



Growing ideas into reality

**Pennsylvania Association of
Resource Conservation & Development Councils
2008**

Karl Mason Award

The Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals (PAEP) recently presented the 2008 Karl Mason Award to the Pennsylvania Association of Resource Conservation & Development (PARCD) Councils during their annual conference. The PARCD was recognized for the work its nine regional RC&D Councils are doing to enhance the environment and quality of life in local communities throughout Pennsylvania.

PAEP commended the Pennsylvania Councils for their “outstanding service and support of resource conservation and development in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania through innovative and dynamic leadership and by nurturing partnerships among public and private agencies, corporations, organizations, and citizens to protect, restore, enhance the environment” during the presentation of this prestigious award. The Karl Mason Award is given each year to an organization or project that has made significant contribution to the betterment of Pennsylvania’s environment.



Marc Radell, PAEP Conference Chair; Susan Parry Capital RC&D Coordinator; Brian Oram, Pocono Northeast RC&D Chair; Commissioner Jo Ellen Litz, Capital RC&D Chair (past); Jason Minnick, PAEP President

The Pennsylvania RC&D Program and regional non-profit Councils develop projects based on regional needs identify and provide technical and/or financial assistance necessary to bring various projects to fruition. The focus of the national RC&D program includes land conservation, land management, water management, and community development. There are currently 375 RC&D Councils nationally receiving assistance through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“With the support and collaboration of our partners within the USDA/NRCS, we bring together local citizens at a regional level to plan and implement projects that not only address natural resource concerns, but also address the need for community and economic development within our important rural communities,” stated Lebanon County Commissioner Jo Ellen Litz during her acceptance of the award on behalf of the PARCD Councils.



www.parc.org

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A Message from the President:

As President of the Pennsylvania Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils, it is my pleasure to introduce the annual report of our State Association and the nine RC&D councils. RC&D is a truly unique program, giving local people the ability to determine their needs and find solutions.

As you look over the reports from the nine councils it will show the diversity of the many projects and activities that they are accomplishing. Many of these projects come to fruition through the partnerships with other organizations which supports our vision statement of nurturing cooperation to improve the quality of life and strengthen our ability to be responsible for the environment.



We in RC&D are very thankful for the support of the Federal Legislators and the National and State organizations that provide many of the resources for the councils to carry out their plans of work. Equally important are the many volunteers that give of their time, energy, resources and skills to successfully complete our many projects and serve as council members. Let's continue to work together so that RC&D will make positive difference in our communities.

Best Regards,
Jack M. Preston, President

2008 State Association

President - Jack M. Preston (Penn Soil RC&D)
Vice President - Paul R. Sell, Jr. (Southeastern PA RC&D)
Secretary - Ron K. Beam (Capital RC&D)
Treasurer - JoAnn McCready (Penn Soil RC&D)
Member at Large - Robert Hughes (Pocono Northeast RC&D)

Our Vision for Pennsylvania: We will serve, support, and promote Resource Conservation and Development Councils by nurturing partnerships and by providing innovative and dynamic leadership. The result will be an excellent quality of life in Pennsylvania and a strengthened ability to be responsible for the environment.

TO: PA Association of RC&D Councils

The RC&D program in Pennsylvania thrives because of the leadership of the volunteer Council members and boards, the dedicated Council staff, and the motivated RC&D Coordinators who provide technical assistance to the Council.

Nationwide there are 375 RC&D Councils providing leadership in addressing natural resource issues and in community development. Pennsylvania can count itself among the successful leaders in the RC&D program with nine strong Councils. Through public input, the Councils develop annual and long range area plans that address the local needs. They fill a niche in every community. The Councils in Pennsylvania are widely known for their ability to accomplish noteworthy work.

USDA NRCS looks forward to the continued success of RC&D Councils in Pennsylvania and anticipates the positive results from the PA RC&D Association's continued good work through carrying out their strategic plan.

Sincerely,

Gary P. Smith, RC&D State Program Manager

2008 Statewide Projects:

Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance Project

The nine RC&D Councils that comprise the Pennsylvania Association of Resource Conservation & Development (PARCD) Council, continued to work on the “Weed Control and Wildlife Habitat Technical Assistance Project” during 2008. This project provided oversight and guidance on weed control and wildlife habitat concerns and issues to landowners enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) throughout the state. The project was a cooperative effort between the RC&D Councils, USDA/NRCS and Farm Services Agency, County Conservation Districts, and others.



Working with landowners enrolled in CREP, the Councils provided information and resources on how to address noxious and invasive weeds on their property while emphasizing the beneficial plants and other attributes of the practices that improve wildlife habitat. The CREP program focuses on reducing soil erosion while improving water quality and wildlife habitat. Therefore the RC&D’s worked with the landowners to make sure they were in compliance with the program as well as educating them on ways to maintain and improve their practices and plantings for the best attainable results.



The RC&D’s worked locally to implement the project by forming a local committee to develop a localized plan for their individual RC&D area. This allowed each Council the ability to develop and implement the projects to meet the unique needs of their respective regions. Councils educated landowners through various venues including meetings, workshops, field days, and other events allowing landowners to learn about the different CREP practices, how they improve wildlife habitat and how to properly address noxious weed management. Landowners and project partners responded very positively towards the project.

Consortium for Scientific Assistance To Watersheds (C-SAW)

The Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds (C-SAW) has been a statewide RC&D project since 2001 and continues to provide greatly needed assistance to watershed associations, lake associations, municipalities, communities, and individuals across the Commonwealth. The scope and depth of collaboration and cooperation that has grown among the Consortium partners enables the C-SAW program to efficiently and effectively provide a range of services to approved applicants. The Consortium partnership represents a diversity of individual and collective knowledge and skills that can be drawn upon to provide the assistance requested.



C-SAW is guided and administered by Pennsylvania's RC&D Councils with the help of service providers collaborating and enhancing the group's programmatic and technical skills to monitor, protect, and restore PA's waterways for the long term. The program continues to evolve by developing and implementing a successful capacity-building model that provides watershed groups the necessary programmatic and technical assistance to effectively address local water-quality concerns across the state. Services provided through C-SAW include watershed specific technical assistance, water quality monitoring planning and design, program management and quality assurance/quality control measures.



