

BEAVER TALES



The Beaver County Conservation District was established by Resolution #213 on August 3, 1961 for the conservation of the soil and soil resources in Beaver County and for the control and prevention of soil erosion. Its mission is to preserve natural resources and protect and promote the health, safety and general welfare of the people of Beaver County and to provide technical services to improve resource management for the benefit of farmers and urban residents.

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A Snapshot of Beaver County Agriculture

Richard Voytko: Agricultural Conservationist, Beaver County Conservation District

Joe Petrella: Chairman, Beaver County Agricultural Land Preservation Board

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Census of Agriculture was released in April 2019. This report provides an overview of agriculture across the country and in each individual county. The data documents what occurred on farms in 2017. So what is the state of agriculture in Beaver County Pennsylvania?

Beaver County had 613 farms in 2017 according to the census of agriculture. The amount of land in farms was 53,832 acres. These figures indicate that there has been only a slight decrease in the number of farms and acreage since the last census conducted in 2012.

What is the most common crop in the county? By a wide margin, hay/forage is the most common crop with over 13,400 acres. Corn comes in a distant second place with about 4,700 acres. Soybeans rank third at just over 2,000 acres. Oats, wheat, vegetables, and orchards round out the common crops grown in the county.



Hay/Forage and Corn are the two most common crops grown in Beaver County

According to the 2017 census of agriculture, there are 29 farm operations with milk cows in the county totaling 1,628 milk cows. This would average about 56 milk cows per operation. In contrast, there were 185 beef farms in the county totaling 2,228 beef cows. The average beef operation has about 12 cows. Horse operations are also common in the county. There were 166 operations in the county totaling 1,129 horses. This is an average of about 7 horses per operation. There are a few pig, sheep, goat, and poultry operations in the county. Many farms have multiple types of operations.

What does the future hold for farming in Beaver County? Evidence indicates that dairy farming is shrinking in the county since the 2017 census. There seems to be an increase in beef, vegetable and specialty crops. Maintaining the farm land base is the key to the future of farming in Beaver County.

The Beaver County Conservation District assists farm operators who manage the soil, water, and other natural resources to sustain healthy productive farm land. The district provides technical assistance including: whole farm conservation planning, soil erosion and sedimentation planning as well as manure/nutrient management planning. Landowners can request assistance by calling the district at 724-378-1701.

The Beaver County Agricultural Security Area and Agricultural Land Preservation programs are both voluntary programs. By signing up for both of these programs, farmers are telling the public that they want to preserve the agricultural viability of their municipality and the county. As of May 2019, there are over 47,246 acres in Agricultural Security Areas and over 3,195 preserved acres on 29 farms. The preserved farms will remain farmland in perpetuity (forever). Landowners can request more information by calling 724-770-4429

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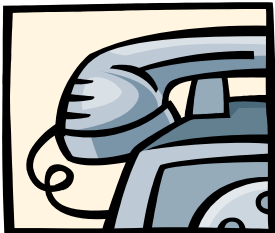
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Alex Veto, Resource Conservationist
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Heather Humbert, Environmental Educator
Richard Voytko, Nutrient Management Specialist
Heidi Krigar, West Nile Technician

Part-time Field Assistants

Homer Summy Don Winegar
Dustin Covert

*We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us.
When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to
use it with love and respect. Aldo Leopold*



Contact Us

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Office hours: 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Mon. - Fri.

Send inquiries to
beavercounty.conservationdistrict@bccdpa.us

Keep up with BCCD activities on Facebook!

Watershed Updates

What is a watershed? It is the area of land that drains to a common waterway, such as a stream or lake. Small watersheds make up larger watersheds, which in turn form larger river basins which may drain to the largest water body of all...the ocean.

New Watershed Specialist

Beaver County Conservation District would like to welcome Hannah Schrauder as the new Watershed Specialist. Since October 2018, Hannah has been training closely with Marty Warchol in order to take over the position in July 2019 after Marty's retirement.

Raccoon Creek

Potter Township and Independence Conservancy have been working on Rocky Bottom Park. The overall design of the park focuses on enhancing the quality of landscape and habitat based on an ecosystem approach, and sensitively inserting low-impact circulation infrastructure in the form of trails and supporting facilities, leading to a highly functional, educational and visually pleasing park. The project was partially funded by a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Conservation grant with matching funds from Potter Township.



