



## REPORT ON MCCD

November/December 2019

By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

# Changing faces at conservation district

In November, the Monroe County Conservation District board approved BWA President Craig Todd as an associate director, a post he'd long sought.

In December, the board hired a new district manager: Kristina Heaney, currently a senior technician at Northampton County Conservation District.

"I think that you'll be very well satisfied with the choice of the board," board Chairman Pat Ross said during the December meeting. Heaney "has vast knowledge, and with the help of the staff, I think she will do a great job."

Board member Chuck Gould also tipped his hat to MCCD employees, noting, "She's also fortunate to come into a staff like this."

Todd's appointment to associate director marked a long-sought transition. He headed MCCD for more than 20 years, retiring in summer 2016.

Also at the Nov. 21 meeting, board members reappointed John Lyman and BWA'S Edie Stevens to another associate director term, and also appointed Amalia O'Brien, Brendan Carroll and Brian Winot as new associate directors. All terms will begin this month and run for two years.

In other business in November, head Resource Conservationist Lori Kerrigan called board members' attention to a report from state Department of Environmental Protection watershed manager Shane Kleiner. Kleiner's report mentioned that county conservation districts will no longer be involved in the permitting or review processes for state Department of Transportation Chapter 105 projects. Under Chapter 105, Pennsylvania requires a permit for anything that involves construction, modification, or relocation of any dam, water obstruction or encroachment on a waterway. Currently, MCCD does advise and inspect.

"We are the first line of defense," Kerrigan said. "That is now being rolled back for PennDOT projects. It takes more of the control (away) from the local level."

Kerrigan described the available DEP staff assigned to oversee PennDOT projects as "minimal. Hopefully they won't just rubber stamp" projects.

The MCCD technical section will try to coordinate with DEP and PennDOT to make sure the district at least receives copies of project plans, Kerrigan said.

Kerrigan also reported that the district continues working with the state Association of Conservation Districts and the DEP regarding concerns surrounding the deposit of unclean fill in some properties around Pennsylvania. A number of such instances were reported during 2019 in Monroe County.

Pennsylvania's standards for fill are lower than those in surrounding states, and there are amendments under review to include procedures for addressing the issue. Policy recommendations include tightening the rules to ensure all loads' contents are clearly identified, requirements are rigorous for filling out forms before transport, and oversight is strengthened.

Acting District Manager Roger Spotts discussed the Penn State Farm-to-School program. The program connects local produce farmers and school cafeterias, providing local buyers for locally grown, fresh produce. Penn State would like to expand it to more schools and farms.

The district board observed a moment of silence in honor of the late Karen Boyle, who worked for more than 30 years as a district naturalist, and for the late Elaine R. Gould, wife of district board member Chuck Gould. Boyle died Nov. 20; Gould, Nov. 2.

For the December meeting, the board met at Stroudsmoor Country Inn. In addition to announcing the selection of Heaney as new district manager, the board heard end-of-the-year reports from representatives from Kettle Creek Environmental Fund, Bureau of Forestry, Planning Commission, BWA, Nature Conservancy and several elected officials.

The board also said goodbye to outgoing District Manager Adam Schellhammer, and to outgoing board member Charlie Garris. Ross thanked Garris, a two-term county commissioner. "Whenever we needed something, Charlie was always there to make a good presentation, and got us the funds," Ross said. Newly elected Commissioner Sharon Laverdure will replace Garris.

*The MCCD board's next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 16, 2020, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.*