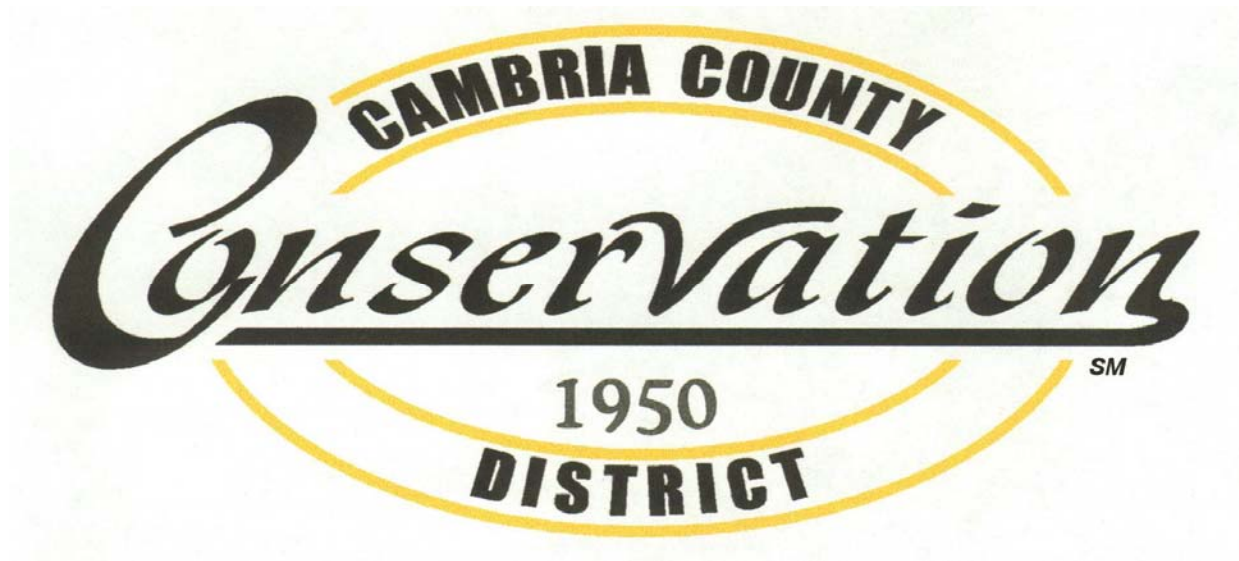


2020 STRATEGIC PLAN



Prepared
July 2020

Cambria County Conservation District

Five-year Strategic Plan

Approved 2020

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Introduction

Planning is one of the most important tasks of an effective organization as organizations risk straying from their mission and being unpleasantly surprised by events that could have been anticipated by strategic planning. The Cambria County Conservation District board of directors, associate directors and its leadership team recognize the importance of adhering to the District's mission and thus by extension, the importance of planning. As a result, this is the fourth strategic plan completed by the District

The previous plans have been very successful in guiding the District fulfilling its mission. The very first plan was adopted nearly two decades ago in July of 2002. The plan identified initial critical natural resource issues. One of these was the need to promote Ag land Preservation in the County. As the administrator of the county Farmland Preservation Program, we have since purchased 19 easements preserving over 3000 acres.

The second strategic plan, adopted in January of 2009, identified AMD remediation of large discharges as critical to making significant water quality improvement in the county. To that end, the district developed a document entitled the "Super Seven" which identified the 7 largest discharges that needed addressed to improve the water quality. This document was used by the district, watershed groups and foundations as a blue print to work with DEP BAMR to give priority in addressing these discharges. To that end, 3 new active treatment plants have been built in the county, another is scheduled to begin construction in 2020 and a 5th is just about ready to enter the design phase.

The third strategic plan identified a need to address District operations and personnel. To that end, in 2017 the district and County Commissioners approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU defines the relationship between the county and the district and the duties and responsibilities of each. It also provides a plan for shifting employment of district staff from County to District employment. To that end, approximately 50% of the staff have transitioned to District employment.

We intend this strategic plan be as useful and successful as the previous ones. It will enable the District to continue focusing its programming on current issues and needs over the next five years.

Plan Development

This Conservation District plan identifies the District's priorities and lays out its plans to achieve the goals. This plan was created through a facilitated strategic planning process that involved the District Board of Directors, leaders, staff and stakeholders. The steps used to develop the plan follows:

- Sent out an RFP to planning facilitators who had experience with conservation organizations
- Reviewed, selected, and contracted a facilitator to guide the District through the planning process
- Formed a Steering Committee to work with the facilitator throughout the planning process and monitor progress. The Steering Committee was comprised of Directors, Associate Directors, District Staff and former employees.

- The Steering Committee conducted 7 meetings, in-person and via Zoom, to work on the 3 Phases of the Planning Process:
 - Where are we now? (internal & external input, trends, current situation)
 - Where do we want to be and how will we get there? (mission, goals, objectives, strategies and action plans)
 - How will we implement and monitor? (strategic plan document, monitoring plan)
- Survey Monkey was used to conduct an on-line public survey to solicit input on critical resource issues and the role of the District.
- An organizational assessment was conducted using Staff and Board Surveys to assess where the organization is today and what the critical areas are for success in the future.
- A facilitated stakeholder meeting was conducted on March 12, 2020, involving Directors, Associate Directors, Staff, County Commissioner, PA Department of Agriculture (PDA), PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Cambria County GIS Center, Cambria County Redevelopment Authority, PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR), Prince Gallitzin State Park, DCNR, Bureau of Forestry, and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The session was used to gain ideas on critical issues to be addressed, trends, analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (S.W.O.T.) and potential goal strategies.
- Additional conference call meetings were conducted by the District Manager and staff to gain specific input and discuss coordination of efforts. One was with the DEP, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) and the Western Pa Coalition of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (WPCAMR). The other was with the Cambria County and Johnstown Redevelopment Authorities.
- The facilitator and District Manager then compiled the information into a draft strategic plan for the steering committee and board consideration and approval.

Plan Distribution

A printed copy of the plan will be provided to all Directors, staff, the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) and the State Conservation Commission (SCC). The plan will be posted on the District website and copies will be made available to others upon request.

Plan Usage

This is intended to be a living document, not a stale plan to be placed on a shelf and forgotten. The District's mission and its responsibilities include areas that are subject to rapid change in today's world. Conservation, technology and forms of communication are just a few examples. As the District fulfills its role and adapts to change, this document will serve as a guide, helping keep the District focused and providing markers by which it can measure its progress toward meeting its goals and mission.

This document was adopted by the Cambria County Conservation District Board of Directors on 8-11-2020.

Cambria County Conservation District Overview

The Cambria County Conservation District, formed in 1950, is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, organized under Act 217, the Pennsylvania Conservation District law. About 50 percent of the Conservation Districts statewide are county departments. The rest stand alone, as authorized by Act 217. Regardless of their status, all Conservation Districts are subject to the policies and decisions of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, including director appointment approvals, income generation, audits and state-allocated funding.

The Cambria County Conservation District acts not as an advisory board of directors to the county commissioners, but in concert with them to fulfill the mission of the District for a better Cambria County. The two county governments, acting together, are a powerful team for Cambria County in delivering programs and other efforts related to environmental issues.

County government's role is to provide the District with an adequate budget along with basic but critical administrative assistance such as access to county purchasing, accounting software, IT support, solicitor needs, a human resources department and payroll, among other services.

In 2017 the County Commissioners and the Conservation District Board approved a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that further details the duties and responsibilities of each party. The MOU also established a means for the District to transition toward a position more independent of the County Government providing the District with the ability address its needs as programs and natural resource issues change. Furthermore, the MOU is to be reviewed by the parties every four years.

This respectful working relationship allows the District to concentrate on program development and delivery.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Cambria County Conservation District believes that the stewardship of natural resources enhances everyone's quality of life. We provide leadership, education, technical assistance, projects and create collaborative partnerships.

Critical Issues/Needs

The committee evaluated and considered the list of critical issues generated at the Stakeholder meeting, those identified in the public survey and the issues raised in the board and staff surveys. Most issues were consistent in all the sources of input. The critical issues selected for inclusion in the strategic plan are:

- Water resources improvements
- Agricultural technical support
- Reduction of stormwater impacts
- Targeted environmental education
- Eradication of invasive species
- Operational and administrative efficiencies

Strategic Initiatives, Goals and Objectives

The following 6 strategic initiatives with goals and measurable objectives were developed as the strategic plan:

Strategic Initiative: Fishable Water Resources

Goal #1: *Achieve suitable quality for fishing and other recreational uses of the county's water resources.*

Objectives:

1. Achieve fishable water quality in the Little Conemaugh River by 2030.
2. Expand the effectiveness of water monitoring efforts.
3. Increase the amount of educational opportunities through DGLVR by 5% over 5 yrs.
4. Increase the number of stream restoration/protection BMPs installed in critical or sensitive water quality areas.
5. Reduce sediment loads to streams by continuing the District's DEP delegation duties.
6. Strengthen and increase our partnerships with local, state and federal entities that are water quality improvement oriented.

