



## REPORT ON MCCD

July 2021

By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

# Thanks and congrats for notable achievements

In July, Monroe County Conservation District board members honored both an outgoing leader and the next generation of environmental stewards.

Board Chairman Pat Ross resigned his position after 20 years on the board. He did not attend the meeting, but drew praise for his long service.

And, several Pleasant Valley High School students drew applause for their achievement in being the first Monroe County Envirothon team to win the state Envirothon competition.

Board Vice Chairman Bob Armstrong noted Ross' score of years on the district board. "It's quite an accomplishment," he said of the volunteer service. "We wish him well in his new endeavors, and we give him all our support."

Board member Craig Todd, a retired district manager, pointed out that Ross' deep involvement in many aspects of the community gave him "a good perspective on things. He was always especially supportive of the staff."

Environmental Education Coordinator Roger Spotts was full of praise for the winning Envirothon coach and team members. At the state competition, "They won by 10 points, which is an unheard-of margin on the state level," Spotts said.

Coach Maricatherine Garr accompanied team members to the meeting, including Captain Emma Barrett, who will focus on environmental studies at Yale University in the fall; Eagle Scout Reece Kresge, who will enter the Army and plans to study forestry; junior Zachary Dooner and sophomore Benjamin Keppel. Team member Megan Chechen also helped win the state competition, but was unable to attend.

The annual Envirothon tests students' knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils and wildlife, along with a current issue that changes yearly. The Forestry Bureau, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, state Game Commission, state Fish and Boat Commission, Penn State Cooperative Extension and district staff collaborate to present the challenge. Locally, Pleasant Valley competed against Evergreen Community Charter School, East Stroudsburg, Stroudsburg and Pocono Mountain high schools.

A 14-year science teacher at Pleasant Valley, Garr credited the students' work ethic, which included meeting regularly — both in person and via Zoom — to study and prepare for the competition.

"They took hours upon hours of studying upon themselves," Garr said. "They're very detail oriented."

Later in July, the team, minus Megan Chechen, placed seventh from among 42 teams in the international competition sponsored by the National Conservation Foundation and the Nebraska Association of Resources Districts. The students received \$1,000 scholarships for that achievement.

In other business, the board:

- Approved a recommendation to hire David Hooker as a resource conservationist/watershed specialist, "a vital position," district Manager Kristina Heaney said. The recommendation goes to the county commissioners for final approval.
- Heard about ways the district hopes to use possible grant funding for outreach and education about the spotted lanternfly, a non-native tree and agricultural pest that has entered the county. Among the proposals are a workshop on how to make a circle trap, "fireside chats" with local farmers, and programs in conjunction with local municipalities and homeowners associations. The district is seeking \$9,500 in funding for the efforts.
- Discussed a new Kettle Creek Environmental Fund initiative involving a special committee that would explore how best to use donations made in memory of the late Karen Boyle, a longtime environmental educator who died in 2019.

- Talked about the possibility of establishing a regular schedule of informational meetings for the regulated community — builders, developers and contractors — to promote a better understanding of the regulations surrounding earth disturbance that are designed to protect waterways from pollution.

Some 25 people signed up for a recent meeting.

“We’re here to be a partner, and not to be an enemy,” Heaney said. “Enforcement is a bad situation for everyone.”

*The MCCD board’s next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 19, 2021, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.*