



2024 Annual Report

2024
FOREST COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Mark S Kingston – Chairman
Robert J Snyder, Jr
Patrick F. Kline

**FOREST COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT &
CONSERVATION DISTRICT MEMBERS**

Todd Huth – Chairman
Kenneth R Butler – Vice Chairman
Mark S Kingston – County Commissioner
Robert Summers
Elton Kline
Leonard Hetrick
Robert Wagner

James Bailey – Director Emeritus
Jeffrey Arnold - Director Emeritus
David Yeany – Associate Director
Rory Summers – Associate Director
Rich Cramer – Associate Director
Sheila Conner – Associate Director

**FOREST COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT &
CONSERVATION DISTRICT STAFF**

Donna Lynn Zofcin – Executive Director
M. Curt Kiefer – Resource Technician

Morgan Miller – Resource Technician/Admin

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS

Ty Ryen – Service Forester – Bureau of Forestry, PA DCNR
Laura Ayers - NRCS

DEP REGIONAL FIELD REPRESENTATIVE

Susannah Harris

**DIRT & GRAVEL ROAD PROGRAM QUALITY ASSURANCE
BOARD MEMBERS**

Donna Lynn Zofcin
Robert Summers
Erik Shellgren
Laura Ayers

The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department is unique in the Commonwealth because Forest County has combined both Conservation and planning duties under one office. With a very small staff, of just three people, a part-time resource technician who has other County job duties, an executive director, and a new full time resource technician/admin, we perform the duties and responsibilities assigned us. Our District Board is extremely vital and dynamic, representing a cross section of citizens within Forest County. Our Chairman, Todd Huth, is a forester, the Vice-Chairman, Ken Butler, is treasurer of the PA Firefly Festival. Also on the Board are Robert Wagner, a Township Supervisor, and farmer; Robert Summers was a Howe Township Supervisor (retired); Mark S Kingston, Forest County Commissioner; Elton Kline a retired business owner, and Leonard Hetrick retired from the Fish & Boat Commission. David Yeany is a business owner, Rich Cramer is retired Fish & Game Commission, and Sheila Conner is retired beautician and a local business owner.

As a Level One Conservation District, our duties do not include onsite inspections of E & S activities; however, our District does administer the Dirt & Gravel Road program as well as perform educational programs for both students and adults. The cross-over of interests between Planning and Conservation is our true strength. Being a small county that comprises of half government owned and half private owned property, our challenges in regards to conservation and planning are akin to a balancing act. In fact, over the past two decades, the two functions in Forest County have always remained connected. With a single manager/administrator over both functions, the citizens of Forest County receive service that is really a two-for-one kind of deal.

The Forest County Conservation District continues to be a clearing house of information, a unique agency that is able to react with flexibility in response to requests and concerns brought to light by the citizens of Forest County, the County Commissioners, and the Board. No District is typical, so we recognize that Forest County is different. If our mission could be summed up in a single statement it would be that we serve the citizens of Forest County in regards to conservation and land use issues.

With the funding we get for Dirt, Gravel, & Low Volume Roads, we completed four projects this year with three different townships.

DUHRING ROAD- BEFORE

Before the Duhring Road project, washouts from the steep hills on either side of the road were leading to sediment pollution in Spring Creek. Old pipes were rusted out and had collapsed or were too small. The original application was submitted as two separate phases, but after discussing funding with the township, both projects were combined and funded as one.



DUHRING ROAD- AFTER

Our project on Duhring Road had a total length of 7,881 feet and included the installation of 5 boxes and 293 feet of perforated pipes to create an underdrain along the steepest part of the road. Old pipes were replaced, as some were rusted out and had collapsed, with a total of 20 new cross pipes installed along the road. The township plans to resurface the roadway using its own funds now that the drainage issues have been resolved.



STITZINGER ROAD- BEFORE

Stitzinger Road was originally part of the 2023 project. Cut rebar was placed at the end of the pipe to make it inaccessible for wildlife. However, this caused the pipe to become backed up, and through the freeze and thaw cycles of winter, the pipe was uprooted.



