



# The Resource

A Newsletter of the Mercer  
County Conservation District

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January 2023

## Welcome, Gerry Bickel

A lifelong Mercer County resident, Gerald "Gerry" Bickel is MCCD's new Mosquito-borne Disease Control Program Coordinator. He received his B.S in Geography & Sustainable Planning from Penn West Clarion where he focused on geoscience and entomology. He also attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Environmental Planning Masters Program where he focused on sustainable growth and natural resource conservation. Gerry is very excited to be working with MCCD.



## Welcome, Chris Greising

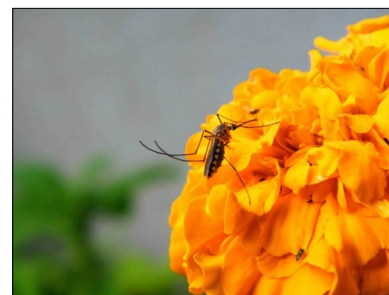


Chris Greising is the new Conservation Resource Specialist. He was born and raised in in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and is a proud Yooper who still visits often. Chris has a degree in Environmental Studies with a minor in Geosciences from YSU and is currently working on his GIS Master's degree from Kent State. Prior to returning to school, he was a scuba instructor who had the pleasure to work in places like Florida, Hawaii, Fiji and the Philippines. His time in the scuba industry helped cultivate his passion for environmental conservation and he is now excited to share that passion with Mercer County. When not at work, Chris enjoys spending time with his wife and 3-year-old son, traveling, and being outdoors with them as much as he can.

## Mosquitoes: The Forgotten Pollinator

By Gerry Bickel

While mosquitoes are well known for causing itchy bites and vectoring a variety of illnesses, for most of their adult lives they bring joy to our lives by pollinating our flowers, fruits, and vegetables. In fact, mosquitoes are such prolific pollinators that they are often seen landing on floral print clothing, mistaking it for real flowers. While female mosquitoes are notorious for taking blood meals and leaving behind itchy bumps and potentiality dangerous viruses, they only engage in this activity during breeding season. For most of a female mosquito's life, and the entirety of a male's life they receive their food energy in the form of pollen collected from our native plants as well as cultivated gardens. Mosquitoes, while being a nuisance in our man-made environment, provide many important ecosystem services including being food for aquatic insects, fish, and amphibians, as well as pollinating our native flora and home gardens.



## Pioneers in Conservation Awards

By Kelcy Marini

We presented the 2022 "Pioneers in Conservation Awards" at our annual dinner on Thursday, March 31st at the Mercer County Career Center. This award recognizes individuals and organizations who have committed to local conservation efforts and made it their mission to inspire others through their actions. The following people were chosen for an award:

**Conservationist:** Jennifer and Rick Barborak for their work as co-founders of the Shenango River Watchers.

**Educator:** Jacqueline McCullough for her dedication to providing environmental education to students throughout Mercer County.

**Individual:** Gary Beatty and Hugh "Fuzzy" Shields for their involvement in fundraising, education, habitat improvement projects, and more for Lakeland Longbeards, the local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

**Director Emeritus:** Cornelia Sealand and Fred Brenner for their unwavering commitment to the Mercer County Conservation District's Board of Directors.

**The 2023 dinner will be on Thursday, March 30<sup>th</sup> at the Mercer County Career Center. Please call our office at 724-662-2242 for more information on purchasing tickets.**

## Internship Opportunity

We are looking for a conservation-focused individual to join the district's summer staff. This person will work closely with our Environmental Education Coordinator, as well as our Watershed Specialist, Mosquito Control Coordinator, and other staff. This will be a paid position during summer 2023 with an expected start date in early-May and an expected end date in late-August. For more information, please call 724-662-2242 or email Kelcy at [kmarini@mercercountypa.gov](mailto:kmarini@mercercountypa.gov).

## A Popular Fishing Spot is Getting an Upgrade

By Larissa Cassano-Hamilton

A popular fishing spot on Lake Wilhelm in M.K. Goddard State Park is getting an upgrade! The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), PA



Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC), and Mercer County Conservation District (MCCD) partnered for a PA

Lake Management Society grant to protect the shoreline in this heavy-use area. Those triangles of rock are called stone deflectors and are used to stabilize the shoreline and reduce sediment into the lake.



## The PA State Budget Establishes a New Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program

By Nick Trivelli

The recently passed Pennsylvania state budget includes \$154 million for a new Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) that will provide cost-share grants for farmers to install best management practices (BMPs). The new program will be accessed by producers through their local county conservation districts with Mercer County Conservation District (MCCD) projected to receive over \$2 million for conservation practice implementation on agricultural operations. The money will be assigned to MCCD this winter and must be spent by December 2026.

ACAP will help pay for projects from helping convert farming practices to no-till and planting cover crops to more expensive projects such as barnyard management and manure management systems. If you own or operate an agricultural operation, please contact the Mercer County Conservation District to discuss what practices you might be eligible for and how to apply for funding.

Please direct any questions about this program to Agricultural Resource Conservationist Nick Trivelli at 724-662-2242 or at [ntrivelli@mercercountypa.gov](mailto:ntrivelli@mercercountypa.gov).



## A Look Back at Envirothon 2022

By Kelcy Marini

We would like to congratulate the Commodore Perry “Mudpuppies” and advisor Jay Carlson for winning 1st place at the 2022 Mercer County Envirothon. Great job to “Jamestown 1” (Amber Heil) for taking 2nd place, the Lakeview “Trout Troopers” (Jacqueline McCullough, Justin McGinnis, Ryan Fagley) for taking 3rd place, and to the “Hickory Hornets” (Tim Peterson) for receiving honorable mention.

