

Adams County Conservation District History (1947-2022): information from past annual reports and other historical documents.

*Background* - May 15, 1945 - The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted Pennsylvania Act 217 in response to the dust bowl of the 1930's to improve soil and water conservation. Act 217, "Conservation District Law" designated Conservation Districts as the primary local government unit responsible for the conservation of natural resources in the Commonwealth and to be responsible for implementing programs, projects, and activities to prevent and control nonpoint sources of pollution. When the county governing body determined that the conservation of soil and water, and related resources and control and prevention of accelerated soil erosion are problems of public concern in the county, and that a substantial proportion of the landowners of the county favor such a resolution, it shall be lawful for the said county governing body, by a resolution adopted at any regular or special meeting, to declare the county to be a Conservation District.

April 2, 1947 - The Adams County Commissioners made the declaration at the request of local farmers and county citizens to establish the Adams County Conservation District (originally called the Adams County Soil Conservation District).

November 14, 1947 - The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the Adams County Conservation District (District) was held in the office of the County Commissioners. The first Board of Directors (District Board) included Clarence Waybright, Robert Lott, W. Clayton Jester, Joseph Klunk, John Peters, and County Commissioner George Taylor. The second order of business was to decide a meeting schedule, which they held weekly meetings for 1 month. It appears the District Board meetings were once a month after that first month.

These early District Board meetings included reports from organizations such as federal Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resources Conservation Service) and the PA Department of Forest and Waters (now Department of Environmental Protection and other state agencies). The District Board worked closely with these organizations and other state agencies to provide staff assistance and set local priorities for the best use of the resources that were available at that time.

1949 – It was recognized that the biggest problem on most Adams County farms was drainage, and that underground drainage did not work in Adams Co. Many years later, William "Bill" McCleaf recalled this 1949 comment and said that we learned many things since then. And that tile drainage could be done successfully, but the tile needed to be captured at the source of water. 1949 the District signed an agreement with Mr. Walter Hays, a machine operator to operate the Austin Western M99 grader loaned to us by the Government. Mr. Hays agreed to operate the grader, furnish the fuel and lubrication, and take care of minor repairs for \$3.50/hr. The construction of farm ponds was one of the most popular District programs with interest from all types of farmers. Other important work was with Fruit Growers planting new orchards on the contour. Practically every orchard set out that year had been laid out with the assistance of the District.

1953 – District signed up 703 farm Cooperators to date, which covered 75% of the good farmland in the County. To work with the District, you had to sign up as a Cooperator.

1955 - The report mentioned a bus tour the District provided for the District Directors of Lexington, Kentucky Conservation District, bankers, and other businessmen to observe all the conservation work being done in Adams County. It was noted that the Kentucky District Directors expressed considerable amazement.

1957 – The District continued our annual meetings consisting of about 200 cooperators, which was held at the County Courthouse. 1957 the main speaker discussed agriculture in Holland. 1958 the speaker spoke of farming in Germany.

1959 – Each year approximately 60+ new farm cooperators were approved. To date, there were 1,149 Cooperators signed up in Adams County.

1963 – The District continued their promotion of Soil Stewardship Week, which worked with 60 clergymen in the County to provide information kits to assist with them preparing sermons related to soils conservation and the work the Conservation District was doing. Materials were paid for by the Gladfelter Paper Company. Robert Lott was appointed by the Governor to the State Conservation Commission. Dr. Maurice Goddard, PA Secretary of Forest and Waters, was the main speaker at the District annual Cooperators meeting. The name of the District officially changed to the Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District to keep with expanded duties (was Adams County Soil Conservation District).

1966 – The District continues to have a steady, healthy growth, which is indicated by new cooperators each year. It was noted that it is most gratifying that county landowners recognize the importance of conserving soil and water and further recognize that the Adams County Soil and Water Conservation District is the place to go for assistance with these related problems.

