

**ANNUAL REPORT
2022**

**CELEBRATING
75 YEARS
OF CONSERVATION**



**INDIANA COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT**

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Through education, technical assistance, projects and partnerships, the Indiana County Conservation District will serve as a model in protecting and conserving natural resources to improve the quality of life and local economy for current and future generations.



Letter from the Chairperson

The Indiana County Conservation District recently celebrated its 75th year of existence! We honored the occasion with an Open House to commemorate the accomplishments of one of the longest operating of Pennsylvania's 66 districts. The event drew all the county commissioners, the current board and associate members and employees, state and congressional district representatives, former District directors, former employees, and dozens of friends of the District. There were displays, including historical documents and educational resources, set up throughout the ICCD building. We unveiled the District's modernized website. The room in which the Open House took place was overflowing with an enormous commitment to the wise use of the natural resources in Indiana County, for the good of our water, soil, and land.

As Chair, I remarked that the new, state of the art building and property was a "place to conduct the business that plays a vital role in the development and growth of Indiana County and its path to prosperity." Those are considerable words because Indiana County, like most of the Appalachian region, has experienced nothing resembling prosperity for many decades. Long-term disinvestment and economic marginalization have created feelings of substantial resentment and despair in the places that built this country and fueled a century of modernization and affluence through extraction of coal, gas and oil, salt, and timber. Many of those workers sacrificed their health and personal economics, and many gave their lives.

Attempts to mend the economic exploitation, systemic racism, and environmental damage have been made. However, the region will not truly experience an upswing in its economic circumstances unless there is massive public investment in workforce development, access to capital, support of small businesses, and the political will to dedicate funding to economic diversification across the region.



In 2022 the American Rescue Plan Act began to make that investment real for rural and small-town America. Passed in early 2021, there is a provision for the Economic Development Administration to commit \$300 million to coal-impacted communities. For local government, community-based organizations, businesses, and agencies such as the Conservation District, these historically significant investments will begin the healing of our region. Through strong partnerships, a commitment to justice and fairness, and leveraging of the extraordinary amount of funding for programs such as the Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program, we can look forward to assisting those the District serves – agricultural producers, watershed associations, developers, and educators. With a boost to technical assistance, bottom-up community planning, capacity-building, and other functions devoted to economic diversification, in which the District already excels, I am optimistic that

we will experience the saying “a rising tide lifts all boats” in meaningful ways over the next decade and beyond.

I invoked the iconic Loretta Lynn in my remarks at the commemoration of the 75th Anniversary of the District. She had passed away just days before the event. “Born a coal miner’s daughter,” Loretta Lynn had the ability to put into poetry our rural way of living, capturing the uniqueness of our culture, our heritage, and traditions in northern Appalachia. She didn’t live her entire life in Appalachia, but she and her contemporaries sang the words that illustrated rural and small-town Indiana County in so many ways.

In Indiana County, we’ve watched our landscape, industries, rural way of life change in these past 75 years, but our ethic remains:

- We love our land and our way of life and care deeply for our natural resources.
- We help our neighbors, especially in their time of need.
- We continue to produce food, fiber, and fuel for the country we love.

And our ethic has always embraced professionalism, attention to quality, and an understanding of the needs and challenges and strengths of Indiana County. Our District has been second to none in ensuring that businesses, the people, and the natural environment receive

what they need to accomplish their goals in a responsible way.

I am thankful to all the former board directors and businesses and governmental partners who have made the District what it is today. Staff are constantly improving their knowledge base and bringing the wider world and economy to Indiana County. They have acquired multiple streams of funding and strengthened programming by addressing the concerns of women, people of color, and other historically disenfranchised people. Through educating about food systems, clean energy, and community health, the Conservation District is offering a return on the monumental investment of the past few decades with an aim to create a community that cares about its resources and its people enough to work for a future for both.

Congratulations to the Indiana County Conservation District on 75 years of delivering results for Indiana County’s producers, citizens, and businesses. We look forward to many more years of collaboration with our partners and stakeholders as we continue our efforts of bringing prosperity and sustainability to Indiana County.

Sherene Hess, 2022 Chair,
Indiana County Conservation District



Letter from the Executive Director

“To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived – that is to have succeeded” (Ralph Waldo Emerson). This quote encapsulates the whole of the current Indiana County Conservation District (ICCD), and it speaks true to the very foundation that has set us on a journey of conservation and environmental improvements for more than 75 years.

The year 2022 marked the 75th anniversary of ICCD being a county-wide conservation district, though, as you will read later in this report, our history began many years prior. Building on the legacy that generations of conservationists have left before us, the incredible team of directors and staff have continued to push the boundaries of conservation efforts in our county, making immeasurable improvements for the betterment of all who are lucky enough to live, work, and play here.

In 2022, ICCD made tremendous progress toward increasing our capacity to provide educational programs. We worked on establishing our building grounds for educational demonstrations that include growing hops, planting specialty crops like vegetables and fruits, managing stormwater, and decreasing mowing through the establishment of native meadows, native plantings, and no-mow areas. In 2022, we hosted the inaugural First Waves Indiana workshop that provided meaningful outdoor experiences for underserved youth.

Our dedication to the community continued through collaborative efforts with local organizations to improve community gardens that alleviate food deserts and provide food for the most vulnerable of our population. We advanced efforts to assess watersheds for impairments and strengthened our partnerships with local watershed organizations. Agriculture remained a critical component of our mission as we created a new technical position and worked to hire a talented person to administer and provide technical assistance to farmers through our Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program.

Financial sustainability received significant focus in 2022 as ICCD participated in meetings with state legislators, other districts, and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts to educate them on the value that conservation districts bring to local communities. Those efforts resulted in the first increase in state funding to conservation districts in over 15 years. To support community driven projects, ICCD continued to seek grant funding and was awarded several grants from different local, state, and federal programs.

Both physical and metaphorical gardens that were sown by ICCD in 2022 will lead to a community that is better, healthier, and stronger than it is today. Without a doubt, we make the claim that our founding members, who saw a need and had the foresight to work and create the solution to address it, succeeded in enabling the lives of many to breathe easier. Their legacy has had immeasurable impact, and it is through that same spirit of conservation that we continue to advance the mission and purpose of ICCD today.



Douglas M. Beri Jr
Executive Director

Synergy of Conservation

The 75- Year Storied History of the Indiana County Conservation District

Soil and water are natural elements that have intrigued a variety of people, from conservationists and scientists to farmers and poets. Soil has always had an intimate partnership with humankind enabling people to live, to eat, to build, and to heal.

Mud baths, therapeutic concoctions of dirt and water, are highly lauded for providing detoxification and relief from stress and inflammation. For soldiers, though, the earth has long been a symbol of refuge and safety. As American poet, novelist, and environmentalist Wendell Berry succinctly stated, "Earth is what we all have in common."

Given soil and water's unique relationship to humans everywhere, some people have devoted much time and effort toward elevating the importance of soil health, clean water, and smart land use. In the 1930s, like-minded individuals began forming the early concept of conservation districts. In 1934, Indiana County, Pennsylvania, blazed the trail for the nation when a small group of residents established the actual first conservation district in Pennsylvania known as the Blacklick Soil Conservation District.

Erosion control demonstration projects, including the construction of diversion terraces and tree planting, were the primary focus. These Great Depression Era projects presented an opportunity for the District to partner with the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Young men who worked for the CCC in Indiana County lived in camps located in the Homer City and Shelocta areas. The District capitalized on the available labor and equipment that the CCC provided to carry out some of the conservation practices in these early demonstration days.