Strategic Initiative: Farmland Management Support

Goal #2: *Provide innovative and effective programs and technical support services to the Agricultural community for farmland management.*

Objectives:

1. Conduct 10 comprehensive farm operation evaluations to identify needs, discuss BMP options, funding options and service providers by Dec 2025.
2. Assist 5 farmers per year in development of plans for soil conservation, nutrient management or manure management by 2025.
3. Continue promoting no-till cropping.
4. Increase public awareness of agricultural and urban ag.
5. Promote and support funding for farmland preservation.

Strategic Initiative: Reduce Resource Impacts from Storm Events

Goal #3: *Promote stormwater planning and management practices to reduce the impact of storm events.*

Objectives:

1. Meet with 15 Municipalities over 3 years to promote stormwater planning and its' model ordinances to meet their responsibilities and educate them on benefits.
2. Meet with County Agencies over 3 years to promote stormwater planning and Act 167 requirements. Assist with identifying sources of technical assistance and educate on benefits.
3. Have at least 1 demonstration project by 2022 to showcase stormwater BMPs and increase awareness of alternative methods to reduce stormwater runoff.

Strategic Initiative: Targeted Environmental Education

Goal #4: *Provide innovative educational programs and assistance to increase the environmental awareness and enhance resource stewardship.*

Objectives:

1. Increase participation in County Envirothon.
2. Increase social media presence annually by 100 followers.
3. Increase adult professional education opportunities.
4. Continue education and outreach for youth.
5. Increase adult education programs for the public.

Strategic Initiative: Invasive Species Prevention

Goal #5: *Promote the use of native species and eradication of invasive species.*

Objectives:

1. Increase knowledge level of staff.
2. Complete a demonstration project to remove invasives/establish native plants.
3. Increase public awareness of invasive species and encourage use of native plant species.

Strategic Initiative: Sustainable District Funding

Goal #6: *Maximize operational and administrative efficiencies to fulfill the CCCD mission.*

Objectives:

1. Achieve transition of 2 additional staff to District employees by 2025.
2. Increase staff by at least 1 full-time position to address program support, environmental ed and accounting by 2021.
3. Have in effect by 2022 a Succession or Transition Plan for District Manager and key staff.
4. Purchase additional and replacement computers and software to address electronic permitting needs by 2021.
5. Increase staff efficiency with software and programs to achieve a minimum comfort rating of 8 out of 10 by 2025.
6. Increase staff proficiency in technical expertise on an annual basis.
7. Increase efficiency of tree sale procedure to reduce time and effort by 20%.
8. Meet board members professional development needs annually.
9. Establish and conduct a quarterly Networking Meeting with other County Agencies to discuss sharing of resources and effective partnering to achieve common goals.
10. Achieve 50% increase in the District's Trust Fund by 2025.

Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategic Plan

The strategic plan will be implemented employing coordination with the individuals and agencies which support the District. The plan will be reviewed quarterly at the monthly board meeting by the District Board of Directors, Manager and staff beginning January 2021. After this time, the plan will be reviewed and evaluated by the board at the annual planning meetings.

Strategic Initiatives, Goals, Objectives Action Plans

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: FISHABLE WATER RESOURCES

GOAL #1: *Achieve suitable quality for fishing and other recreational uses of the county's water resources.*

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 38%

Concern due to anticipated trends:

- We believe that there is an increased interest to opening roads for ATV use, therefore we must work with townships on sustainability of roads and work with other partners and the DGLVR program.
- We believe that with the lack of waste coal pile removal there will be effects in soil, water and air, therefore, we must use our technical expertise to minimize the radius of damage as much as possible and explore funding to eliminate the piles.

Critical issues addressed: water quality improvements, AMD cleanup, riparian buffers, removal of coal refuse piles, project funding

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Achieve fishable water quality in the Little Conemaugh River by 2030.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Coordinate & collaborate with AMD partners to assist in water quality improvements such as PA DEP BAMR, WPCAMR, SCRIP, Watershed Associations, etc.	District Mgr, Watershed Spec.	Annually
Meet with PA DEP BAMR to discuss joint AMD remediation efforts on the S. Fork of Little Conemaugh and Beaverdale area.	District Mgr, Watershed Spec.	Annually

Objective #2: Expand the effectiveness of water monitoring efforts.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Evaluate current action plan & investigate and implement new processes/protocols	Watershed Spec.	Annually
Identify other sources of monitoring by speaking with watershed groups, municipalities, & other resources.	Watershed Spec	Annually
Obtain funding for monitoring by exploring grant options & donations.	Watershed Spec.	Annually

Objective #3: Increase the amount of Education Opportunities through DGLVR by 5% over 5 years.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Increase participation in the program by 3 local municipalities	Resource Specialist	Annually
Educate municipalities and other local entities that are eligible for the program by hosting a minimum of 1 training opportunity per year.	Resource Specialist	Annually
Provide a newsletter updating everyone within the county, eligible or not, about the program status.	Resource Specialist	Annually
Complete at least 1 awareness survey for local entit.	Resource Specialist	Annually
Ensure project implementation of all projects awarded.	Resource Specialist	Annually
Continue to participate in The Center for Dirt & Gravel Roads and other resource trainings.	Staff with program duties	Annually

Objective #4: Increase the number of stream restoration/protection BMPs installed in critical or sensitive water quality areas.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Submit grants at least once a year to remediate AMD and Ag impaired waters. Complete any combination of 4 AMD, Ag BMP, streambank stabilization and/or fish & wildlife habitat improvement projects.	Bay & Ag Techs, Watershed Specialists, NRCS, Assoc. Agencies	As funds Permit
Encourage the use of riparian buffers by planting various native species on at least 1 project per year	Ag Tech, Watershed Specialists	As funds permit
Increase the use of no-till management by speaking to at least 2 new farmers per year.	Ag Tech	Annually
Increase cover crop implementation by increasing acreage by 5%.	Ag Tech	2022
Coordinate with WPCAMR on funding options for coal refuse pile removal such as the Vintondale/Blacklick Creek Project.	District Board, District Mgr., Watershed Spec.	Annually
Seek updates from WPCAMR on Pilot funding projects for coal refuse pile removal.	District Mgr., Watershed Spec.	Annually

Objective #5: Reduce sediment loads to streams by continuing the District’s DEP delegation duties.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Increase education and outreach to landowners, engineers, and earthmoving contractors by hosting 2 trainings and 2 news releases per year	E&S Technicians, Programs Assistant, AmeriCorps	Annually
Review plan review fees.	District Board, District Mgr., E&S Technicians	Bi-annually
Develop MOUs with municipalities regarding E&S plan reviews. Meet with 12 municipalities per year.	E&S Technicians	Annually
Continue to participate in DEP training for District permit/plan reviewers.	E&S technicians	Annually

Objective #6: Strengthen and increase our partnerships with local, state and federal entities that are water quality improvement oriented.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Network and collaborate with others who share similar goals at the local, state & national levels to leverage opportunities including but not limited to BAMR, WPCAMR, watershed groups, legislators, etc.	District Board, District Mgr., District Staff	Annually

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: FARMLAND MANAGEMENT SUPPORT

GOAL #2: Provide innovative and effective programs and technical support services to the Agricultural community for farmland management.

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 14%

Concern due to anticipated trends:

- We believe that a generational turnover of Ag operators will lead to an industry shift in how farms are managed, therefore we must provide outreach and education to new farm managers on what’s available and do so through multiple media platforms.
- We believe that there is an increased pressure of housing developments encroaching on farmlands, therefore we must increase education of the public, local municipalities, county government, planning commission, builder associations and developers and lobby for additional preservation funds and other funding sources.
- We believe that the Federal Ag Programs (Farm Bill) require more contracts to consultants so less traditional government technical service providers will exist, therefore the District must become more proficient at developing and implementing Farm Conservation Plans and field BMPs.