Marty's Retiring After 19 Years!

We would like to congratulate Marty Warchol on her retirement from the Beaver County Conservation District. Marty was a dedicated and appreciated employee of the district for 19 years and her warmhearted spirit will certainly be missed.

Marty began working for the district in May 2000 as Program Assistant. She then became an Erosion and Sediment Technician from August 2000 until September 2002. She finished her time with the district as Watershed Specialist from October 2002 to her retirement in June 2019.

Marty thoroughly enjoyed her position as Watershed Specialist. Her favorite program that she was responsible for was the Envirothon.

We wish Marty the best in her future endeavors. Retirement will surely offer her many new opportunities, which we know she will embrace wholeheartedly.



Marty Warchol and Hannah Schrauder at the Beaver County Envirothon

Dirt, Gravel and Low Volume Roads Summer 2019

Sadly, summer in Beaver County means a sea of orange traffic cones signaling lane restrictions, lane closures, long traffic lines, and frustrated drivers. On the bright side, road maintenance is coming to three Beaver County Municipalities this summer.

Grant money collected from the State fuel tax and passed through the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission to the local conservation districts are going to be used to fund projects in Beaver County.

Three Municipalities were awarded grants by the Beaver County Conservation District this year. Independence Township, Darlington Township, and Vanport Township. Independence Township will be using the grant to work on two projects, Darlington Township will also be working on two projects, and Vanport Township will be working on a stream crossing project. Each one of these projects will benefit the local streams by reducing sediment and controlling dust. Most of the road drainage will be directed to allow for gentle sheet flow of the water. This means that the sediments will slowly be released to the earth instead of entering the streams. Vehicle safety will be improved by properly re-crowning and shaping the road surfaces and removing the potholes and ruts.



We ask you to please be courteous and safe while maneuvering the sea of orange traffic cones this construction season.

2019 Envirothon

Congratulations Central Valley High School!

Central Valley High School Envirothon team, Free Soil Party, won first place in the 2019 Beaver County Envirothon! This is the third year that this team has placed first in the competition. Team members are: Kevin Kennelly, Sean DeWeese, Jon Katherine, Ned Mitrovich, and Isaac Johnsen. Their team advisor is Brian Emler.

The Envirothon is a competition where five-member teams participate in a series of tests that focus on five topic areas – soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife, and environmental issues. The 2019 current environmental issue focused on “Agriculture and the Environment: Knowledge and Technology to Feed the World.” The competition was held on May 8, 2019 at Bradys Run Park.



Left to right: Sean DeWeese, Ned Mitrovich, Isaac Johnsen, Kevin Kennelly, and Jon Katherine



Pennsylvania State Competition

The team went on to represent Beaver County at the Pennsylvania State Envirothon that was held on May 21st and 22nd at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown. At the competition they competed against high school students from 65 Pennsylvania Counties. The Beaver County team placed 6th!



2019 Junior Envirothon Congratulations Western Beaver Junior High!

The team Parks and Recreation from Western Beaver Junior High placed first at the 2019 Beaver County Junior Envirothon. They competed against nine junior high teams.

Partners include Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Forestry, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Western Beaver Junior High first place team, Parks and Recreation.

Thank You for Your Support!



Environmental Education Summer 2019 Newsletter

Since the beginning of the year, 17 different groups have attended Conservation District-led programs, bringing 302 students and 71 teachers/facilitators to our maple camp, arboretum trail, and wetlands. Programming has included lessons on maple tapping, tree identification, native wildlife and food chains/webs, and wetland functions and ecology. Some of our younger students caught tadpoles in mid-spring, while others saw them as tiny toadlets hopping along the trails. Older students engaged in stream studies, looking for fish, amphibians, and macroinvertebrates in an effort to judge water quality based on biodiversity. Some of the critters they caught included hellgrammites, caddisfly and crane fly larva, and mayfly, dragonfly, and stonefly nymphs.



