



THE CONSERVATION REPORT

(717) 240-7812

Cumberland County Conservation District

FALL 2005

SHIPPENSBURG FARMERS RECEIVE STATEWIDE AWARD

Ray and Jean Thrush of Shippensburg recently received a statewide award for their commitment to conservation. The Thrush family was recognized on July 26 at the awards luncheon of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD) held in Erie, PA. This annual awards ceremony recognized individuals and organizations that have helped to promote or continue conservation efforts in Pennsylvania.

County conservation districts across the state sent nominations to judging panels for consideration in seven different categories. The Cumberland County Conservation District nominated Ray and Jean Thrush for the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award, which they were chosen to receive. PACD awards this honor annually to a farmer who has furthered conservation through the establishment and maintenance of soil, water and nutrient management practices.

The Thrush family owns Jet Rae Farm, a large dairy and crop operation. They have fully implemented the practices set forth in their conservation plan and nutrient management plan. Over the years, the Thrush family has implemented farming practices that address water quality and soil erosion. They built a waste storage structure to safely contain manure. They implement crop rotation, use reduced and no-till farming and plant wheat as a cover crop to decrease soil erosion. In addition to these conservation practices, Ray & Jean Thrush have also taken action to ensure the future of their farm by enrolling it in the Agricultural Land Preservation Program which prevents future development of prime farmland.

The Cumberland County Conservation District congratulates Ray and Jean Thrush on receiving this award for their outstanding commitment to conservation in Cumberland County.



Ray & Jean Thrush of Shippensburg were given the Conservation Farmer of the Year Award by the PA Assoc. of Conservation Districts on July 26, 2005. Front row: Jean & Ray Thrush. Back row (left to right): PA Secretary of Agriculture, Dennis Wolff; Conservation District employees, Carl Goshorn, Vince McCollum and Brian Jaymes.

SEDIMENT AND EROSION CONTROL REQUIREMENTS FOR FARMING OPERATIONS

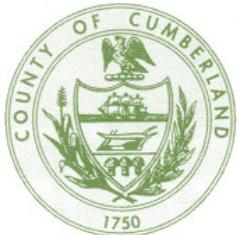
The processes used by farmers to produce the food and fiber needed by our nation involve earth disturbance to varying degrees depending on the type of tillage, planting techniques and cultivation. Under Chapter 102 – Erosion Control regulations, persons involved with earth disturbance are required to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) as part of an Erosion and Sediment Control plan to minimize accelerated erosion and soil loss. The implementation of BMPs are especially important to farmers since their use protects the soil resource and keeps water clean.

A Conservation Catalog for Pennsylvania is available at the District office which features soil-saving BMPs for the conservation of natural resources. The BMPs include contour farming, contour strip cropping, cover crops, grassed waterways, terraces and diversions, as well as other common farming practices.

Conservation districts were formed to help farmers plan, develop and implement conservation plans that include an erosion and sediment control component for their farms. The plan includes BMPs to minimize the potential for accelerated erosion and sediment from agricultural plowing and tilling, and a schedule for implementation of the BMPs. Implementation and maintenance of BMPs ensure erosion rates do not exceed the soil loss tolerance, commonly called “T”. The plan also includes computations to show that stormwater runoff from the farm for a 10-year frequency storm will not cause erosion in waterways or channels. If major changes occur in tillage operations, the plan should be updated. Technical assistance is also available from NRCS to assist in developing the plan.

The erosion and sediment control plan consists of a plan map, soils map, and narrative. Plan implementation includes installing the BMPs and continual management and maintenance of the BMPs. Structural practices are designed for a specific storm frequency and may be damaged during larger storm events. BMPs such as strip-cropping, contour farming and grass buffers usually require maintenance annually to assure the boundaries are maintained and adequate vegetation is established. Practices performed annually, such as cover crops, conservation tillage, crop residue management and crop rotations, must be carried out according to the conservation plan.

