

"The Dirt"

A Resource for Local Conservation

MCCD Welcomes Ashley Claycomb, Assistant District Engineer

The Montgomery County Conservation District welcomes Ashley Claycomb as Assistant District Engineer! A graduate from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown with a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering Technology as well as a Minor in Mathematics, Ashley joins the Conservation District with over a decade of experience in private consulting, where she specialized in stormwater management and permitting for projects in the greater Philadelphia area. Ashley is no stranger to the staff at the Conservation District, where she had regularly worked with staff in obtaining NPDES approvals as a designer - but she is confident her experience in the private sector has prepared her for the challenges at the District level. Ashley lives in Bucks County with her husband and two children. Outside of the office she enjoys annual camping trips to Gettysburg with family, participating in a local book club, and spending time outdoors with her children. Please help us in welcoming Ashley to the team!



Lawn to Meadow Conversion Grant Funding Available



Brian Vadino, Watershed Specialist

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) was awarded a \$200,000 Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grant from the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to continue offering training, lawn conversion and riparian buffer mini-grants to Pennsylvania's conservation districts. Landowners are encouraged to work with their local conservation district to determine eligibility and work through the process of installing a project.

This round of grants will have three mini-grant funding categories that Conservation Districts may apply for, on behalf of landowners, for eligible projects. These categories include:

- Installation of lawn conversion and/or riparian buffer projects with a maximum cost of \$25,000
- Post-planting establishment for DCNR or non-DCNR funded projects with a maximum cost of \$5,000
- Education & Outreach events with a maximum cost of \$1,000

These grants are considered on a first come first served basis with an application deadline of June 30, 2027, or until all funds are committed. All grant program related documents and instructions are available on from PACD's website: https://pacd.org/?page_id=25337

If interested in applying through MCCD for a grant, please read through all grant program materials and instructions thoroughly to determine:

- 1) If the project is eligible for funding through this grant program
- 2) Acknowledgement of the 50:50 match requirement
- 3) Comfortability with all terms and conditions stated within the required Landowner Agreement

Once the Montgomery County Conservation District determines that a proposed project is eligible for funding consideration, we can work together with partnering organizations and/or landowners to put together a mini-grant application to submit to PACD.

According to the PACD, “These programs have been incredibly successful in completing smaller scale lawn conversion and riparian buffer projects across Pennsylvania. Last round, conservation district projects covered almost 18 acres of lawn conversion and almost 12 acres of riparian forest buffer. Since 2018, conservation districts installed nearly 150 acres of riparian forest buffers across Pennsylvania.”

If you have questions about the program or would like assistance putting together an application, please reach out to Brian Vadino at (610) 489-4506 x15 or bvadino@montgomeryconservation.org.

New NPDES Qualified Visual Site Inspector Requirement and Training Course

Eric Konzelmann, Resource Conservationist

The new version of the NPDES PAG-02 permit for construction sites over 1-acre became effective on 12/8/2024 and provides clarification related to the qualified personnel and designees of licensed professionals performing inspections and oversight responsibilities. Visual erosion and sediment control (E&S) site inspections by a “qualified” person are required by the permit, and include routine weekly inspections, post-storm event inspections and any potential corrective action inspections as necessary. A “qualified” person is defined by one or more of the following:

- They have completed the Qualified Site Inspector Training Program in DEP’s Clean Water Academy initially and every two years;
- They hold active certification as a Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control (CPESC) or as a Certified Erosion, Sediment, and Stormwater Inspector (CESSWI) from a recognized organization; or
- They can demonstrate to the satisfaction of DEP/CCD that they have qualifications equivalent to or exceeding those persons identified above. If this option is selected, the person must submit documentation of their training and experience to DEP/CCD and receive written approval from DEP/CCD prior to conducting site inspections.

DEP has offered a free “Qualified Visual Site Inspector Training Program” on the Pennsylvania Clean Water Academy for those who wish to take the training and become certified as a Qualified Visual Site Inspector. Beginning on 12/8/2025, PAG-02 permittees must have a qualified inspector complete the E&S inspections. To enroll and take the “Qualified Visual Site Inspector Training Program,” use the following link to DEP’s E&S Resources page and select the program under the Training section. You must create an account and be logged in to participate in the course.

<https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/water/clean-water/stormwater-management/construction-stormwater/eands-resources.html>

North Penn High School wins 2025 Montgomery County High School Envirothon event

Brian Vadino, Watershed Specialist

MCCD partnered with the Montgomery County Parks, Trails and Historic Sites, PA Game Commission, PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PA Department of Environmental Protection and Penn State Extension and to deliver the 2025 Montgomery County Envirothon on May 1st at the Norristown Farm Park.

Since 1989, the Montgomery County Conservation District has hosted the Montgomery County Envirothon, an annual, hands-on competition for high school students. This free environmental educational event focuses on wildlife, forestry, soils and land use, aquatic ecology, and a current topic. The 2025 current topic was “Roots and Resiliency: Fostering Forest Stewardship in a Canopy of Change.”