Despite the rains this spring, students did not have to worry about flooded trails. Instead, many received lessons in track identification as the muddy conditions provided many easy-to-recognize examples of footprints. Frequent animal visitors to the



wetlands included white-tailed deer, raccoons, opossums, beavers, herons, geese, and turtles. The seventeen-year cicadas also made an appearance along our trails, and students saw the shed casings of the larval stage as well as the adults. Other wildlife sightings included our American toads, great blue herons, mallards, wood ducks, and kingfishers.

Of our Arboretum Programs Series, our Maple Sugaring tour was poorly attended this year, but we did have a few wildflower enthusiasts come out for our Spring Wildflower Hike. We are hoping for good weather and bright blooms for our Summer Wildflower Hike, to be held on Saturday, July 27th at 10:00AM. We hope to see you for this hike around our wetlands, exploring the summer wildflowers which thrive in the variety of habitats we have on our property.

Thanks,

Heather Humbert
Environmental Educator



Ag Corner

Soil Health

Soil is an ecosystem with many living organisms. Soil health is managing the soil to improve ecosystem function. All crops have their roots in the soil ecosystem. To improve crop yields it is necessary to improve soil health. No-till planting is a key to improving soil health. Cover crops planted when there is no cash crop provides energy and other benefits to the soil. Diversify your crop rotation to benefit the soil. Routinely soil test and provide the nutrients needed to optimize crop yields. Healthy soils make for a healthy bottom line for farm operations.

SOIL: The unconsolidated mineral or organic material on the immediate surface of the earth that serves as the natural medium for the growth of land plants.

Cover Crops Protect Soils

Soils are meant to be covered! Plan now for fall cover crops to protect soils on cropland over the winter when no cash crop is growing in the field. Cover crops are a key ingredient of healthy cropland soils. Cover crops reduce erosion, retain nutrients for the next crop, and increase organic matter, just to name a few benefits. A single species cover crop of rye is simple and relatively inexpensive to plant. Rye can be broadcast or drilled. Cover crops including multiple species such as clover, sunflowers, and a variety of other species that can be planted and provide a range of benefits to cropland soils. Renting the no-till drill from the conservation district provides a cost effective tool to try planting a cover crop.

All farms tilling greater than 5,000 sq. ft. must have an ag erosion and sedimentation plan (Conservation Plan). All farming operations that apply manure need to develop and implement a manure management plan. Call the conservation district to get detailed information and support developing your plans.

Drains for the Rain

Stormwater management is used by large construction developments to alter water flow paths in order to control runoff. Controls however can be scaled for use around smaller private residences. Underdrains also called French drains are a useful tool to help manage water on your own property.

Installation features digging a trench at a slight downslope angle about 1 foot deep. A perforated drain is then placed in the bottom and bed in clean stone to grade. It should outlet at ground level. The purpose is to divert overland and subsurface flow around structures such as homes. It is important to note this technique is used where the amount of water is minimal and is prohibited in stream channels and wetlands.



The ditch above was always wet from roadside springs. This underdrain will collect spring flow to keep the roadbed and ditch dry.

Management of stormwater with correctly installed underdrains can help to reduce frequency of basement flooding and yard saturation. With another year of uncertain weather this easy to install drain could make the next storm less of a headache.

Recent visitors to the BCCD Environmental Center



American Bittern



Blue Heron

No-till Drill For Rent

The Beaver County Conservation District has purchased an 8' Truax FLEXII 812RD No-Till drill that is available for rent to interested farmers in Beaver County. The purpose of the drill rental program is to encourage and assist farmers in implementing no-till crop production systems, including cover crops, as well as promote good pasture management. Reducing tillage can improve soil health and improve farm economics. Renting this drill provides farmers with a low cost opportunity to try no-till planting and determine if it can be an asset to farm management. More information is available on our website or contact the district's agricultural technician.

Dates to Remember

Summer Wildflower Hike

July 27, 2019

10:00 AM, BCCD Environmental Center

Forest Landowner Field Day

August 7, 2019

1:00 PM to 4:00 PM, Brady's Run Park

To Register:

Email richard.voytko@bccdpa.us or Call 724-378-1701

Big Knob Fair

August 27— August 31, 2019