Critical issues addressed: ag technical support to farmers, urban ag, farmland preservation

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Conduct 10 comprehensive farm operation evaluations to identify needs, discuss BMP options, funding options and service providers by Dec 2025

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Contact local farmers through farm meetings and in-person site visits.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	Annually
Obtain or develop an evaluation form or checklist for completing the comprehensive farm evaluations.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2021
Develop a database of Ag operators with coordination of FSA & other agencies	Staff	2021
Identify underserved segments of Ag community for initial evaluation and assistance.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2022
Provide preliminary onsite evaluations for Ag producers related to natural resources to establish needs and help direct producers to funds & services.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2023
Educate Ag producers on coordinating funding sources to achieve BMP installation.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2024
Assist NRCS with field practices (evaluation and installation) to increase staff knowledge of practices	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	On-going
Implement the County Chesapeake Bay Action Plan when it is finalized.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	Upon completion
Obtain funding for a minimum of ½ staff person to concentrate on comprehensive farm evaluation if needed.	Manager, Directors	2025

Objective #2: Assist 5 farmers per year in development of plans for soil conservation, nutrient management or manure management by 2025.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Take steps towards conservation & nutrient management certification through training to develop plans & utilize ARC-GIS for those plans.	Staff	Annually
Expand Ag E&S, nutrient management and manure management training opportunities.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	Annually
Utilize farm evaluations from objective 1 to identify farms for planning assistance and plan development.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2025

Objective #3: Continue promoting no-till cropping.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Continue to promote the benefits of no till to the local farming community. (Social Media, word of mouth, etc)	Staff	Annually
Keep and maintain the 2 existing drills.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	Annually

Objective #4: Increase public awareness of agricultural and urban ag.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Incorporate Agricultural (Rural & Urban) information into CCCD's social media.	Staff	Annually
Staff educate themselves on all Ag funds options and develops Fact Sheets of options and a comprehensive list of resources, services and contractors.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	2022
Promote the use of Ag programs offered by cooperation agencies.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	On-going
Introduce and educate newer farm operators on adjusting to changing practices such as the change to larger operations and bigger or more sophisticated equipment.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	On-going
Build stronger relationships with young Ag professionals via Pa Farm Bureau.	Ag. Conservation Specialist/ Bay Tech	On-going
Educate the public on agricultural operations and urban ag opportunities.	Staff	On-going

Objective #5: Promote and support funding for farmland preservation.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Accept applications annually and score and rank those applications, while preserving the #1 rank farms.	Staff	Annually
Obtain commitment from 1 farm in the farmland preservation program 2025.	Staff	2025
Complete compliance inspections on preserved farms.	Staff	Annually

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: REDUCE RESOURCE IMPACTS FROM STORM EVENTS

GOAL #3: *Promote stormwater planning and management practices to reduce the impact of storm events.*

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 5%

Concern due to anticipated trends:

- We believe that there is an increased demand for stormwater management, therefore we must educate and work with municipal officials in assuring stormwater management is being addressed in development within their municipalities.
- We believe that Stormwater planning should be done based on a watershed boundary, not a political boundary.

Critical issues addressed: stormwater management

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Meet with 15 of Municipalities over 3 years to promote stormwater planning and its model ordinances to meet their responsibilities and educate them on benefits.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Staff to educate themselves on stormwater management and Act 167.	Manager, Watershed Specialists	December 2020
Develop Fact Sheets of benefits, options, and potential partners.	Watershed Specialists, Programs Assistant	February 2021
Educate county administrators on Act 167 requirements and benefits of planning.	Manager	2021
Educate municipalities on their responsibilities and use of model ordinances.	Manager, Watershed Specialists	2024

Objective #2: Meet with County Agencies over 3 years to promote stormwater planning and Act 167 requirements. Assist with identifying sources of technical assistance and educate on benefits.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Convene county level agency consortium to address stormwater management at a County level (FEMA, Emergency Mgmt. may have some funding even)	Manager	Spring 2021
Promote and support funding for Act 167 Stormwater Management planning.	Manager, Directors	Annually
Lobby state legislators to fund stormwater planning.	Manager, Directors, Commissioners	Annually

Pursue and promote stormwater management project opportunities in critical areas to reduce stormwater impacts.	Manager, Directors, Commissioner	Annually
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Objective #3: Have at least 1 demonstration project by 2022 to showcase stormwater BMPs and increase awareness of alternative methods to reduce stormwater runoff.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Initiate dialogue with municipalities, urban redevelopment authorities and county economic development to promote concept of repurposing blight areas into innovative dual-purpose stormwater management/green areas such as raingardens, urban ag, pollinator gardens.	Manager, Watershed Specialists	2021
Engage and gain support of local community organizations to maintain green space, urban ag or infiltration projects and demonstration plots. (Penn State Master Gardeners, Vision 2025 committee, United Neighborhood)	Manager, Watershed Specialists, Municipal officials	2022
Apply/ obtain for grant funding for a demonstration project.	Watershed Specialists	2022
Construct / Implement demonstration project	Watershed Specialist	2033

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: TARGETED ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

GOAL #4: *Provide innovative educational programs and assistance to increase the environmental awareness and enhance resource stewardship.*

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 24%

Concern due to anticipated trends:

- We believe there is an increase in demand for local food movement and urban Ag, therefore we must do public education on local food, farmer markets, urban Ag and work with Redevelopment Authorities to use Urban Ag to address blighted properties.

Critical issues addressed: targeted environmental education, awareness of District & its work

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Increase participation in County Envirothon

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Contact 3 additional schools	Staff	2021

Objective #2: Increase social media presence annually by 100 followers

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Post regularly about projects and events	AmeriCorps/ Staff	On-going
Evaluate the use of other social media platforms	AmeriCorps/ Staff	2021
Promote local farmer markets through our social media posts	AmeriCorps/ Staff	On-going

Objective #3: Increase adult professional education opportunities

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Provide 2 trainings to consultants and contractors on 102/105 related work	Resource Specialists	Annually
Provide training on stormwater management to municipalities, redevelopment authorities, land use planners and consultants	District partners/staff	2023
Conduct legislative education to provide input on regulations, sustained/increase for funding programs	Manager/ Directors	Annually
Conduct field days/ tours to promote BMP's, demonstration sites	Staff	2024
Host 1 DGLVR training for eligible program participants	Resource Specialist	Annually

Objective #4: Continue education and outreach for youth

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Continue partnership with local library summer programs in the County	Staff/ AmeriCorps	On-going
Continue youth community group programs (scouting, 4-H, skills of PA)	Staff/ AmeriCorps	On-going
Continue school programs at Disaster's Edge	Staff/ AmeriCorps	On-going

Objective #5: Increase adult education programs for the public

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Partner with the fair to offer educational workshops	Staff/ AmeriCorps	Annually
Host 2 gardening workshops in conjunction with the tree sale	PSU Extension	Annually
Host 2 kayak programs	Partner with Benscreek Canoe Club, PA Fish and Boat Commission	Annually

Objective #6: Maintain Disaster’s Edge Environmental Education Center

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Continue the relationship with the 1889 park and share resources where possible	Staff/ Directors	On-going
Evaluate building maintenance needs and budget for repairs.	Staff	Annually
Reach out to new power generating companies for funding for environmental education programs and facility.	Directors, Associate Directors, Manager	2021

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: INVASIVE SPECIES PREVENTION

GOAL # 5: *Promote the use of native species and eradication of invasive species.*

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 5%

Concern due to anticipated trend:

- We believe that invasive species are becoming a major problem, therefore we must educate staff so they can educate the public and also practice safety measures so we don’t spread invasive species.

Critical issues addressed: invasive species

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Increase knowledge level of staff.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Reach out to extension for information/ training	staff	Fall 2020
Attend training sessions (DCNR/Master Gardeners...)	staff	2021

Objective #2: Complete a demonstration project to remove invasives/ establish native plants.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Develop list of publicly owned properties	AmeriCorps/Interns	2021
Conduct field assessments for invasive species	AmeriCorps/Interns	2021
Contact agencies/ non-profits to assess interest levels	AmeriCorps/Interns, staff	2022
Meet with partners, select pilot project	AmeriCorps/Interns, staff	2022
Design project, secure funding and construct project	Outside Consultant/ staff	2023
Assess project results and plan future projects	AmeriCorps/Interns, staff	2025

Objective #3: Increase public awareness of invasive species and encourage use of native plant species.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Post 2 social media posts per month devoted to invasive species education	AmeriCorps/ Intern	On-going
Develop educational display board on invasive species that can be placed around the county at different events and used at the county fair	AmeriCorps/ Intern	2021
Integrate more native species into our annual tree sale, provide education materials on the benefits of native species into our catalog	Staff	2021
Develop list large property owners in the county	AmeriCorps/ Intern	2022
Conduct invasive species management workshops targeting large property owners in the county.	Staff/ Extension	2023

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE: SUSTAINABLE DISTRICT FUNDING

GOAL 6: *Maximize operational and administrative efficiencies to fulfill the CCCD mission.*

Total Percentage of staffing resources utilized towards completing the goal – 14%

Concern due to anticipated trends:

- We believe that the results of the 2020 Census will change Cambria County from a Class 4 to a Class 5, reducing state and federal funding, therefore the District must adjust by securing replacement funding.
- We believe that within 5 years the District financial resources from the County will shift from directly paying the salary and benefits for county employed district staff to a direct allocation of funds to the district for operation, therefore the District must communicate with the Commissioners to ensure that adequate funding and technical resources are allocated to sustain our level of service.
- We believe that things are moving to an electronic format but without the services to support it, therefore we must have better equipment and training.

