includes four dams within the same watershed, is in progress and is expected to be complete in 2020. Eight dam assessments were also completed.

In addition to the Watershed Rehabilitation Program, NRCS is working through the planning process for four projects in Chester, Lancaster, Westmoreland, and Wyoming Counties. These projects are focused on addressing land treatment and flood protection within the watershed and are funded through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations.

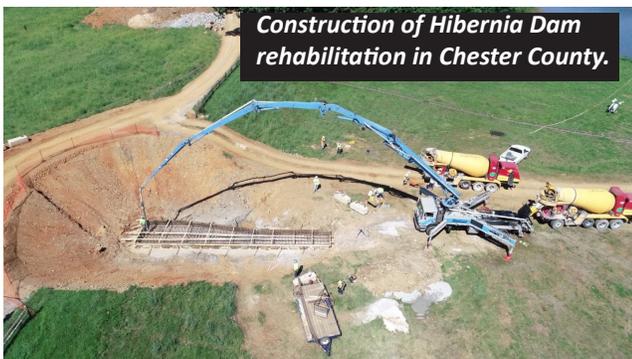


TABLE 3: WATERSHED REHAB ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FY 2020

Dam	Watershed	County	Sponsor	Milestone Achieved	Anticipated Construction
Hibernia Dam	Brandywine Creek	Chester	Chester County Water Resource Authority	Construction Completed	
Beaver Creek Dam	Brandywine Creek	Chester	Chester County Water Resource Authority	Design completed	2021
Conneautville Dam	Conneautville	Crawford	Borough of Conneautville	Design completed	2021
Kintz Creek Dam	Greene Dreher	Pike	Pike County	Design Underway	2022
Beechwood Dam	Mill Creek	Tioga	PA Fish and Boat Commission	Design Started	2024
Rainbow Dam	Mill Run	Crawford	City of Meadville	Design Underway	2024
Hamilton Dam	Marsh Creek	Tioga	Wellsboro Borough Municipal Authority	Design Underway	2023
Core Creek Dam	Neshaminy Creek	Bucks	Bucks County	Watershed Plan Begun	2023



Conservation Innovation Grants

In fiscal year 2020, four Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) proposals were accepted for a total of \$221,081. These proposals focused on the topics of soil health and forestry. In addition, the following four CIG projects were completed:

A Comprehensive Biological Control Program for European Corn Borer and Corn Earworm in Sweet Corn Production on Mennonite and Other Small Farms of South-Central Pennsylvania - (funded in 2017): The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture demonstrated integrated pest management techniques and associated soil health practices on land dedicated to sweet corn production. An interview of growers indicated agreement that biocontrol was adequate when used in conjunction with biological pesticides. In production fields treated with these methods, an overabundance and conservation of beneficial insects was noted. Farmers were interested in learning about them and the effect they have on corn pest populations. Conservation of the natural enemies allowed additional predation of the eggs and larval stages of the sweet corn pests, thereby increasing control of these pests. The production of outreach materials was also completed as part of the project.

Montgomery County Interseeder Conservation Initiative (funded in 2017) – The Montgomery County Conservation District promoted the early implementation of cover crops and increased adoption of no-till farming for soil health and environmental conservation through a no-till drill available through a rental program as well as demonstration field day events. Twenty-eight farmers utilized the modified no-till drill for no-till crop and cover crop planting, interseeding, pasture renovation, basin naturalization, and native pollinator habitat planting. Seven field days were held to demonstrate the equipment and conservation practices.

Retrofitting the Rural Roadside Ditch Network to Treat Nitrogen from Agricultural Runoff Using Woodchip Bioreactors (funded in 2018) - Penn State University and Cornell University partnered with the Bradford County Conservation District to demonstrate a new method of treating nitrogen at the field edge. This project specifically evaluated the effectiveness of using existing road ditches fitted with woodchip bioreactors to remove nitrogen from agricultural runoff and explored temporal and environmental changes on effectiveness. The results were used to determine nitrogen removal rates and limiting conditions for use of in-ditch woodchip bioreactors to improve water quality from farm field runoff and to enhance conservation practice standards. The bioreactors are inexpensive, low maintenance, and have a life span of 5-10 years. The potential application for denitrifying storm water in the roadside ditch network should be of interest to both agriculture and road and wastewater managers as well.