Many of the groups that apply for C-SAW assistance have only recently formed and require assistance with organizational development and program management before they can effectively proceed with watershed monitoring and assessment. Even for more seasoned organizations, the request for C-SAW assistance can include organizational development and program management. Consortium partners collaborate with C-SAW recipients to build ownership, capacity and confidence. This approach sends ripples far beyond the individuals and organizations assisted, and helps to build stronger individuals, stronger watershed organizations and stronger communities.

PA Rural Fire Protection Project

All nine RC&D Councils continued to offer matching grants to local sponsors to install dry hydrants to improve rural fire fighting efforts. Dry



hydrant installations at strategic locations throughout rural areas helps improve fire protection and may save

residents money on their fire insurance. The local RC&D furnished the dry hydrant kit for local sponsors to install in advance, but the value of the kit \$202 was matched by the local sponsor. The kit included the hydrant head, the strainer, and a metal "No Parking-Fire Department Use Only" sign. Up to an additional \$300 rebate per installation was available under this grant when matched by the local sponsor on a 1:1 basis. The funding which could be used to purchase pipe and fittings or hire an excavator was provided through the grant from

U.S. Forest Service funds passed through the Pa Bureau of Forestry for local firefighting efforts. Participants had to match the grant provided with either cash or in-kind contributions to complete the installation. The statewide project also included educational programs to local sponsors to learn more about becoming a Firewise Community.

Many fire companies, municipalities, communities, organizations and individuals benefitted from the dry hydrant program thanks to the RC&D Councils. Well over 200 dry hydrants were installed through the program, some of which have been used successfully by fire companies to withdraw water for fighting fires. There have been some other benefits realized such as the lowering of insurance rates as a result of the installation of the dry hydrants.



Capital RC&D

Regional Riparian and Agricultural BMP Initiative



The purpose of the project was to support rotational grazing systems, riparian buffers and other agricultural Best Management Practices (BMP) on livestock operations, through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP). The Capital Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council, in partnership with the DEP, State Conservation Commission, county conservation districts, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and South Central PA *Project Grass* Chapter, has expanded nutrient and sediment reduction effectiveness of agricultural riparian buffers and conversion of cropland to pasture through this three-year project. Funds were also available for the general promotion of sound conservation planning principles and practices related to grazing systems.

Contract administration was performed by the Capital RC&D Area Council, on behalf of the Project Grass South Central Chapter and the participating county conservation districts. A Steering Committee was formed consisting of the Capital RC&D Program Manager, an RC&D Council Member, NRCS Grazing/Natural Resource Specialist, a county conservation district representative, and the DEP Regional Project Advisor, to develop an impartial ranking system and to make overall recommendations for the project. County partners prepared project worksheets, facilitated landowner agreements and submitted documentation to the Steering Committee for approval prior to the allocation of funds for project work. The RC&D reimbursed landowners directly for the project after county verification of costs. The RC&D worked cooperatively with other programs such as EQIP and CREP to be sure that there was no duplication of efforts or resources, resulting in a successful collaborative effort.

The *Regional Riparian and Ag BMP Initiative* provided 100 percent landowner cost share for riparian fencing of rotational and non-rotational grazing projects, at an amount of \$1.50 per linear foot. Funding for additional practices including stabilized stream access points, stream crossings, and alternative livestock watering systems at a 100 percent cost share rate; stabilized livestock walkways and other practices were provided with an 80 percent rate for landowners. The Capital RC&D Council worked with project partners to support practices within a seventeen-county region to include the installation of **three (3) alternative watering systems, four (4) stream crossings, three (3) stabilized livestock walkways, over 30,000 lineal feet of stream bank fencing, close to 60,000 lineal feet of internal fencing for grazing purposes, in addition to landowner cost share for pipeline, diversions and seedings, ensuring success for up to 75 new grazing operators. A total of \$300,000 was contributed to projects over the three year period, from July 2006 through June 2009.**



"The Capital Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area Council, Inc. is a seven county non-profit organization that networks people, resources and projects to promote responsible use and conservation of our region's natural, community and economic resources."

Community and Urban Gardening Programs:

The Claremont Community Gardens Project-The goal of the project is to develop an effective horticultural therapy program through the installation of garden sites within the Claremont Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (CNRC) in Cumberland County, PA. The CNRC is a county-owned facility that houses 270 patients, an adult and child daycare facility and is surrounded by a grounds area that historically was the county farm. The Claremont Community Gardens Project promotes mental health and wellness for its residents, families and the community-at-large. CNRC Staff and Penn State Cooperative Extension Master Gardener volunteers at the facility will be trained to assist with physical, emotional, behavioral and social rehabilitation using the specialized focus of each individual garden area, including *Trial and Idea Garden* (pictured at right), *Heirloom Vegetable Garden*, *Intergenerational Garden*, *Birds and Butterflies Garden* and *Sensory Garden*.



Urban Gardening Projects- In partnership with community service groups in several counties, the Capital RC&D has been facilitating the installation and operation of projects designed to bring the “connection to the land” back to the urban environment. Along with the funding assistance for the gardens themselves, the RC&D is promoting projects that teach young audiences the importance of community and entrepreneurship, nutrition and wellness, and the need for support of local farms. At-risk youth in the city of Lancaster (the Dig-It! project) and Harrisburg are experiencing what it’s like to grow their own food then take it to market and sell it. They are also benefitting from learning how to plant and maintain organic gardens. Volunteers and professionals from local arts, conservation and agricultural groups provide hands-on activities to keep them interested and engaged in their commitment to the programs.



Current Projects we are working on:

- ⊗ Taste the Gifts of our Region
- ⊗ South Central PA Buy Fresh Buy Local
- ⊗ Big Spring Legacy Sediment Project
- ⊗ Manure and Minelands Program



Counties Served: Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, York

Community Partnerships RC&D

Pride In Community, Partnerships In Action

Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts

Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts (PPA) is a partnership between local organizations and the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (PCA), a branch of the governor's office. Now operating in all 67 counties in Pennsylvania, PPA re-grants funds to support a wide variety of local and community arts activities. Since its creation in 1996, PPA has demonstrated enormous success and is continually rated as one of the most effective and efficient programs in the state of Pennsylvania.

Community Partnerships RC&D is currently in its ninth (9th) year of administering the program in Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder and Union Counties. The decentralized funds improve the cultural experience and quality of life for rural residents- often in underserved, economically disadvantaged areas.



