

Indiana County Conservation District



Annual Report
2017





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Annual Report 2017

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On the cover: A Green Frog scooped up during stream culvert installation at the East Mahoning Township Simpson Road project.

Indiana County Conservation District *Staff*

Dedicated to serving Indiana County and its residents.



Indiana County Conservation District staff left to right:
Brooke Russick, Andrea Frustaci, Adam Cotchen, Tammie Robinson, Leya Ramer

Indiana County Conservation District Celebrates 70th Year

70 years—A Conservation Legacy

The Blacklick Soil Conservation District was organized in Indiana County on July 2, 1934, and officially became the first “District” in Pennsylvania on September 7, 1939. It served 10 townships in southern Indiana County in the Blacklick Creek Watershed. The Indiana County Soil and Water Conservation District was later organized on a county-wide basis on March 7, 1947. Since then our name has changed but our mission remains the same.



Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture, Russel Redding (left) and Secretary of Department of Environmental Protection, Patrick McDonnell (right) presented District Manager Adam Cotchen (center) with a certificate of recognition

2017 marked the 70th anniversary of the Indiana County Conservation District. Our goals today include the development of programs to address land and water related resource concerns, community environmental education, and the coordination of public and private sources to accomplish those goals. Due to regulations and the necessity to care for our natural resources, the need for Indiana County Conservation District’s assistance has multiplied exponentially over the past seven decades. The need to care for our natural resources is as important now, if not more, than it was when we formed 70 years ago. The District strives to be a public example not only of tried and true conservation practices, but also new, innovative ways to conserve and wisely use our natural resources. We are proud to have served Indiana County for 70 years and hope to continue for 70 more.

Celebrating 70 Years of Conservation

A look back at our milestones

Join us for a look back in time as we revel in our accomplishments, learn from our mistakes, and smile at memories made along the way.

1947

'47 The District was organized. There were no paid staff, only a volunteer board of “supervisors”. Major land use problems included excess erosion, drainage, and vegetation of mine spoil areas. Early conservation work focused on providing assistance to farmers in implementing conservation practices to reduce soil erosion. The District also endeavored to organize watershed associations to deal more effectively with resource problems in areas of greatest need. This remains our focus today.

1950's

'58 Began “Queen of the Furrow”, plowing, and essay contests. Today over 200 Jr and Sr high school students compete in the Envirothon.

'59 Operating expenses totaled \$201.47. Today, we administer millions of dollars in delegated programs, project, and grant work.

1960's

'64 The directors distributed Autumn Olive seeds for the growing of future planting stock. Today, we work with landowners to plant native species.

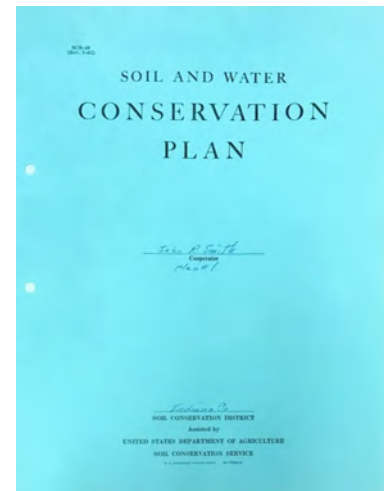
1970's

'70 An anti-water pollution poster contest was promoted. Conservation booklets were distributed to county elementary and high schools.

'73 An erosion and sediment control handbook and manual for forestry was completed and published.

'75 An environmental laws and regulations workshop for elected officials, township supervisors and strip mine operators was held. Today we work closely with municipal officials to educate and assist them year-round.





1980's

'87 The District started an active program with timber harvesters to help reduce sediment from logging operations.

'88 Coordinated the county-wide Gypsy Moth Suppression Program with the DER Bureau of Forestry.

1990's

'95 Entered into a delegation agreement to administer the Chapter 105 stream encroachment permit program.

'97 Joined the Farmland Preservation Program. Today 932 acres on nine farms have been preserved.

'97 The Dirt & Gravel Roads Program began. Today the program includes low volume roads and funding has increased from \$94,000 to \$725,000 annually.



