



"The Dirt" A Resource for Local Conservation



My name is Ryan Devine and I'm the new Agriculture Conservation Specialist for Montgomery County. I didn't grow up with a background in agriculture, but got involved later in life through Americorps. My passion grew for the field of agriculture and conservation. Previously, I worked for a number of years as a camera operator for a media company, but eventually decided to make a transition. Following my passions, and to gain ag experience, I worked as a dairy worker for a summer, for Rutgers University's pesticide department in the blueberry fields and cranberry bogs, and most recently, with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). I live in Easton, PA with my wife. I enjoy gardening, biking and running, kayaking, reading, woodworking, and the arts.



Rebecca Whitten started as MCCD's Permit Administrator in June of last year. Prior, she worked closely with Montgomery county as an admin for Carson Valley Children's Aid in Norristown. Originally from South Carolina, Rebecca has lived in PA for almost 10 years. She enjoys stories of all kinds and formats, so when she's not working you can usually find her reading, doing theatre, or dissecting movies with her husband.

2025 Environmental Stewardship Award

Jessica Buck, District Manager

The [Ursinus College Food Forest](#), the first of its kind in Montgomery County, received the 2025 Environmental Stewardship Award. This exceptional and innovative project serves as a pioneering model of environmental restoration that combines hands-on education and community engagement. Nestled on a preserved agricultural easement in Trappe Borough, the forest spans 1.75 acres and stretches 640 feet along a tributary of the Perkiomen Creek. The project expanded an existing narrow riparian corridor onto previously farmed lands, creating a multifunctional edible landscape that nourishes both people and ecosystems. Through continued student involvement, cultural connections, and ecological stewardship, the food forest stands as a beacon of hope, resilience, and collaboration for Montgomery County and beyond. Click below to read the full project summary.



[Learn more about the Ursinus Food Forest](#)



Mussel Power!

Jessica Buck, District Manager

There's something pretty cool happening just beneath the water's surface in Green Lane Reservoir! Montgomery County has partnered with the Academy of Natural Sciences, Aqua and other local watershed partners to support the Freshwater Mussel Recovery Program, helping to conserve and restore regional freshwater mussel populations.

[Full Article](#)

PAG-02 New Permit Requirements

Jeff McKenna, Resource Conservationist

With the rollout of the 2024 PAG-02 NPDES Permit last December, numerous changes from previous versions of the permit were introduced. This article outlines several of the more significant changes and the effective dates of the new requirements.

The most current versions of all forms should always be used. At the time of this article, the latest version of the Notice of Intent was dated June 2025. The latest versions of Module 1, Module 2, the PCSM Spreadsheet, Managed Release Concept (MRC) Spreadsheet, and Pre-development Site Characterization (PDSC) Spreadsheet are dated March 8, 2025.

Permits originally authorized before December 7, 2024, and subsequently renewed, now require an Annual Report for the period from 10-1-2024 to 9-30-2025. These reports were due to be submitted to the District office before December 7, 2025. Permits acknowledged after December 7, 2024 will be required to submit an Annual Report for the period from 10-1 to 9-30 after one full year of coverage. The forms may be submitted anytime between October 1 and December 7 for the year in which they are due. The Annual Report form is available from the [DEP E&S Resources page](#).

Visual Site Inspection Reports (VSIR) are an existing permit requirement, however, effective December 8, 2025, the program now requires that the individuals performing the weekly / rainfall event inspections be certified. The qualification necessary to perform the inspections can include CPESC or CESSWI from EnviroCert, or completion of the QVSI training course available from the PA DEP's Clean Water Academy. [Click here](#) to view a video explaining how to sign up for and take the free, public course.

Any Post Construction Stormwater Management Stormwater Control Measures (PCSM SCMs) that were completed after December 8, 2024 should have an SCM Construction Certification form completed and submitted to the permitting authority within 30 days of the completion of the SCM. Confirmation testing for infiltration based SCMs became a requirement December 8, 2025. SCMs completed prior to that date may leave the questions blank on the SCM Certification form, regarding the testing. If you are submitting a Notice of Termination that does not include the SCM Certification forms, please include an explanation as to why the forms were not included.