For additional information and assistance, please contact the Cumberland County Conservation District at 717-240-7812 or visit their website at www.cumberlandcd.com.



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CUMBERLAND COUNTY ENVIROTHON



Pictured is the winning team of the 2005 Cumberland County Envirothon, held at Colonel Denning State Park. They are from left to right, Nichole Griffith, Kisha Flawd, Tom Beeman, Andy Welte and T. J. Walker.

Students from six area high schools competed in the annual Cumberland County Envirothon on Tuesday, May 3, at Colonel Denning State Park. Top three overall scores were The Bundle of Sticks from Cumberland Valley High School in first place, The Scat Squad from Cedar Cliff in second place, and The Blades of Grass from Carlisle Area in third place. The Bundle of Sticks team represented Cumberland County at the 2005 Pennsylvania Envirothon at Bloomsburg University and PPL Montour Preserve on May 23 and 24. The team placed 38 out of 64 teams at the Pennsylvania event. The team also participated in the voluntary Oral Component at the Pennsylvania Envirothon and placed sixth out of 54 teams that participated.

The annual Cumberland County Envirothon, presented by the Cumberland County Conservation District, gives high school students hands-on field experience dealing with environmental issues. Students complete five exams that present problems focusing on wildlife, aquatics, forestry, soils, and a current issue; this year's issue is natural resources in urban areas. This year, six schools totaling 23 teams representing 98 students participated. The Conservation District provided a snack and lunch and gave participants and advisors a Cumberland County Envirothon t-shirt sponsored by the Conodoguinet Creek Watershed Association.

Additionally, the Conservation District received financial support from many local businesses. This support enabled them to provide lunch, trophies and t-shirts for the event. The businesses include the following:

BL Companies, Inc.
Conodoguinet Creek Watershed Association
J.D. Eckman, Inc.
John W. Gleim Jr., Inc.
The McNaughton Company
Pennoni Associates, Inc.
Snoke's Excavating & Paving, Inc.
Leon E. Wintermyer, Inc.
Yingst Homes, Inc.

H. Edward Black & Associates, PC
Crabtree, Rohrbaugh & Associates
Evans Engineering, Inc.
Hoover Engineering Services, Inc.
R.S. Mowery & Sons, Inc.
Skelly & Loy, Inc.
Triple Crown Corporation, Inc.
Womex, Inc.

The District continues to try and get more schools involved in the Envirothon with a goal of having all county High Schools eventually participating. If you would like more information about the Envirothon, please visit the District's website at www.cumberlandcd.com, or contact Vince McCollum.

RUSSIANS VISIT SHUGHART FARM

A group of Russian visitors recently visited the farm of Allen Shughart to observe conservation practices designed to reduce nutrient runoff. The group was here as part of the Open World program which is an initiative of the Center for Russian Leadership Development of the Library of Congress. Hosted by the Greater Harrisburg Friendship Force, the group arrived Saturday in Harrisburg after spending two days of orientation in Atlanta. The group was focusing on environmental issues and had many questions about how and why these practices were implemented. Their questions ranged from "was the farmer required to participate" to "what kind of and how many cows" does Mr. Shughart have on the farm.

The conservation practices were installed as part of the Growing Greener Program with assistance from the Conservation District. District staff and Mr. Shughart fielded questions from the curious group to help them understand how these types of programs work and how decisions are made when planning a project. This is the second year that a group has visited Mr. Shughart's farm to observe how his operation works together with the environmental practices on his farm.



CUMBERLAND COUNTY AND COVER CROPS FOR WATER QUALITY

Background

Under direction from the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), the Conservation District recently developed a new Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy. As part of the new Strategy, the Conservation District identified 10 "Core Best Management Practices (BMPs)" considered vital to achieving the County's water quality goals. The Strategy will guide the Conservation District throughout the implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Program through the year 2010.