Managing Pennsylvania's Forests for Birds and Biodiversity (funded in 2018) –This National Audubon Society project focused on delivering science-based information to implement bird-friendly forestry practices and improve forest health on private lands with NRCS eligible producers. The project created new written guidance for technical service providers and forestry professionals, developed and offered training workshops, and identified sites where practices can be demonstrated. Three in-person, bird-friendly training workshops were conducted online and at various locations around the state. A total of 126 students attended the trainings which included forestry professionals and non-industrial private forest landowners. The trainings utilized two demonstration sites as outdoor classrooms to teach students about bird-friendly forestry techniques. A 40-page guide entitled “Healthy Forests: A Bird-based Silvicultural Guide for Forestry Professionals” was developed for use by NRCS and other practitioners in implementing forest management on private lands to benefit bird species.

OUTREACH AND TRAINING

PA CIVIL RIGHTS

In FY20 the Pennsylvania Civil Rights Advisory Committee (CRAC) held quarterly meetings. The first few meetings were in person, but to adapt to the COVID pandemic, we went virtual! Outreach activities were different than past years and also continued through virtual mediums. A team put together new State Title VI Outreach Plans that will assist field teams in their outreach efforts. A new Customer Engagement Tool was created to speedily and accurately report activities.

The All Employee Annual Meeting was virtual and Kefeni Kejela was presented the 2020 Civil Rights Spotlight Award. As the Black SEPM for Pennsylvania, Kefeni went above and beyond expected roles and responsibilities.

Presentations throughout the year included: Cultural Change and Equity Building in NRCS, Native American Historical Data and Resources for Native American/Alaska Native Heritage Month, and The Culture of NRCS in PA and the Changing Cultures of our Producers. Implicit Bias Surveys were conducted to educate NRCS employees, and new Individual Development Plan Options were created for more flexibility to meet Civil Rights Elements and to enhance service to underserved customers.

A Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration was held virtually with a special guest from de la Crema. A Stakeholders Teleconference was held for Minority Black Farmers, focusing on Farmer-to-Farmer Introductions. USDA program brochures were translated into Spanish for our historically

underserved farmers. Additionally, the Hispanic SEPM presented NRCS Programs at the PVGA Spanish Sessions, presented on Outreach to Hispanic Producers at PASA, and cohosted a virtual high tunnel event in Spanish.

The Disability SEPM arranged for two sign language interpreters so a deaf customer would be able to attend a Soil Health Conference and presented National Disability Independence Day during a State Teleconference. The Veteran SEPM participated in a Zoom Veteran Farmer event presenting USDA programs and assistance.

The screenshot shows a mobile application interface titled "PA Customer Engagement Tracker". Below the title is a green header bar. The main content area contains a form with the following sections:

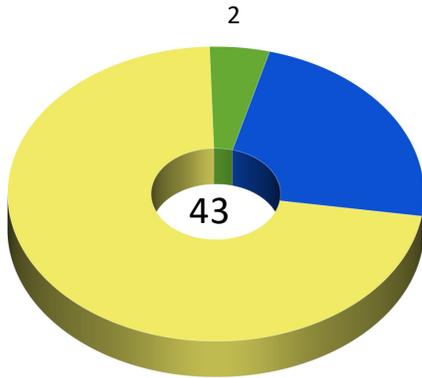
- Log your Title VI outreach to external customers and agricultural producers. (Note: Do not submit PII through this form.)**
- Basic Information** (indicated by a green checkmark icon):
 - NRCS Staff Name***: Identify one NRCS Point of Contact for this outreach activity. (Text input field)
 - Additional NRCS Staff and/or Partners**: (Optional) Use this space to name any other staff members or partners who participated. (Text input field)
 - County***: Select the County where this outreach happened. (Dropdown menu with "-Please Select-" selected)

The PA Customer Engagement Tracker was created in FY 2020 to track PA NRCS 's Civil Rights outreach efforts.

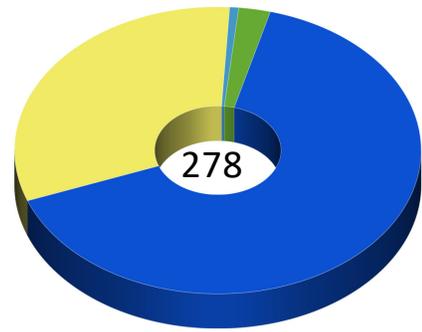
TRAINING

PA NRCS continues to place a large emphasis on training its own employees as well as those of the conservation partnership. In FY 2020, PA NRCS hosted 33 trainings. The charts below provide a breakdown of those in attendance.