To educate potential applicants, Community Partnerships RC&D conducts dozens of grant workshops across the region to educate local citizens (many of whom are under-represented artists and organizations) on the availability of PPA funds and other sources of grant funding. The workshops allow the application process to be explained in detail by Community Partnerships RC&D staff.

After the program is promoted through community outreach and media coverage, applications are submitted and organized. A volunteer arts panel is assembled with representatives of each of the five counties in the Community Partnerships RC&D area.

The panel then scores and ranks the applications based on the criteria of availability to the community, artistic merit and project management. A ranking of projects is then collated and funds are awarded based on the project's overall score. Recently, Community Partnerships RC&D distributed nearly \$30,000 to projects in the area this year.



The project checks are presented in an awards ceremony generally held in mid-September. Legislators are on hand to formally present the checks to award recipients. Excellent media coverage for the Pennsylvania Partners and the Arts Program and Community Partnerships RC&D follows the event in regional newspapers.

Several businesses and jobs are retained and local quality of life improved as a result of Community Partnerships RC&D's arts funding programs which have re-granted over \$500,000 to area artists in organizations over the course of the partnership.

The Great Chip Drop

The second annual New Year's Eve celebration "The Great Chip Drop" was held last year on December 31, 2008 in Lewistown, Pennsylvania.

The event was an extreme success as 4,000 plus Central Pennsylvania revelers showed throughout the night to ring in the New Year. The joyous crowd gathered in the square and Historic Courthouse for entertainment of all kinds which included live music and a children's parade. Local businesses and eateries held special hours to stay open during the event. Vendors lined the streets. The night reached its climax as a giant replica bag of hometown favorite Hartley's Potato Chips dropped from the sky at midnight. Fireworks and cheers welcomed 2009.

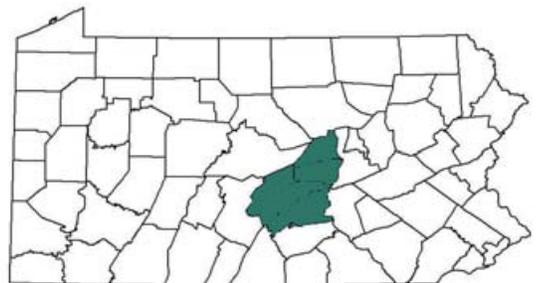
The community has embraced the event as its newest downtown tradition as business leaders, individuals and volunteers donated time, effort and money toward putting on the celebration. A local volunteer firefighter company, United Rescue manned the ladder truck that suspended the giant replica potato chip bag nearly 100 feet in the air. The fire company's involvement was especially appropriate as Lewistown is the site of the State Fire Academy.

Local businesses sponsored the event through advertising and donated materials. Hartley's Potato Chips and Community Partnerships RC&D distributed 1,000 free bags of chips to celebrating citizens. Countless other volunteers, businesses and organizations also helped make the event a success once again.

Over 50 businesses were retained through the local celebration.



**Serving: Juniata, Mifflin, Perry,
Snyder, and Union Counties**

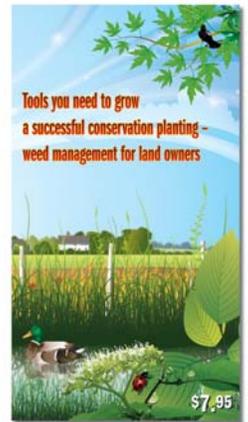


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Endless Mountains RC&D

Weed Control Wildlife Habitat Management Project: Tools You Need to Grow a Successful Conservation Planting- Weed Management for Land Owners DVD

Endless Mountains RC&D Council has been involved in the Weed Control Wildlife Habitat Management project for two years. This project involves providing education and outreach and technical assistance to landowners enrolled in USDA's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) on weed control and wildlife habitat. Endless Mountains RC&D Council has hosted 3 workshops, 5 field days and two rounds of one on one technical assistance to more than 200 landowners covering more than 6000 acres in the Endless Mountains RC&D region. During several of the field days NRCS and FSA field staff commented on the value of the information presented and the need to reach additional CREP landowners in the region with this information. The concept for the **Tools You Need to Grow a Successful Conservation Planting-Weed Management for Land Owners DVD** were born out of those comments and the obvious need that was expressed by CREP landowners needing more help and education.



The **Tools You Need to Grow a Successful Conservation Planting-Weed Management for Land Owners DVD** contains information on all of the following: Integrated Pest Management, Weed Lifecycles, Identification of Noxious and Invasive Weeds, Applying Herbicides, Sprayer Calibration, Weed Management in Forest Buffers, Weed Management in Grasslands, Wildlife Habitat and Additional Resources. The DVD is geared toward CREP landowners, but applies to anyone with and trying to manage conservation grassland plantings and forested riparian buffers. The DVD is narrated by Art Gover, Penn State University. The DVD can be viewed using a home computer or a DVD player connected to a home television. Using the DVD with a computer will allow the viewer to open additional resources and publications as a pdf. The goal of this project is to make the information provided at the field days available to landowners at will and provide them with visuals to see and hear specifics on what plants look like and how they grow to help a landowner better control the weeds they have on their properties.



Solar Powered Watering Systems/Grassland Conversion for Rotational Grazer



In an effort to improve water quality on livestock farms in northeast PA, Endless Mountains and Pocono NE RC&D and Northeast Project Grass are

implementing a program that provides incentives to farmers for converting cropping acres into intensively managed pasture/hayland acres. Through this project we will be converting 450 acres to pasture/hayland and installing 10 solar powered watering systems.