Approximately 60 students made up 12 teams from 5 schools in Mercer County: Commodore Perry, Hickory, Lakeview, Jamestown, and West Middlesex. We also had exceptional representation from the field as our station experts: PA Game Commission for the Wildlife station; USDA National Resources Conservation Services for the Soils and Land Use station; PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry for the Forestry station; University of Pittsburgh Pymatuning Lab of Ecology for the Aquatic Ecology station; and Mercer County Recycling and Solid Waste Department for the Current Issue station.

## A Busy Year for the NPDES Program

By Bob McDonald

What is NPDES? NPDES stands for National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System.

Who needs a construction stormwater permit? Construction sites equal to or larger than one acre (equal to or greater than one acre of earth disturbance). We processed 22 NPDES permit approvals in 2022— about double 2021’s total permits!

Why do you need one? Authorized by the Clean Water Act, NPDES Permits control water pollution by regulating point sources, such as a pipe or ditch that discharge pollutants into waters.

Examples of Projects in Mercer County with NPDES Permits:

- Interstate -80 Welcome Center
- South Hermitage Distribution Center
- Farrell High School Track
- Grove City National Guard Center
- Mercer Dollar General
- Greenville Wastewater Treatment Plant

## Success for Schollard Run

By Larissa Cassano-Hamilton

In early 2022 MCCD was contacted by a geologist for information about the stream that flows through State Game Land 284 and over Springfield/Leesburg Falls. The US Board of Geographic Names named it in the 1960s because it was blank on old USGS topographic maps. They named it 'Hunters Run', based on a PA Game Commission map allegedly. Historically it had been called 'Schollard Run'. MCCD provided supporting documentation to petition the US Board on Geographic Names to make the adjustment. We received an email at the end of 2022 with our success! The stream has officially been restored to Schollard Run. 'Schollard' is a nod to the nearby community of the same name and its namesake, William Schollard. William was the ironmaster of the Springfield Furnace from 1837 – 1862.

## Ross Paulenich Memorial Conservation Scholarship

By Nick Trivelli

We would like to congratulate our 2022 scholarship winner, Connor Grossman. Connor graduated from Mercer Area High School with plans to attend Mount Union College with a major in Civil Engineering. We commend Connor for his academic achievements, extracurricular activities, and dedication to conservation. We hope that his involvement in the Conservation Club, trout stocking, and the school's recycling programs will inspire him to have a lifelong dedication to supporting conservation efforts in the community. The 2023 scholarship deadline is January 31st, and we look forward to announcing the winner at the Pioneers in Conservation Awards Dinner on March 30th. The next round will open in late 2023.



## The Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program Thanks New Vernon Township

By Shawn Hedglin

For those who visit Lake Wilhelm, many have traveled across Creek Road. This road provides access to fishing, boating, biking, hiking, and many other recreational opportunities surrounding the lake.



Traveling this road, you more than likely have noticed that many portions provide a smoother ride than others. This is due to the hard work and dedication of the Supervisors of New Vernon Township. Over the course of the last 8 years they have made use of available funding provided by the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program to improve portions of this roadway for travel. All of this effort has culminated in a much more pleasant drive over portions of this roadway.

## Guidelines for Maintaining Streams in Your Community

By Larissa Cassano-Hamilton

Weather changes can mean stream changes. Here are some tips adapted from the 'Guidelines for Maintaining Streams in Your Community' handout from DEP.

**Green – Go!** (Proceed – these actions do not require DEP notification, pre-approval, or additional permits)

- Removing woody debris and manmade debris materials from the stream, banks, and riparian areas by hand or using handheld equipment
- Removing above items using heavy equipment from the bank; equipment should not enter the stream or dig into the streambed
- Removing gravel and debris in and close to bridges and culverts (note: review permit conditions first!)
- Crossing a flooded stream for emergency access to your property if conditions are safe

**Yellow – Slow Down!** (Call DEP first – notification, pre-approval, or emergency permits may be required)

- Rebuilding roads and bridges across streams
- Streambank stabilization projects, including riprap
- Removing gravel bars from the stream channel using heavy equipment
- Repairing a bridge or culvert, or removing one in danger of failure

**Red – STOP!** (These actions require permits from DEP, and possibly from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or other agencies)

- Redirecting the flow of a stream by reshaping gravel bars, or moving gravel to the streambank
- Moving/relocating a stream
- Dredging or damming streams, or creating dikes
- Building a new bridge or culvert

Visit the DEP website at <http://www.dep.pa.gov> for more info about relevant permits and programs.

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### Calendar of Events

Tuesday, January 31	Ross Paulenich Memorial Conservation Scholarship Application Deadline
Monday, February 6	Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, February 20	Office Closed: Presidents' Day
Tuesday, February 28	Mercer County Envirothon Registration Deadline
Monday, March 6	Board of Directors Meeting
Friday, March 24	Seedling Sale Order Deadline
Thursday, March 30	Pioneers in Conservation Awards Dinner
Monday, April 3	Board of Directors Meeting
Wednesday, April 5	Mercer County Envirothon Training Day
Friday, April 7	Office Closed: Good Friday
Wednesday, April 12	Seedling Sale Order Pick-Up
Wednesday, April 26	Mercer County Envirothon
Monday, May 1	Board of Directors Meeting
Monday, May 29	Office Closed: Memorial Day

### Mercer County Conservation District Staff

Jay Russell, District Manager	
Gerald Bickel, Mosquito Control Coordinator	Bob McDonald, Conservation Technician
Larissa Cassano-Hamilton, Watershed Specialist	Kelcy Marini, Environmental Education Coordinator
Chris Greising, Conservation Resource Specialist	Jennifer Medberry, Office Manager
Shawn Hedglin, Conservation Resource Specialist	Nick Trivelli, Agriculture Resource Conservationist

### Let's Keep In Touch



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724-662-2242