Critical issues addressed: funding, transition of employees from County to District, adequate staffing, succession planning

ACTION PLAN

Objective #1: Achieve transition of 2 additional staff to District employees by 2025.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Secure County funding allocation to maintain staff positions as positions transition from County to District employment.	Manager & Directors	2022
Review and adjust fees charged for various programs and services.	Manager & Directors, staff	Annually

Objective #2: Increase staff by at least 1 full-time position to address program support, environmental ed and accounting needs by 2021.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Hire a Programs Assistant	Manager, Directors	August 2020
Review and evaluate each position for cross training or dual responsibilities.	Staff, Manager	Annually
Cross train key staff on fiscal responsibilities for grants.	Staff, Manager	Annually

Evaluate if cross training is sufficient to address accounting needs	Manager. Admin Assistant	Annually
Develop a template to follow for carrying out grant projects and admin duties.	Manager. Admin Assistant	2021

Objective #3: Have in effect by 2022 a Succession or Transition Plan for District Manager & key staff.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Update position descriptions and use to identify gaps, overlap & potential to delegate key duties or conduct cross training	Manager & Directors	2021
Write succession plan for Manager & key staff and include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross training on programs • Retain retirees part time to provide training to newly hired staff • Identify and train additional staff on fiscal and personnel duties 	Manager & Directors	2022
Continue transition from county funding to full district funding as per MOU	Manager & Directors	Annually

Objective #4: Purchase additional and replacement computers and software to address electronic permitting needs by 2021.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Evaluate existing equipment and determine needs	Manager & Directors, staff	Annually
Determine costs, source of funding and budget.	Manager & Directors	Annually
Order equipment	Manager	Annually

Objective #5: Increase staff efficiency with software and programs to achieve a minimum comfort rating of 8 out of 10 by 2025.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Outline a staff development plan and annual budget to address training needs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of new software • Accounting/QuickBooks for DGLVR staff • Advanced computer skills 	Manager & Directors, staff	Annually

Objective #6: Increase staff proficiency in technical expertise on an annual basis.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Attended annual program trainings provided by delegating agencies Develop individual development plans for each person to identify training needs and provide opportunities to receive training as needed.	All Staff as appropriate	Annually

Objective #7: Increase efficiency of tree sale procedure to reduce time and effort by 20%.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Review tree sale procedure for efficiency and change as needed.	Manager, Admin Assistant	Annually

Objective #8: Meet board members professional development needs annually.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Update Directors Resource Binders to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More in-depth info on staff duties and responsibilities • Types of permits staff review & inspections conducted • Common acronyms • Define duties or roles of board members • Outline parliamentary procedures to be used at board meetings • Participate in the Board trainings provided by the PACD Leadership Development. Survey Directors regarding professional development training that they would like or need	Staff and Directors	Annually

Objective #9: Establish and conduct a quarterly Networking Meeting with other County Agencies to discuss sharing of resources and effective partnering to achieve common goals.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Identify who to involve	Manager, Res Con Supervisors	Fall 2020
Contact and schedule first kickoff meeting	Manager	December 2020
Agree on future frequency of meeting	Agency Directors	Annually

Objective #10: Achieve 50% increase in the District's Trust Fund by 2025.

Action Step	Who will do it?	By When?
Develop Trust Fund Fact Sheet	Program Assistant	2021
Meet with 2 per year of financial planners/ advisors and estate attorneys to promote and grow the Trust Fund	District Manager, Directors	Annually
Track annual donations to Trust Fund	Manager	Annually
Advertise in appropriate publications to solicit donations.	Staff	Annually

APPENDIX

Stakeholder Meeting Summary

Cambria County Conservation District (CCCD)

Strategic Planning Stakeholder Meeting

March 12, 2020

Agenda

Purpose: to gather input to aid CCCD in writing its' strategic plan for next 5 years. Gain your ideas on critical issues/needs to be addressed, trends, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats (S.W.O.T.) and potential goal strategies.

- 9:00 Welcome & Introductions
- What the District does now – John Dryzal
- Services
 - Time distribution
- Planning Process
- Input
 - Timeline
- Critical Issues/Needs to Address in Plan
- Trends Which May Impact District
- S.W.O.T. Analysis
- Noon **LUNCH – provided**
- Ranking Critical Issues/Needs
- Criteria
 - Lobbying & Voting
- Potential Goal Strategies
- Wrap-Up
- 2:00 **Adjourn**

Summary of Stakeholder Input

The following are the facilitator's notes of input provided during the stakeholder meeting.

Introductions:

When I think of Cambria County Conservation District, I think of _____:

- farmers into the future due to preservation
- tool as go between of famers & regulatory
- supporting farmers
- conservation
- conservation education partnership
- "conservation" says it all
- clean water, land preservation, mine streams reclaimed back
- water & professional helpful staff
- indispensable partner with DEP
- economic development – education
- economic development – getting things done
- collaborative group to assist & support
- the people – they care
- professionalism – people to people
- all their partnerships
- weddings – conservation partnerships
- team of environmental professionals working for good of County
- 20 years of paperwork
- public outreach
- tailor to & meet the needs of residents
- spans a broad spectrum of clients (unique)

Trends which have the potential to impact the District over the next 5 years:

We believe that _____, therefore we (the District) must _____.

1. We believe that a generational turnover in Ag operators will lead to an industry shift in how farms are managed, therefore we must provide outreach and education to new farm managers on what's available and do so thru multiple media platforms.
2. We believe that there is an increased pressure of housing developments encroaching on farmlands, therefore we must increase education of the public, local municipalities, county government, planning commission, builder associations and developers and lobby for additional farmland preservation funds and other funding sources.
3. We believe that invasive species are becoming a major problem, therefore we must educate staff so they can educate the public and also practice safety measures so we don't spread invasive species.
4. We believe that there is an increase demand for stormwater management, therefore we must educate and work with municipal officials in assuring stormwater management is being addressed in development within their municipalities.
5. We believe that with the lack of waste coal pile removal there will be effects in soil, water and air, therefore we must use our technical expertise to minimize the radius of damage as much as possible and explore funding to eliminate the piles.
6. We believe there is an increase in demand for local food movement and urban Ag, therefore we must do public education on local food, farmer markets, urban Ag and work with Redevelopment Authorities to use urban Ag to address blighted properties.
7. We believe that there is an increased interest to opening roads for ATV use, therefore we must work with townships on sustainability of roads and work with other partners and DLVG roads program.
8. We believe that things are moving to an electronic format but without the service to support it, therefore we must have better equipment and training.

Critical Issues Grouped by Categories: (#) is scoring during ranking

A. Water Quality Improvements

- Removal of coal refuse piles (10)
- Cogeneration – regs and advocate for assistance for plants (0)
- AMD Cleanup – remediation (12)
- Riparian Buffers (11)
- Growing Greener and other project funding (13)

B. Soil Conservation

- Erosion control (4)
- Ag technical support to farmers (16)
- Urban Ag (13)
- Repurposing blighted properties (9)

C. Education

- Targeted environmental education (25)
 - Including E&S education
- DEP technical assistance (0)
- Partners with economic development agencies (7)

D. Operations – finances & staff

- Maintain monetary support (7)
- Staff retention (8)
- Wages (5)

E. Stormwater Management (36)

F. Invasive Species (21)

G. Farmland Preservation (18)

Critical Issues in Priority Order:

1. Stormwater Management
 2. Targeted Environmental Education
 3. Invasive Species
 4. Farmland Preservation
 5. Ag Technical Support to Farmers
 6. Urban Ag
 7. Growing Greener & other Project Funding
-

4 Critical Issues were selected for brainstorming potential strategies (using verb, object, purpose format)

Issue: Stormwater Management

Potential Strategies:

- a) Advocate for better/more stormwater management with municipalities and educate them on their responsibilities
- b) Educate self on above
- c) Promote use of green space such as urban repurposing of blight lots for stormwater infiltration BMPs
- d) District create a demonstration project for above
- e) Convene county level agency consortium to address stormwater management at a County level (FEMS, Emergency Mgmt. may have some funding)
- f) Lobby state legislators to fund stormwater planning

Issue: Targeted Environmental Education

Potential Strategies:

- a) Expand education/outreach to schools, community groups & media to increase understanding of environmental issues
- b) Develop strategies to distribute info to the public in diverse communication media to reach a wide range of audiences (for example: website, email, twitter, Instagram, mailings)
- c) Reach various community groups/organizations and public to promote conservation district activities to increase awareness of what we do

Issue: Invasive Species

Potential Strategies:

- a) Create a plan to educate self
- b) Establish programs targeted to specific audiences
- c) Incorporate programs in social media outreach
- d) Conduct field surveys
- e) Develop action plan to address species found in surveys
- f) Realize and utilize biosecurity measures

