



## REPORT ON MCCD

September 2021

By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

# Board discusses post-hurricane streambank damage

Monroe County Conservation District's technical side received numerous reports and complaints in recent weeks about streambank erosion and flooding in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. The topic arose at the district's Sept. 16 board meeting.

Among the most hard-hit sites were a stretch of Pocono Creek off Bridge Street in Stroudsburg behind the Ninth Street McDonald's restaurant, where a sizable section of the bank fell away; and further downstream behind Stroudsburg High School near the pedestrian bridge. A portion of the parking area of Knights Park, across the stream from the high school stadium, collapsed from the floodwaters.

Flooding can cause immediate property damage, but stormwater even at small levels also often creates erosion problems. Eroded soil pollutes waterways, harming fish and other aquatic life.

Local resident Jack Fossett said he was "dumbfounded" by the extent of the damage behind McDonald's, and asked whether the district is addressing the problem.

District Manager Kristina Heaney noted that the district has the ability to help respond to and prevent problems. However, local municipal officials must initiate the work. Townships and boroughs can ask the district staff for assistance in seeking emergency funding and to help apply for infrastructure grants for permanent improvements, and funding is available, but "they have to be the applicant," Heaney said.

Heaney and board member Craig Todd noted the need to design sustainable development and improve existing stormwater infrastructure, which in many areas is proving inadequate for today's storms. Only those measures will help manage the ever-rising severity of stormwater driven by climate change.

Key to that is making zoning consistent with what a given landscape can sustain, Todd said. Avoiding building in a flood plain in the first place, for example, "would save a lot of money."

The district strongly encourages municipalities to tap the agency's expertise and advice on making infrastructure and design improvements that will better manage stormwater and the damage it causes. District staff can help municipalities get through the often complex process of applying for grants and can help in the design process as well.

"Navigating through the application process is arduous," Heaney said. "Now is the time to be doing that."

### OTHER BUSINESS

- The district board learned that the nominating process is under way to find a board member to replace former board President Pat Ross, who resigned recently.
- And, the board conditionally approved a \$26,611.25 grant to improve a stretch of a low-volume paved road, Knob Hill, in Middle Smithfield Township. Work will include straightening the drainage course and realigning it so that runoff flows to a receiving stream; and improving roadside swales. The approval is conditioned on an updated, accurate count of daily weekday vehicular traffic on the road. The most recent count, of fewer than 100 per day, was conducted on a weekend. The grant will pay for materials, while the township will supply labor and equipment.
- The district's Environmental Education Center staff members continue to navigate varied COVID-19-driven school restrictions. Environmental Education Coordinator Roger Spotts told the board that each school district, and in some cases each school within that district, may have its own rules.
- Despite restrictions, education staff are back to conducting programs in the schools, and building visitation at the district, which houses the EE Center, is as good or better than it's been in the past. There's heavy use of the outdoor trails.
- Public and school walks in the Tannersville Cranberry Bog have resumed. The limit per group is 20 — about classroom size — and walkers must be masked.
- Online ordering is available for the education center's annual bird seed sale through Thursday, Oct. 14 at [mccconservation.org/bird-seed-sale.html](http://mccconservation.org/bird-seed-sale.html). Pickup is available 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 23.

*The MCCD board's next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 21, 2021, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.*