



CARBON CONSERVATION DISTRICT CELEBRATES 77 YEARS OF SERVICE 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

On February 14, 1947, Carbon County was declared a Conservation District by the Carbon County Commissioners, in accordance with provisions of the Soil Conservation Law of 1945, Act 217 of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Carbon was the tenth county to become one of 66 conservation districts in Pennsylvania and began operations in May of 1947. The District was organized as the result of concerns for the conservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and aesthetic resources of Carbon County and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The District is a nonprofit government entity led by a seven-member board consisting of farmers and public directors and a county commissioner.

CARBON CONSERVATION DISTRICT

5664 INTERCHANGE ROAD

LEHIGHTON, PA 18235

(610) 377-4894

FAX (610) 377-5549

carbmgr@ptd.net - Manager, Chris Storm

carboncd@ptd.net - Secretary, Susan Gegeckas

carbtech@ptd.net - Technician, Briana Fulmer

aklemag@ptd.net - Ag Tech, Ashley Klemczak

DISTRICT DIRECTORS

CHAIRMAN - ROGER SHOENBERGER (FARMER)

VICE CHAIRMAN - MERLE HUNSICKER (PUBLIC)

SECRETARY/TREASURER - ROBIN CRESSLEY (PUBLIC)

JOSIAH BEHRENS, III (FARMER)

SCOTT MOSIER (FARMER)

DR. JUSTIN CUNFER (PUBLIC)

COMMISSIONER WAYNE NOTHSTEIN

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

KAY GILBERT DAVID HAWK

FREDERICK MERLUZZI

DISTRICT & ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER STAFF

DISTRICT MANAGER, CHRIS STORM SECRETARY, SUSAN GEGECKAS

DISTRICT TECHNICIAN, BRIANA FULMER

DISTRICT AG TECHNICIAN, ASHLEY KLEMCZAK

CHIEF NATURALIST, SUSAN GALLAGHER NATURALIST, REGINA CARL

PROGRAM ASSISTANT, FRANKLIN KLOCK

CARBON COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

ROCKY AHNER

WAYNE NOTHSTEIN

MICHAEL SOFRANKO

Board Meeting Date and Time - Fourth Thursday of each month @ 7 PM

The Conservation District's purpose is to resolve land and water resource problems through voluntary compliance with landowners; to enlist and coordinate help from all private and public sources that can contribute to accomplishing district goals; and to make citizens aware of the relationship between human activities and the affect these activities have on our environment. The District achieves this goal by participating in several different programs.



EROSION & SEDIMENTATION CONTROL AND NPDES PERMITTING PROGRAMS

Sixty-five county Conservation Districts have been delegated responsibilities for the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Erosion and Sediment Control Program. Under this program, authority is delegated to Conservation Districts at three different levels. Level I delegation includes providing information on DEP's Erosion and Sediment Control Program, E&S Plan Reviews, and processing E&S Control Permits. Level II delegation includes Level I responsibilities, plus responsibilities of complaint investigation and site inspections. Level III delegation includes Level I and II responsibilities, plus enforcement responsibilities such as administrative hearings, equity actions, summary or misdemeanor actions, and assessment of civil penalties.

In addition to the Erosion and Sediment Control Program, sixty Level II and III Conservation Districts are also delegated responsibilities for processing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permits for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction Activities.

The Carbon Conservation District continues to operate under the "Level II Authority" with Delegation Agreements with the Department of Environmental Protection and the State Conservation Commission. The following represents the activity regarding both the E&S and NPDES Permitting Program for 2024:

CARBON CONSERVATION DISTRICT 2024 E&S & NPDES PROGRAM

Erosion Control Plans Received	75
Total Project Acres	2,569
Total Disturbed Acres	402
Plan Reviews Conducted	150
Site Inspections	325
Complaints Assessed	34
Technical Assistance Provided	1,025
NPDES Permits Received & Issued	21



Dirt and Gravel / Low Volume Paved Road Program

Through a partnership between the Penn State Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies and the State Conservation Commission, the DG/LVP program provides technical support & grant funding to aid public road owners in implementing environmental improvement projects to help minimize sedimentation to "Waters of the Commonwealth".

