



REPORT ON MCCD

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By Paula Heeschen for Brodhead Watershed Association

MCCD helping revamp stormwater management plans

Monroe County Conservation District continues working on revisions to the county's stormwater management plans. Improvements will be even more necessary going forward, given rising adverse impacts from storm events.

Development, which adds pavement and roofs — impervious to rainwater — disrupts nature's system of rainwater absorption, and can reduce the replenishment of groundwater. Higher volumes and rates of stormwater can lead to flooding, erode the soil and pollute waterways with soil and other contaminants, including oil from parking lots. Head Resource Conservationist Lori Kerrigan spoke at the district board's Oct. 21 meeting about staff and community discussions over updates to the Brodhead-McMichael Stormwater Management Plan and the Tobyhanna Creek plan. BWA and Toby-Tunk watershed groups and municipal officials have taken part in the talks.

Pennsylvania adopted Act 167 into law decades ago to help counties and municipalities better manage stormwater runoff. The law requires the plans to be updated every five years.

The district's technical staffers work with municipalities on creating and updating management plans. The staff will send recommendations for changes to the plans to DEP for review by Nov. 24, Kerrigan said.

"Once the DEP goes through the renewal process with us, (the changes) will have to be adopted by municipalities," she said.

The district is also helping to prepare for a flood mitigation project in Sand Spring Run, part of the headwaters of Pocono Creek in State Gamelands 38 west of Camelback Mountain. District Manager Kristina Heaney and Watershed Specialist David Hooker visited the site earlier in October. Heaney noted, among other things, that stormwater had breached a large beaver dam on both sides and that the stream banks were "pretty torn up."

The roughly \$800,000 mitigation project will include streambank stabilization and in-stream structures designed to reduce streambank erosion from floodwaters.

"This project overall is going to make a substantial difference in (sediment) deposits downstream in Pocono Creek," Heaney said.

The board spent some time discussing with Heaney the best way to address staffing needs, including that of the agricultural conservation specialist, who is resigning. Meanwhile, the number of ag complaints is rising, and the technical staff overall, Heaney said, "is stretched pretty thin."

The district created the ag position to help work with the farm community as other agencies, including the State Conservation Commission and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, lost personnel. The SCC cost-shares the salary through a fund allocation program for district agriculture conservation technicians.

The board voted to advertise the resource conservationist position. The board also agreed to approach the SCC about amending its ACT agreement. The proposed amendment would divide temporarily the ag-focused duties, which make up about half of the position's workload, between the tech section's watershed specialist and a member of the district's environmental education section.

After a lengthy discussion, the board also suggested that Heaney investigate the possibility of eventually adding another resource conservationist position, possibly covering the salary through expected higher revenues generated by the district's recent raising of plan review fees. And also long-term, board member Craig Todd suggested the district approach county commissioners about an overall pay review.

The board also approved an extension of the deadline to Dec. 1 for completion of work on County Park Road, a low-volume road adjacent to the West End Fair grounds in Chestnuthill Township. Among other improvements, the work includes a stream crossing and installation of guard rails.

On the environmental education side, Coordinator Roger Spotts said public walks this fall at the Tannersville Cranberry Bog have been so well attended that they've had to turn people away.

"People are looking for things to do" outdoors, he said. Public bog walks ended on Nov. 1, though school groups continue to tour the site.

Kettle Creek Environmental Fund is the recipient of all proceeds from a book created by two long-time members of the environmental education center, Spotts said. Mary Anne Moore wrote "Tiny Creature Tales," and Nancy Tully provided the photographs. They are donating the proceeds. The book is available at the center's gift shop.

The MCCD board's next meeting is at 8 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, 2021, at Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center, 8050 Running Valley Road, Bartonsville.