2000's

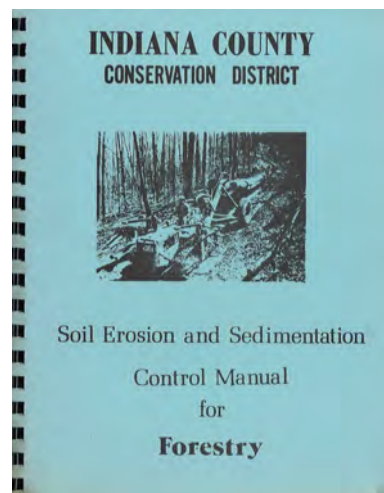
'02 Developed the Bear Run Watershed Restoration Plan that eventually led to the District receiving the first DEP watershed renaissance grant in Pennsylvania.

'03 Began work on the Waterworks Conservation Area showcasing abandoned mine drainage treatment wetlands. Today the site is a county park.

'08 The District developed a South Branch Plum Creek Watershed Implementation Plan assessment that eventually led to eligibility of EPA 319 funds for restoration of the watershed. That work continues today.

2010's

'15 Helped form the Indiana County Stormwater Education Partnership.

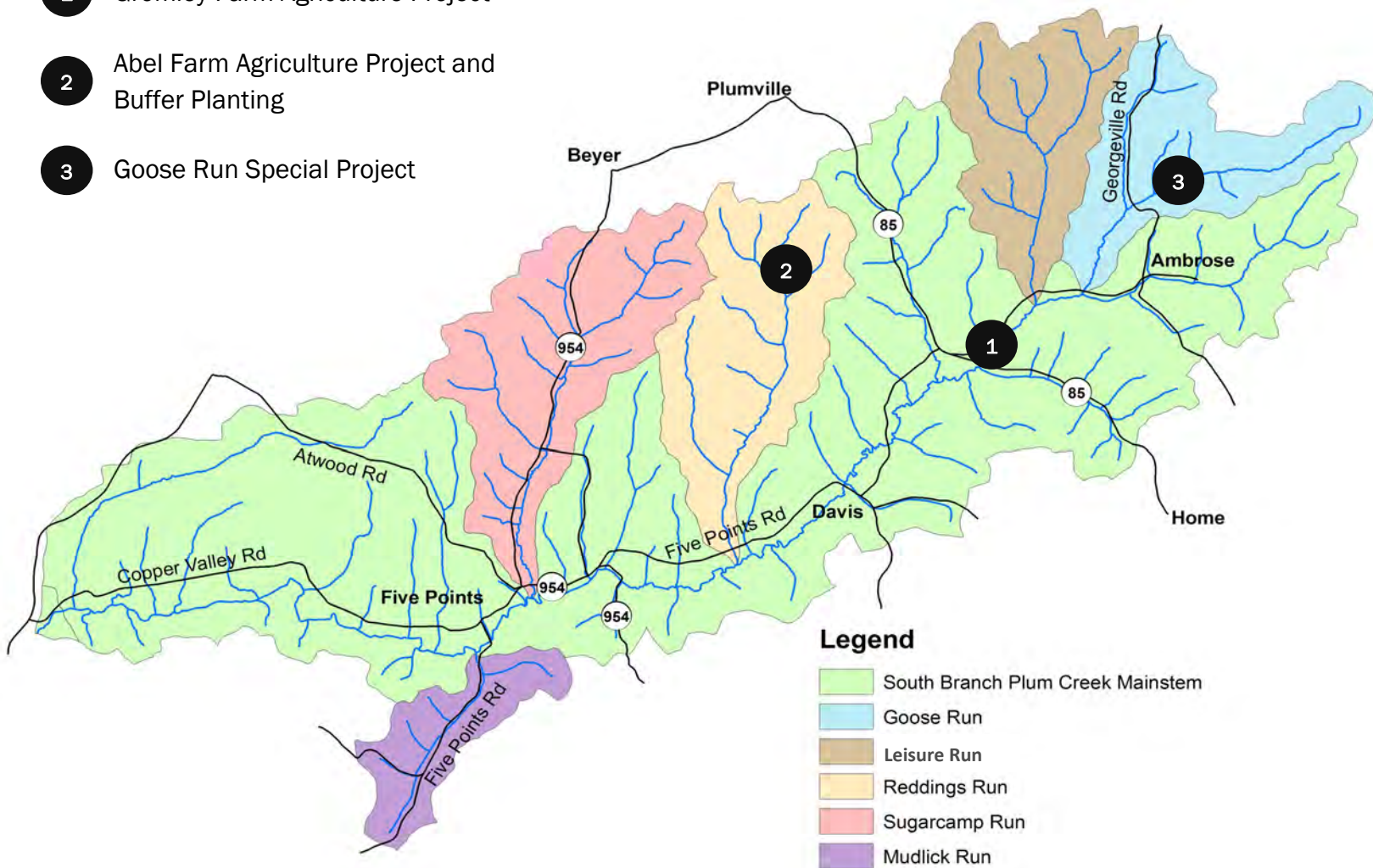


South Branch Plum Creek

A Priority Watershed

The South Branch Plum Creek is one of several priority agricultural watersheds in Pennsylvania. Since 2009, this watershed has been the focus of targeted funding and conservation planning efforts as part of the EPA Section 319 Non-Point Source Program's Watershed Implementation Planning (WIP) efforts.

- 1 Gromley Farm Agriculture Project
- 2 Abel Farm Agriculture Project and Buffer Planting
- 3 Goose Run Special Project



The South Branch Plum Creek is a 40 square mile watershed that includes 103 miles of stream located in mid-western Indiana County and mid-eastern Armstrong County. Streams within the South Branch Plum Creek are identified as impaired by siltation resulting primarily from agricultural sources. Dirt and gravel roads throughout the watershed also contribute significant amounts of sediment and siltation to receiving streams.

The Indiana County Conservation District (ICCD) is the lead organization for implementation of the WIP and is actively working to reduce sediment within the watershed.