Issue: Ag Technical Support for Farmers

Potential Strategies:

- a) Provide preliminary onsite evaluations for Ag producers related to natural resources

- b) Assist NRCS with field practices (evaluation and installation) to learn
- c) District needs to become the starting point for farmers since District has a more diverse or broader knowledge base
- d) Find out farmers' onsite needs and help direct them from there
- e) Educate farmers on pulling together funding sources to make BMPs happen
- f) Build stronger relationship with young Ag professionals via Pa Farm Bureau

S.W.O.T. Analysis

Format: attribute + its impact

Strengths – positive internal conditions that can be used in strategies to help carry out goals & objectives

1. We are support for environmental agencies and landowners which enables us to build relationships and do more to address their needs (our expertise, funding, etc.).
2. Experienced, reliable, self -motivated and passionate staff provides diverse knowledge of programs and resources and enables us to build and maintain relationships with agencies and landowners.
3. Staff are good at grant writing and very successful at gaining funding to improve local resources and bring in money to the local economy (can never have enough of this).
4. Strong relationships with partnering agencies to bring innovative solutions to difficult problems – problem solving.
5. Exceptional relationship with county government which allows us to work effectively and efficiently (could always change based on elections).
6. Excellent educational programs to instill conservation ethic in future generations.
7. Realizes there is an abundance of natural resource assets in the county which can bring economic growth and recreation. Public awareness of natural resources should be considered.

Weaknesses – negative internal conditions that are potential barriers to address for success of goals & objectives

1. Lack of in-depth exposure to new concepts/ideas outside of our county or state which leads to lack of new solutions or incentives which may lead to burn out.
2. Lack of dedicated budget for training (personal development, team building) resulting in less effective communication.
3. Staff skill sets are underutilized creating missed opportunities which inhibits staff development and delivery of potential services.
4. Lack of diversity in messaging methods of outreach so missing out on a portion of the audience (i.e. Social media generations).
5. Lack of county inter-agency collaboration creating missed opportunities, lack of coordination which may lead to unintended issues for other county agencies.
6. Insufficient time allotted to get things done leading to overworked staff.

7. Impending retirements resulting in loss of institutional knowledge and rebuilding of established relationships.
8. Low pay scale/salaries which can lead to turnover and the district becoming the training ground as staff leave for other employment.
9. Dependence on state or county funding jeopardizes programs if funding is cut.
10. Not having a full-time educator to provide more public and adult programming on all issues prevents us from promoting what we do and how to practice conservation. We are not reaching as many youths due to school busing issues and schools are not teaching sciences.

Opportunities – positive external possibilities that can be used in strategies to help carry out goals & objectives

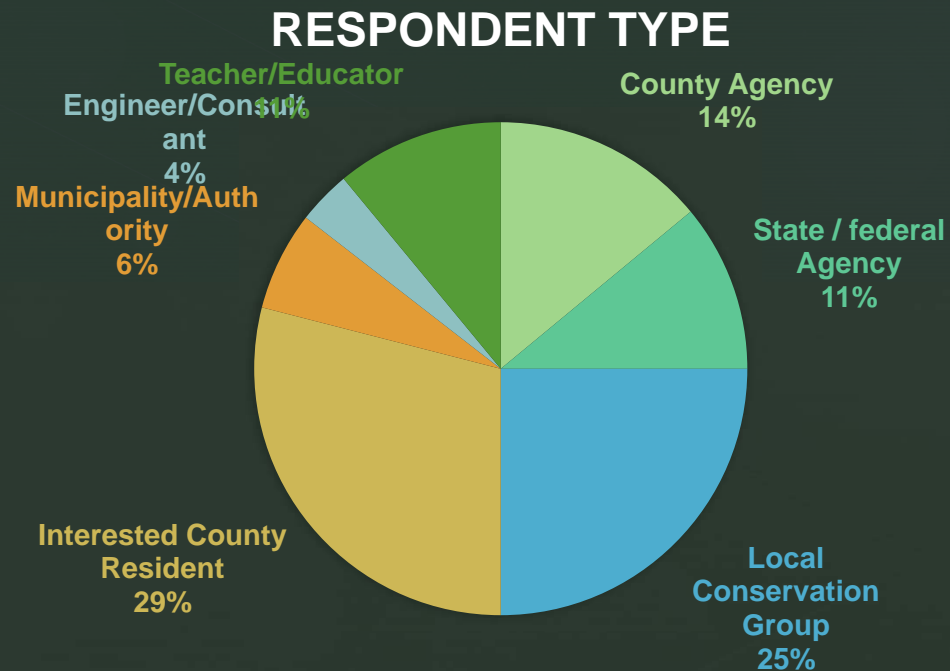
1. Public education is a way to increase awareness and understanding of District programs and creating a conservation ethic in the community.
2. Legislative outreach to provide input on regulations, convey the importance of conservation programs and the need for sustained/increased funding for programs.
3. Ag technical assistance and outreach to increase farm efficiency by implementing new practices, providing soil/water conservation measures (riparian buffers) and increase yields and profitability.
4. Abandoned mine land restoration to clean up streams and repurpose reclaimed properties.
5. Interagency collaboration of county agencies so citizens receive more comprehensive services for their issues.

Threats – negative external possibilities that are potential barriers to address for success of goals & objectives

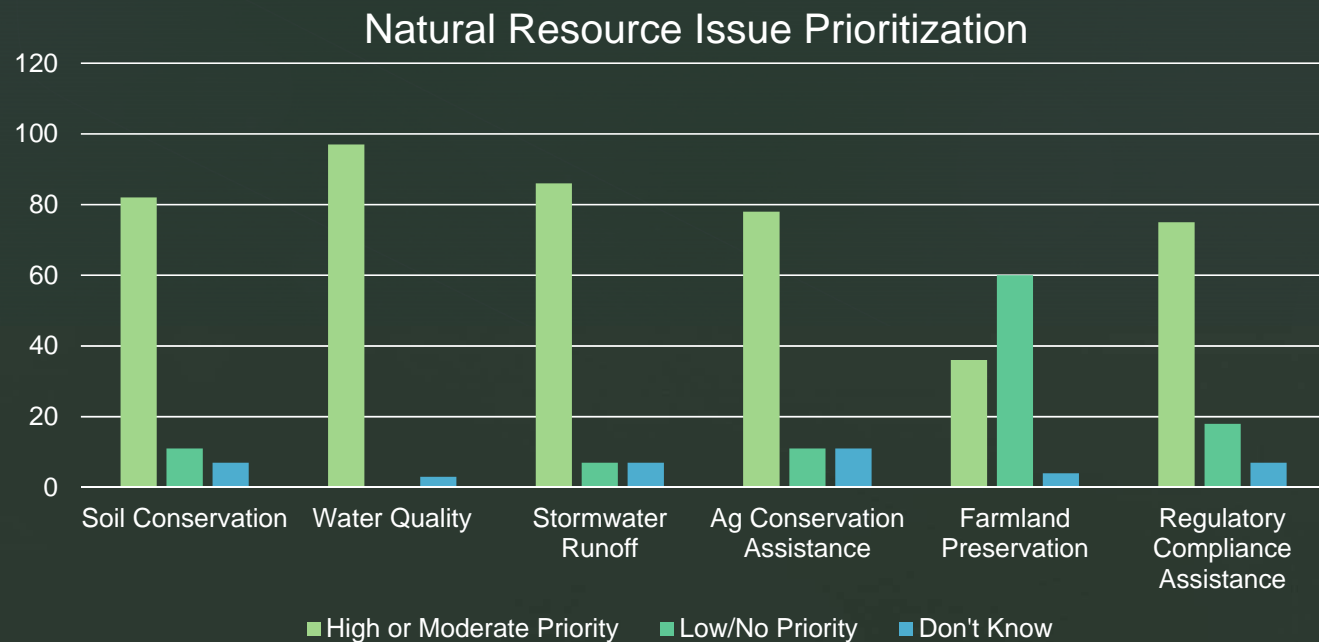
1. Funding, flat or cut, or unfunded mandates create a reduction of services and negatively affect staff retention. Technology is outpacing funding.
2. Politics create policy change which can lead to environmental degradation.
3. Litigation like in Beaver County where landowner is suing due to sediment in their waters brings concerns of possible financial liability.
4. Changes in public attitude with lack of caring, generational mentality and publics lack of trust with government make conservation work harder.
5. Staff turnover (district educator position) creates decrease in productivity so permit delays, loss of institutional knowledge and training costs associated with training replacements.
6. Turnover in partner agencies causes delays while re-educating new partner staff on what the District does.
7. Environmental change from stormwater and invasive species must be addressed and people must be educated on the impacts and solutions.
8. People have a lack of knowledge of what the District does.