STITZINGER ROAD- AFTER

To fix these problems, a new pipe was installed without the rebar, allowing the drains placed in previous years to work continuously together once again.



BEACH ROAD- BEFORE

The problems on Beach Road included heavy traffic from camper trailers, which had to pull out onto Route 36. The loose gravel caused vehicles to spin out and create ruts at the intersection of Route 36 and Beach Road. Additionally, the guiderail on Beach Road was in poor condition and needed replacement. Drainage runoff from Route 36 flowed down Beach Road, creating potholes and contributing to sediment pollution in Tionesta Creek.



BEACH ROAD- AFTER

The solution was to install a 75 x 25-foot paved apron at the intersection of Route 36 and Beach Road. As part of this project, the road base and road bank were improved, and the road surface was stabilized, which helped reduce sediment drainage into Tionesta Creek. Additionally, the guiderails on Beach Road were replaced.



JACKS HOLLOW ROAD- BEFORE



Problem: The natural springs on Jack's Hollow Road emerge through the road base and cartway, continuously running down the wheel tracks. These springs flow into the ditch, contributing to sediment pollution in Troutman Run.

JACKS HOLLOW ROAD- AFTER



The solution was to install a 74-foot French mattress to capture the spring water, designed to drain into the ditch on the east side of the roadway. Additionally, the drainage pipes under the roadway were replaced, and sturdy headwalls were installed.



WHIG HILL- BEFORE

Before the Whig Hill project, drainage issues led to sediment pollution affecting Tionesta Creek. To limit the pollution, improvements were needed to the ditches and road surface to stabilize them. Additionally, bank stabilization was a critical concern.



WHIG HILL- AFTER

The solution involved adding multiple new drainage pipes and boxes, as well as replacing the old. The boxes were strategically placed in a way that facilitates easier cleaning of the ditches, a method that Bud can attest to. Additionally, placing the boxes this way can help stabilize the bank and acts as a water velocity suppressant, reducing erosion and improving drainage effectiveness.



An additional annual project of the Forest County Conservation District is the RUSSELL M SMITH SCHOLARSHIP. The Scholarship was established to honor Russell M. Smith for his contribution to Forest County. Mr. Smith, well known because of his service to the Cooperative Extension program and the 4-H program, also served as a charter member of the Forest County Planning Commission beginning in 1966. He served as the only Secretary-Treasurer for the Commission until he resigned in 1983. His community service stands out as an example to all of us. The goal of conserving natural resources was his passion and so the Board decided that any Forest County student intending to pursue fields of study including Forestry & Wildlife management, Forestry Science, Environmental Planning and Management, Surveying, Agronomy/Agriculture, Forest & Earth Sciences, Wood Industry Services, or Teaching in a related field deserved aid by way of the scholarship.

Bryce Lee Byers, son of Erick & Rhonda Byers, received \$3,000 toward tuition at Clarion University, where he is studying Environmental Biology. This is the fourth Russell M Smith Scholarship that Bryce has received.


The Board was proud to present to one Forest County student the Annual Scholarship. This scholarship is given to students pursuing careers relating to the science of forestry and related natural science fields. The Board was very pleased to give this student help towards his education.

The Forest County Conservation District & Planning Department partnered with the Penn Soil RC&D Council on the Kellettsville re-route of a portion of the North Country Trail (NCT).


The purpose for the re-routing was to get the NCT off of public roads to improve public safety, as well as improving aesthetics viewed by the walkers/hikers along the NCT. The 1.25-mile section previously on Pierson Hill Road and Branch Road was relocated instead to the Kellettsville Campgrounds and land owned by Collins Pine. The project also included building bog bridges to more safely and with less damage to the environment to cross wet areas, as well as new interpretive signage about the adjacent mill. The trail was successfully moved/re-routed and the bog bridges were built with volunteer help from students from the Allegheny College Outdoor Club. New interpretive signage has been purchased and will be placed along the trail.