The conservation pioneers of the Blacklick Soil Conservation District forged the way for Indiana County to become a catalyst for change when it came to con-

serving and protecting soil, water, and related mineral resources.

According to Allen F. Snyder's letter, dated May 29, 1956, the Blacklick Soil Conservation District served until it was reorganized in 1947 on an entire county-wide basis. The Blacklick Soil Conservation District included, at most, ten townships in Indiana County and one, Blacklick Township, in Cambria County. When the entire county was declared as a Soil Conservation District in 1947, the area more than doubled the acreage and nearly doubled the number of farms represented. In his letter Mr. Snyder noted that "farmers acted favorably to the district concept."

By 1959, with a fistful of accomplishments and a mere operating budget of \$1,000, the District (ICCD) was tasked with figuring out ways to help area farmers reduce the erosion of fertile soil, a major land use problem. Nearly a decade later and with additional staff and money (\$3,400), the District reviewed agriculture conservation plans and erosion and sediment control plans for construction sites. Establishing a working relationship with the USDA Soil Conservation Service enabled the District to move forward with planning and implementing vital soil conservation projects.

Efforts and achievements did not go unnoticed. In 1965, the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company presented the District with an award in recognition of their work. A prestigious award for its time, the Goodyear Company's Soil Conservation Awards Program sought to honor local conservation district leaders across the United States for their work in maintaining and improving natural resources, according to A.H. Settle, director of the program. In the year following the Goodyear award, the District declared William H. George the Indiana County Conservation Farmer of the Year.

Over the decades, the District's synergy, or the power



generated by team work, fueled collaborative efforts to encourage and carry out the proper stewardship of land and water. Douglas Beri Jr., ICCD's current executive director, stated: " It's incredible to think that a few well-intentioned people could band together 88 years ago and completely change conservation forever in Indiana County."

Acknowledging humanity's shared interconnectedness with Earth, ICCD endeavored to educate youth about the importance of environmental sensitivity and the need to achieve a social, ecological, and economic balance. In the 1980s, ICCD saw the Pennsylvania Envirothon as the ideal program for equipping middle and high school students in Indiana County with knowledge and skills related to natural resources and environmental sciences.

Inspired by a vision of showing youth how all aspects of the environment are connected and relate to one another, ICCD was instrumental in bringing to fruition their first high school Envirothon competition in 1987. As the Envirothon gained popularity throughout the U.S., local enthusiasm for ICCD's competition increased, and in 1999 the first Indiana County Jr. Envirothon for seventh and eighth grade students was held.

Over the past 36 years, more than 2,000 students have participated in ICCD's Sr. Envirothon. In addition to learning about aquatic ecology, soil, and land use, students experience and explore topics related to forestry, wildlife, and current environmental issues. By 2007, ICCD was one of the first conservation districts in Pennsylvania to offer education grants to each of the five members of the winning team. Financial support and donations from community-minded businesses, conservation organizations, and private citizens fund this education grant program. Given their genuine passion for the environment, the staff and directors of ICCD have impacted the environmental education of thousands of county youth, resulting in far-reaching, immeasurable effects on caring for the environment.

As the District's goal of educating youth in the county was gaining momentum so was the District's involvement in additional environmental opportunities. In 1993, the ICCD hired its first full-time technician to meet the growing need to assist local businesses and residents with navigating and implementing Pennsylvania's Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control and Chapter 105 Dam Safety and Waterway Management regulations. This service, an invaluable one to the community, has led to better planned and constructed projects and the use of proper E&S controls to protect land and fragile aquatic ecosystems.

With funding of just \$103,000 in 1998, the District faced the task of administering Pennsylvania's new Dirt/Gravel Roads Program. This program provides funding to eliminate stream pollution caused by runoff and sediments from unpaved public roads. The overarching goal of the program is to create a more environmentally and economically sustainable low volume road network. Since the addition of the Dirt/Gravel Road program, the District has completed numerous dirt and gravel road improvement projects that have received accolades for being exemplary projects.

With the growing need and success of soil conservation projects, the Indiana County Conservation District endeavored to organize watershed associations to tackle the serious issues involving the cleanup and restoration

of county waterways for the health and safety of residents. By the 1990s, the Board of Directors took action to remediate hundreds of miles of streams tainted and impaired by decades of abandoned mine drainage. Beginning in 2000, a watershed specialist coordinated stream and watershed rehabilitation projects like the current Lucerne 3A Waterworks Passive Treatment System. With robust funding of almost \$600,000, this system promises to fulfill ICCD's goal of creating a cleaner Two Lick Creek. The return of clean, healthy water will ripple with countless benefits for the viability of aquatic life and for outdoor enthusiasts and anglers.

Problems beyond the scope of the original forefathers of the Blacklick Soil Conservation District challenge today's district directors. Stormwater is an increasing problem, and the ICCD has stepped up to the challenge by assisting Indiana County's governing municipalities and agencies with the development of a comprehensive stormwater management plan for the county. With increasing regulation on the agriculture community, the District hired its first agriculture technician in 2001 to assist local livestock and crop producers with utilizing their manure nutrients to their fullest economic and environmental benefit. From manure management workshops to watershed assessments and individual farm inspections, the District has played an integral role in conserving and protecting precious soil and water by assisting farmers with the implementation of best management practices.

"The earth," wrote William Shakespeare, "has music for those who listen." Listen is what a small group of environmentally minded trailblazers in Indiana County did. The synergy of ICCD's directors and staff has resulted in years of notable environmental achievements for Indiana County. Their collective efforts created conservation objectives and projects that have contributed to widespread sustainable use and management of the county's soil and water. Responsible stewardship of land and water has directly impacted the health, safety, and general welfare of generations of families that have called Indiana County their home.

ICCD has come a long way from an annual budget of a few hundred dollars to the incredible organization that it is today. Five core programs – rural road infrastructure improvements, technical assistance and support for the farming community, locally controlled permitting for development projects, overall cleanup and restoration of county waterways, and environmental education workshops – continue to make ICCD the driving force for conservation in Pennsylvania. In 1934, a small group of directors decided to collectively make a difference, a phenomenal one that continues resonating throughout Indiana County. In Douglas Beri Jr.'s opinion, "they formed a strong foundation that successive board members and staff have been able to build upon, growing the District into what it is today. So many of the most incredible environmental movements have been initiated by a few concerned people. As Margaret Mead once said, 'Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful and committed citizens can change the world.'"



NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

ICCD Executive Director Receives Award



At the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Summer Meeting in July of 2022, Executive Director Douglas M. Beri Jr. was presented with the PACD President's Award for his contributions to the PACD Ad-Hoc Budget Committee that was successful in advocating for and receiving a substantial increase in conservation district funding in the PA General Assembly's FY 2022 Budget. All members of the committee received this award.