Public Survey Results

Please select the group that best represents your connection to The Cambria County Conservation District.



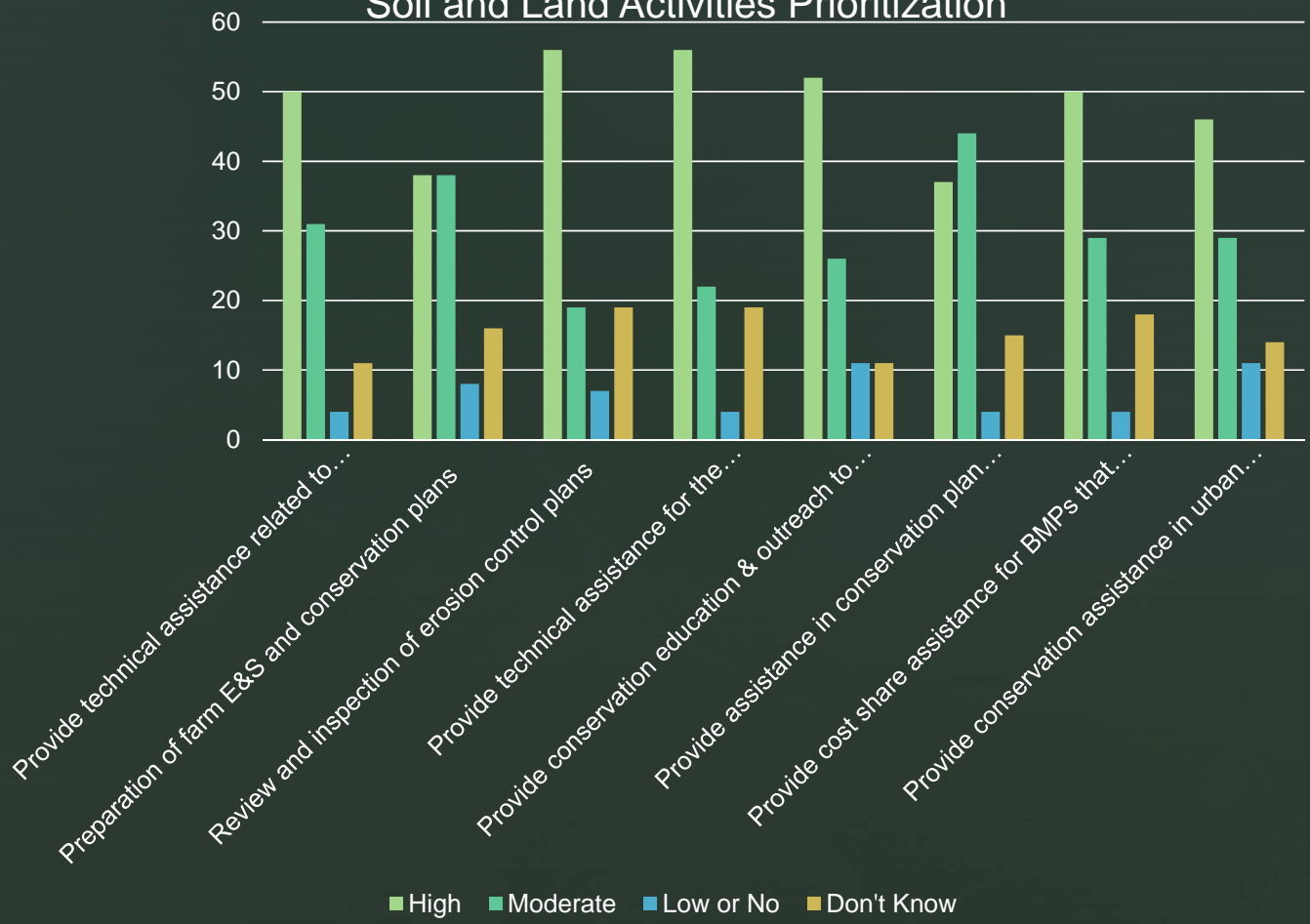
In general, what priority do you think the following natural resources issues should be given in Cambria County for the next 5 years?



In terms of conserving and managing Cambria County's SOIL AND LAND RESOURCES, what priority do you think should be given to the following activities?



