



REPORT ON MCCD

**October 2020**

*By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association*

## Board turns down \$10,500 donation

The Monroe County Conservation District board won't accept an offered \$10,500 donation from board member David Moyer to replace its handicapped access ramp, citing an appearance of a conflict of interest.

Board Chairman Pat Ross consulted the State Conservation Commission after associate member Craig Todd, who's a retired district manager, and others expressed concern that as an excavator, Moyer is part of the "regulated community" subject to decisions by district engineers and technicians. Moyer owns Papillon & Moyer Excavating in Stroudsburg.

The SCC does not have a policy regarding donations from the regulated community, but warned Ross that accepting such a donation would be inappropriate. Moyer and others in the regulated community have donated to the district's environmental education program, but those funds are used for education programs, and are not part of the regulated division functions, including building maintenance.

District Manager Kristina Heaney said accepting such a donation "creates the appearance of a conflict of interest, if not an actual conflict of interest."

Ross complained that it took the SCC three weeks to respond to his inquiry, thus delaying the ramp project. The district will put it out for bid again in January, pushing the project to next spring's construction season.

In other business, the board approved a Memorandum of Understanding with the conservation districts in Lehigh and Northampton counties assuring mutual support when needed. Prompting the request for cross-border assistance, Heaney said, was the fact that seven of the nine staff members in Northampton County Conservation District are out with COVID-19. Lehigh and Monroe personnel have been helping when needed; the MOU makes it official.

"You never know when you might need services on the other side," district board member Bob Armstrong said.

And, the district plans to hold a multi-agency public meeting on Thursday, Nov. 19, after the board's regular monthly meeting, to discuss flooding issues. Some county property owners sustained heavy damage from stormwater in August.

Attending will be staff from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the state Department of Transportation. The meeting will have a fixed agenda that includes a question-and-answer session about stormwater mitigation efforts, Heaney said, which should help the public understand better the three agencies' role in flood control and prevention. Questions may be submitted in advance to: [khmccd@ptd.net](mailto:khmccd@ptd.net).

From its Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, the board heard that the center is expanding its efforts beyond school and public programs to support area senior citizens.

Environmental Education Coordinator Roger Spotts reported that Spring Village at Pocono, a personal care home in East Stroudsburg, requested its services recently.

"They've been stuck inside for months, not seeing anybody," Spotts said of Spring Village residents, noting the detrimental social isolation resulting from COVID-19 precautions.

COVID-19 restrictions also have limited the education center's normal activities, ranging from the in-school presentations to outdoor field trips and nature walks that typically keep the staff busy. Now, the center is providing Zoom education programs and some other programs on school grounds, but far less than its usual schedule.

Spring Village officials "would like us to set up two bird feeders so they can watch them," Spotts said. "We have the time to do it, and we have the technicians."

On a related note, the center's annual online bird seed sale is experiencing record sales. The order deadline was Oct. 19.

"I'm assuming that's because (people) have been home and watching their feeders more than they would in a normal situation," Environmental Educator Alesia Gallo said after the meeting. The center also offered bird feeders this year along with the seed itself, and "the feeders have been quite the hit as well," Gallo said.

*The MCCD board's next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 19, 2020, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville. See [mconconservation.org/agendasmeeting-minutes.html](http://mconconservation.org/agendasmeeting-minutes.html) for details.*