PACD Ad-Hoc Budget Committee Members

PACD Legislative Leadership Award presented to State Representative Jim Struzzi

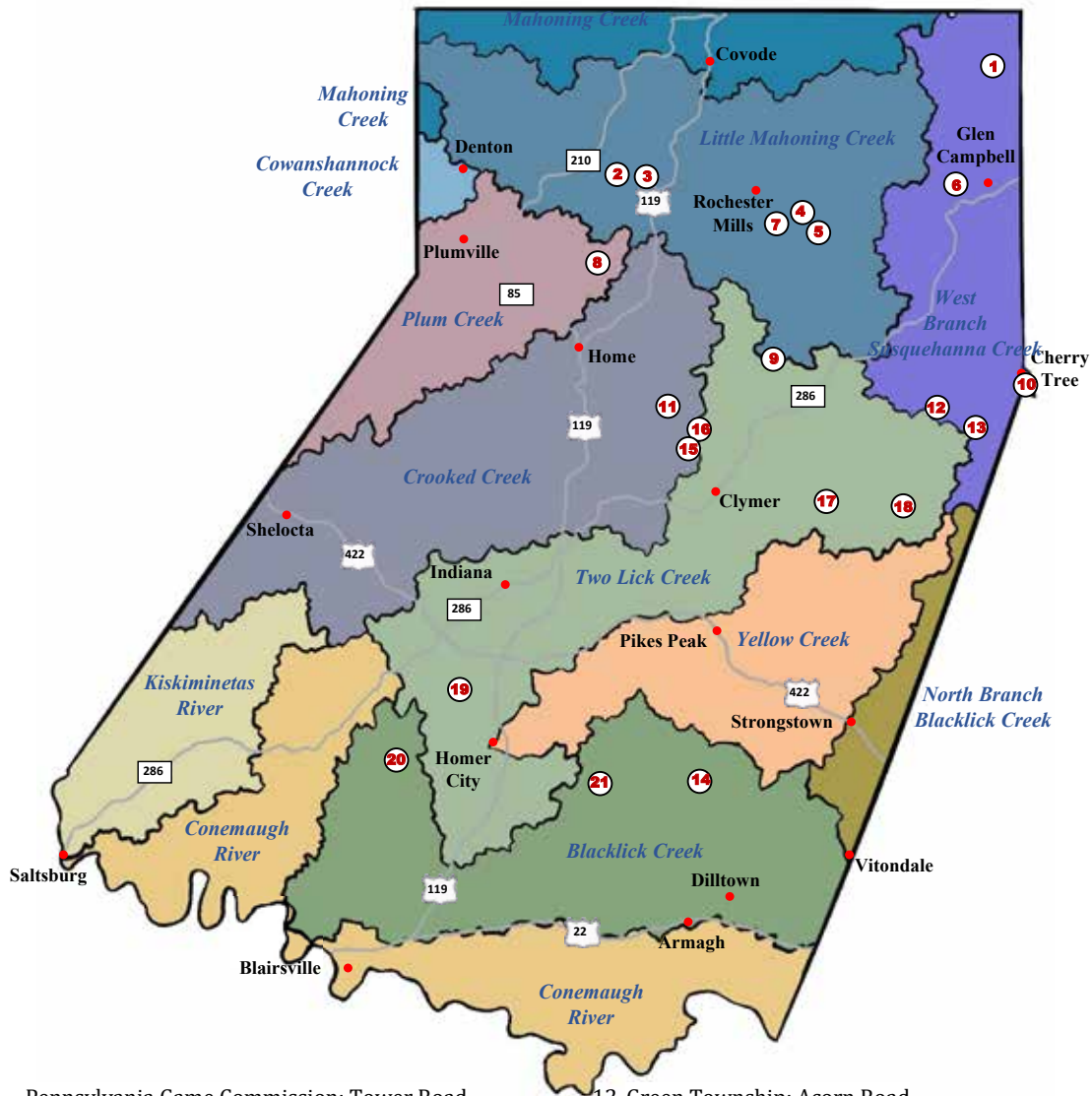
Representative Jim Struzzi was presented with the PACD Legislative Leadership Award at the 2022 Summer Meeting, after having been nominated by the Indiana County Conservation District. Since taking office, Representative Struzzi has been a great local champion for the Indiana County Conservation District. He has supported our project grant applications, participated in our strategic planning process, took the time to learn about the services we offer the community, and advocated for Pennsylvania's Conservation Districts through the state budget process. Representative Struzzi embodies the characteristics of a true conservation leader, which is why we were happy to nominate him for the PACD Legislative Leadership Award. We are fortunate to have him as a conservation partner and friend of ICCD.



State Representative Jim Struzzi (center)

DIRT, GRAVEL & LOW VOLUME ROADS

Every year ICCD works with public road owners through the Dirt, Gravel, & Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Maintenance Program. The DGLVR program works to improve local infrastructure and decrease long-term maintenance costs, while also minimizing roadway impacts on our local streams. In 2022, ICCD funded 21 road projects across eight municipalities and one State Game Land. This amounted to an investment of over \$657,000 in dirt and gravel road improvements and over \$335,000 in low-volume road improvements in Indiana County.



- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Pennsylvania Game Commission: Tower Road | 12. Green Township: Acorn Road |
| 2. East Mahoning Township: Rowe Road | 13. Green Township: Redwood Road |
| 3. East Mahoning Township: Gilgal Road | 14. Brush Valley Township: Spruce Hollow Road |
| 4. Grant Township: Hetzler Road | 15. Rayne Township: Kirkland Road. A |
| 5. Grant Township: Hetzler Road 2 | 16. Rayne Township: Kirkland Road. B |
| 6. Banks Township: Spotts Road | 17. Green Township: Barr Road |
| 7. Grant Township: Braughler Road | 18. Green Township: Stitt Road |
| 8. East Mahoning Township: Steffy Road | 19. Center Township: Johnson Road |
| 9. Green Township: Raspberry Road | 20. Center Township: Henry Road |
| 10. Cherry Tree Borough: High St. | 21. Brush Valley Township: Old Mission Road |
| 11. Rayne Township: Myers Hill Road | |

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads

Project Spotlight: Rayne Township, Chambersville Hill Road

Chambersville Hill Road was a typical dirt road that lacked sufficient drainage. The roadway frequently washed out after storms and introduced sediment to the headwaters of a tributary to Crooked Creek. Due to decades of erosion, the road was significantly lower than the surrounding ground – a critical issue in addressing drainage. To fix the problem, the project included a whopping 3300 tons of material to raise the roadway up to three feet, three new crosspipes and a turn out to breakup stormwater flows, and 1220 ft of underdrain to catch springs. Rayne Township partnered with two neighboring townships to assist with hauling the fill material and did all the work with township forces.



Adding limestone fill material



Installation of underdrain

Grant Source and Amount

Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program
Funds
\$70,945.58

In-Kind Sources and Amount

Rayne Township
\$14,212.94

Total Project Cost

\$85,158.52



Newly installed stormwater pipe and underdrain outlet

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads

Project Spotlight: East Mahoning Township, Steele Road

Steele Road, located in East Mahoning Township, was a Dirt Road project. The most concerning aspect of Steele Road's previous state was the direct impact on tributaries to Goose Run and Ross Run, both high-quality streams. Few cross pipes existed on this stretch, resulting in direct drainage from the ditches into the stream. Inadequate drainage also caused deeper erosion within these ditches.

This project included the installation of seven new cross pipes, replacing two existing cross pipes, adding 1,680 feet of underdrain, and topping it off with 6,400 tons of road fill. Three stream crossings were also replaced, along with two squash pipes and a third arched pipe with a flat bottom. These stream crossings were installed to mimic natural conditions on grade with streambed material throughout the entire pipe.