During 2017 ICCD, in cooperation with landowners, completed several agricultural best management practices projects. The following articles are a glimpse at some of the projects completed.

Phase II Grant Completed

In 2017 ICCD closed out another successful grant to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) in South Branch Plum Creek. Because of our heavy focus on farm projects, we want to highlight our successful rotational grazing and agricultural based improvements installed from 2013-2017. Through Section 319 Grant funding, we installed:

- 1850 feet of streambank exclusion fencing
- 7909 feet of fencing for rotational grazing systems
- 9831 feet of water line for rotational grazing systems
- 2783 square yards of access roads, animal trails, and walkways
- 4 improved stream crossings
- 120 acres under Nutrient Management Plans
- 1 animal heavy use area and waste storage facility
- 2 acres of riparian buffer planted

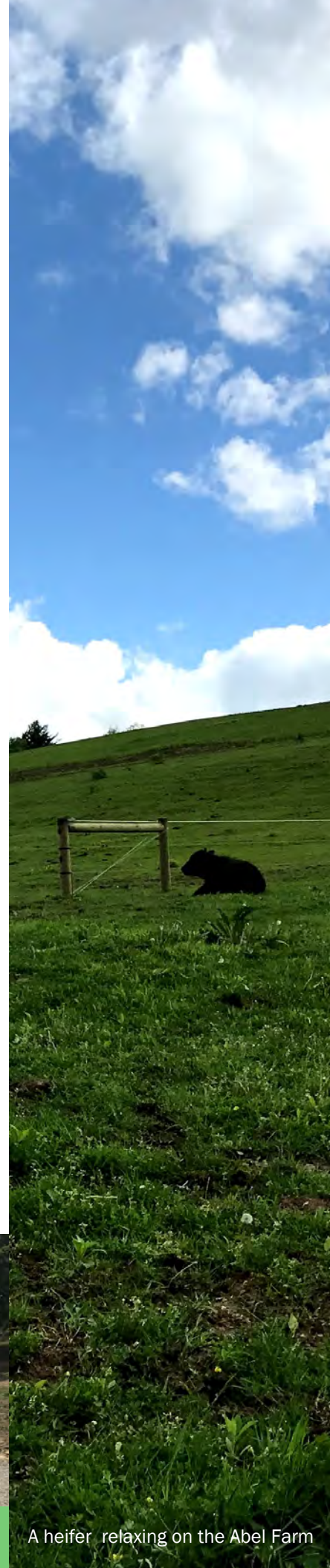
We are proud of these projects and look forward to future partnerships with landowners in this watershed.

Gromley Farm Agriculture Project *Animal Trails & Livestock Fencing*

The Gromley farm is a small family beef cattle operation located in Home that sits on the main stem of the South Branch Plum Creek. This farm had previously installed stream bank fencing through Growing Greener funding. Major concerns on this farm included a lack of rotational grazing paddocks and limited watering facilities. Implementation of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service prescribed grazing plan for this operation included 3,500 feet of interior walkway fencing, 1,475 feet of interior divisional fencing, five hydrants with troughs, 1,850 feet of pipeline, one freeze-proof trough and 13 acres of prescribed grazing.