1968 – Residents of Adams County had seen large areas being developed in the past few years: Lake Meade, Lake Heritage, and Charnita (currently Carroll Valley). From 1950-60 population increased 17%. It was expected the population would increase another 25% by 1970 census. We the District Directors recognize, more than ever, the need to preserve and manage our natural resources.

1970 – Act 222 of 1970 revised the PA Clean Streams Law to specifically name sediment as a pollutant, and property owners could be fined up to \$10,000 for allowing uncontrolled erosion to pollute the waters of the Commonwealth. If pollution results as an act of God, from land which had a Conservation Plan developed and fully implemented, the landowner shall be excluded from penalties.

1972 – 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the District. Name was changed to the Adams County Conservation District. Originally, the activities of the District were directed to the improvement of farming methods. Now, it is recognized that the problems of reducing runoff, soil erosion, and water pollution is often the result of handling of soil by non-farmers. Thus, the District started preparing to furnish support to highway and building projects.

1976 – Robert Lott became a Director of the National Association of Conservation Districts.

1981 – Directors decided they would administer the State Erosion and Control Program working for volunteer compliance and encouraging voluntary conservation measures. The District was also involved in the “208 Assessment Process” to survey and identify specific “non-point” pollution in the Conewago Creek and Rock Creek.

1982 – Fran Koch is hired as District Manager. District operating budget was \$15,324.39 which included salaries for secretary and part-time District Manager.

1983 – It was noted that a tillage test plot was setup at Larry Wilkinson’s farm to check yield differences between different tillage methods on Adams County’s red shale soil.

1984 - District held a No-till pasture renovation demonstration at Larry Wilkinson’s. Bill McCleaf retires for the Soil Conservation Service and is hired as the District’s 1<sup>st</sup> Technician.

1985 – Emma Lott received the Pennsylvania Maurice Goddard Award on behalf of the late Robert Lott. John Lott was appointed to fill out his father’s term as Director. John Hess was awarded Outstanding Farmer for the State of Pennsylvania. The Chesapeake Bay Program was established as a federal and state funded program to provide technical and financial assistance to Adams County farmers with nutrient or erosion issues.

1986 – A new educational program started called the Enviro-Olympics where students from grades 9-12 competed in environmental topics. The event was held at Kings Gap and the following schools attended: Bermudian Springs (teacher - Jim Ristine), Biglerville (Rick Mader), Fairfield (Rick Baker), and Gettysburg (Shirley Cavaliere). Gettysburg won the County event and went onto the state event to place 4th. In 1988, the name changed from Enviro-Olympics to the Envirothon due to copy right issues w/ the Olympics.

1989 – The District was busier than ever before and had increased staff from 3 to 6. The 3 positions were Computer Person, Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Management Technician, Part-time Chesapeake Bay Technician (Mildred Musselman). It was the first report with an Associate Director listed: Donald Waddell.

1990 – District moved meetings from 44 South Franklin Street to 57 N. Fifth Street.

1991 - November District Managers Report – District Manager, Mary Ann Horst reported that she hired a boy from Hanover to be the next Chesapeake Bay Nutrient Management Technician. That boy was Brian Sneeringer.

1992 – The District accepted the delegated authority to acknowledge Chapter 105 general permits for minor encroachments in wetlands and watercourses. Director Melvin Worley was elected as President of the PA Association of Conservation Districts.

1993 - The District accepted the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) delegation, which was a new federal permit for construction earth moving activities. Larry

Martick was hired as the new District Manager and Rusty Ryan was hired as the 1st full time Erosion & Sediment Technician.

1994 – Bill McCleaf decided to officially hang up his dowsing rod and retired from the District after many years of service with the District and Soil Conservation Service. The District established and presented Bill McCleaf, the District's 1st Bill McCleaf Conservation Leadership Award. It is also the first-time interest in a unified County Agricultural Resources Center was mentioned in an annual report, where all the agencies serving agriculture could be collocated for "one stop shopping".