The installations on Steele Road have improved the road banks, road base, stream crossings, stormwater management, stabilization of road surface, and ditches. Phase 2 of this project is to cap the slate fill with driving surface aggregate in future grant rounds.



(Before) Entrenched roadway



(During) Raising road profile with slate fill

Grant Source and Amount

Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program
Funds
\$128,355.00

In-Kind Sources and Amount

East Mahoning Township
\$12,187.55

Total Project Cost

\$140,542.55

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads

Project Spotlight: Center Township, Johnson Road

Johnson Road, located in Center Township, was a Low Volume Road project with significant drainage issues. Surrounded by large agriculture fields, Johnson Road is heavily used by a local dairy with wide and heavy equipment. Not only did the road lack stormwater infrastructure, but it was also inundated with water from off the right-of-way. During wet months of the year, water would overload the township ditch and cause flooding and dangerously icy conditions on the roadway. A tributary to Cherry Run parallels Johnson Road and made this a perfect fit for Low Volume Road funding.

To improve this section of Johnson Road, six new cross pipes were installed, four existing cross pipes were replaced, one access drain was improved, 1,020 feet of underdrain was added, and four field drains were directed through the road instead of over the road. This project was completed entirely by Center Township forces. Overall, these practices greatly improved the ditches, road base, and management of stormwater that was impacting traffic safety and water quality along Johnson Road.



(Before) Johnson Road flooding during a storm event



(During) Installation of underdrain



(After) A newly installed pipe to catch field drain

Grant Source and Amount

Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Roads Program
Funds
\$52,193.51

In-Kind Sources and Amount

Center Township
\$14,145.39

Total Project Cost

\$66,338.90

AGRICULTURE

Whether you're traveling through Blairsville or making a trip to Smicksburg to purchase goods of the Plain Sect community, you're bound to see a variety of crop fields, tree farms, and livestock grazing and frolicking in their pastures. The District understands it is so important to have a good working relationship with the farming community due to the abundance of agriculture throughout the county. This year alone, staff provided assistance to 35 farmers who had questions regarding Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP), cover crops, rotational grazing systems, manure management plans, manure hauler tests, and pesticide questions.

In addition to educating the farming community, ICCD has a delegation agreement with DEP to administer Chapter 91. Chapter 91 is a regulation that requires EVERY farm, regardless of size, that produces or spreads manure to develop and implement a manure management plan. Farmers have the option to develop this plan themselves by following the DEP "Land Application of Manure – Manure Management Plan Guidance" document. But if you need any help, ICCD is willing and able to help create a plan for you at a low cost. In 2022, staff reviewed 15 manure management plans for farmers that were applying for REAP program benefits.

Along with administering Chapter 91, the District also administers Act 38, Pennsylvania's nutrient management law. This law requires that any operation deemed a "Concentrated Animal Operation" (CAO) will be required to develop and maintain a nutrient management plan. CAOs are defined as agricultural operations where the animal density of all livestock on the farm exceeds two animal equivalent units (AEUs) per acre on an annualized basis. Unlike a manure management plan, a nutrient management plan must be developed by a certified plan writer and reviewed by the District's certified reviewer. You don't have to be a CAO to use the management plans under Act 38; however, farms that have fewer than two AEUs per acre are encouraged to join the nutrient management program by developing a plan voluntarily. This would classify the operation as a voluntary animal operation (VAO). Farmers that are working with the District developed are encouraged to become a VAO. Indiana County boasts five VAOs, two of which were processed this year. The number is expected to grow with the addition of the new Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) starting in 2023!

ACAP is a statewide cost-share program aimed to help farmers implement best management practices to conserve resources, keep soils healthy, and waterways clean. Indiana County was awarded 2.58 million dollars that will be allocated to farmers over the next three years. Funding is available for cover crops, rotational grazing, watering systems, streamside buffers, livestock heavy use areas, and much more.

Through an open partnership with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), ACAP will also assist farmers enrolled in NRCS's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to cross fund projects and decrease the overall out-of-pocket costs to farmers.



Agriculture

Project Spotlight: Local Brewers, Local Farms, and Malt Grains

At the District office, we have constructed a demonstration plot to grow a small batch of hops constructed with 22-foot tall black locust poles and raised beds to provide quality soil. Thirty-five hop rhizomes were planted in the raised beds, and they successfully grew, crawling up the twine to reach the top of the cables. The first year produces the smallest yield, so hops that are harvested in the following years will be processed for brewing a small batch beer. A local farmer in Indiana County has partnered with us to grow an acre of malt barley to be used in this brew and for educational purposes. The purpose of this work is to demonstrate different specialty crops that can be grown in Indiana County.

ICCD hosted an "Intro. to Hops" workshop where Noah Petronic, owner of Hazy Daze Hops Farm, gave a presentation about his own hops yard. Additionally, three ground tours were carried out, educating a total of 47 people about hops as a specialty crop and giving them the opportunity to observe hops up close.



Constructing raised beds



Installing growing poles

Grant Source and Amount

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
\$37,951.00

Project Partners

Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force, Indiana County Board of Commissioners, Indiana County Farm Bureau, Indiana County Farmers Market, Penn State Extension, Indiana County Chamber of Commerce.



Bountiful hops crop

Agriculture

Project Spotlight: Specialty Crop Test Plots and Community Education Grant

Indiana County is known for its history of rich agriculture and crops like corn and soy. In 2021, ICCD received a specialty crop grant to integrate community experience and education related to Indiana’s agricultural history. Our goal with this grant is to emphasize the importance of growing specialty crops to farmers, food industry, and consumers. With a local based mindset, we want to encourage the community to support local farmers.

As spring arrived in 2022, ICCD was busy preparing for the upcoming events. The carpentry department at the Indiana County Technology Center (ICTC) built several raised beds for this project. These beds are open for community use or are available to be claimed and rented out to a family to garden for the summer.

Each garden has landscaped fruit and nut trees/shrubs to create food forests within these green spaces. Excess produce grown at the gardens is donated to the Chevy Chase Community Center to be provided to the underserved community, increasing access to fresh produce at no cost to them.

Grant Source and Amount

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture
\$100,500.00

Project Partners

Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Indiana County Farm Bureau, Indiana County Chamber of Commerce, Penn State Extension, PASA Sustainable Agriculture, Indiana Community Garden, Chevy Chase Community Center, Indiana Career and Technology Center, Indiana County Sustainable Economic Development Task Force, USDA NRCS



Education program at Chevy Chase Community Garden



Chevy Chase Community Garden



ICCD Community Garden



WATERSHEDS

ICCD is focused on reducing the amount of non-point source pollutants reaching Indiana County waters, while simultaneously promoting management practices that sustain the agricultural industry, urban and rural communities, and stream ecosystems. Focus areas for our watershed specialist include work on abandoned mine drainage (AMD) remediation, riparian buffer installations, agricultural conservation, stormwater management, and environmental education.

In 2022, the ICCD installed over nine acres of multi-functional riparian forest buffer zone, completed a watershed assessment of Yellow Creek, began assessment of Upper Two Lick Creek, and designed a passive treatment system to treat the Lucerne 3A/ Waterworks discharge on Two Lick Creek. All these projects aim to reduce the non-point source pollution that enters Indiana County waters by identifying the problem area and developing a plan to remediate it.

Alongside the various projects that the ICCD spearheads, we offer support to local Indiana County watershed and environmental organizations through project partnership and meeting attendance. This collaboration allows for ICCD to remain a reliable local resource in tackling the water pollution problems of Indiana County.