Cover Cropping was identified as an essential part of reaching water quality goals in the new Bay Program. Currently, the Conservation District is in the developmental stages of a Cover Crop Program for agricultural producers. The Conservation District anticipates enrolling producers in the program by 2006; producers will receive program incentives in the Spring of the year following enrollment.

Why Cover Crops?

Although there are increased costs associated with seed, labor and equipment, cover crops offer producers several benefits well worth the necessary investment:

1. The primary benefit of cover crops is the utilization of excess nitrogen in the soil. Basically, this consumption of excess nitrogen translates to improved water quality; less nitrogen is lost through leaching into groundwater and runoff into surface waters.
2. By trapping soil which might otherwise erode from crop fields during rain events, a well established cover crop decreases sediment and phosphorus losses. Once again, this translates to water quality improvements and retains soil necessary for productive crop fields.

A well established cover crop increases the organic matter content of soils, resulting in improved soil structure and soil properties. In this way, cover crops improve the sustainability of the soil, enabling long term productive crop growth.

Additional Considerations

As development pressure and regulatory pressure continues to increase in Cumberland County, remaining farms will be held to a higher standard by governmental agencies and the non-farming public. Soil erosion, conservation planning and nutrient management will continue to be 'hot button' topics.

Cover crops go hand-in-hand with both conservation planning and nutrient management. Increasing emphasis on Chapter 102 regulations (erosion and sedimentation control) and changing Nutrient Management regulations (pertaining to manure and fertilizer application) may force some producers to change their current practices. Cover crops are a management option that may help producers stay within the guidelines of these programs, particularly on critical areas of concern.

Program Information

The Conservation District is still developing the Cover Crop Program Guidelines. Most likely, a "per-acre incentive" will be provided to producers to help offset the costs of implementing cover crops.

After the program guidelines are established, producers may enroll in the program by contacting the Conservation District office. A brochure detailing the program guidelines and benefits will be released in the Spring of 2006.

For additional information or to provide program input, please contact Craig Mitchell at the Conservation District Office: (717) 240-7812 or cmitchell@ccpa.net. The Cumberland County Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy can be viewed on the Conservation District's website: www.cumberlandcd.com

ACRE LEGISLATION

Act 38 of 2005 - the "ACRE" legislation, containing provisions relating to review of local ordinances, nutrient management and odor management was signed into law by the Governor on July 6, 2005. The key provisions of the bill are as follows:

- An efficient, fair process of reviewing local ordinances that restrict farming operations.
- Close the Nutrient Management Program manure export loophole.
- Expand the definitions of CAOs and CAFOs to bring more large operations under direct regulation.
- Providing financial incentives for farms to establish streamside buffers and a program to encourage voluntary actions that address agricultural impaired water bodies.
- Financial assistance to encourage energy production from manure.
- Enhanced technical and compliance assistance for agricultural E&S and Manure Management.
- Enhanced enforcement of agricultural E&S and Manure Management requirements.
- Establishing a program to develop and implement effective odor management for agricultural.
- Agricultural air emissions.
- Agricultural use of antibiotics – DEP has committed to continue to monitor research and developments on the use of antibiotics in agricultural and other areas.
- Convert to Phosphorus based nutrient management planning for farm operations. The EHB in May 2004 directed this change and the federal CAFO program.

For more information on the new ACRE legislation please visit the PA Department of Agriculture web site at <http://www.acre.state.pa.us/acre>.



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UPDATE OF NEWSLETTER MAILING LIST

In an attempt to maintain the most accurate mailing list possible, the Conservation District is asking for your help. If you fall into any of the categories listed below, please fill out the information below and send this form to the Conservation District (43 Brookwood Ave., Suite 4, Carlisle, PA 17013) or respond by email to conserve@pa.net.

Check all that apply and fill out form

Address Change (Please include previous address) Name Change Only (Please include previous name)
 Remove Name from Newsletter Mailing List Add Name to Newsletter Mailing List

New Information

Previous Information

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