A pasture/hayland system can make a significant impact on reducing soil erosion, improving water infiltration, improving soil quality, increasing soil organic matter, sequestering carbon, and improving the sustainability of PA farms by utilizing perennial forage systems, thereby lessening their dependence on fossil fuels to feed livestock. By encouraging rotational grazing and pasture/hayland management, we can provide a low cost solution to environmental degradation of northeastern PA's agricultural lands. Converting cropping land to intensively managed pasture would allow farmers to save as much as **310,500 BTU's/acre**, or possibly over **139 million Btu's** of fossil fuel energy on the 450 acres of cropland this project aims to convert to pasture. In

addition to the energy savings, these same farms can potentially reduce soil erosion by as much as **900 tons/year**, while reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions (CO₂) by as much as **90,000 lbs/year**. The installation of 10 solar water pumping system will create as much as **2200 KWH** of energy to water livestock on pasture. Finally the real energy creation in this project is the energy converted from sunlight to forage dry matter for livestock. In one season the 450 acres of cropland conversion to pasture could potentially generate as much as **122 million Btu's per acre** converted or **55 billion Btu's of energy total from the 450 acres** targeted. Energy converted from sunlight to forage dry matter is an essentially component of PA's economy and this project will assist farmers in the northeast to become more energy independent in an effort to find true sustainability. It is our goal not only help reduce the risk of environmental impacts from northeast PA farms, but also make those same farms as viable and sustainable as possible so they are able to continue to provide food and farm products for generations to come.



Current Projects EMRCD is Working On:

- PA Fuels for Schools and Beyond
- Soil Health and Profit: No-till and Cover Crops
- Pine Creek Oral Histories and Education Project
 - Proactive to Flooding Education Project

"The Endless Mountains Resource Conservation and Development Council will lead a diverse group of stakeholders in the sound conservation and stewardship of the region's natural resources. The Council will promote the rural quality of life and its economic stability through organizational efforts, education of communities, technical expertise, and sponsorship of projects."



Counties Served: Bradford,
Lycoming, Sullivan, Susquehanna,
Tioga and Wyoming



Endless Mountains RC&D Council

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Headwaters RC&D

Filson 7 Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System

In north-central Pennsylvania, a long history of heavy surface coal mining has resulted in locally impaired water quality. Headwaters RC&D has a long-standing tradition of assisting local watershed organizations to address the Acid Mine



On-site water quality testing

Drainage (AMD) issues that have arisen due to this activity. One of the sites, known as Filson 7, is located in Union Township, Jefferson County, and contributes to exceptionally high levels of acidity in Little Mill Creek. Through a partnership of the Mill Creek Coalition, Headwaters RC&D, and the Headwaters Charitable Trust, the Filson 7 AMD treatment system was designed to both lower the acidity and the quantity of metals in the AMD discharge, which will ultimately positively affect the local surface water.

Through grants and donations from the Pennsylvania DEP Growing Greener II program, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Dominion Foundation and the Headwaters Charitable Trust, a very effective and reliable passive treatment system was put into place that utilizes a combination of Anoxic Limestone Drains (ALDs) and a settling pond.

The project was successfully completed during the winter of 2008. The Mill Creek Coalition continues to monitor the parameters of the discharge from the site, in addition to water quality in Little Mill Creek downstream of the site. Initial results indicate that the Filson 7 system is meeting all expectations by reducing acidity and iron concentrations in the water, and is expected to do so for at least 25 years in the future. The total project cost was \$240,609.

In addition to providing better water quality for the area, the Filson 7 site is currently being used as an educational and research site for undergraduate students at nearby Clarion University. One student is also researching the implementation of an experimental AMD treatment technique as a senior thesis project.



Filson 7 after the installation of an ALD

2008 Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference



Headwaters RC&D, in partnership with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, and Jefferson County Conservation District, hosted the 2008 Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference in DuBois, PA. Speakers for this year's conference were brought in from Pennsylvania, New York and Kentucky, and they addressed a wide range of topics from composting bedded pack, watering systems, utilization of abandoned land for grazing, to using grasses as a biofuel.

There was record-breaking attendance at this year's Conference with around 169 producers, governmental agency personnel, and other interested parties from Pennsylvania, New York and Ohio. Thanks in large part to contributions from Northeast SARE, the Agriculture Crop Insurance Education Grant and 11 sponsors and vendors, another informative and interesting Grazing Conference was made available to the public.

Headwaters RC&D Current Projects

- Rotational Grazing Best Management Practice Installation
- Technical assistance to CREP landowners for weed control
- Grazing and no-till workshops
- Financial management services for watershed groups
- Rails-to-Trail trailhead restroom facility construction
- Watershed restorations projects funded by Headwaters' Sinnemahoning Endowment Fund
- Alternative energy workshops
- Farmer's Markets Capacity Building
- Rail-to-Trail property management services
- Area-wide greenway planning and implementation
- Biomass energy programs for local landowners and farmers



*Serving Centre, Clinton, Potter, McKean
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478 Jeffers St, Bldg 3, Ste. D, DuBois, PA 16830 * Phone: 814-375-1372 ext. 4 * Fax: 814-375-2453

www.headwaterspa.org

Penn Soil RC&D

“Working To Improve Communities and Natural Resources”

Rural Fire Protection Project

A dry hydrant is a non-pressurized pipe system permanently installed in existing lakes, ponds, and streams that provides means of suction supply of water to the tank truck. The concept is not new. Many fire departments have successfully used dry hydrants for a number of years, although its use is not wide spread.



In many rural areas, a lack of water mains and domestic fire hydrants can sometimes impair a fire department's ability to do its job quickly and efficiently. Tanker trucks must be used to carry large amounts of water to the fire scene. The success of the operation hinges on the distance the trucks must travel to water "fill-up" points around the county. Unfortunately, the fill-up points are often a long distance from the fire and fire-fighters are unable to retain an interrupted water supply at the scene in many cases. Some counties have begun to take advantage of "natural water sources" for fire-fighting. Most areas have a number of privately owned ponds, lakes, and streams that could be used, with permission, as fill-up points. The installation of a non-pressurized pipe system into these water sources provides a ready

means of a suction-supply of water to tank trucks. The dry hydrant system gives the trucks access to the ponds and streams from the main road. As in the photo to the left, one end of the dry hydrant sticks out of the ground to give tankers a hose connection, and the other end is a strainer submerged in the pond or stream to draw water directly through the system.

On behalf of all nine RC&D Councils in Pennsylvania, Penn Soil RC&D administered the Statewide Project to install new dry hydrants across the state. A total of 370 dry hydrant kits were purchased and distributed to the nine RC&D's in PA. The project has been completed and the grant was closed out in December, 2008. Two hundred and forty-nine hydrant installations were reported completed as of this date with a total of \$206,320 of the federal grant funds. The actual value of the work donated by all the project sponsors is \$277,754 which resulted in a total project value of \$484,074 statewide. Within the Penn Soil RC&D Area there were 42 dry hydrants completed and the local sponsors contributed a total of \$54,470.34 in matching funds or in-kind value to the projects.

