

MONROE COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Board meeting – October 19, 2023

BWA Report from Paula Heeschen

Monroe County Conservation District board agreed in October to continue supporting a key stream gage in Pocono Creek.

The board voted unanimously at the October meeting to renew the contract for 2023-24, also agreeing on a plan to fundraise to defray some of the cost.

The district budgeted \$16,730 for the coming fiscal year toward maintaining the U.S. Geological Survey stream gage, located in the Pocono above Wigwam Park Road near Bartonsville. It has been in operation since 2002.

Representatives of the U.S.G.S. and U.S. Department of the Interior gave a presentation on stream gages at the district's September work session. There are 10 stream gages in Monroe County, from the gage on Tunkhannock Creek near Long Pond to a Delaware River gage near the Gap. Stream gages record water flow.

Knowing the volume of water flowing in a stream helps weather forecasters predict flooding, and helps emergency managers create response plans. Stream flow data also inform boaters and fishermen looking to use the waterway.

Emergency managers have used stream gage data over time to outline floodplains. Identifying these vulnerable areas makes for better planning for proper development of commercial, residential and industrial land uses.

Board President Bob Armstrong suggested the district create a fundraising campaign aimed at businesses and municipalities alike. Board member Craig Todd agreed, saying it would make sense to approach area businesses for contributions toward the gage. Todd pointed out that "Major companies are totally dependent" on clean water for their operations.

"Wherever we can," Armstrong said, "we need to educate" the public on the importance of the gages, and solicit for financial support. He asked District Manager Kristina Heaney to work with the staff to develop a plan of action.

In other business in October, the board heard that the Environmental Education section is busy with school and public programs. Two more public bog walks will take place before the end of the season. Already 75 people signed up for Bog Day, a free tour of the Tannersville Cranberry Bog on Oct. 28.

"Our program totals are through the roof," Heaney said.

Also pending is the district's annual bird seed sale; Heaney encouraged board members to take part.

Head Resource Conservationist Lori Kerrigan told the board that the technical section has begun alerting permit holders when their permits are due to expire. Building or development that involves extensive earth-moving requires planning to obtain permits, to help keep soil on the ground and protect area streams and rivers.

Sending the letters helps not only the developer, but “it gives us a reminder and helps us keep track” of projects, Kerrigan said.

The board also discussed a poorly functioning infiltration basin at a new warehouse site at Vigon International Inc. in East Stroudsburg. The site is near wetlands, which may be contributing to the problem through groundwater intrusion, technicians said. The district is helping contractors work out modifications.

Todd noted that cases like this point to the wisdom of buffers around wetlands, which would move development away from them.

The board discussed “egregious” problems with the Transco pipeline project, which runs through parts of Chestnuthill, Hamilton and Tunkhannock townships. Soil runoff polluted Poplar Run, and a followup inspection showed Transco had failed to maintain best management practices designed to control runoff. The district sent a Notice of Violation to the state Department of Environmental Protection.

Todd reported that he voted against, during a recent state Association of Conservation Districts meeting, a measure that would have prevented municipalities from requiring stream fencing for livestock. “I don’t like bills that take away the powers that municipalities have,” Todd said.

Livestock with open access to streams can disturb the banks and stream beds, often causing stream bank erosion and sending sediment pollution downstream. Sediment harms fish and other aquatic life.

“It’s appropriate for municipalities” to adopt an ordinance that addresses erosion and sedimentation, he said.

And, Heaney reported that the annual Farm Day program was a hit again in Stroudsburg School District. Students visiting Gould’s farm “got to pick their own apple and eat their own sweet corn, which was wild for them,” Heaney said.

The district hopes to expand the program to other school districts in the coming years.

The board meets next at 10 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 16 at the district’s office near Bartonsville.

Respectfully submitted,

Paula C. Heeschen