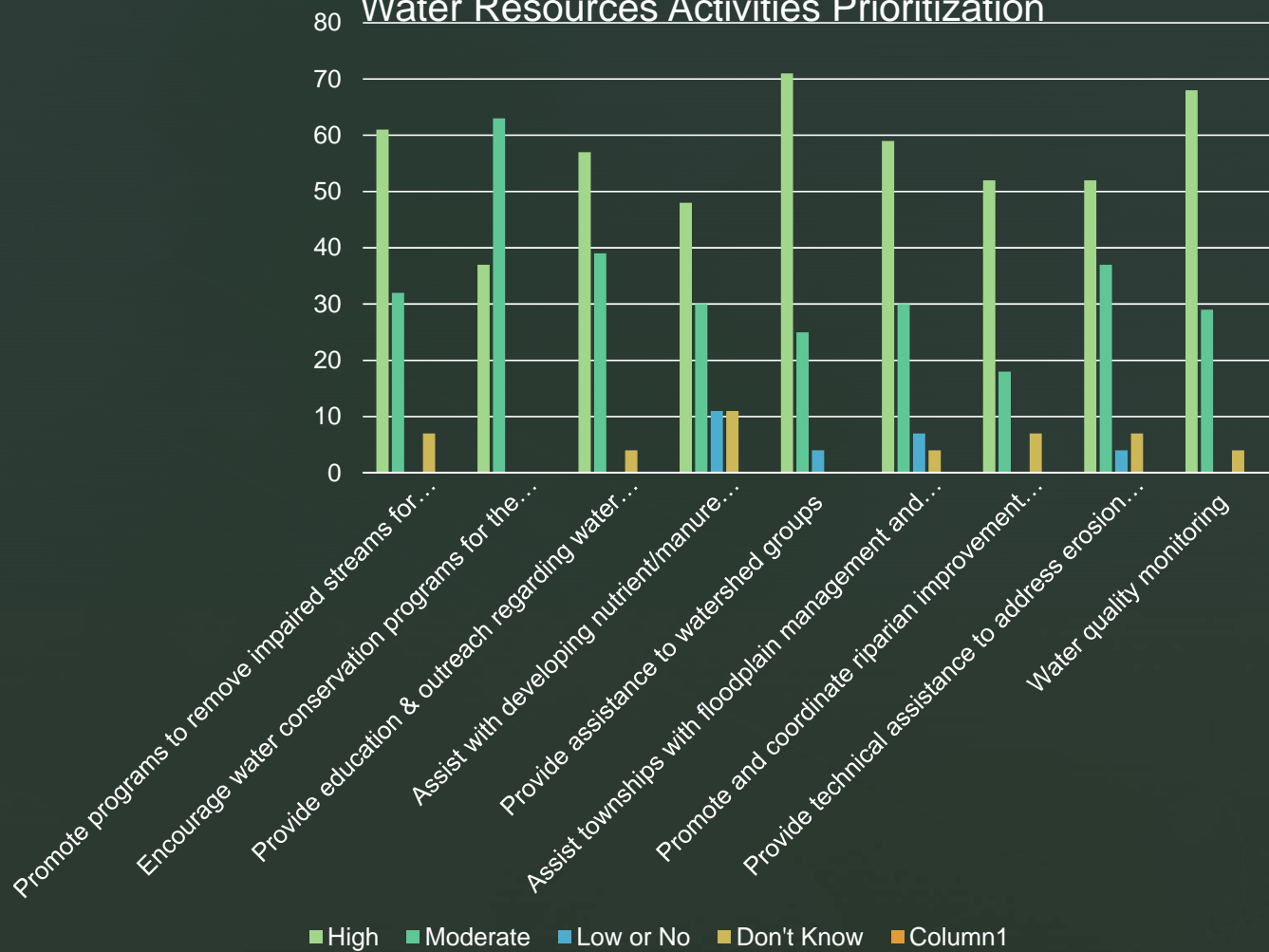
Soil and Land Activities Prioritization



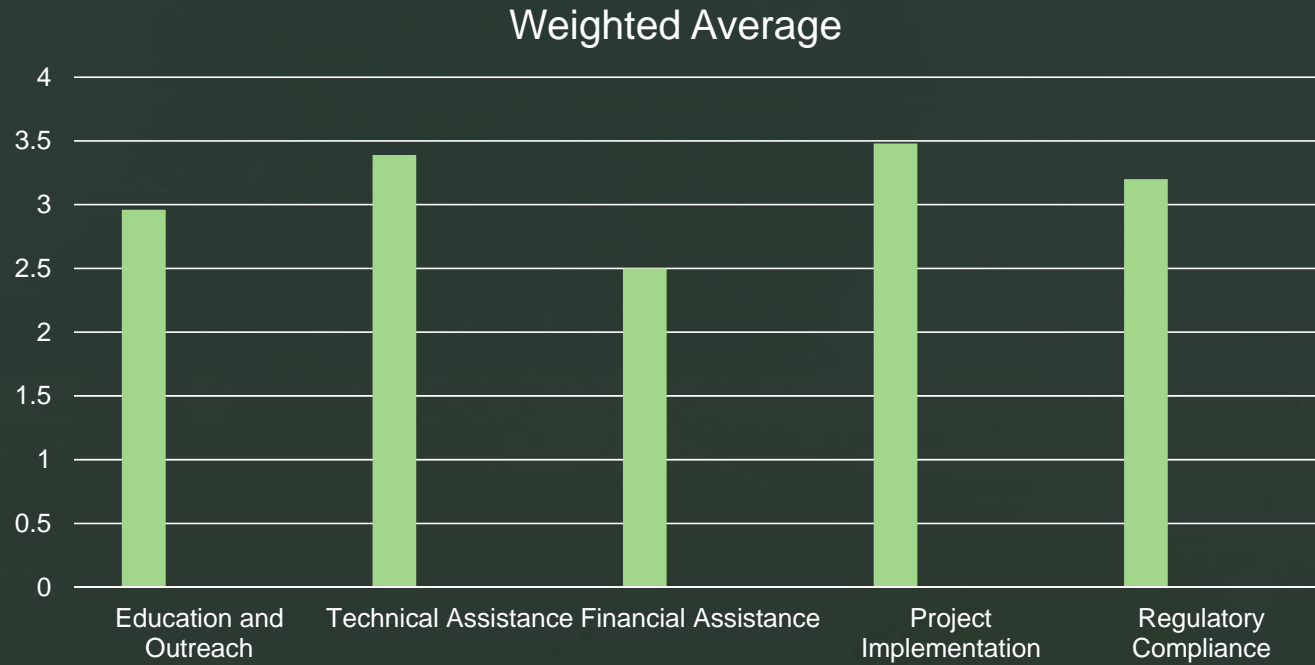
In terms of conserving and managing Cambria County's WATER RESOURCES, what priority do you think should be given to the following activities?



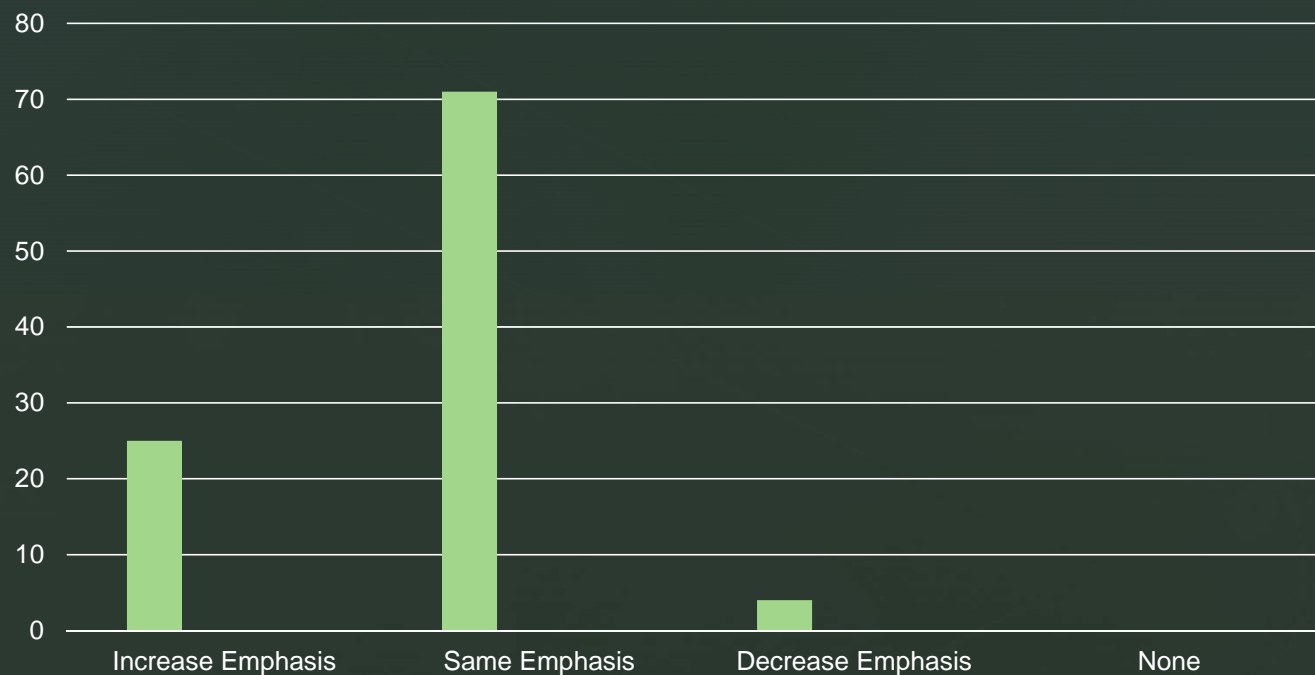
Water Resources Activities Prioritization



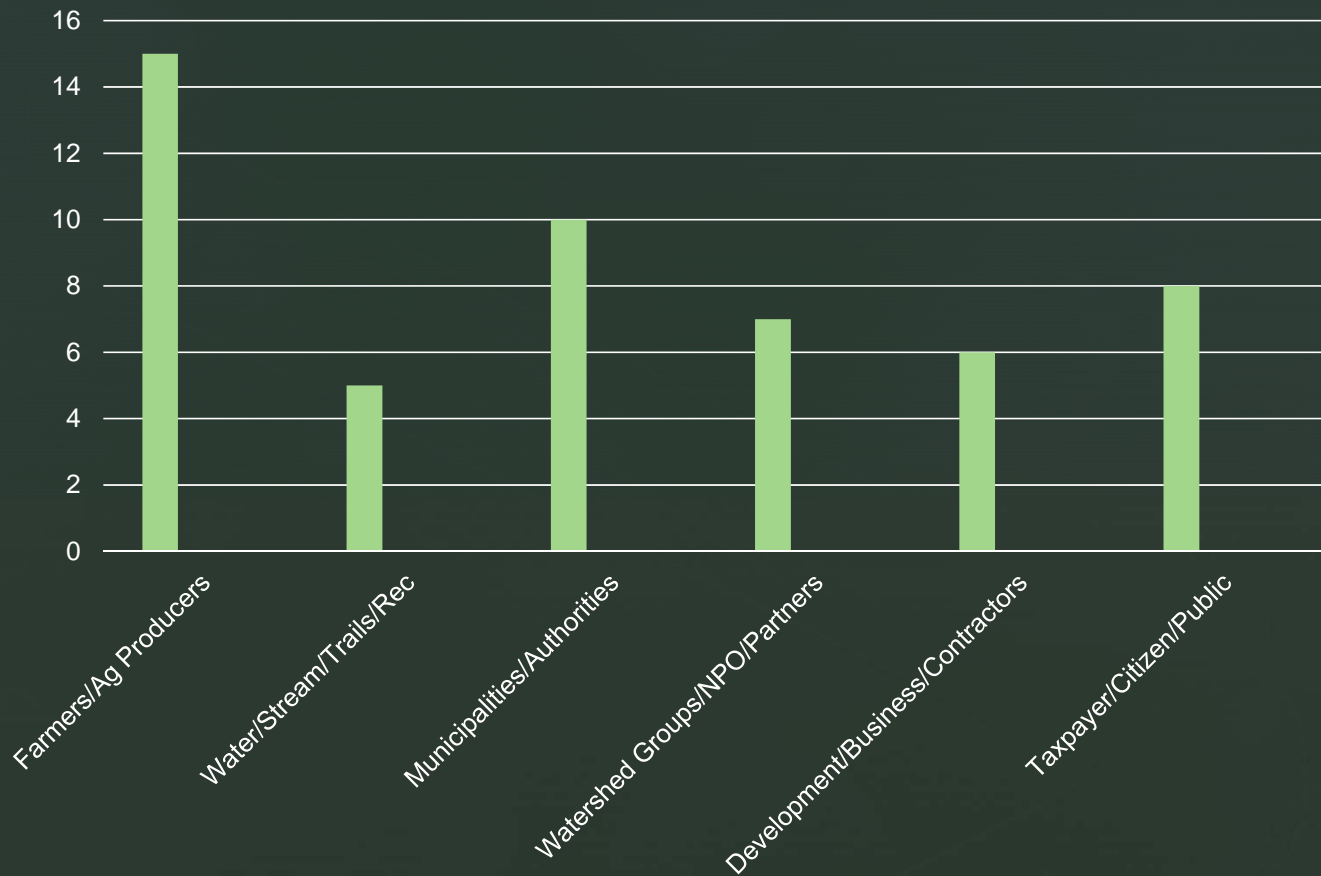
Please rate the services provided by the CCCD in importance with 5 being the most important and 1 the least.