Please check the DEP E&S Resources page regularly to ensure the use of the most updated version of any forms, as forms are updated frequently.

Updates to Managed Release Concept (MRC) SCM

Elise Eggert-Crowe, District Engineer

For projects looking to implement Managed Release Concept (MRC) Stormwater Control Measures (SCMs), DEP began requiring the MRC Spreadsheet as of March 8, 2025. This update incorporates both the spreadsheet crediting tools as well as revised design standards from the previous MRC Version 1.2 in effect from August 2020. While many of the concepts remain the same as before, a few notable updates include:

- Revised release rate for the 1.2-inch/2-hour storm: The new design standard is 0.02 cfs per equivalent impervious acre. The rate was 0.01 cfs per equivalent impervious acre in the previous MRC Version 1.2.
- Diversions: Diverting flows greater to the 1.2-inch/2-hour storm or the 2-year/24-hour storm around the MRC SCM to a separate rate control SCM is recommended, with a goal to increase the lifespan and reduce need for inspections/repairs after extreme events. There are incentives to implement this recommendation, such as larger drainage areas. The concept of diversion of larger storm events was also recommended in the previous MRC Version 1.2, however there were fewer incentives to implement the recommendation.
- Drainage area limitations: New drainage area limitations can be found in the MRC Paper; In general, where larger storm events are diverted around the MRC SCM, the MRC SCM can manage a larger drainage area. There were no limitations on drainage areas in the previous MRC Version 1.2.
- Partial Crediting: In the MRC Spreadsheet, a deduction is taken for deviating from a design standard. This allows for flexibility in design, where there was little flexibility in the previous MRC Version 1.2.

Designers are encouraged to visit PA DEP's E&S Resources page frequently instead of relying on downloaded versions, as updates are routinely rolled out. Questions on the use of the MRC Spreadsheet can be directed to the Bureau of Clean Water at rapchapter102@pa.gov

See PA DEP [E&S Resources](#) webpage and look for the heading "Implementation Tools" for links to the following: MRC Spreadsheet, MRC Simplified Design Spreadsheet, MRC Spreadsheet Instructions, MRC Paper, and DEP MRC Training Course.

Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP): Funding Available for Implementation of Agricultural Conservation!

Abby Renz, Ag Conservation Specialist

The Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) was created through the Clean Streams Fund established by the FY2022-2023 Pennsylvania state budget. ACAP provides financial and technical assistance for the implementation of conservation work on agricultural operations within the Commonwealth. ACAP is administered by the State Conservation Commission and delegated to participating Conservation Districts for local implementation of the program. Many practices are eligible for funding, priority put on those which reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loss, to improve water quality. Applications are currently being accepted for ACAP grant-funded projects in Montgomery County!



Eligible practices for funding include manure/waste storages, heavy use area protection, grassed waterways, diversions, stream crossings and cover crops, and many others. Practices must be installed to meet NRCS design criteria. Through ACAP grant funding, Montgomery County Conservation District is able to reimburse costs of installing eligible practices up to 90% of the project cost, with a required 10% of the project cost requirement of the applicant. Applications are currently being accepted and will be accepted on an ongoing basis until funds are spent. See the website, link below, for a listing of all eligible practices, program application and other resources.

For questions or with interest in applying, please contact program administrators:
Abigail Renz at (610) 489-4506 x24 or arenz@montgomeryconservation.org or
Ryan Devine at (610) 489-4506 x12 or rdevine@montgomeryconservation.org

[ACAP Resources](#)



Low Volume Roads Grant Program: Funding Available for Road Improvement Projects with an Environmental Benefit

Jessica Buck, District Manager

PA Low Volume Roads Grant Program:

With funding through the PA Transportation Bill, administered by the State Conservation Commission and locally by Conservation Districts, the Low Volume Roads grant program funds road improvement projects with an environmental focus, on paved roads with <500 vehicles per day. Eligible projects aim to manage stormwater, reduce pollutant runoff, and reduce and improve maintenance requirements.