Installation of gravel animal trails on the Gromley Farm



A heifer relaxing on the Abel Farm

Manure Management Efforts Continue

DEP manure management regulations require every farm in Pennsylvania that produces or applies manure to develop and implement a written Manure Management Plan (MMP). With financial assistance from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts manure management mini-grant program, ICCD continued to host regular workshops to educate and assist farmers in writing a MMP for their operations.

Throughout 2017, ICCD hosted five workshops and helped over 200 farmers comply with regulations.

Abel Farm Agriculture Project *Animal Trails and Livestock Fencing*

The Abel farm is a 50 acre equine operation housing over twenty horses, pigs, and beef cattle. Located in Creekside, this farm sits on an unnamed tributary to Reddings Run in the South Branch Plum Creek Watershed.

Major concerns on this farm included a lack of rotational grazing, animal heavy use areas located adjacent to the stream, and unlimited animal access to the stream causing streambank degradation. A grazing plan was developed for this farm and best management practice installation began.



One of five watering troughs installed on the Abel farm

These practices included heavy use area protection, an access road, two stream crossings, five water hydrants with troughs, and nearly 10,000 feet of livestock fencing, including streambank fencing to exclude livestock from the riparian area. This effort increased the rotational grazing system nearly three fold from six acres to over 17 acres of prescribed grazing.



Before and after of the Abel farm riparian buffer, animal trails, and access road

Abel Farm Riparian Buffer Planting

Planting Trees to Improve Water Quality

The Abel farm had great potential for a riparian area planting. The stream that runs through the farm was degraded by livestock and impacted by nutrients from manure stacked adjacent to the stream.



Before and after of the Abel farm riparian buffer

Through her grazing plan the landowner was already willing to place fence 15 feet along both sides of the stream to limit livestock access. For this landowner, planting trees in the unused area just made sense.



Tree planting crew braving the rain to get it done

Riparian Stream Buffer
a vegetated or forested area near a stream which helps shade and protect the stream from the impact of adjacent land uses.

Trees will provide shade to her livestock and to the stream, which restores cooler water temperatures and helps aquatic life flourish. The landowner was allowed to choose many of the tree and shrub species that were planted and opted to add edible berry bushes to the buffer. Cooler water temperatures, increased aquatic life, and edible plants means more wildlife brought to the farm and elderberry jam for the family.

This tree planting was organized by the 2017 AmeriCorps VISTA and completed with the help of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and community volunteers. We planted nearly an acre of riparian area and over 200 trees!

Goose Run Special Project

Lone Oak Farm Agriculture Project

Lone Oak farm is a small family dairy farm operated by the Simpson family. Located near Marion Center, the 175 acre farm sits on the banks of an unnamed tributary to Goose Run in the South Branch Plum Creek watershed. Lone Oak farm is an environmentally conscious operation that utilizes rotational grazing and sustainable agriculture practices to raise livestock and produce for local sale.

When this farm was established many generations ago, like many farms in the county, building the barn close to the stream was an asset. Because of the lack of running water, the stream was used to water livestock and was also handy for running milk house drains. These days we know more about how nutrients from animal manure and milk house wastes affect aquatic life and water quality. We must work to avoid discharging nutrients into streams and get them onto crop fields where plants can use them to grow.



Photo Credit: Fallon Simpson, Lone Oak Farm Photographer

ICCD obtained special funding through the Department of Environmental Protection's Regional Ag Watershed Assessment Program Initiative for agricultural planning and installation of best management practices in the Goose Run watershed. Lone Oak Farm is one of several farms where the funding will be used .





Before and after photos of the Lone Oak Farm animal trail and walkway improvements

Major concerns on this farm included an unstable animal walkway that was depositing sediment and manure into the waterway, and milk house waste water that discharged into the stream. The solution to these issues was to install a stabilized gravel animal trail and walkway, and to install a milk house waste water tank the farmer will pump out and spread on crop fields.



Dirt, Gravel, & Low Volume Road Program

Improving County Roads

Every year ICCD works with public road owners through the Dirt, Gravel, & Low Volume Road (DGLVR) Maintenance Program. In 2017, ICCD worked with 10 municipalities on 15 road projects to minimize roadway impacts on streams, while also decreasing long-term maintenance costs. Over \$506,000 went to fund dirt and gravel road improvements and \$196,000 funded low-volume road improvements.