CREP Weed Control & Wildlife Habitat Project



Penn Soil RC&D provided training and subcontracted with partners to provide on the ground technical assistance reviews with CREP participants to help them better manage their CREP acreage. The feedback from producers has been entirely positive judging from the phone calls we have received in the office. A Warm Season Grass Management field day was held on August 27th at the Walt Robertson farm in Clarion County. About 50 people attended to learn more about the establishment, identification, and management of warm season grasses and about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program. Between all the participating Districts, 110 on farm visits were conducted to provide technical assistance to landowners.

Chandlers Valley Dam

This project consisted of replacing the eroded earthen dam embankments with a well-compacted clay soil material against both sides of an existing concrete spillway to restore the dam to its original design. We also added geotextile fabric and rock rip-rap armoring on both the upstream and downstream approaches to protect and prevent future erosion which might endanger the stability of the dam. The rock armor was keyed into the pool bottom and stream bottom of the exit channel on Jackson Run, project cost totaled \$10,250.00.

The restoration of this landmark dam will preserve and maintain a reservoir that serves many purposes for the citizens of Chandler's Valley and Sugar Grove Township including fire protection, recreation, aesthetics, and the revitalization of a community park.

BEFORE



AFTER



Allegheny GeoTrail



Penn Soil RC&D partnered with the Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry, and Tourism to develop and implement The Allegheny GeoTrail, an innovative new concept to increase tourism benefits in a ten county area of north western and north central Pennsylvania. The project utilizes the growing interest in a relatively new outdoor sport for people of all ages called *Geocaching* to provide increased tourism benefits to ten counties which comprise the Allegheny National Forest and its gateway communities. The project is funded by a \$234,200 grant from the U.S. Forest Service. Geocaching is an entertaining outdoor adventure game for Global positioning System (GPS) users in which the participants seek out hidden geocaches by navigating to certain GPS coordinates provided by the person who hid the cache. The coordinates are obtained from a website on the internet and downloaded into a GPS unit. Participating in a cache hunt is a good way to take advantage of the features and capabilities of a GPS unit, but it is also a great way for someone to navigate their way to find noteworthy attractions and hidden areas that might not be readily found by those casually passing by.

Geocaching combines the love of the outdoors, hiking, sightseeing, wildlife watching, and nature study with the innovative electronic gadgetry of a GPS to result in a high tech treasure hunt enjoyed by young and old alike. More and more people are spending their free time, weekends, and vacations geocaching. The Allegheny GeoTrail is actually a network of roads that will carry visitors across the ten county regions in pursuit of special hidden geocaches which contain a special self-inking stamp that participants will use to validate their Allegheny Trail Passports. From the log reports and comments we are receiving, it is apparent that this project has been a huge success to date. As of the end of March, there were over 40,009 individually recorded logs of finds posted on www.geocaching.com website since the project went active on October 1, 2007. The grant contract has now been extended through June 30 of 2010 and additional passport stamps and geocoins are being ordered.

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Counties Served: Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, and Warren

Penn's Corner

RC&D

Penn's Corner RC&D continues to advocate for conservation and work towards building strong communities by fostering regional partnerships, securing technical and financial resources and delivering services and programs to the nine county area making up Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Penn's Corner 2008 Partnerships and Projects

Grassland Evaluation Contest, May 2008: Out of 18 teams, the team representing Cambria County 4-H took first place, earning \$500 scholarships for each member. Second place finisher, Team Connellsville FFA, earned \$250 scholarships. Using a predetermined set of landowner's goals, each competitor demonstrated their knowledge of grassland management in four categories: grassland condition, soil interpretation, wildlife habitat and plant identification. Understanding these conditions allows a landowner to identify the best management decisions that will maximize profits while sustaining the land. A well-managed grazing system means healthy soil and clean water and air for people, wildlife and fish, as well as, lowered costs, improved herd health and reduced labor on the farm. Since the contest began in 2003, a total of \$17,500 in college scholarship funds has been awarded to students.



Project Grass Annual Grazing Conference: held on October 24-25th 2007 in Washington, PA. 164 participants and 22 vendors gained knowledge and networked. Keynote speaker Ralph Quillin, who owns and operates a grass based beef operation in Bourbon County near Paris, KY, explained how low cost farm fencing, portable livestock watering systems, water soluble mineral delivery and dynamic management can improve farm profits and preserve water quality. Other topics included livestock health issues, nutrient management, and grazing horses. Tours of farms that have installed solar pumps and educational presentations on soils rounded out the conference.

The **Southern Laurel Highlands Plant Management Partnership** sponsors Project Weed Whack, a series of workdays coupled with fun activities aimed at educating volunteers and the general public how to identify and properly eradicate invasive species. The Partnership is working with Invasive Plant Control, Inc. to begin a strategic chemical treatment plan for Japanese Stiltgrass at Bear Run Nature Reserve, Fallingwater, Fort Necessity, and Friendship Hill. This project is a result of a Forest Service grant as well as state DEP funding.

Innovative Stormwater Management & Energy Conservation Westmoreland County's "conservation campus" in Greensburg continues to feature alternative technologies which have been incorporated in the buildings on the grounds. These Sustainable Energy Showcases are intended to not only reduce the use of non-renewable electric and natural gas energy in the buildings' operation, but also to serve as demonstrations, showing area citizens how these technologies can be employed in their homes or businesses to save energy and money, create a healthier environment, and make their living or working environment a more pleasant place to be. Through local, state funding and significant private funding, a vacant 25 year old, 23 thousand square foot building was transformed into a model "green" building.

Now called GreenForge, the structure boasts many clean and safe technologies, including a geothermal heating/cooling system, pervious parking lots, and the county's first ever green roof. GreenForge is fully functional and now houses several agencies, nonprofits and commercial ventures. With foundation funding, and in partnership with Penn's Corner Conservancy Charitable Trust, Inc., the Westmoreland Conservation District annually conducts several programs aimed at a variety of audiences, including homeowners, construction site inspectors, and horseowners about innovative stormwater management practices. This work directly benefits water quality, reduces the threat of flooding, and reduces the need to invest in storm sewer infrastructure.

