



REPORT ON MCCD

December 2021

By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

'Our role is advocacy': MCCD speaks against changes to state Clean Streams Law

The Monroe County Conservation District board voiced unanimous support in December for the agency's environmental advocacy in state government.

Board members voted to approve District Manager Kristina Heaney's letter (*see below*) opposing legislative changes to Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Law. House Bill 1842, Heaney wrote, would weaken the law by leaving the reporting of potentially polluting spills up to individuals.

Heaney acted in response to a request from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, which encouraged local districts to oppose the measure. "They were extremely stand-out on why they don't feel [the changes] are appropriate," Heaney told the board. She sent copies of the letter on Nov. 29 to all state elected officials.

The House passed the amendments in question on Dec. 14, 2021, with Monroe County's Republican representatives, Jack Rader and Rosemary Brown, voting to support the changes, while Democrat Maureen Madden voted no.

"Our role is advocacy," Heaney said. "I will forward these along and welcome your opinions on it."

The board then passed a motion opposing the changes under HB 1842, and approved Heaney's action after the fact.

THE TECHNICAL SECTION STAFF continues working with Monroe County Planning Commission on updates to the stormwater management plans for the Brodhead-McMichael watersheds and for Tobyhanna Creek. The update is required by Act 167, the Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act, first passed in 1978 to "Protect clean air, clean water, and public health...." The update will include revisions to municipal management ordinances.

The staff also joined the Army Corps of Engineers during a recent field visit for a wetland training/regulatory update.

THE BOARD APPROVED A \$529,132 BID from Rutledge Excavating, of Pike County, and approved entering a contract with them, for the Sand Spring Run streambank improvement project. The district received nine bids for the work, which will include streambank and in-stream work aimed at reducing erosion and sedimentation downstream in Pocono Creek. Rutledge was the lowest bid, and met all the required qualifications, including experience with streambank restoration.

Head Resource Conservationist Lori Kerrigan said the company received "a great recommendation" from Pike County Conservation District. "They did do great work for them up there." In-stream work will occur in late spring or early summer 2022 during the low-flow season.

THE BOARD ALSO APPROVED EXTENDING to Dec. 31 a contract with Chestnuthill Township for improvements to County Park Road under the Dirt and Gravel Low-Volume Road Program.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION COORDINATOR ROGER SPOTTS reported public programs are keeping the staff about as busy as ever despite pandemic curtailments. Already the environmental education center has 110 tree sponsors for its annual maple sugaring program at Meesing Nature Center in Middle Smithfield Township. That program is very popular, Spotts said, noting that the staff is registering participants in advance to manage parking challenges.

School-based programs are slightly lower than they were before COVID-19, and the staff alters "on the fly" as needed, Spotts said.

HEANEY REPORTED THAT THE AGENCY'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS continues. Staff from both the education and technical sides have been sharing their goals and objectives as part of the process.

THE BOARD APPROVED HIRING a new resource conservation specialist, David Lucykanish, an aquatic biologist from Chambersburg. Lucykanish will start in mid-January.

AND, THE BOARD APPROVED MEETING DATES FOR 2022. They are at 8 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 20, Feb. 17, March 17, April 21, May 19, June 16, July 21, Aug. 18, Sept. 15, Oct. 20 and Nov. 17; and at 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 8.

The MCCD board meets at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.



November 29, 2021

The Monroe County Conservation district **opposes HB 1842**, currently on the House calendar for consideration. This legislation allows for the Environmental Quality Board to develop a threshold for reporting a pollution spill on surface or groundwater. Currently all spills must be reported to DEP.

HB 1842 also allows individuals and companies who cause pollution to surface or groundwater determine if any spill should be reported. In essence, the bill allows polluters to decide if their spills are a pollution event and if they should be reported to DEP. Unfortunately, polluters may not know where downstream drinking water intakes are located and are not in a position to determine if their pollution event is a threat.

Finally, HB 1842 would likely cost DEP's federally delegated authority to implement the federal Clean Water Act. Pennsylvania could lose over \$8 million a year in federal funding it currently receives to implement the federal Clean Water Act. This would result in fewer staff and having to cut programs, including those that support our county conservation districts and clean water protection efforts.

As a conservation district dedicated to preserving and protecting our natural resources, we believe that current PA law requiring all spills to be reported to DEP is safer for all of our county citizens. For this reason, we oppose HB 1842 and urge you to vote against the legislation. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Thank you again for your support,

Kristina Heaney
District Manager
Monroe County Conservation District