



REPORT ON MCCD

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By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

MCCD wants state to tighten laws on clean fill

Monroe County Conservation District staff members are pushing to strengthen Pennsylvania's clean-fill requirements.

District Manager Adam Schellhammer and technical section Supervisor Lori Kerrigan both discussed the issue of tainted fill at July's board meeting.

"We will support any regulation that puts our clean fill standards in line with other states," Schellhammer said.

State Department of Environmental Protection regional watershed manager Shane Kleiner noted that New York and New Jersey have higher standards for fill disposal than Pennsylvania. The result is truckloads of fill deemed unsuitable for use in those states ends up entering Pennsylvania. In recent months, much of it has ended up on lots and in subdivision construction projects in the Poconos. Some of it has contained pollutants, and some of that tainted fill has ended up in wetlands, compounding the problem.

DEP inspectors have visited several sites in recent months to test the fill, Schellhammer said, noting that only legislators can strengthen standards.

State Rep. Jack Rader, R-176, at July's meeting, commented that he was "shocked our standards aren't better than theirs." Rader agreed to help shepherd legislation toward that end.

But new legislation won't necessarily solve the problem, said retired district manager Craig Todd, who is Brodhead Watershed Association board president. Todd said DEP staff reductions that began many years ago — and are continuing — result in reduced enforcement.

"There aren't enough people in the regulatory office or solid waste to enforce" tighter solid-waste rules, he said. "That needs to be part of the equation."

Kleiner agreed, citing his own job change, 19 months ago, as a case in point: His former position as a DEP field representative has remained vacant ever since.

In other district business:

- Todd suggested expanding the parking lot at Meesing Nature Center, now badly inadequate given the much higher number of visitors who attend events like public Maple Sugaring Day. The nature center is off Marshalls Creek Road within Delaware State Forest.
- Kerrigan reported that local municipalities could borrow the district's new hydroseeder to help stabilize roadside ditches.
- Brodhead Watershed Association Executive Director Bob Heil announced BWA's Aug. 4 River Ramble, which this year takes place in Barrett Township in state gamelands and other locations, including the Buck Hill community, which boasts a scenic waterfall. "This is a private community giving an opportunity to people to come out and see a part of the watershed" that they can't normally visit, Heil said.

The MCCD board's next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 15, 2019, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.