Kellettsville during the Logging Era


The lumber industry had a significant impact on the tiny village of Kellettsville. The population grew from a small settlement to approximately 1,300 people in the early 1900s due to the laborers needed for timber felling, two saw mills, a kindling wood factory, a tannery, and all the businesses needed to support those industries. The people of Kellettsville enjoyed a typical small town life with the village supporting many businesses, services, and churches.




Above: The Salmon Creek Lumber Mill crew holds bandsaw blades (circa 1907).




Top right: Salmon Creek Mercantile Company.




Right: In the Kindling Wood factory, wood scraps were cut into 3" lengths, dried and bundled. The cord used was soaked in wood tar to make the kindling easy to light. The bundles were shipped to cities to use in stoves for cooking and heating.



Above: The Fourth of July Parade went along Main Street. The street was lined with small businesses, like a butcher, blacksmith, barber, drug store, and general store. There were also services, including a doctor, a dentist and a post office. Further down the street, one of the three churches in town, the Free Methodist Church, can be seen.




Below: People rode special bikes along the railroad tracks.



Above: As trees were felled, teams of horses pulled the logs to the narrow-gauge tracks. Here workers roll the logs onto the cars. The train can be seen in the back to the left.

Once all the timber was harvested, the industries that depended on the trees were shut down. By 1940, the population of Kellettsville dropped to about 840 people. Presently, the village has become much smaller, consisting of some camps and a few businesses.



Photos courtesy of the Forest County Historical Society.
Sign funded by the Forest County Conservation District and Planning Department
Grant assistance from Penn Soil RC & D Council

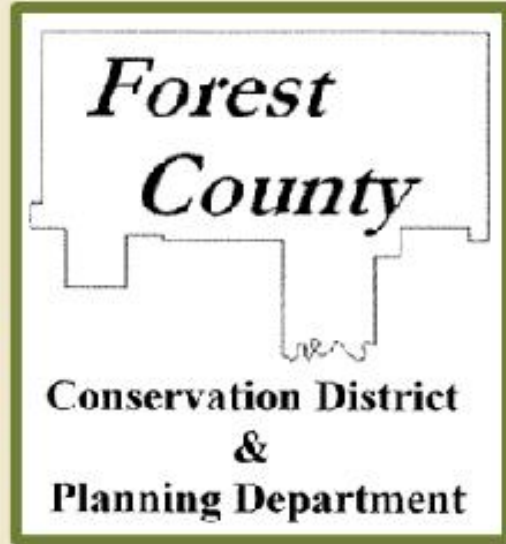
Forest County completed its first ACAP project at the end of 2024 at the Millward Family Farm. The Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) was created through the Clean Streams Fund established by the FY2022-23 General Funds State Budget. The purpose of the \$154 million program is to assist farmers and landowners in the design and installation of Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP's) that will reduce or prevent nutrient and sediment losses from their farms and improve water quality and soil health across the Commonwealth. The Millward Family Farm Project consisted of: a waste storage structure, heavy use area, underground outlet, fence, water well, pumping plant, watering facilities, and a livestock pipeline.



The Forest County Conservation District & Planning department joined forces with the Army Corps, ANF, State Health Nurse, Venango Conservation District, Game Commission, and Penn West University to host an Elementary Envirothon Exploration Day.

ENVIROTHON EXPLORATION DAY INSPIRES
FOREST AREA STUDENTS WITH ENGAGING
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION THROUGH
HANDS-ON LEARNING

The Forest County Conservation District is thrilled to announce the success of the Envirothon Exploration Day, held on December 19th, 2024. This exciting event, carefully planned by the Conservation District, brought together students from both East and West Forest for a day of inspiring, hands-on environmental education. The day's activities fostered a deeper connection with nature and promoted environmental stewardship. A key goal of the event was to inspire students to join the Envirothon program when they reach high school.