Watersheds

Project Spotlight: Upper Two Lick Creek Assessment

The Upper Two Lick Creek Assessment Project proposes to create an updated, inclusive analysis of the impairments in the Upper Two Lick Creek watershed. Two Lick Creek is part of the Blacklick Creek watershed. The Upper Two Lick Creek watershed has been studied previously by Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Operation Scarlift. This project intends to conduct a more thorough and comprehensive analysis of the watershed which will be used to develop a plan to remediate the impairments.

This assessment will guide our efforts to determine where the watershed is impaired, the causes of these impairments, and how to best treat them. This project directly addresses the impairment sources of abandoned mine drainage (AMD) and agricultural impacts. Through field reconnaissance and water quality assessments, the team will be able to develop a restoration plan to remedi-



One of DCED's sampling points on Penn Run



Sample Run at confluence of discharge and a headwater

Grant Source and Amount

DEP Growing Greener - \$131,689

In-Kind Sources and Amount

Hedin Environmental - \$9,241; Indiana County Conservation District - \$19,500; Blacklick Creek Watershed Association - \$14,270; St. Francis University - \$7,111

Total Project Cost

\$181,811

Project Partners

Blacklick Creek Watershed Association, St. Francis University, Hedin Environmental, and PMSC AmeriCorps

ate the problems in the watershed. This project is intended to be conducted in two phases. The first phase will consist of in-stream sampling of the watersheds at twenty-five locations on a bi-monthly basis over one year during a variety of flow rates, weather conditions, and seasons to determine locations and sources of impairment and determine if any stretches of stream are not currently impaired. Additionally, research into farms that do not have manure management plans in place will also be conducted. The second phase of the project will identify individual impairment sources by focusing on the impaired stretches. This will determine the severity of the impairments and a plan to treat them. Also, any stretches of streams that show little to no impairments will be assessed for biologic viability by sampling for macroinvertebrate and fish populations.

Watersheds

Project Spotlight: Yellow Creek Watershed Assessment

This project was intended to be used as an update to the 2005 Blacklick Creek Watershed Assessment/Restoration Plan specific to coal mine drainage. This project funded reconnaissance to provide updates and to detail the acid mine drainage (AMD) pollution sources in the Yellow Creek watershed. The watershed assessment obtained data from four mass balance sampling efforts from November 2019 to May 2021, and monthly discharge monitoring from November 2020 to May 2021.

Grant Source and Amount

Growing Greener - \$91,123.65

In-Kind Sources and Amount

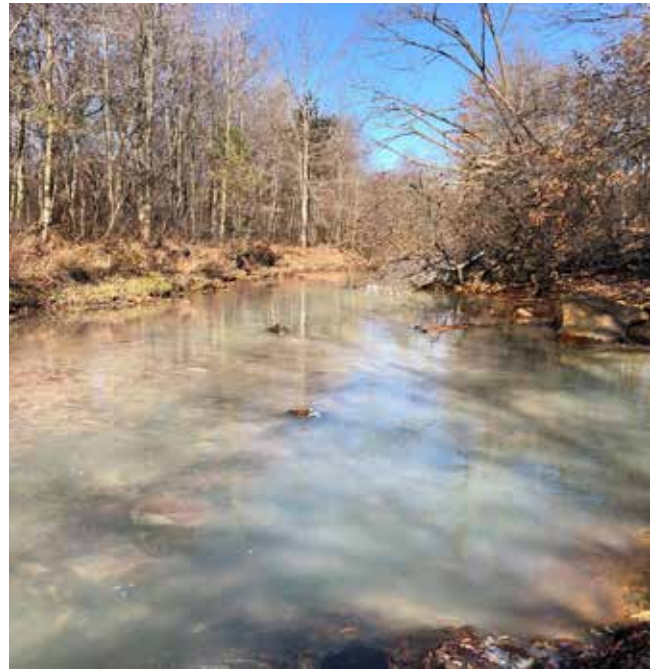
Blacklick Creek Watershed Association - \$17,283.00; Indiana County Conservation District - \$1,750.00; Hedin Environmental - \$8,440.00; Conemaugh Valley Conservancy Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team - \$4,740.48; Saint Francis University - \$15,750; Indiana University of Pennsylvania - \$5,360

Total Project Cost

\$146,378.33

Project Partners

Blacklick Creek Watershed Association, Indiana County Conservation District, Skybernetics LLC., AmeriCorps, Conemaugh Valley Conservancy Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, Hedin Environmental, Saint Francis University, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana County Pennsylvania Senior Environmental Corps



Abandoned mine drainage in Yellow Creek Watershed

The final report revealed that the Yellow Creek Watershed is generally of good quality and able to assimilate many minor sources of mine drainage from its headwaters to about one mile from its mouth. At the one-mile mark, the stream flows by the Lucerne refuse pile. AMD from this area significantly degrades Yellow Creek to its mouth and confluence with Two Lick Creek. The source of this pollution is likely polluted groundwater.

The Yellow Creek watershed is a large sub-watershed of the Blacklick Creek watershed. It flows southwest from its headwaters near Heilwood to its confluence with Two Lick Creek in Homer City. The roughly 86 square mile watershed is separated into two sections by the dam at Yellow Creek State Park, and has a variety of designations under Chapter 93 including cold-water fishes, high-quality cold-water fisheries, and trout-stocked fisheries. Within this watershed, 18 miles are listed as impaired by abandoned mined drainage according to the 2016 Integrated Waters List. Another approximately six miles are impaired by agricultural-related causes. Thus, AMD causes most of the watershed's impairment.

This project's expected environmental impacts are long term. The goal of this project was to provide a foundation for all future AMD remediation efforts in the Yellow Creek Watershed.

PERMITTING

Pa. Code, Title 25, Chapter 102 of the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law was created to require people conducting earth disturbance activities to develop, implement, and maintain best management practices (BMPs) to minimize erosion and sedimentation leaving the site during construction and after construction.

The Indiana County Conservation District has Level II delegation from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to administer the erosion and sediment pollution control program. Under this delegation agreement ICCD has the following responsibilities: review erosion and sedimentation control plans; conduct site inspections; receive, answer, and service complaints; and process permit applications in conjunction with the NPDES program. The NPDES, or National Pollution Discharge Elimination System, is a federal regulation that works in conjunction with the state Erosion and Sedimentation program. This regulation requires earthmoving activities disturbing over one acre to obtain an NPDES permit, which is then reviewed by the District.

CHAPTER 102 ACTIVITY

235

Total Plan Acres

163

Total Disturbed
Acres

\$11,550

E&S Plan Review Fees

6

General NPDES
Permits Issued

1

Individual NPDES
Permits Issued

\$3,500

NPDES Permit Fees Collected

18

Total Complaints
Received

20

Total Site
Inspections
Conducted

In 2022, eight Erosion and Sediment Control Plans were reviewed for projects under one acre, and seven NPDES permits were processed. NPDES projects included Blairsville Family Housing 2, Indiana University of Pennsylvania – Demolition of Obsolete Buildings, Dollar General – Alverda, Grisemore Road Solar Farm, Marion Center WR20 Waterline, Glory Substation

Expansion, Falling Run Road Waterline, and Saltsburg (286) Dollar General. Notice of Terminations (NOTs) are completed when a permit has expired and/or the job has been completed. A total of six permits were terminated this year.