East Mahoning Township Wins Project of The Year

As featured in our 2016 Annual Report, Lewis Road was a challenging but successful project. East Mahoning Township worked with a small dairy farmer to handle water coming from off the road's right-of-way and implemented numerous environmentally sensitive maintenance practices.

To recognize such great projects, ICCD launched an annual "Project of the Year" award and East Mahoning Township was our first winner! They not only won bragging rights, but camp chairs and a catered lunch served by ICCD staff.

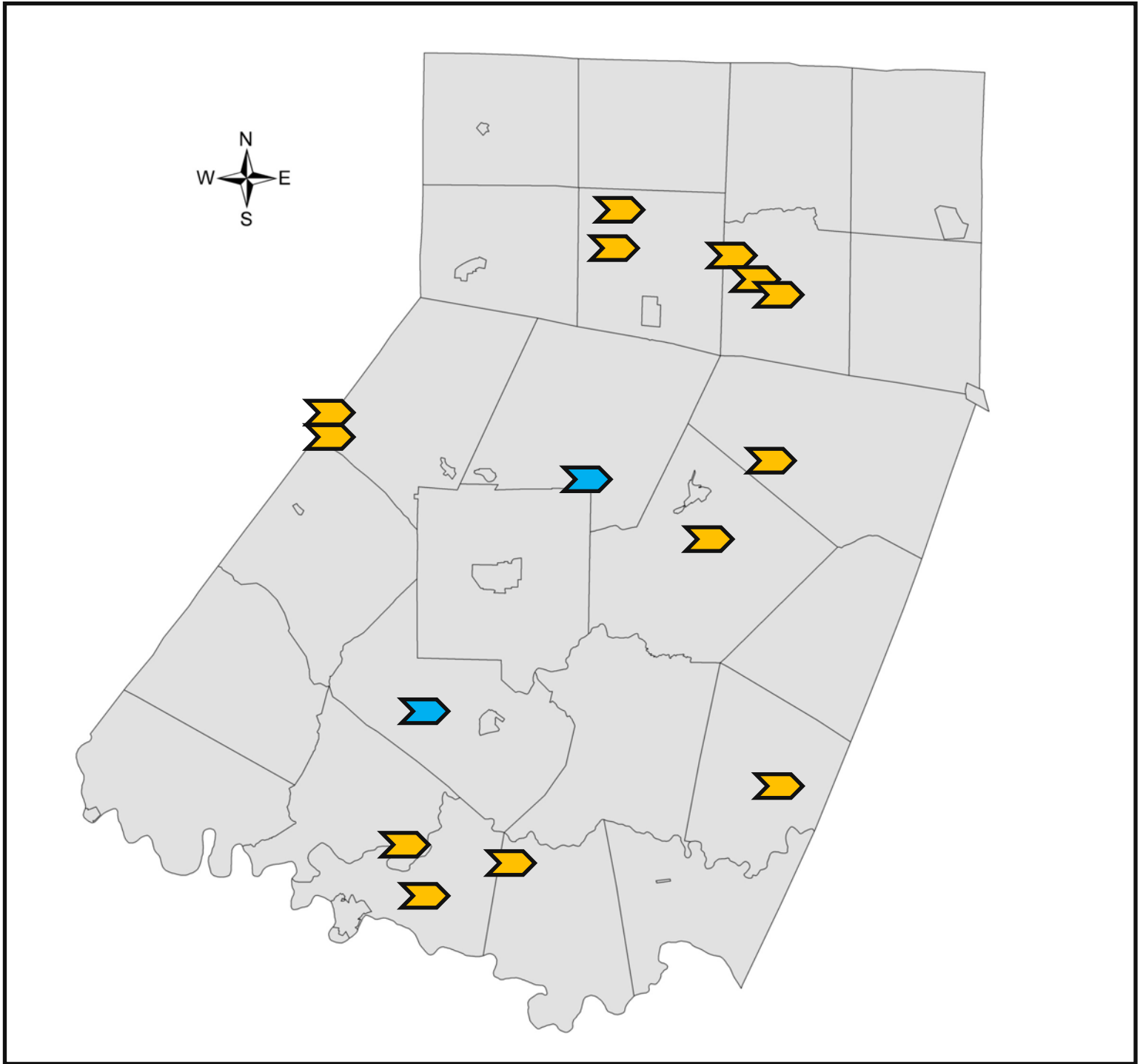


Brian Fike and PJ Ackerson accept the Project of the Year award from ICCD staff at the annual Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Roads municipal workshop