Envirothon educates high school students in natural resources and environmental sciences. The program emphasizes the importance of environmental sensitivity while stressing the need to achieve

a social, ecological, and economic balance. The learning objectives emphasize awareness, knowledge and attitudes through outdoor hands-on applications while addressing the complex natural resource concerns facing today's world, as well as the challenges of tomorrow.

Montgomery County Commissioner, Neil K. Makhija, addressed the participants prior to the start of the competition. He spoke to the importance of environmental stewardship in Montgomery County, while mentioning that he (also) participated in Envirothon, as a student!

A total of 40 students from 5 schools attended the event. Participating schools included Perkiomen Valley High School, Upper Perkiomen High School, North Penn High School (4 teams), Pottsgrove High School, and Norristown Area High School.

A team from North Penn High School won the competition and advanced to represent Montgomery County at the Pennsylvania Envirothon PA state competition, which was held in Windber, PA in May 2025. For more information, please visit <https://www.envirothonpa.org/>



MCCD is accepting Student entries for the 2025 Conservation District Poster Contest!

Abby Reiter, Ag Conservation Specialist

MCCD is now accepting K-12 student entries for the 2025 Conservation District Poster Contest! The National Association of Conservation Districts is holding their annual poster contest, and MCCD is accepting submissions from K-12

students in Montgomery County. This contest is open to all public, private and home-schooled students in grades K-12. The deadline is fast approaching!

Submissions are **due to Montgomery County Conservation District by June 16, 2025** along with a completed entry form for each submission. The 2025 theme, "Home is Where the Habitat is," must be a part of the poster. Posters will be voted on by the Conservation District staff, with the first-place winner in each category earning a county level prize and being sent on to the state level competition.

Additional Contest Details:

- Poster must be flat, no 3-D elements
- Submissions can be mailed or e-mailed to the address below
- Painted, hand-drawn or braille posters are accepted for all grade categories
- Categories are as follows: grades K-1, 2-3, 4-6, 7-9 and 10-12
- Digital posters are being accepted for the 7th-9th and 10th-12th grade categories

Judging Criteria:

Conservation Message – 50%
Visual Effectiveness – 30%
Originality – 10%
Universal Appeal – 10%

Questions and submissions can be directed to: Abigail Reiter, areiter@montgomeryconservation.org, (610) 489-4506 x24

Mailed submissions can be sent to: 143 Level Road Collegeville, PA 19426

The entry form and informational flyer can be found on the Conservation District website (scroll down on the homepage): www.montgomeryconservation.org

Funding Available for Cover Crops Establishment! & Soil Health Day Event Recap



Abby Reiter, Ag Conservation Specialist

A Cover Crop policy was approved and is now effective through the Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) in Montgomery County to allow farmers to apply for funding towards planting cover crops on their agricultural fields. Cover crops significantly benefit soil health. Applicants can apply for a maximum of 200 acres per year, with payments made at a set rate of \$64 per acre for single species and \$79 per acre for mixed species. Applicants must use an approved planting method and follow all other ACAP grant program requirements. [Click here](#) to view the full ACAP Cover Crop Policy on our website, and access all ACAP grant application resources. If you have any questions about this program, please reach out to Abby Reiter at (610) 489-4506 x24 or areiter@montgomeryconservation.org.

On Friday April 25, 2025 Montgomery County Conservation District partnered with Sarahsway Farm, Penn State Extension and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to host a Cover Crop Field Day in Gilbertsville for approximately 20 attendees. The event featured cover crops and soil health, to promote ag conservation. The event hosts, Michael Conner and Marcie Boettger of Sarahsway Farm, provided an introduction to the field including cropping history and planting timeline along with rainfall information and how the Fall 2024 drought affected the cover crop growth. Andrew Frankenfield, Penn State Extension Agronomy Educator, spoke on cover crop termination methods and how to utilize cover crops as mulch and to build soil organic matter. Michael Conner demonstrated use of a roller crimper for cover crop termination (image above, left). Sjoerd Duiker, professor of Soil Management and Applied Soil Physics at Penn State University, provided a hands on demo in a soil pit, including discussions of soil microbes, soil health topics as well as observation and discussion of cover crop root systems and growth in the soil profile (image above, right). Rosalynd Orr from the local Natural Resources Conservation Service set up a soil runoff demonstration, showing the difference in rainfall runoff quantity and quality from various cropping system examples including no till crops, permanent hay/pasture and a fully tilled field with bare soil. We thank our partners and event hosts for working with us to hold this educational event! If interested in applying for funding for cover crop establishment, see the grant funding opportunity listed above.



MONTGOMERY COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Visit our website



Montgomery County Conservation District | 143 Level Road | Collegeville, PA 19426 US

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