



REPORT ON MCCD

November 2021

By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

MCCD finds more illegal fill brought from out of state

Illegal fill is still finding its way to building lots in Monroe County, keeping watchdog agencies on the alert.

The county Conservation District Board discussed two such sites during its November meeting. Both building sites were in Penn Estates, in Stroud Township, and on both building sites the illegal fill came from New Jersey. Also on both sites, the fill was used to level a steep slope, but there were no safeguards in place to make sure the fill stayed in place. Loose fill can make its way to streams and creeks, polluting the water and endangering fish and other aquatic life.

"One site is our usual 'bad actor,'" resource conservation Specialist John Motts told the board. "The other is a new guy." Neither driver had a required a clean fill certificate.

Making matters worse, new district board member Brian Winot said, "Both these companies are advertising (free fill) on Facebook Marketplace."

Potentially polluted fill has become a chronic problem in Pennsylvania because surrounding states have stricter standards, making it cheaper to dump suspect materials in the Keystone State. Often, companies present the material as clean fill for site landscaping.

One of the Penn Estates sites was referred to the state Department of Environmental Protection for materials testing.

Also during the November meeting, the board showed an interest in raising its public profile over time.

District Manager Kristina Heaney cited the district's Sand Spring Run improvements as a project that will draw positive attention to the staff's work. The Sand Spring Run project involves streambank and in-stream work aimed at reducing erosion and sedimentation downstream in Pocono Creek. The district held a Nov. 10 pre-bid meeting, and 14 to 15 groups visited the site. Heaney invited members of the board to visit the site before work begins. Bids were due Dec. 1.

Head Resource Conservationist Lori Kerrigan and hydraulic engineer Mike Wilk have been working on finalizing the grant application, which Heaney described as "a bear."

The project will kick off with about a six-acre timber harvest and streambank stabilization, possibly by the end of this year. In-stream work will occur in late spring or early summer 2022 during the low-flow season.

"It's going to be a great PR project for the district," Heaney said, "and a great watershed project."

Meanwhile, Heaney reported, the district recently received a thank-you e-mail from the DEP for a training session it offered. "We've really become one of the (recognized) organizations across the state for our wonderful staff," she said.

Board Vice Chairman Bob Armstrong encouraged district staff to take part in Pennsylvania's annual Farm Show, which offers opportunities to showcase activities and services.

Heaney agreed but noted that they might have to wait until next year, since this year the district is somewhat short-staffed.

"I think it would be good for the district and good for the county to get our name out," Armstrong said.

In other business, the board:

- Witnessed as Armstrong administered the oath of office to Winot, who had been serving as an associate director.
- Agreed to seek a deadline extension until mid-December for the state Dirt, Gravel and Low-Volume Road program improvements to Knob Hill in Middle Smithfield Township. Delays in a concrete delivery have put off a needed drain installation.
- Learned that the environmental education section's 2022 calendars have been printed and are available for sale, an annual fundraiser for environmental ed programs. The calendars feature photos submitted to the Monroe County Natural Resources Photo Contest by area amateur photographers.

The MCCD board's next meeting has been rescheduled to 10:30 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 16, 2021, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.