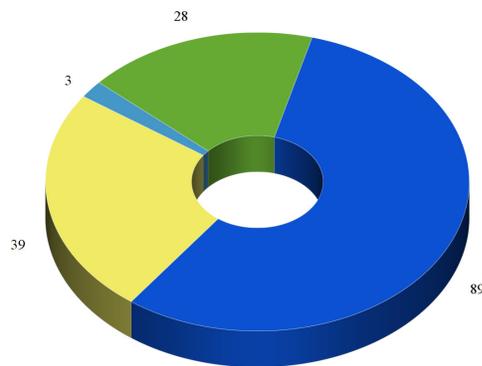
BOOT CAMP TRAININGS (BASIC AND ADVANCED)



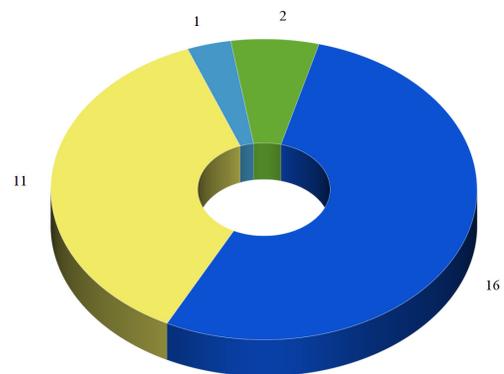
AREA & FIELD OFFICE ENGINEERING TRAINING



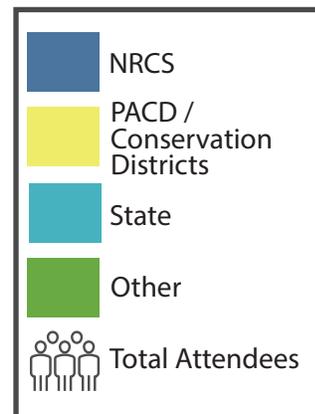
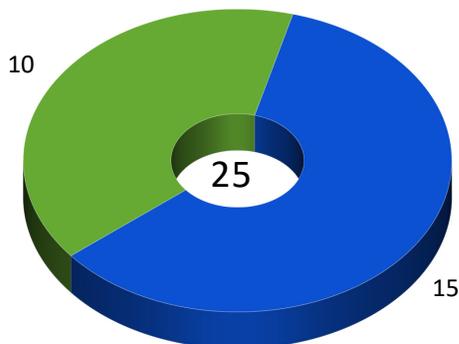
STATEWIDE OFFICE TRAININGS



CULTURAL RESOURCES



CNMP WORKSHOP



PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

FY 2020 AGREEMENTS

In FY 2020, PA NRCS administered eight different technical support agreements that provided additional staff to work on NRCS conservation activities in Pennsylvania. Through these agreements, approximately 52 affiliates contributed additional staffing valued at more than \$3 million. These agreements were with partner entities including five Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&Ds), Pheasants Forever, the National Older Workers Career Center, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The affiliate employees conducted conservation planning and provided technical assistance, program support, and administrative support for PA NRCS offices.

NRCS also held an agreement with the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) to provide services for three different activities: conservation district staff support, engineering technical services, and training. The first activity provided staff to NRCS from 11 different conservation districts for 21 full or part-time people (11 full-time equivalents). NRCS cost-shared these employees and provided 75 percent of the salaries and benefits for these conservation district employees. The other 25 percent was provided by the conservation districts. The work that was completed under the PACD agreement by these 11 full-time equivalent conservation district employees is summarized in Table 4.

Two other activities under the same PACD agreement included engineering technical assistance and conservation training. The PACD agreement also included funding for 6 Conservation Technicians and 2 Conservation Engineers that were cost-shared between NRCS and the PA Department of Environmental Protection to provide engineering technical assistance to conservation districts and Growing Greener Grant recipients. The

TABLE 4: PACD AGREEMENT FY 2020 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Components	Number	Hours
Conservation Plans	88	5,605
Inventory and Evaluation	44	469
Surveys	89	745
Practice Design/ Layout	151	4,897
Construction Quality Assurance	77	2,091
Total:	619	13,477

Contributor	Funding
Conservation District	\$205,447
NRCS	\$616,342
Total Contribution	\$821,789

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

other activity funded under the PACD agreement was conservation training. This activity, described elsewhere in this report, was cost-shared between the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission and NRCS. Funding and examples of work performed for all three activities under the PACD agreement is shown in Table 5.