2008 No Till Conference – Improving No Till System Management. The combined efforts of NRCS, Pennsylvania State University's Department of Crop and Soil Science and Cooperative Extension,



Fayette & Westmoreland Conservation Districts, the Penn's Corner RC&D, and the PA No-Till Association proved again that **collaboration is the key to success.** Conference sessions included "Insect Management in No-Till Systems" by keynote speaker Dr. Ron Hammond, a professor at The Ohio State University, and researcher of insect pests in no-till systems since the 1980s. Dan Towery of Ag Conservation Solutions and Steve Parrish of Agrotain International added their expertise to the mix. Displays and time to interact with farmers who are successfully using no-till on their farms resulted in an event that benefitted more than 100 farmers in southwest PA.

Counties Served: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Washington, and Westmoreland



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Pocono Northeast RC&D

Forest Management and Habitat Initiative

The Forest Management and Habitat Initiative project, successfully completed in 2008, provided assistance to numerous landowners within the RC&D Area to complete the implementation of conservation practices on their properties to improve wildlife habitat and forest management. The RC&D received funding through the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation to educate landowners on the importance of conservation practices and then to implement them. The projects objectives were: provide education and outreach to private landowners, school teachers, and conservation organizations on forest management for water quality protection/enhancement and wildlife habitat creation; conduct workshops

throughout northeastern PA within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed on forest management for water quality protection/enhancement and wildlife habitat creation; assist landowners with development of conservation plans for their properties; and implement 70 acres of conservation practices



The practices of conservation cover (native warm and cool season grass establishment), forest stand improvement (including invasive species removal), tree/shrub planting, and wetland enhancement or creation were available for landowner implementation within the Fishing Creek Watershed in Columbia County and Wapwallopen Creek Watershed in Luzerne County. Landowners within each of the watersheds were invited to attend workshops to learn about the importance of conservation for water quality, air quality, wildlife habitat,

soil stabilization, and other additional benefits. Once the landowners received instructions about conservation and the various conservation practices that they could implement, they were invited to apply for inclusion into the project. One of the requirements of the project was landowners selected to participate with the project were required to provide a minimum of 25% match for their portion of the project. The project partners included US Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS), PA Game Commission, PA Dept. of Conservation of Natural Resources (DCNR- Bureau of Forestry), Columbia & Luzerne County Conservation Districts, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Pheasants Forever who determined which projects would yield the greatest environmental benefit. The partners developed conservation/management plans for all landowners who were selected to participate by giving them instruction on how to properly implement the conservation practices for which they were selected. The project exceeded the expected goals set forth by the RC&D and its partners and resulted in the hosting of six workshops, ten landowners being selected to implement conservation practices, a total of \$28,500 of in-kind match (44% of the project total) being provided for the project, and the implementation of the following conservation practices on the ten properties:



- 14.5 acres of conservation cover**
- 20 acres of invasive species removal**
- 70.5 acres of timber stand improvement**
- 22 acres of tree/shrub establishment**
- 9 acres of wetland enhancement/creation**

The Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation & Development Council is a community resource providing expertise in resource management and development throughout a ten county area of Northeastern Pennsylvania. The Council is committed to the preservation and protection of natural resources within a framework of economic growth.

Benton Area School District's Biomass Heating System

The Pocono Northeast Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council is working in



cooperation with the Benton Area School District in Columbia County to install a biomass heating system that will provide heat to both the elementary and middle/high school build-

ings. Currently the Benton Area School District's heating system is an oil-fueled hot water boiler. The school district has an average heating load that requires approximately 45,000 gallons of oil or more per year to heat the schools. Through this project, the district will be installing a biomass boiler system that will produce approximately 80% or more of the school's heating requirements through the heating season. The boiler system will utilize biomass as the feedstock for the heating system to offset almost 36,000 gallons of oil.



The Pocono Northeast RC&D Council was instrumental in assisting the school district with acquiring a \$350,000 grant from the Pennsylvania Energy

Development Authority (PEDA) to assist with the installation costs of the biomass heating system. Another project the RC&D Council is initiating is providing the district with densified grass free of charge to fuel the system during the first two years of operation.

Even without the free grass, the district will be able to realize cost savings by converting to a biomass heating system and should see a return on its investment in 5-10 years. Because of ever-increasing costs of fuel oil, initial cost estimates of the heating system are projecting the school district will save from \$40,000 to \$80,000 per year depending upon the feedstock utilized by the district once the initial supply of grass pellets is exhausted. With the RC&D providing the densified grass to the school free of charge, they will be able to realize financial savings the first day the biomass system is in use.

One unique aspect to the project, besides the fact the school will be heating with biomass for energy, they will be utilizing native warm sea son grasses as the feedstock for the system. There are many benefits to using biomass for energy which include: cost saving versus fossil fuels, biomass is a renewable resource, better net energy value (production to combustion) than fossil fuels, many environmental benefits, and locally



produced feedstocks increasing the local production and economy. The Benton Area School District made a very important decision early in the process to provide the local agricultural

community an opportunity to provide feedstocks for the biomass system. The district is predominantly an agricultural community, and this opportunity to use grass as a feedstock will promote the use of agriculture through a grass based system for biomass. When the Benton Area School District begins heating with grass, they will be the first school in the country to heat exclusively with grass biomass.



Current Projects we are working on:

- ❖ **Pennsylvania Fuels for Schools...and Beyond Program**
- ❖ **NEPA Energy Solutions Expo**
- ❖ **No-till Initiative & Conference**
- ❖ **Northeast PA Grazing Conference**



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Southeastern PA RC&D

2008 Highlights

No-till Vegetable Farming – Had a specially built horse drawn no-till planter built and made available to members of the Amish community so they can transplant their young seedling plants without disturbing the soil surface. In addition, the Council loaned other no-till vegetable planters to several farmers in the region.

Stream Signage- Conducted a survey of the area's municipalities and approximately 100 municipalities were interested in obtaining stream signs for over 1400 streams in their communities.

Eastern Delaware County Council of Governments - Meetings were held with community leaders and a consultant to conduct a study to determine if it is possible for the municipalities to save money and time by partnering together to address some stormwater management issues.

Farm Market Transportation- Provided transportation for approximately 120 low income individuals to visit farmers markets so they purchase fresh fruits and vegetables. SEPA RC&D also sponsored five focus group meetings to learn from local community members to learn their interests and needs on shopping at farmers markets. Over 3,000 fruit & vegetable nutrition booklets were printed and distributed participants in the Women, Infant & Children (WIC) Program.