1995 – John Lott decided to step down as a Director. Between John and his father Robert, they served the District as Directors from the inception 1947 to 1995 (48 consecutive years). That year, Larry Wilkinson became a Farm Director. Larry and his son Ed currently (up to 2022) have 27 consecutive years. District hits \$1M spent on ag bmps through the Chesapeake Bay Program (after 10 years/ 59 farmers). Getty Acres, Wilkinson Family, receive the Bill McCleaf Conservation Leadership Award.

1996 - The PA Nutrient Management Act regulations went into effect requiring concentrated animal operations to develop and maintain a nutrient management plan that needed reviewed and approved by Districts.

1997 – 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Adams County Conservation District. Total number of farm Cooperators reach 1,444. During those 50 years, the Adams Co population double 44,000 to 88,000. These are rounded numbers but shows the loss of farms/farmland during those 50 years. In 1945, there were 3,150 farms with 265,000 acres of farmland. In 1995, there 1,060 farms with 173,000 acres. During that time, we lost 2/3 of our farms and about 1/3 (92,000) acres of farmland. That year, Littlestown High School started their 20 consecutive year Envirothon winning streak. District offered its 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Tree Seedling Sale.

1998 – District started administering the Dirt & Gravel Roads Program. The first allocation of D&G funds (\$17,900) went to Hamiltonban Township for Newman Road.

1999 - District assisted in establishing the Watershed Alliance of Adams County. Getty Acres receive the PA Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Farm Award.

2000 – The Adams County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center construction was completed. The District took on 2 more state contracts: Watershed and West Nile Virus programs.

2002 – Directors voted to terminate our administration of the Chapter 105 Program in Adams County: To time consuming, expensive, and the lack of state enforcement. PA Department of Environmental Protection proposed changing the NPDES permit for construction activities from 5 acres to 1 acres of earth disturbance with a point source discharge of stormwater.

2004 – Brian Sneeringer coordinates the District’s 1<sup>st</sup> Annual No-till Meeting for local farmers (2022 is the 18<sup>th</sup> consecutive year – it is now called the Annual Soil Quality Meeting to reflect the incorporation of broader soil health programming)

2010 – Table Rock Farm – Bill and Michelle Kirk were awarded Outstanding Cooperator of the year. PA Department of Environmental Protection revised the NPDES permit for construction activities from 5 acres to 1 acres of earth disturbance (even without a point source discharge of stormwater).

2014 – District received its first allocation of Low Volumes Roads program funding to assist municipalities with low volume paved roads. The first 2 allocations of LV funds went to Germany Township (Feaser Road) and Tyrone Township (Rock Valley Road).

2016 – District decided to stay in the Chesapeake Bay Program, which now obligated contracted Districts to perform 50 farm inspections to verify that farms had a complete agricultural erosion and sediment control plans and manure management plans where applicable.

2017 – The District and County Commissioners decided to merge the offices of the Adams County Conservation District and the Adams County Office of Planning & Development and to make the Conservation District a division of the Planning Office.

2018 – The District and County of Adams agrees to be a 1 of 4 pilot counties to develop a Countywide Action Plan creating a list of potential best management practices to reduce the nitrogen and phosphorus loads that Pennsylvania allocated to Adams County.

2019 - District formalized their environmental scholarship program as the Mildred Musselman Environmental Education Scholarship.

2020 – District agreed to be a pilot county in the Phase 2 of the Chesapeake Bay Agricultural Inspection Program to determine if farm plans were in compliance with the best management practice schedules set forth in their Ag Erosion & Sediment Control and/or Manure Management Plans.

2022 – 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the County Commissioners establishing the Adams County Conservation District and of the 1<sup>st</sup> District Board meeting. District held a 75-year anniversary picnic at the Adams County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center on July 28th. The invite list included current employees, living past Directors, state and county elected officials, and agency partners. Many proclamations and citations were presented to the District from elected officials and partners.