NRCS also supported two interagency agreements with other Federal agencies. One agreement was with the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) for \$75,009. Under this agreement, FWS provided wildlife expertise and services for bog turtle conservation and protection, and for the promotion and conservation of pollinator species. The other interagency agreement was with the US Geological Survey (USGS) for \$532,696 over a five-year period to provide near real-time water-quality monitoring and modeling of conservation practices in the Chiques Creek Watershed in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

TABLE 5: PACD AGREEMENT ACTIVITIES

Activity: District Employee Support			Activity: Engineering Support			Activity: Training		
NRCS Funding	District Funding	Total Funding	NRCS Funding	DEP Funding	Total Funding	NRCS Funding	SCC Funding	Total Funding
\$205,447	\$616,342	\$821,789	\$97,505	\$477,237	\$574,742	\$20,130	\$21,100	\$41,230

REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

At the beginning of FY 2020, PA NRCS had eight active Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) projects. Pennsylvania was the lead state for six of these agreements. During the fiscal year, four of these agreements expired and one agreement received an extension. Of the four expiring agreements and the extended agreement, all had practices scheduled for future installation and funding remaining in farmer contracts to provide for this purpose. There were no new obligations for the four expired and one extended agreement.

The four remaining active projects at the end of FY 2020 included:

1. ***Delaware River Watershed Working Lands Conservation and Protection Partnership*** (2015 extended), Lead Partner: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation;
2. ***Soil Health: Improving Land, Water and Producer Profitability*** (2017), Lead Partner: Chesapeake Bay Foundation;
3. ***CCCD Partnership for Chesapeake Bay Water Quality*** (2018), Lead Partner: Chester County Conservation District; and
4. ***Implementing Conservation Practices and CNMPs on Pennsylvania Preserved Farms*** (2018), Lead Partner: PA Department of Agriculture Bureau of Farmland Preservation.

Total EQIP obligations at the end of FY 2020 for the four active projects that had remaining funds to obligate are provided in Table 6.

TABLE 6: PENNSYLVANIA NRCS RCPP PROJECT STATUS

RCPP Project	County	Funds Obligated	Acres Contracted
CCCD Partnership for Chesapeake Bay Water Quality	Chester	\$441,449.00	858.50
Implementing BMP's & CNMP's on PA Preserved Farms	Adams	\$398,177.84	428.50
	Cumberland	\$61,388.46	84.50
	Dauphin	\$133,650.00	373.20
	Franklin	\$438,331.93	1,137.60
	Perry	\$171,732.02	540.70
	York	\$282,466.00	842.10
	Total		\$1,485,746.25
TOTALS		\$1,927,195.25	4,265.10





EARTH TEAM PROGRAM

Every year, Pennsylvania NRCS holds an Earth Team Challenge as a friendly competition among groups of employees, field offices, technical offices, and the State Office. In FY 2020, volunteering started strong, but then declined in March as Covid-19 hit.

For the safety and health of the volunteers and staff, PA NRCS decided to temporarily discontinue the use of volunteers until conditions are deemed safe. Fortunately, this has not shut down the Earth Team volunteering. **We have adapted to the situation and ventured into virtual volunteering, which has quickly caught on.**

EARTH TEAM VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Troy Alleman and Cameron Weiser began volunteering with PA NRCS when they were students at Shippensburg University.

Troy volunteered and interned for two years out of the NRCS Chambersburg Office. He and Cameron spent the summer inspecting field practices. Together, they conducted field certification on 6,000 acres for Conservation Technical Assistance (CTA) reporting. In doing so, they have become a large part of our outreach on behalf of NRCS; building relationships with local Cumberland and Franklin County farmers and partners.

Troy had the strong desire and determination to work for NRCS. He said he would keep volunteering until a position would come open that led to a position with NRCS. His hard work and determination paid off. This summer he was hired as a Soil Conservationist in the McConnellsburg field office.

“I’m really thankful for the mentorship that [NRCS] provided me, and it made it a seamless transition to go from volunteer to intern. Then Earth team volunteer and then into this job which I got accepted,” said Troy.

Troy has been a real source of encouragement to those he worked with and around in the field and offices. For his efforts, he received the Earth Team Northeast Group Volunteer Award.

Earth Team*



425

Hours



92

Volunteers



\$11,560**

* As of March 1.
**Hours valued at \$27.20



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