Any municipal or government entity that owns and maintains a public roadway is eligible for this grant funding. In 2024, the Carbon Conservation District completed 2 Dirt and Gravel Road projects for a total of **\$177,157.57** and 2 Low Volume Paved Road Projects for a total of **\$160,025.68**.



Agricultural Conservation Technician /ACAP Programs

Over the past three years, the Conservation District has made it a goal to provide more programs and technical services for the farming community in Carbon County. As a result, the District was able to take advantage of funding sources through the CDFAP program administered by the State Conservation Commission to create an Ag Technician position as well as agree to take part in the ACAP program to help provide funding to our local farmers to be

able to install or maintain agricultural best management practices on their farms to minimize sedimentation to “Waters of the Commonwealth”. Most recently, the district has created our own individual Cover Crop Program as part of our ACAP funding program. The District is holding our 2nd annual Farmers Brunch to help get word out to our farming community and promote participation in our District Agricultural Programs.



Carbon County Environmental Education Center

Nature has a way of uniting us all. No matter our age, upbringing, or political persuasion, our shared need for clean air, water, and soil brings us together every time. This is perhaps the reason some of CCEEC’s programming is so successful. Outreach aimed at particular groups

was well received in 2024. Some programs were offered as annual favorites, while others were newer ideas soon to become repeat events.

Photographers with an eye for nature shared their work at the annual photo contest, which drew nearly 50 entries and dozens more who came to view the exhibit. Over 100 runners and walkers lined up at this year’s Rattlesnake Run 5k fundraiser, where they also learned a bit about Pennsylvania snakes.

Two teacher workshops, including a virtual session on using museum techniques to prepare natural history specimens for the classroom, attracted 120 educators. CCEEC also partnered with Lehigh Carbon Community College’s SHINE after-school program, providing environmental education sessions for hundreds of students and teachers.

Fiber artists of all ages and abilities joined in weekly “Yarn Tuesday” classes, participation in monthly adult-oriented art classes picked up, and a programming partnership with the Hazleton Area Art League connected artists from neighboring Luzerne County with all CCEEC has to offer. Bringing art and nature together is always a recipe for successful programming.

Connections for community service continued in 2024 with our area’s CARES Adult Day Care, and Boy Scout Troop #555, both of which completed much needed work projects at CCEEC.

After a post-Covid slump, interest in the center’s annual Conservation Camp continued to increase, and a full, week-long camp was enjoyed for the first time since 2019.

For the first time ever (that we know of), CCEEC was the site of a surprise marriage proposal. He asked for her hand at the nature play area, where the couple had met and explored the woods together as children. She said yes, and we couldn’t be happier to know that CCEEC plays a part in forming fond and lasting childhood memories.

The year finished out with a new and noteworthy Winter Solstice Walk, where a blanket of freshly fallen snow welcomed visitors to a peaceful, candlelit trail. A more fitting year-end tribute to the natural world couldn’t have been better planned. All told, nearly 12,000 visitors and program participants were reached in 2024. It was a good year for CCEEC. And like any and every year, a great time to get outside and connect with nature, no matter what your interests are.

Carbon County Conservation Camp

This year marks the 34th year for the Carbon County Conservation District and Carbon County Environmental Education Center's Carbon County Conservation Camp. Camp is an over-night adventure set in the scenic beauty of Hickory Run State Park. The third week of August is planned for camp for campers aged 8-12 in Carbon County and the surrounding area. Registration for camp begins in late spring but space is limited to the first 25 registered campers.

The campers are engaged in learning all week-long. They are exposed to a variety of topics all relating to the outdoors and the environment while interacting with adults who are committed to teaching children a greater appreciation about the environment. Through these efforts, hopefully, their awareness about their environment is raised.

Campers get to make new friends, experience new activities and are exposed to experts in various fields that they would otherwise not have the opportunity to meet. Some of the guest speakers in the past included rescue teams, experts in the fields of entomology, herpetology, and astronomy. Campers get the chance to

express themselves creatively through art, explore their natural world and get outdoors. It's something that a child who loves the outdoors would truly enjoy experiencing.