C-SAW – Reviewed technical assistance requests and made recommendations to the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds, a partnership of experts, to assist local organizations and municipalities develop the necessary skills to accurately monitor and identify watershed related issues.

Training – Board Members and Program Assistant attended training sessions sponsored by the North Penn Nonprofit Academy, PA Assoc. of Nonprofit Organizations, PA Association of RC&D Councils, and the Mid-Atlantic Association of RC&D Councils. In addition, the Board of Directors met with representatives of the Clinch-Powell RC&D Council in Tennessee to learn about their Council's programs and operation.

Dry Fire Hydrants - Installed three specialized dry fire hydrants in Lehigh and Northampton Counties. The hydrants were installed in farm ponds in rural areas to aid fire companies in suppressing fires where traditional hydrants and pressurized water lines are not available. Dry fire hydrants allow fire companies to safely and quickly refill their tanker trucks to haul water to the fires.

Strategic Plan Development - Started work on creating its 2009-2013 Strategic Plan. Over 430 individuals, organizations, government agencies, and businesses provided the Council with input on current needs and opportunities in the region.

Southeastern Pennsylvania Resource Conservation and Development Council is a regional 501(c)3 nonprofit organization addressing issues of concern in the counties of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Montgomery, and Northampton. Southeastern PA RC&D Council improves the quality of life for people in the region by promoting programs that conserve and enhance the area's natural and community.

Ithan Creek Restoration– Assisted the Radnor Valley Country Club with submitting a grant proposal to restore the streambanks of approximately 3,270 linear feet of Ithan Creek, remove 29,000 cubic yards of legacy sediment, and create almost 5 acres of wetlands.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) - With the services of a local consultant, SEPA RC&D was able to assist over 20 landowners by providing advice on how to control noxious and invasive weeds on approximately 1,025 acres of their land enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

Financial Management- The Council’s 2007 financial records were audited by an independent certified public accounting firm and were found to fairly represent the financial position of the Council. It was also noted that the Southeastern PA RC&D Council financial management procedures are in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Sustaining Female Farmers— Co-sponsored a workshop for Pennsylvania’s female farmers. Approximately 50 people attended the session at the Rodale Institute to learn about mentoring female farmers, ongoing research, risk management, and organic recycling.

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Southern Alleghenies RC&D

Outdoor Heritage 2008

Outdoor Heritage 2008 is a month-long celebration of the natural heritage of the Southern Alleghenies Region that involves participation of 80 conservation organizations, individuals and exhibitors. April was officially designated as Outdoor Heritage Month in 2008 by Governor Rendell and the Pennsylvania Legislature with the theme “Constructing a Greener Earth in the Alleghenies”.



Outdoor Heritage Month is an approved RC&D project that highlights and promotes various local, state, national, and international celebrations that occur during the month of April, including National Environmental Education Week, Global and National Youth Service Days, and National Wildlife Week.

The centerpiece of Outdoor Heritage 2008 is an educational field day called Outdoor Adventures, which was held at the Summers Best 2 Weeks Youth Camp at the Quemahoning Reservoir in Somerset County on April 24 & 25.

Nearly 1,000 students in grades K through 9 from five school districts and several home school families took part in this year's event, which featured craft exhibits, bird presentations, fishing and fly tying demonstrations, fun with music activities and the Pennsylvania DEP model green home. Natural Biodiversity and the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team hosted Outdoor Heritage 2008 with support from many of the regions conservation organizations, including the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council and the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy.



40 organizations exhibited
125 volunteers participated
5 school districts plus home school families
Nearly 1,000 students attended
40 additional organizations or individuals provided financial support

The Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council is committed to improving the quality of life and preserving the heritage of Pennsylvania's citizens and future generations by: conserving land containing significant natural, cultural and recreational resources; restoring and enhancing resources; and assisting public and private organizations with conservation projects.

Stonycreek River Watershed Reassessment

The Stonycreek River is a fifth order tributary of the Conemaugh River, located in northern Somerset County and part of southern Cambria County. The Stonycreek River watershed is approximately 467 square miles in size and includes many historic landmarks such as the Queecreek Mine Rescue Site and the Flight 93 Memorial. Between 1991 and 1995 the Stonycreek was the subject of extensive study by the US Geological Survey, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and the Somerset Conservation District. These organizations were all



interested in determining the impact of abandoned mine drainage (AMD) on the water quality of the Stonycreek and its tributaries and planned to fund extensive watershed restoration activities through a variety of new and innovative programs and partnerships. The result of a decade of hard work and expenditure of more than \$10 million in local, state and federal funds was a dramatically restored watershed with close to 20 miles of re-established fisheries and improved municipal water supplies.

In 2007 the Somerset Conservation District acquired funding from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds to reassess the Stonycreek River and its tributaries using biological, chemical and physical parameters to determine the current

condition of the restored watershed. The Somerset Conservation District staff, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission staff, and volunteers from the Pennsylvania Mountain Service Corps (AmeriCorps) conducted the reassessment and prepared the final report with recommendations for further restoration work needed in the watershed. The Stonycreek River Watershed Reassessment was submitted and approved as an area-wide Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council project which made it eligible to receive technical assistance from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. The success of this project is reflected in the fact that the Somerset Conservation District now has current data on the extent of improvement in water quality in the watershed resulting from a decades worth of restoration work, a good understanding of the remaining problems and an enhanced capacity to do further assessments in house.