Active pollution from timber harvest site that did not have erosion and sedimentation control measures installed

Along with reviewing E&S plans and processing permits, the District has the responsibility of handling complaints. Typically, complaints are called in directly to the ICCD, but in some cases a complaint is filed through DEPs online environmental complaint webpage. When a complaint is received, the Conservation Programs Specialist will visit the site and conduct an inspection. After the inspection, all involved parties will be contacted and a plan to achieve compliance will be discussed. Most times, the issue is resolved through voluntary compliance but there have been a few times where DEP needed to step in for enforcement actions. This year we received a total of 18 complaints.



Timber mats that are not installed correctly

EDUCATION

In addition to both the Jr. and Sr. Envirothon events, ICCD provided environmental education to over 500 children and adults in Indiana County in 2022. Students were taught using hands-on educational techniques by ICCD staff and other professionals in the environmental field. ICCD offers customizable programs at our Discovery Center, in schools, and at various outdoor locations including the Tanoma Acid Mine Drainage Facility, ICCD's Discovery Center, Chevy Chase Food Forest, and the Indiana Community Garden.

Some notable environmental topics covered included invasive species awareness such as spotted lanternfly education, gardening, regenerative agriculture, professional opportunities, specialty crops, abandoned mine drainage, water health, macroinvertebrate identification, and soil health. These classes and workshops allowed students, both young and old, to gain respect, knowledge, and interest for environmental topics in Indiana County and beyond.



OVERALL EDUCATION OUTREACH

722

Children

44

Adults

Project Partners

Evergreen Conservancy, PMSC AmeriCorps, the Water-smith Guild

2022 Jr. Envirothon

After two years of creating video lessons and holding the Jr. Envirothon virtually, we joyfully returned to an in-person, hands-on event in 2022! We chose the theme “Native, Non-Native, and Invasive Species” to teach to 95 seventh and eighth grade students.

Students learned techniques on how to identify the difference between our native species and non-natives, as well as their effects on the biodiversity of our local environment. They left with the knowledge of how THEY can help control existing problems and how to prevent unintentional spread in the future. We’re happy to know that every public school district in Indiana County, as well as the Homeschoolers for Christ and Seeds of Faith Christian Academy, feel environmental education is important enough to ensure that students from their schools participate in this great event.



Students at the Forestry Station



Students studying pelts at the Wildlife Station

2022 Sr. Envirothon

Like the Jr. Envirothon, we were excited to return to an in-person competition after two years of holding the event virtually. One hundred and twenty students from Homer Center, Indiana, Marion Center, Penns Manor, Purchase Line, River Valley, and United High Schools, as well as Homeschoolers for Christ, participated in the annual competition held at Blue Spruce Park. This was our largest event to date and that tells us that our students were ready to get back outside to Accept a Natural Challenge!

The Envirothon tests high school students’ knowledge of Pennsylvania’s natural resources and environmental sciences. Five-member teams participated in a series of field-oriented tests that focused on aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and a current environmental issue, which was “Waste to Resources.” The teams were tested in a variety of ways including identifying wildlife by skulls, tracks and scat, bird and frog calls, turtles, salamanders, macroinvertebrates, trees, use of forestry measurement tools, invasive plants and insects, soil textures, soil horizons, and recycling and waste management practices.



Pictured left to right are Connie Bruner – advisor, John Bruner, Joseph Pumford, Bergen Spencer, Sadie Palfrey, Elizabeth Bruner,

Homeschoolers for Christ Co-Op placed first at the competition; second place was earned by Marion Center’s Team A; and third place was earned by Team 2 from United. The Homeschoolers for Christ Co-Op went on to represent Indiana County at the Pennsylvania Envirothon where they competed against 61 other teams and earned 2nd place in the oral presentation component, and 9th overall in the state! Each of the five members of the winning team was awarded a \$500 David S. Frick Envirothon Education Grant to be used toward post-secondary education.

Envirothon Partners

Indiana County Parks and Trails, PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Game Commission, DCNR Bureau of Forestry, DCNR Bureau of State Parks, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Evergreen Conservancy, PA Senior Environmental Corp, Turner Dairy, and many public volunteers



Students identifying a tree species

David S. Frick Envirothon Grant Fund



Homeschoolers for Christ representing Indiana County at State Envirothon

Since 2007, \$29,750 in Envirothon education grants has been disbursed to Indiana County students. The grants are funded by donations from local businesses, conservation organizations, and private citizens and are administered by the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies (CFA).

The CFA is one of only 39 statewide participants in PHEAA's Partnerships for Access to Higher Education (PATH) Program. The PATH Program can match our scholarship grants on a dollar-for-dollar basis up to \$3,500 for eligible undergraduate students who attend Pennsylvania schools of higher education. Simply put, there is potential for your donation to be matched through the PATH program so please consider contributing to the David S. Frick Envirothon Education grant program.

Donate to the Fund

<https://www.cfalleghenies.org/fund/david-s-frick-envirothon-education-grant-fund>

Thank you to our 2022 contributors:

The Markosky Engineering Group, Inc.

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Gibson-Thomas Engineering

Indiana Moose Lodge #174

Edward and Sherri Kuckuck

P&N Coal Company

Keller Engineers, Inc.

Crooked Creek Watershed Association

Indiana County Farm Bureau

Stiffler, McGraw and Associates, Inc.

Jim Resh

Doug Beri Jr.

Donald and Florence Bothell

Susan Bowers

Dilltown Sportsmans Club

Charles and Regan Houser

Lias Tire, Inc.

Marion Center Area Lions Club

Herbert Pollock

Vincent Receski

Tammie Robinson

Joe and Arlene Yackuboskey

First Waves 2022



Youth participants paddleboarding on Yellow Creek Lake (photo by Renee Rosensteel, courtesy of the Watersmith Guild)

“All children need nature. Not just the ones whose parents appreciate nature. Not only those children of a certain economic class or culture or set of abilities. Every child.” – Richard Louv. As a conservation organization, we serve a critical role in providing meaningful outdoor

experiences for our county’s children. First Waves Indiana is one way in which we accomplish this priority.

The First Waves Indiana program is modeled after successful First Waves programs in Cambria and Allegheny Counties. First Waves Indiana exposes youth to cross-curricular opportunities in outdoor recreation, environmental science, and art. These experiences foster an appreciation for the environment and children who participate come away with an interest in water conservation and a better understanding of stream health and how it interrelates to outdoor recreation and overall community health.

Existing spaces like Yellow Creek State Park and Greenhouse Park are natural areas that also serve as outdoor classrooms. Our program utilizes them to connect children with the natural world, weaving environmental science into multiple disciplines that helps participants develop a deep understanding of and respect for earth’s communities. These connections create environmental awareness which, in turn, builds overall long-term environmental sustainability. First Waves Indiana creates partnerships among professionals in multiple disciplines who become an important part of the solution for combating the societal disconnect from the natural world.

Participants in the inaugural First Waves Indiana attended

Grant Source and Amount

Community Foundation for the Alleghenies: \$5,0000; PA American Water: \$6,390

In-Kind Sources and Amount

ICCD: \$5,741; SurfSUP: \$1,500; Malhari Media: \$750

Total Project Cost

\$19,381

Project Partners

Indiana County Conservation District, Malhari Media, Watersmith Guild, Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, SurfSUP Adventures, and Yellow Creek State Park

a series of three one-day workshops. For the first workshop, Indiana County youth traveled to Yellow Creek State Park where they received instruction on how to fly fish and standup paddleboard. After getting suited up, they hit the water for the first time in their lives. On the open water, they practiced standing up on paddleboards and quickly grasped the concept. They adventured around Yellow Creek Lake and up a stream channel while observing different kinds of plant and animal life. On that day, their lives had been changed and their hearts opened to a new appreciation of nature.