Installation of underdrain on Donahey Road in Grant Township

Road Project Grants Awarded in 2017



Dirt & Gravel Projects

- Buffington Township, Wissinger Road
- Burrell Township, Bells Mills Road
- Burrell Township, Hill Drive
- Cherryhill Township, Diehl Road
- East Mahoning Township, Lewis Road
- East Mahoning Township, Simpson Road
- Grant Township, Braughler Road
- Grant Township, Donahey Road

- Grant Township, Kinnan Road
- Green Township, Railroad Street
- Washington Township, McCreight Road
- Washington Township, Peterman Road
- West Wheatfield Township, Ofman Road



Low Volume Projects

- Center Township, Smith Road
- Rayne Township, Tanoma Road

Environmental Education

Education for the Future of Conservation

Annual DGLVR Municipal Workshop

ICCD held its third annual Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Municipal Workshop. Each year we invite our public road owners to get program updates, review local funding priorities, and showcase excellent projects from the construction season. This year we had a special demonstration of a leaf-blower (courtesy of White Township) that can clean ditches with minimal soil disturbance. This workshop has proven to be an effective education and outreach tool that we will continue to host in the coming years.



A shot of the workshop (left) and demonstration of a ditch-cleaning leaf-blower (right)

Indiana County Eco-Tour GeoTrail Kickoff!

Evergreen Conservancy, in partnership with the Eco-Tour Committee on which ICCD staff serves, launched the Indiana County Eco-Tour GeoTrail in November 2017. A GeoTrail is a series of geocaches that have a common theme. Indiana's Eco-Tour GeoTrail showcase areas of environmental interest in the county focusing on land, water, sustainability, healthy community, or wildlife habitat, and includes several ICCD project sites. Participants fill out a passport as they visit each cache. After finding all the caches on the GeoTrail, the completed passport can be exchanged for a trackable geocoin modeled after Indiana County.

In addition to the GeoTrail, the Eco-Tour Committee is exploring alternative eco-tour options to showcase environmentally important sites, including a walking or driving tour, and the creation of educational videos to promote environmental stewardship in Indiana County.



Illustration of the GeoTrail sites



The Abel Farm with completed best management practices

Task Force to Focus on Sustainable Ag/Environment

ICCD is excited to participate in a recently formed county-wide task force working to ensure a sustainable economic future for Indiana County. Organized in 2017, the County Commissioners appointed this task force in partnership with Evergreen Conservancy, the Center for Community Growth, and League of Women Voters of Indiana County. The task force also works with numerous agencies, county departments, and Indiana University of PA.

The purpose of this task force is to identify strategies and initiatives for local economic development that are grounded in sustainable economic development practices and tailored to Indiana County. The task force is conducting a one-year participatory process of engaging local stakeholders, including local businesses, grass roots organizations, and educators in a research and planning process. This process involves creating four focus groups of local stakeholders in each of the following substantive topics: Agriculture, Renewable Energy, Sustainable Building Methods, and Environmental Restoration. The results of this process will be collated into a report that will provide direct input into the development of the long range County Economic Development/Work Force Development Plan.

District Hosts AmeriCorps VISTA

ICCD partnered with Evergreen Conservancy and Blacklick Creek Watershed Association to host an AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA). The VISTA works to promote environmental stewardship in Indiana County. Maegan Stump, this year's VISTA, assisted with South Branch Plum Creek initiatives, quarterly stream assessments, and environmental education programs. In addition, Maegan will continue to support the Indiana County GeoTrail and develop projects to promote environmental awareness in Indiana County.



AmeriCorps VISTA Maegan Stump

Donate to the David S. Frick Envirothon Education Grant Fund

Even the smallest amount can help support the Envirothon Education Grant Fund! Your tax deductible donation can be made payable to the Indiana County Conservation District Environmental Education Fund and mailed to 625 Kolter DR, STE 8, Indiana, PA 15701.



Andrea showing off the Mobile Environmental Display truck at the Indiana County Fair.

Outreach at the Indiana County Fair

H2Oh! On the Go!

This year ICCD decided to go big at the county fair. Thanks to a partnership with Armstrong Conservation District, ICCD was able to bring a 24-foot long hands-on mobile environmental display (MED) to residents of Indiana County.