Other Active RC&D Area Projects:

- * Area-wide Renewable Energy Initiative
- * Sugar Run Restoration
- * Cove Creek Community Corridor Initiative
- * Warrior Ridge Dam Access
- * Glendale Lake Shoreline Stabilization
- * Park the Plow for Profit

Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council

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2008 PA Resource Conservation & Development Councils' Accomplishments

2008 Totals

Projects Approved

Projects Completed

Active Projects

136

172

241

RC&D Project Benefits

Information and Education

Workshops, Tours, Seminars Held	2,579
Research and Legislative Education Events	4
Community Events Held	92
Trainings Sessions Held	33
Participants	14,689
School Curriculum and Programs Created	28
Information Media Produced	21,872
Information Media Distributed	336,720
Watershed or Area-wide Conservation Plans Developed (number)	97
Watershed or Area-wide Conservation Plans Developed (acres)	5,913,612
Study/Plans Completed	29

Natural Resource

Land Treated	37,081
Land Preserved or Protected	4,801
Urban Land Protected	8
Soil Saved	162,740
Nutrients Reduced	31
Invasive Species Managed (acres)	2,916
Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protected/Improved/Created	5,185
Water Bodies Created/Improved (units)	9
Water Bodies Created/Improved (acres)	1,205
River and Streams Improved	36
Drinking Water Improved/Conserved	20,250
Ground Water Conserved/Improved/Recharged	2,575
Animal Agriculture Operations Assisted	453
Shoreline Protected	400
Shoreline Erosion Reduced	2
Alternative Energy Systems (units)	4

Community Development

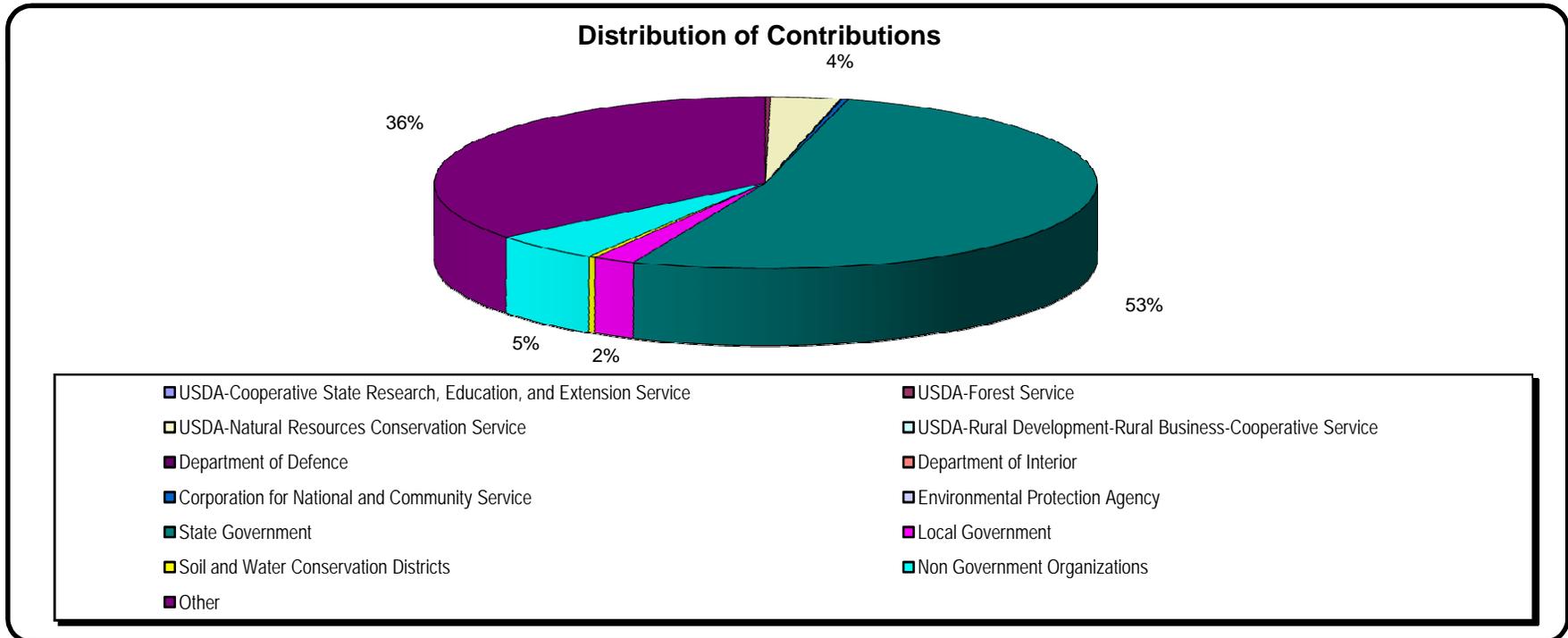
Businesses Created/Expanded/Retained	339
Businesses Financed (units)	32
Businesses Financed (monetary)	\$3,988,245.00
Ag-Value Added Products	13
Ag-Farm to Market	3
Ag-Poultry	184
Jobs Created/Retained-Farm	106
Seasonal Jobs Created-Farm	292
Jobs Created/Retained-Non Farm	24
Seasonal Jobs Created-Non Farm	104
Cooperatives/Associations Formed	127
Businesses Benefitting from New Technology	8
People Benefitting from New Technology	89
Recreation Area Established/Improved/Retained (area)	1,144
Recreation Area Established/Improved/Retained (length)	18
Recreation Facilities Created/Improved/Retained (units)	900
Tourism Area Established/Improved/Retained	156
Visitor Days Increased	3
Historic Sites Identified/Preserved (units)	9,317
Public Facilities Improved/Repaired/Constructed	24
Service Provided-Grant Administration	30
Service Provided-Community	3554
Service Provided-Rural Fire Protections	124
Service Provided-Emergency Preparedness	11
Service Provided-Healthcare	1
Recycling Projects Started/Retained/Expanded	1
Material Recycled	3
Citizens Served	389,630
Citizens Served Underserved or Underrepresented	1,964
Citizens Served: Socially or Economically Disadvantaged	225,519
Citizens Served	389,630
Citizens Served Underserved or Underrepresented	1,964
Citizens Served: Socially or Economically Disadvantaged	225,519

2008 PA Resource Conservation & Development Councils' Accomplishments

RC&D Contributions by Source

USDA-Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service	\$1,600
USDA-Forest Service	\$28,000
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service	\$436,509
USDA-Rural Development-Rural Business-Cooperative Service	\$200
Department of Defence	\$10,000
Department of Interior	\$1,796
Corporation for National and Community Service	\$36,250
Environmental Protection Agency	\$2,283
State Government	\$6,769,343
Local Government	\$265,765
Soil and Water Conservation Districts	\$44,855
Non Government Organizations	\$685,764
Other	<u>\$4,610,042</u>
Total	\$12,892,407

PA RC&D's have leveraged more than \$11 for every \$1 of RC&D Program Funds



Pennsylvania Resource Conservation & Development Councils



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