The second day of the workshop brought the youth to Greenhouse Park in Somerset County where they participated in a stream ecology workshop and learned how to whitewater paddleboard on a constructed river wave in the Stonycreek River, an experience they will never forget.

The third and final day was held at the ICCD Discovery Center where they learned about filmmaking and composed their very own short films from footage they had taken throughout the previous days of the workshop. The videos were inspired and unique to each participant and really captured the value that First Waves brings to kids who don't have these opportunities.

First Waves Indiana connects the often-forgotten children to nature through transformational experiences that build their individual self confidence and awareness while growing an appreciation for the environment.



Youth participant receiving fly fishing instruction from Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited (photo by Renee Rosensteel,



Photo by Renee Rosensteel, courtesy of the Watersmith Guild



DISCOVERY CENTER



Ralph Waldo Emerson said that “Many eyes go through the meadow, but few see the flowers in it.” Society has reached a point where our lives have become so fast paced that we often fail to notice and appreciate the smaller things that make our world such a wonderful place. We need to dedicate more time to explore, discover, love, and appreciate all of life’s offerings.

It is in that spirit that we have been working to create a place at ICCD that allows our visitors to unplug and immerse themselves in discovery-based experiences. Our Discovery Center features an educational classroom where visitors are surrounded by a collection of unique wildlife specimens. A walk down the hall brings you face-to-face with our resident turtles that are eager to greet you or get a tasty worm to snack on.

Outside, opportunities abound for discovery. Trees planted in memory of those moved on from this life provide shade from the hot sun and habitat for woodland critters. Community gardens and fruit bearing plants nourish the soul and the tummy. Rain gardens that manage stormwater and wildflower plantings erupt with color throughout the various seasons, pleasing the eyes and providing critical habitat for pollinators like butterflies and bees. Hop vines tower above your head. Colorful rain barrels blend your experience with



Educational workshop



PA Dept of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding speaking about spotted lanternfly

nature to the arts.

As we continue to develop our Discovery Center, the future will bring a nature trail, canopy walk, greenhouse, wildlife center, conservation library, more meadows, and other opportunities to connect with nature and discover your inner conservationist.

Our Discovery Center is place of magic, beauty, and wonder. It provokes creativity and critical thought while taking you on an adventure into the incredible, natural world. While exploring at ICCD, you can't help but see the flowers in the meadow and deepen your love and appreciation for the smaller things like the soft flutter of hummingbird's wings or the majestic flight of a monarch butterfly.

A challenge of each of the past physical locations of the ICCD over its history was adequate meeting space, both for board of directors' meetings and District-sponsored events and workshops. The need for a large meeting space for Conservation District events was clear. One of the recurring discussions when planning ICCD's new headquarters construction was how can we better serve the residents of Indiana County? We wanted to increase our presence in the community and region and serve as an environmental educational hub. Planning for the Discovery Center began to take shape to accommodate our needs and provide public meeting space for partner agencies, civic organizations, and environmental improvement committees. Numerous groups regularly utilize the versatile space to further environmental education and improvements in Indiana County. From pesticide update trainings for the agriculture community, to workshops for our municipal officials, to hosting the Pennsylvania Envirothon oral presentation judging, the Discovery Center has served over 800 users, not including District events, during our first full year of operation. We will continue being a valuable resource to bring youth and adult environmental and conservation education to the public we serve. The Discovery Center is a win-win for ICCD and the community.



Community Garden



Rain Garden



Demonstration Hop Farm



Friends of the Indiana County Conservation District is a supporting organization of ICCD which is currently working on becoming incorporated into a 501c3 non-profit organization. Through fundraising, outreach, network development, and other capacity-building activities, this organization supports the environmental, recreational, and economic development efforts of the Indiana County Conservation District. The organization currently manages several initiatives including the Thank a Farmer Dash (featured below), Green Drinks, Memorial Tree Program, Education Center Fund, and Envirothon Scholarship Fund.

Thank a Farmer Dash

Every year on the Saturday before Thanksgiving, Friends of ICCD holds the Thank a Farmer Dash to raise money to support the Cambria & Indiana County Farmer Fund which provides small grants to agricultural producers for business plan development, implementation, and sustainable practices. The 2022 race was held on November 19th. On that brisk, snowy day 33 registrants of all ages lined up on the Ghost Town Trail in Ebensburg to run or walk either a 5K or a 10K to raise money and thank the farmers in Cambria and Indiana Counties. Although they were cold, everyone finished the race!

This event also would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors including Walbeck Insurance, Cambria County Conservation District, Indiana County Conservation District, Cambria County Commissioner Scott Hunt, Hyndman Area Health Center, Evergreen Insurance, Representative Jim Struzzi, Duncan Financial Group, Cambria County District Attorney Greg Neugebauer, Douglas Beri Jr., the Bencie Family, the Pesto Family, Walker Farms, and Vale Wood Farms.



Visit iccdpa.org/friends-of-iccd to learn how to donate to one of our great causes.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Indiana County Conservation District (ICCD) is the leading, essential conservation organization in Indiana County. 2022 was another year of tremendous progress on conservation efforts in the county accomplished through sound financial management practices. Our financial efforts ensure that we can continue to deliver exceptional program results that make Indiana County a better place to live, work, and play.

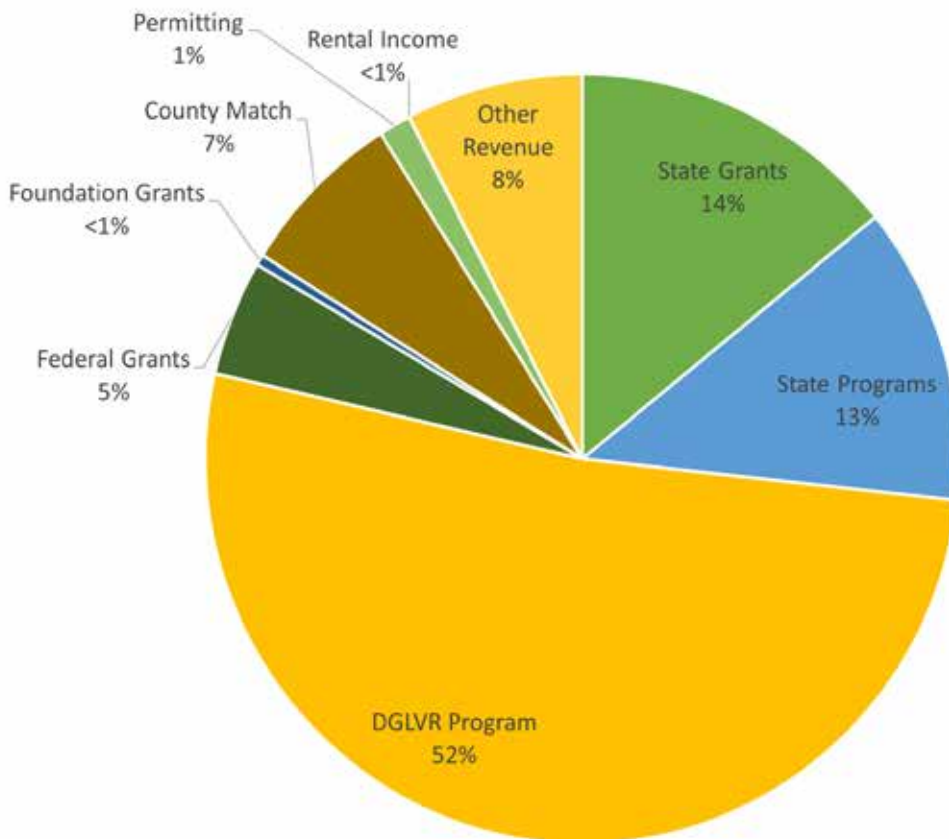
In 2022, ICCD brought in over \$1.4 million in funds from outside the county comprised of money from various private, state, and federal programs and grants. This funding provides direct benefits to Indiana County residents through the implementation of conservation projects and programs.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

