



REPORT ON MCCD

**November 2020**

*By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association*

# State agencies commend MCCD for ‘progressive’ flood planning

Monroe County Conservation District’s many years working with state agencies and local municipalities have helped protect the county from floods, state officials said recently.

The district board heard the praise during a special Nov. 19 meeting board members had requested with officials from the state departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection. The goal was to understand better how those agencies work and how local residents – and MCCD – can best share and resolve issues with them.

John Bohman and Stephen Lantz of PennDOT and Carl DeLuca of the DEP attended the meeting, conducted on Zoom.

Both agencies’ officials complimented the district for its efforts in recent decades to work hand in hand with municipalities and builders on managing stormwater. Those measures have helped stave off what otherwise could have been worse damage in the wake of storms like the one that occurred in early August, which was deemed a 100-year flood.

“Of the counties affected, you were on the lower end” of flood damage, DeLuca said. Schuylkill County had somewhat more rain than Monroe, but its flood-related damage in August was four times as bad, DeLuca added. Prevention “is all in the planning part of it,” he said.

“Monroe County is more progressive on that end of the line,” DeLuca said, noting that MCCD decades ago was in the forefront of leading local municipalities through the Act 167 planning process to manage stormwater runoff. Planning and implementation of land use management and flood control measures have both helped protect water quality and prevented flooding here.

Bohman agreed. “Municipal governments in Monroe County are far more progressive as far as adopting stormwater management planning,” he said.

Overall, Monroe County set the pace for other counties by adopting stricter standards early, the board heard. District Manager Kristina Heaney credited the county agency’s legacy, before she took over last year, of “going above and beyond” in putting resource protection measure in place. Monroe “served as an example” to other counties, she said.

Water quality remains a primary goal of the district: Despite many years of intensive growth here, Monroe County still boasts a high number of exceptional value and high-quality streams. However, the relatively lower level of flood damage has meant that Monroe has received less state funding in response.

Recently, the district and Monroe County Planning Commission jointly prepared a Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency grant application seeking \$530,000 to design and carry out a repair to a flood-compromised road in Labar Village in Stroudsburg.

The meeting answered questions about the state agencies' schedules and procedures. It also helped clarify first lines of communication on local problems, from pothole management to the effects of road salt on area streams and issues like debris lodging in culverts or inlets, which can result in flooding of private property.

Lantz directed local residents who want to report road or bridge problems to use PennDOT's online portal ([customer.care.penn.dot.gov](http://customer.care.penn.dot.gov)). PennDOT refers such complaints to the county's road manager.

District board member Dave Moyer said he feels PennDOT is using more salt nowadays than in the past. He and district board Chairman Pat Ross voiced concern about the adverse effects of salt on the water quality in area streams.

PennDOT officials said the agency is studying alternatives to salt, but so far the cost is prohibitive.

However, Moyer had high praise for the agency's response to flooding. "These guys responded immediately," Moyer said.

"I think it's a very good dialogue that has started," Ross commented about the interagency meeting.

Earlier that morning during the board's regular monthly meeting, board members:

- Voted to hire Peter Wolfhurst to facilitate a strategic planning process for the district board and staff. Heaney suggested a tentative Jan. 16 meeting to launch the planning process.
- Heard that wind has topped and even toppled some ash trees on the district's Kettle Creek property. Fallen branches that have affected areas used by the environmental education center are being removed. "That's occurring all throughout Monroe County, not just on our property," Environmental Education Coordinator Roger Spotts said of the wind damage. Ash trees are already being damaged by the emerald ash borer.
- Heard that the environmental education section also has been working with three local Eagle Scouts, including one project in the Cranberry Bog and another on district property, where a team the Eagle Scout candidate assembled has located and repaired a leak in the rain garden. "That was at no cost to the district," Spotts said.

*The MCCD board's next meeting is at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, 2020, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville. See [mcconservervation.org/agendasmeeting-minutes.html](http://mcconservervation.org/agendasmeeting-minutes.html) for details.*