

CARBON CONSERVATION DISTRICT CELEBRATES 78 YEARS OF SERVICE 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

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

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.

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, III

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 effect 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 2025:

CARBON CONSERVATION DISTRICT **2025 E&S & NPDES PROGRAM**

Erosion Control Plans Received	54
Total Project Acres	4,508
Total Disturbed Acres	832
Plan Reviews Conducted	75
Site Inspections	250
Complaints Assessed	23
Technical Assistance Provided	700
NPDES Permits Received & Issued	11



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 2025, 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



The Conservation District has embraced the program known as “ACAP”, Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program, and helped control erosion and sediment issues on farms in the county. The biggest stride was with our Cover Crop program for the last 3 years, that helped farmers plant for over overwriting the ground and control the erosion after snow melts. Grassed water ways through fields and animal heavy use areas are projects that the Conservation District is proud to also put forward with the ACAP funding. Going forward, there is an abundance of interest from the county farms for projects to help better the land and keep sediment and nutrients out of the “Waters of the Commonwealth”. This program is made possibly with the help of the State Conservation Commission putting forth guidelines and best management practices to follow.



Carbon County Environmental Education Center ~ Celebrating our 40th Year ~

It’s fitting that a nature center’s annual report come due in March. Because while we preach no real start or end to the cycles of weather, water, and soil, we can’t deny that spring marks a beginning.

So, let’s look back to start in spring of 2025, with new life emerging, returning, and waking from slumber. What better time for our annual bird box sale, providing homes for cavity nesters while raising funds for CCEEC.

Last year’s sale included the standard bluebird/wren boxes, along with larger kestrel boxes for this smallest native falcon. Researchers believe a lack of nest sites is the limiting factor for this farmland raptor, making boxes that much more important.

Spring also brought the return of daily school student visits, the trails alive with kids wandering and wondering. Adults came too, for hikes, outdoor yoga, craft, photography, and fine art programs.

And while in-person and outdoors are always preferable, virtual programming remains part of CCEEC offerings, as it has since COVID.

Summer brought ever-popular fundraisers including the Rattlesnake Run 5k, with 150 walkers and runners turning out despite the rain, and a rafting float down the Lehigh River for all ages.

Serving our local community meant weekly wildlife programs for beachgoers at Mauch Chunk Lake, and hosting a veterans’ coffee hour, suicide awareness meet-ups and working with Lehigh Carbon Community College’s SHINE after school program.

That community service continued to extend to residents encountering wildlife in distress, as we remained permitted for wildlife rehabilitation. Admitting nearly 1,000 injured or orphaned wild animals brought the usual robins, cottontails, and squirrels, as well as CCEEC’s first-ever orphaned fisher, a remarkable weasel family member, successfully raised and released.

Both a week-long day camp and overnight Conservation Camp topped off our summer schedule, which also included educational programming visits to area libraries, recreation centers, and civic groups.

While fall foliage season wasn’t the best or brightest, we’ve seen, it did provide the opportunity to connect with the area’s tourists, as many visited to learn more about local wildlife. Short education sessions on forest health served to focus attention on the well-being of trees and shrubs all year long, not just when on fiery display.

A new partnership with the Pocono Mountain Vacation Bureau, with grant funding for outreach materials, helped broaden that eco-tourism reach. With winter's approach, CCEEC welcomed crafters to weekly Yarn Nights and natural holiday decoration sessions. Visitors also enjoyed a cold but bright Solstice Walk along candlelit trails. As calendar pages turned, as warmth and sunlight *re*-turned, time came to catch our breath, with "slow season" months of January and February devoted to promoting Christmas tree recycling, and continuing staff education with webinars and other trainings. But slow season is also a short season! And just like that, the cycle begins again. With spring on the horizon and oh-so-close, we at CCEEC look forward to continuing our most popular programs and offerings into 2026, and we remain committed to finding new ways to connect people of all ages with their natural world.

Carbon County Conservation Camp

This year marks the 36th year for the Carbon County Conservation District and Carbon County Environmental Education Center's Carbon County Conservation Camp. Camp is an overnight adventure set in the scenic beauty of Hickory Run State Park. The second week of August (August 10-14) is reserved for campers aged 8-12 in Carbon County and the surrounding area. Registration for camp begins in late spring. Space is limited to the first twenty-five 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.

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. In the past, guest speakers 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 go outdoors. It is something that a child who loves the outdoors would genuinely enjoy experiencing.



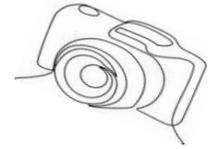
Envirothon

Every year since 1988, the Carbon County Environmental Education Center has been hosting the Envirothon. Due to time constraints and preparing for the state event, the high school students participate in the Envirothon in April. The first week of May younger 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 from second grade and ending with twelfth 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 in one of the Envirothons, students become focused on how their involvement within their community can truly make a difference and become part of the solution. Not only do the students understand ecological systems and the connectedness these systems have all living things but that the human aspect plays a significant role as well.



Photography Contest

It's that time of year - Carbon County Environmental Education Center's Annual Photo Contest! The Carbon County Environmental Education Center is looking forward to hosting their 13th annual photography contest. This year the contest's theme is: **"What's Your Connection to Nature?"** 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 **"What's Your Connection to Nature?"** 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.



Dave Frankenfield
1st People Places Things



Kip Hoffman
1st Landscapes



Jean Perry
1st Wildlife

Gordon Perry
Honorable Mention



Kids' Week 2025

For the last 24 years, summertime around the center has been a time for getting dirty, messy, and exploring our wonderful world. During the week area youth get the opportunity to explore during 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 explore the grounds at the center. Topics range from learning about animals and plants to science experiments, art projects, sports, and more. Making friends, exploring the woods, and appreciating the environment makes this week full of adventure and fun.

Carbon Environmental Education Center \$\$\$ 2025 Income & Expenses \$\$\$

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

<u>INCOME</u>		<u>EXPENSES</u>			
County Schools	\$ 14,179.00	Accounting	\$ 4,150.00	Postage	\$ 964.54
Donations	48,414.12	Animal Supplies	10,434.79	Professional Memberships	434.95
Envirothon	1,125.00	Camp Expenses	4,448.49	Maintenance	6,240.63
Fund Raising	10,473.07	Displays	256.25	Public Programs	9,308.02
Interest income	541.44	Envirothon Expenses	972.02	Public Relations	849.24
Memberships	23,802.99	Fund Raising Costs	2,650.92	School Programs	5,935.06
Non-County Schools	8,855.95	Heat & Light	6,142.00	Special Projects Exp.	4,947.54
Public Programming	10,702.00	Insurance	7,702.00	Telephone	1,871.63
		Office	2,068.67	Travel/Conferences	607.75
				Vehicle Expense	1,588.53

Visit our websites:

Carbon Conservation District

www.carbonconservation.org

Carbon County Environmental Education Center

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.