▶ To what degree should the Cambria County Conservation District continue with its involvement with the regulatory conservation programs, most of which are through delegated agreements with Pennsylvania?



▶ Please list the top 3 clientele for whom the CCCD should provide services.



Public Survey – District Strengths

Diverse skill set and flexibility
Education/outreach – 2
Local involvement
Easy to work with
Good organization with clear mission
Project execution – 2
Cambria County water quality improving
Visibility within the county
Provide a safe and clean environment for all people, animals, and plants.
Knowledge of regulations and guidance
Capable and knowledgeable staff
Technical assistance
Balanced program handling various priorities
Willing to help
History

Public Survey – District Weaknesses

I don't know
Poor Directors--only there is help themselves
Could use more staff (2)
AMD treatment and watershed group assistance
Loss of staff through retirement and age of directors
Public education on water quality
Maintenance
Lack of public awareness (6)
Dependence on active treatment systems
Lack of funding (2)
DGLVR program
Storm water run off

Public Survey – District Threats

Farming is getting very expensive
I don't know
County government is weak--like trump
Insufficient funding (4)
Increased fracking and deforestation
Low wages
Pollution
Blighted properties, vacant lots with invasive species
Lack of funding causes treatment facilities to expire/close
Unsure of any threats to CCCD...
Relaxation of EPA rules
Regulatory changes

Public Survey – District Opportunities

Help new aspiring farmers
I don't know
Always be willing to help anyone
Take watershed management to a new level
Conservation of land and reclamation of water
Strong commissioner and legislative support
Major improvement with water quality with little education to home owners
Find funding opportunities to help fund conservation projects
Increase marketing
Work with Vo Tech to educate, cut and treat, and eliminate invasive species, work lots and
Blighted properties, etc.
Marketing CC water quality and supply industry
Highlight and promote project success stories
Water restoration
Assist on inclined plane and mountain town projects
Growing community awareness of environmental problems
Urban land reuse
Organic

Public Survey - What NEW natural or conservation resource program ideas do you think CCCD should consider implementing in the next 5 years?

Urban farming

I don't know

Better water quality programs

Riparian restoration and enhancement projects

BMP guidance to homeowners

BMPs for Roadway runoff

Encourage less grass mowing, but promoting Lyme disease prevention without the use of pesticides

Adopt a stream cleanup/monitoring aimed at students

Take advantage of momentum of Little Conemaugh restoration

Storm water gardens/filtration

Storm water management through landscape changes (3)

Urban Agriculture

Help small food to table farmers

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Boat and/or fishing access

Clean up polluted wetland areas to help maintain the current ecosystem

Eliminating tree of heaven (spotted lanternfly)

Website showing changes in water quality over time on local streams

Runoff quality management for farmers and homeowners

Flood plain management

Grants to start farms

Control and clean up acid mine runoff (2)

Eliminating waterway choking knotweed

Work to promote low impact recreation/quality of life provided by clean water

Soil conservation using native plants

Public Survey - Please provide any additional input that you feel the CCCD should consider during this Strategic Plan update

We are blessed in Cambria County to have such a valuable resource as the CCCD they are resource we can't afford to lose. Thank you for all of your hard work for our communities!

I have none at the time.

Be less of poor government and be willing to help others without conflict--wonder if the taxpayers are best served. possible need to have additional reviews to see if the goals are really completed.

Fiscal work needs delegated to a new position with manager oversight so the manager can manage personnel and programming.

Get an automated answering system to direct incoming calls.

None.

Education of business on what they need.

Think you are doing a great job, maybe need to educate the public more on what you do and how you can help.

Acronyms

Acronyms - Updated 7/2020

ABACT	Anti-degradation Best Available Combination of Technologies
ACA	Animal Concentration Area
ACOE	Army Corps of Engineers
ACT	Agricultural Conservation Technician
AEU	Animal Equivalency Unit
AFO	Animal Feeding Operation
BMP	Best Management Practice
CAFO	Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation
CAO	Concentrated Animal Operation
CBP	Chesapeake Bay Program
CD	Conservation District
CDFAP	Conservation District Fund Allocation Program (a source of funding for the districts, including PA State Budget Line-Item, UGWF monies, etc.). This funding passes through the SCC for their approval of disbursement)
CDFR	Conservation District Field Representative
CREP	Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (funding to farmers to conserve and enhance sensitive lands)
CZMP	Coastal Zone Management Program
DCED	Department of Community and Economic Development
DCNR	Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
DEP	Department of Environmental Protection (sometimes referred to as "the Department")
DGLVR	Dirt and Gravel, Low Volume Road Program
DRBC	Delaware River Basin Commission
EHB	Environmental Hearing Board
ESM	Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (a workshop put on by the DGLVR program, necessary for grant funding eligibility)
EQIP	Environmental Quality Incentives Program (an NRCS program)
E&S	Erosion and Sedimentation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Act
FLP	Farmland Preservation Program
FSA	Farm Service Agency (USDA)
GG	Growing Greener (a DEP grant program)
GP	General Permit (NPDES)
EV/HQ	Exceptional Value/High Quality (stream designations)
IDP	Individual Development Plan
IP	Individual Permit (NPDES)
IRRC	Independent Regulatory Review Commission (www.irrc.state.pa.us)
JAC	Joint Annual Conference (PACD and SCC)
JP	Joint Permit (with DEP and ACOE)

MM	Manure Management
MMM	Manure Management Manual (google "pa manure management")
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MS4	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (a WQpermitting program required of urban municipalities in PA)
NACD	National Association of Conservation Districts
NICET	National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies
NM	Nutrient Management
NMA	Nutrient Management Act
NMP	Nutrient Management Plan
NOI	Notice of Intent (part of NPDES permit application)
NOT	Notice of Termination (for closing NPDES-permitted site)
NOV	Notice of Violation
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
PACD	PA Association of Conservation Districts
PCSM	Post Construction Stormwater Management
PDA	PA Department of Agriculture
PDG	Permit Decision Guarantee
PEMA	PA Emergency Management Agency
PNDI	Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index (threatened and endangered species, etc.)
PRP	Permit Review Process
PSATS	PA Association of Township Officials
PUC	Pennsylvania Utility Commission
QAB	Quality Assurance Board (at CDs for DGRLVR Program)
QA/QC	Quality Assurance/Quality Control
RCSOB	Rachel Carson State Office Building (DEP's Central Office, Harrisburg)
REAP	Resource Enhancement and Protection (Ag Tax Credit Program)
RAWAPI	Regional Agriculture Watershed Assessment Program Initiative State
SCC	Conservation Commission
SOP	Statement of Policy (with PDG)
SPFP	Special Projects Funding Program
TMDL	Total Maximum Daily Load (U.S. Clean Water Act term -the maximum amount of a given pollutant that a waterbody can receive while still meeting water quality standards)
UGWF	Unconventional Gas Well Funds (Act 13- an impact fee collected from Marcellus Shale well companies; distributed to local and state agencies - administered by the PUC)
USDA	US Department of Agriculture
USFWS	US Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	US Geological Survey
WREN	Water Resources Education Network
WS	Watershed Specialist
(Or) WS	Watershed
WSI	Watershed Initiative

Regional Field Representative and Nutrient Management Specialist

Vacant - DEP SW Region

Jaci Kerstetter - DEP NW Region (Chesapeake Bay Program)

Jamie Ulrich - State Conservation Commission (Nutrient Management Program)

Dirt & Gravel Road Program Quality Assurance Board Members

John Dryzal – Chairman

Matt Colian – WCO, Fish & Boat Commission

Dave Hegemman - Conservation District Representative

Virgil Wilford - NRCS Representative

Nominating Organizations

Cambria County Agricultural Land Preservation Board

Cambria County Farm Bureau

Cambria County Pomona Range

Cambria County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs Inc.

Cambria County Association of Township Supervisors

Growmark FS

Society of Farm Women

West Branch Susquehanna Rescue

Cambria County Conservation District

Regular meetings: Second Tuesday of the month, 7:00 P.M., at 401 Candlelight Drive, Ebensburg, PA, 15931

Mailing address: 401 Candlelight Drive, Suite 229, Ebensburg, PA 15931

Telephone number: (814) 472-2120

Fax number: (814) 472-0686

Email: cccd@co.cambria.pa.us

“I am not an advocate for frequent changes in laws and constitutions. But laws and institutions must go hand in hand with the progress of the human mind. As that becomes more developed, more enlightened, as new discoveries are made, new truths discovered and manner and opinions change, with the change of circumstances, institutions must advance also to keep pace with the times.”

-- *Thomas Jefferson, 1816*