The MED contains interactive displays that demonstrate physical and chemical properties of water. With the MED we were able to teach watershed-based lessons and discuss conservation measures. We were able to interact with over 500 community residents over the course of fair week!

This is an on-going education opportunity and is available for use by our partners.



A youngster interacts with the sand box that projects topographic lines in order to bring a watershed to life



Adam, Brooke, and Leya showcase the MED and information table at the Indiana County Fair

Envirothon

Accept a Natural Challenge!

2017 saw another year of growth for the Envirothon program. 85 students competed in the Sr. Envirothon, while a record 125 competed in the Jr. High event. Many partners and dedicated community members from Indiana County work together to provide a high-quality learning opportunity for our county students.

Five member teams participated in a series of field-oriented tests that focus on aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and a current environmental issue.



Marion Center's Bee Hive Five
Sr. Envirothon winners

Each member of the winning Sr. Envirothon team is awarded a \$500 education grant to be used toward post-secondary education. \$26,500 in grants has been earned by Indiana County students since the grant program began in 2007. Grants are funded by donations from local businesses, conservation organizations and private citizens. Our generous contributors were BPO Elks Indiana Lodge 931, Don Bowers, Crooked Creek Watershed Association, Dilltown Sportsman's Club, Gibson-Thomas Engineering, Indiana Insurance, Indiana Moose Lodge #174, J H Hickman Surveying, Keller Engineers, Inc., The Markosky Engineering Group, Inc., Scott Overdorff, P&N Coal Company, Inc., Stiffler McGraw, and Joe and Arlene Yackuboskey.



Learning how to delineate a watershed (left) and how to test the pH of soil (right)



Delegated Programs

Chapters 102 & 105

Through delegation agreements with the Department of Environmental Protection, ICCD administers the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control (E&S), National Pollutant Discharge and Elimination System (NPDES), and Chapter 105 Dam Safety and Encroachment Act-Water Obstruction and Encroachment programs at the county level.



Before and after of pipeline restoration

Indiana County saw a lot of activity in 2017 resulting in the review and oversight of many construction projects. ICCD is dedicated to ensuring that while development and expansion occurs, our natural resources are protected.

- Reviewed 56 Erosion and Sediment Control Plans for Chapter 102 compliance
- Conducted 50 site inspections in an effort to obtain voluntary compliance
- Conducted 12 site inspections in response to Chapter 102 complaints
- Issued 17 General NPDES permits
- Recommended 12 Individual NPDES permits for issuance by DEP
- Acknowledged 44 Chapter 105 General Permits for water obstructions and encroachments
- Conducted 12 site inspections in response to Chapter 105 complaints
- Met with and assisted 89 individuals with projects and permit preparation
- Projects for the year totaled 250 acres with over 165 acres of disturbance

Indiana County Conservation District

Board of Directors

We bid a fond farewell to Don Bothell and LeeRoy Vatter as they concluded their service to the District. Don dedicated 11 years as an exemplary farmer director. He plans to spend more time with his family and tending to his farm where he raises Holstein beef. LeeRoy served as an associate director for 18 years with a focus on youth education. In fact, he plans to continue volunteering with the Envirothon. We wish you both a happy retirement and thank you for your years of steadfast service to the Indiana County Conservation District and our environment.



Don Bothell



LeeRoy Vatter



Indiana County Conservation District Board of Directors

Top left: Commissioner Rodney Ruddock, Donald Bothell, J. Scott Overdorff, Edward (Ted) Kuckuck. Bottom Left: Beth Marshall, Jason McGinnis. Absent-Rick Stumpf

Directors

Richard Stumpf
Chair
J. Scott Overdorff
Vice Chair
Edward Kuckuck
Treasurer
Rodney Ruddock
Commissioner Member
Donald Bothell
Beth Marshall
Jason McGinnis

Associate Directors

David Babyak
Janis Long
Cindy Rogers
John Somonick
LeeRoy Vatter
Joe Yackuboskey

Staff

Adam Cotchen
District Manager
Tammie Robinson
*Office Administrator /
Envirothon Coordinator*
Andrea Frustaci
*Resource Conservation
Technician*
Brooke Russick
*Watershed / DGLVR
Program Specialist*
Leya Ramer
*Agriculture Conservation
Specialist*

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INDIANA COUNTY
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“To promote sustainable agriculture and communities while protecting and wisely using the natural resources of Indiana County.” - Our Mission



INDIANA COUNTY
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