An eligibility requirement to apply for funding is attendance to Penn State's "Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance" course, a regionally-held free classroom training focused on providing the knowledge and tools necessary for road owning entities to maintain roads in a more cost-efficient and environmentally sensitive manner. Course attendance is required by a representative of the municipality who will be involved with the road improvement project, in order to be eligible to apply for grant funds. Certification is valid for 5 years.

Grant funding remains available for Low Volume Road projects in Montgomery County! Please see the attached flyer to register today for this free one-day eligibility course.

Questions and interest can be directed to program administrator: Jessica Buck, jbuck@montgomeryconservation.org, (610) 489-4506 x14

**A free ESM course (a grant eligibility requirement) will be held on February 17th
at Penn State Brandywine Campus, Media PA**

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Partners Celebrate 20th Anniversary of "Trees for Watersheds"

Brian Vadino, Watershed Specialist

In Fall 2025, Montgomery County Conservation District partnered with Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, Riverbend Environmental Education Center, Pennypack Ecological Restoration Trust and Douglass Township, through the Trees for Watersheds grant program, to complete 11 riparian forest buffer planting projects across 7 acres of stream corridor and stormwater management facilities in Montgomery County. Through these projects, these partnering organizations and their volunteers (who collectively contributed approximately 1,036 volunteer hours) planted and protected 1,122 native trees and 154



native shrubs to help capture and treat runoff, reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, enhance aquatic and wildlife habitat conditions, and provide educational opportunities for the public.

Funding for these projects was made possible by the Trees for Watersheds Grant Program, managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, with funding from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener program, PECO and Aqua PA for projects that are located within its source water protection zones. The program depends upon collaboration between the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the Conservation District offices in each of the four surrounding Southeastern Pennsylvania counties (Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery) to guide and help implement watershed restoration projects in their service areas.

Led by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) since 2005, the program has focused on tree planting along stream corridors, wetlands, adjacent upland areas, headwaters, and naturalized stormwater basins. Through this program, partners conduct dozens of watershed restoration projects throughout the region every year, resulting in more than 240,000 native trees and shrubs planted in sensitive water protection zones (since its start in 2005).

On October 29, 2025, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society (PHS) and Aqua Pennsylvania celebrated the 20th anniversary of the Trees for Watersheds grant program with a commemorative planting event at the Riverbend Environmental Education Center in Montgomery County! Local media outlets covered the event, which opened with remarks from representatives of each organization. For more information, check out the following links:

- [Celebrating 20 Years of Partnership for Clean Water](#)
- [Aqua Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Celebrate 20 Years of Tree Plantings](#)
- [Aqua PA celebrates 20th anniversary of partnership with Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and DEP's Trees for Watersheds grant program - Glenside Local](#)
- [Aqua Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania Horticultural Society Celebrate 20 Years of Tree Plantings - PHILADELPHIA.TODAY](#)
- [We're thrilled... - Riverbend Environmental Education Center | Facebook](#)
- [Aqua - Our team was out at Riverbend Environmental.... | Facebook](#)

With interest in a future grant application to the Trees for Watersheds program, please contact Brian Vadino, bvadino@montgomeryconservation.org, 610-489-4506 x15



2026 Montgomery County High School Envirothon - Save the Date!

Tuesday, April 21 at the Norristown Farm Park

Envirothon is a fun, academic event in an outdoor setting that educates students on natural resource and environmental sciences. High School students learn, study then compete in teams of 5 students, in order to qualify for the state competition.

Registration is now open! Register by March 27th.

[Registration Link](#)

[Informational Flyer](#)

[Teacher Resource Packet](#)

For more information, contact Envirothon Coordinator, Brian Vadino, bvadino@montgomeryconservation.org, 610-489-4506 x15



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website



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