Envirothon

Every year since 1988, the Carbon County Environmental Education Center has been hosting the Envirothon. For one week in May, students from Carbon and Schuylkill counties come to the center to compete with one another with the hopes of going back to their schools with a coveted award. But it is not just about winning and losing because every student that gets off the bus is already a winner. They have an interest in the outdoors and their world. Last year CCEEC Staff greeted approximately 780 students as

they exited the busses every morning Monday through Thursday starting with 2nd grade and ending with 12th grade.

Students rotate through five stations: Aquatics [PA Fish & Boat Commission], Wildlife [PA Game Commission], Forestry Stations [Bureau of Forestry & Penn State Extension Office], Current Events [CCEEC Staff/Various Agencies] and Soil [Carbon County Conservation District Staff] that the students rotate through teach students about how our actions affect our environment locally as well as nationally and globally. The resource people that teach at this week-long event are committed to teaching the students how their decision-making affects their world negatively and positively. It also affords students the chance to connect with professionals in the field to better understand how their careers impact our environment.

By participating at one of the Envirothons, students become focused on the fact that by involvement for within their community they can truly make a difference and become part of the solution. Once the students begin to rotate through the stations, they realize at the Current Events station all the pieces of the "puzzle" come together. Not only do the students understand ecological systems and the connectedness these systems have on all living things but that the human aspect plays an important role as well.



Photography Contest

It's that time of year again; Carbon County Environmental Education Center's Annual Photo Contest! The Carbon County Environmental Education Center is looking forward to hosting their 12th annual photography contest. This year the contest's theme is: **"Do You See What I See?"** and will begin the 1st of March and conclude at the end of the month. All ages and all levels of expertise can enter the contest.

This year the contest's theme **"Do You See What I See?"** allows the photographers who enter the chance to pay tribute to the beauty of our world and contributes to the promotion of photography and our beautiful world. Photographers are looking for photographs to fit the five categories: *Macro, Wildlife, Landscape, People, Places & Things, and People's Choice* and awards will be given in those categories. It is the goal of the contest to inspire photographers to get outside and capture images that fit the theme. This theme allows the photographer to use their imaginations and capture what is important to them. There is a small entry fee and those collected fees are returned to the winners in the form of prizes; both monetary and camera-related merchandise.



Photographs are on display for the entire month of March at the center and can be viewed during regular business hours - Monday - Friday 8:00 am until 4:30 pm. While viewing the display, the public can also vote on what photographs they would like to see win one of the coveted prizes awarded by a judge at the conclusion of the contest.



Kids' Week 2024

For the last 22 years, summertime around the center has been a time for getting dirty, messy and exploring our wonderful world. And, what better way to do just that than to explore at the Carbon County Environmental Education Center's "Kids' Week" program. This program allows children to be children. While learning they get to create, discover and immerse themselves in the wonders our world has in store for them. Topics range from learning about animals and plants to science experiments and more. Making friends, exploring the woods and stopping to appreciate the beauty of our area makes this a week full of adventure and fun.

Carbon Environmental Education Center
\$\$\$ 2024 Income & Expenses \$\$\$

The Center operates solely on donations, memberships, and program fees. Salaries and benefits are managed by the Conservation District.

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENSES</u>			
County Schools	\$ 14,569.75	Accounting	\$ 4,125.00	Postage	\$ 835.19
Donations	37,663.31	Animal Supplies	7,470.79	Professional Memberships	330.00
Envirothon	1,325.00	Camp Expenses	3,119.83	Maintenance	6,301.02
Fund Raising	9,320.87	Displays	28.78	Public Programs	8,503.70
Interest income	737.28	Donations	40.00	Public Relations	829.12
Memberships	21,717.05	Envirothon Expenses	1,300.67	School Programs	5,911.17
Non-County Schools	11,416.00	Fund Raising Costs	2,833.39	Special Projects Expenses	1,620.07
Public Programming	12,830.65	Heat & Light	6,080.34	Telephone	1,834.05
		Insurance	10,697.50	Travel/Conferences	702.18
		Office	2,058.96	Vehicle Expense	1,049.10

Visit our websites:

Carbon Conservation District

Carbon County Environmental Education Center

www.carbonconservation.org

www.carboneec.org

ii Financial and other support is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.