*Back-Row Left to Right: Andrew Schwab, Donna Zofcin, Jenna Morgan, Sarah Needs, Morgan Miller, Suzie Miller, Kurt Register.
Front-Row Left to right: Heather Flick, Bailey Kozalla.*



Presentations included a tick safety session led by Suzie Miller from the State Health Center, providing valuable information on staying safe from ticks and their impact on both human and animal health. Suzie brought examples of the different types of ticks found in Pennsylvania, demonstrating how to identify them and explaining what to do if you find a tick. She also brought along tactile examples to help students understand what ticks feel like on animals and stressed the importance of informing an adult when they find a tick on themselves or their pets, helping to keep everyone safe from tick-borne diseases.



Students also had the opportunity to explore birds of prey through a captivating presentation by Professor Kurt Register of PennWest University, who introduced the fascinating world of raptors. Professor Register also shared his love of falconry with the students and brought his own live Red-tailed Hawk to the presentation, providing an up-close, unforgettable experience.



The macroinvertebrate presentation was given by Joel VanOrd and Andrew Schwab from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, along with Bailey Kozalla from the Venango County Conservation District. This session used newly acquired materials from an Environmental Education Grant awarded to the Venango County Conservation District by the PA Department of Environmental Protection. With the help of two newly constructed macroinvertebrate touch tanks, Students were able to interact with aquatic insects in a mobile, stream-like environment. Through examining and identifying macroinvertebrates found in the touch tanks, students learned how to assess the health of the stream from which they were collected. This hands-on experience allowed them to understand the vital role these tiny creatures play in aquatic ecosystems and how their presence or absence can indicate the overall health of the water.



Students also explored forestry, with Sarah Needs and Jenna Morgan from the Forest Service discussing sustainable forest management practices and the importance of conservation. As part of the hands-on learning, students measured tree samples, guessed the age, and identified the types of trees; giving them a deeper understanding of forestry and the role trees play in our environment.

The soil demonstration, presented by the Forest County Conservation District, focused on the importance of soil layers and the creatures that live within our soil. The kids enjoyed pudding cups; which were used to visually demonstrate each layer of soil.

Finally, the wildlife presentation, led by Heather Flick from the Pennsylvania Game Commission, educated students about local wildlife species and the conservation efforts necessary to protect them. Heather engaged students with a fun and educational game, sharing pelts and skulls of Pennsylvania animals and challenging the students to identify the species, providing them with a hands-on learning experience that brought wildlife conservation to life.



The Forest County Conservation District is proud of the positive impact this event had on the students and looks forward to organizing similar events in the future to inspire and educate the next generation of environmental leaders. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Forest Area Schools and all the local and state organizations whose support helped make this day a resounding success for the students.

The Forest County Conservation District also provides administration of the Forest County Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance. In 2024, 13 subdivisions were processed through the office. In addition, many telephone inquiries were responded to over the course of the year. The District also administers the Forest County Comprehensive Land Use Plan. Although the Plan does not have policing powers that need attended to, the Plan does provide guidance to decision makers in the County.

| Municipality | Number of Subdivisions |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Barnett | 3 |
| Green | 0 |
| Harmony | 0 |
| Hickory | 1 |
| Howe | 2 |
| Jenks | 3 |
| Kingsley | 2 |
| Tionesta | 2 |
| Tionesta Borough | 0 |

An Act 167 Stormwater Management Plan and Ordinance were adopted within the County. Forest County is unique in that the Conservation District & Planning Office has accepted the responsibility of enforcing and managing the ordinance, rather than the municipalities having this responsibility. This Ordinance was revised in 2014, and an amended Ordinance was adopted in 2015. All 9 Townships have signed a MOU with the Conservation District & Planning Department to administer the Ordinance. This MOU is signed on a yearly basis. The Townships have the option to adopt and administer their own ordinance at any time.

| Municipality | Number of Stormwater Applications |
|---------------------|--|
| Barnett Township | 23 |
| Green Township | 16 |
| Harmony Township | 42 |
| Hickory Township | 25 |
| Howe Township | 16 |
| Jenks Township | 45 |
| Kingsley Township | 13 |
| Tionesta Borough | 12 |
| Tionesta Township | 13 |