\$1.4 Million
in private, state, and federal programs and grants

\$13 matched for every \$1
received from county funds

INCOME

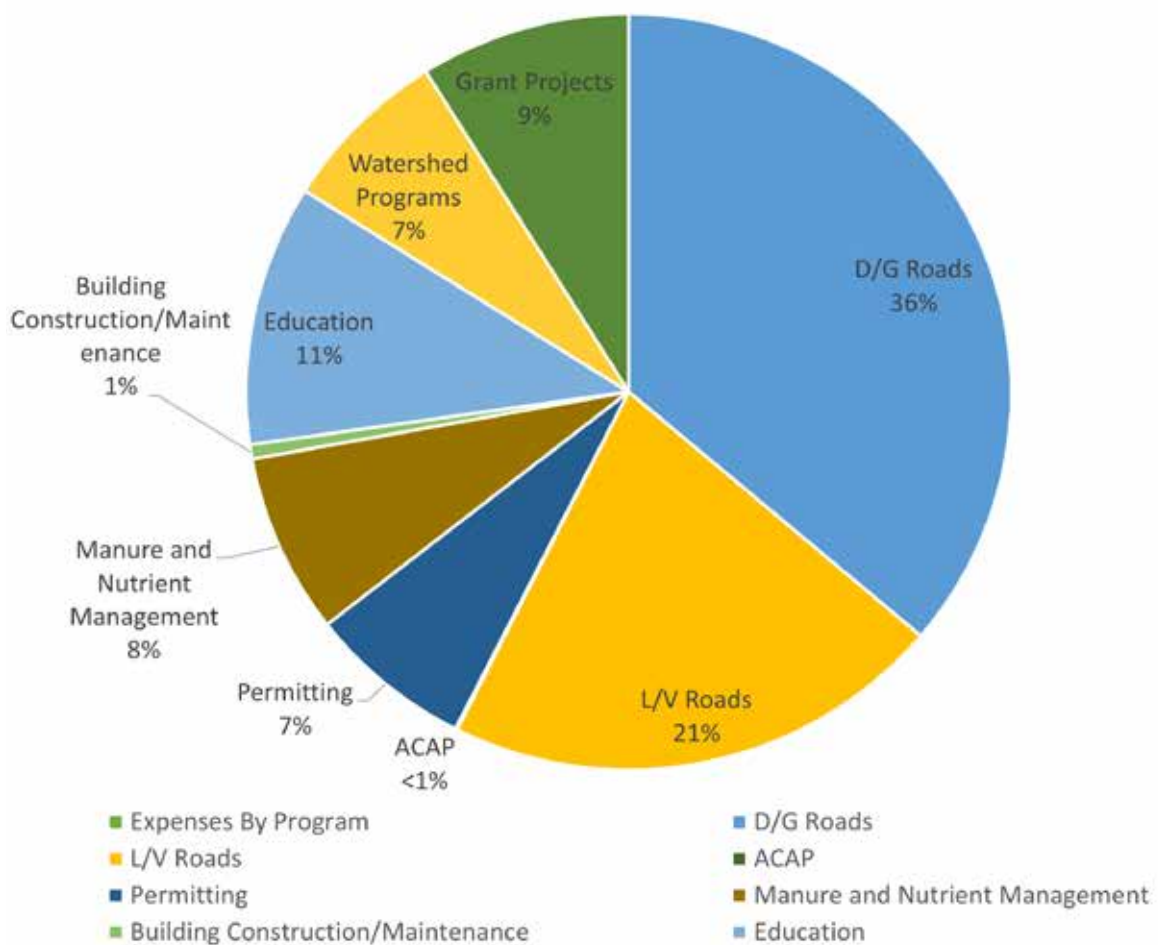


- State Grants
- State Programs
- DGLVR Program
- Federal Grants
- Foundation Grants
- County Match
- Permitting
- Rental Income
- Other Revenue



In 2022, for every \$1.00 of county funds contributed, the District brought in \$13.00 in matching funds from other programs that would otherwise have not benefited Indiana County. The county's investment in ICCD is a great investment in Indiana County.

EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



WHO WE ARE



Associate Directors: (left to right) Thomas Beresnyak, Sara King, Hunter Overdorff, John Somonick, Doyle Freeman. (not pictured: Alysha Trexler, Cindy Rogers, Joe Yackuboskey)



Directors: (left to right) Aaron Simpson, Craig Andrie, Commissioner Sherene Hess, Vincent Receski, Janis Long, Gregg VanHorn, Richard Stumpf



Staff: (left to right): Larissa Bohn, Monica Lee, Brooke Russick, Douglas Beri Jr., Nancy Clawson, Tammie Robinson, Marisa Matlin, Emily Rahalla. (not pictured: Ben Wenger, Alexis Shank, Thaddeus Pajak, Nola Barton, Anna McGonnell, Mackenzie Anderson)



INDIANA COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Indiana County Conservation District
435 Hamill Road
Indiana, PA 15701

2023 Personnel

Board of Directors

Sherene Hess, Chairperson / Commissioner
Richard Stumpf, Vice-Chairperson / Public Director
Aaron Simpson, Treasurer / Rural Director
Janis Long, Public Director
Greg VanHorn, Rural Director
Craig Andrie, Rural Director
Barb Peace, Rural Director

Associate Directors

Doyle Freeman
Alysha Trexler
Cindy Rogers
Joe Yackuboskey
John Somonick
Sara King
Thomas Beresnyak Jr.
Hunter Overdorff

District Staff

Douglas M. Beri Jr., Executive Director
Tammie Robinson, Office Administrator/Envirothon Coordinator
Nancy Clawson, Office Assistant
Monica Lee, District Educator
Brooke Russick, Conservation Program Manager
Marisa Matlin, Conservation Program Specialist (Ag and Permitting Programs)
Benjamin Wenger, Conservation Program Specialist (Watershed Programs)
Alexis Shank, ACAP Coordinator
Larissa Bohn, Education and Outreach Coordinator / PMSC AmeriCorps Member
Emily Rahalla, Project Assistant / PMSC AmeriCorps Member

2022 Personnel

Board of Directors

Vincent Receski, Rural Director

District Staff

Samantha Dull, Resource Conservation Technician
Robert Sabo, Conservation Program Specialist (Watersheds Programs)

Contact Us :

724-471-4751
info@iccdpa.org
www.iccdpa.org



INDIANA COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

435 Hamill Road
Indiana, PA 15701



www.iccdpa.org