

Union County Conservation District

2012 Annual Report



**155 North 15th Street
Lewisburg, PA 17837
Phone (570) 524-3860
Fax (570) 524-3873**



Union County Conservation District strives to be a leader in balancing environmental responsibility with economic opportunities.

Board of Directors

Brian Keister
Chairman

Duane Kling
Vice Chair

Glenn Troester
Treasurer

Preston Boop
Commissioner

Lucas Criswell

John Snook

Dennis Spangler

Fred Swader

Don Fogle

Associate Directors: D. Anthony Deitrich & Guy Temple

UCCD Staff

Bill Deitrick
District Manager

Andrew Hibbs
CB Regional Engineer

Greg Bonsall
Environmental Education & ACT

Eric Ernst
E&S Technician

Randall Ross
Nutrient Management Technician

Dan Wagner
319/Chesapeake Bay Technician

Shanon Burkland Stamm
Watershed and Program Specialist

Cindy Kahley
Ag Pres. Administrator & Administration

June Erb
Administrative Assistant II

2012 Annual Workplan

1. Increase/improve wildlife habitat in Union County.
2. Improve water quality of local streams.
3. Effectively communicate Ag environmental compliance to farmers.
4. Maximize installation of riparian buffers throughout Union County farmland.
5. Manage nitrogen on cropland to maximize agronomic potential and minimize environmental degradation.
6. **Maintain all existing Programs/Events/Field Days**
 - A. Chesapeake Bay Program
 - B. Nutrient management, plan review and enforcement
 - C. Streambank encroachment permitting and enforcement
 - D. Buffalo Creek impairment restoration
 - E. Ag equipment rental program
 - F. Erosion control plan review and enforcement
 - G. Agland preservation program
 - H. Watershed group coordination/liason
 - I. Dirt & Gravel Roads
 - J. Prescribed grazing program
 - K. Conservation/nutrient management planning
 - L. Growing Greener riparian buffer protection—easements & BMPs
7. **Implement Grants (existing and pending)**
 - A. 319 Grant—Water quality BMPs
 - B. Buffalo Creek & Penns Creek streambank projects
 - C. Growing Greener tiered riparian buffer program
 - D. Prescribed grazing project
 - E. New Berlin commons project
 - F. Vic's pub project
 - G. Energy Tour
 - H. Ard's farm wetland
 - I. Federal Ag. Pres Program
 - J. Growing Greener farm visit
 - K. Growing Greener implementation

Annual Awards Banquet

On Tuesday, March 20, 2012, approximately 100 people attended the District's 53rd Annual Awards program held at Christ's United Lutheran Church, Millmont. Guests enjoyed a family style ham dinner, which was followed by the presentation of various awards. The night culminated with guest speakers Steve and Jenn Kurian delivering a presentation about salmon fishing in Alaska.

Awards Winners

2011 Cooperator of the Year - Lee Spangler (Lee and his wife Kathy own and operate a beef and grain business on the outskirts of Mifflinburg. Lee participated in District and NRCS programs to install: barnyard roofing, access lane stabilization, and implemented a grazing system. In addition, he also decommissioned an old manure storage facility.)

Fisherman Award - Dan Sanders (Dan spends his time stocking fish in local creeks and ponds for youth to learn to catch and release. Mr. Sanders also builds fish and turtle habitats at the Montour Preserve.)

Outstanding Educator Award - Norm Conrad (Norm served as the Senior Extension Educator with Penn State's College of Agriculture for 29 years until his position was eliminated due to budget cuts.)

Directors' Award for Environmental Awareness - Karen & Larry Hendricks (The Hendricks' have continually helped in exposing our youth to the outdoors. Karen organized the first Outdoor Expo 14 years ago and Larry writes columns about the outdoors in the Standard Journal.)

Distinguished Service Award - Ben Marsh (Ben was recognized for his 24 years of membership on the Union County Conservation District board of directors).

F.F.A. Public Speaking Awards

1st - Megan Bush

2nd - Ali Barben

3rd - Ashley Confer

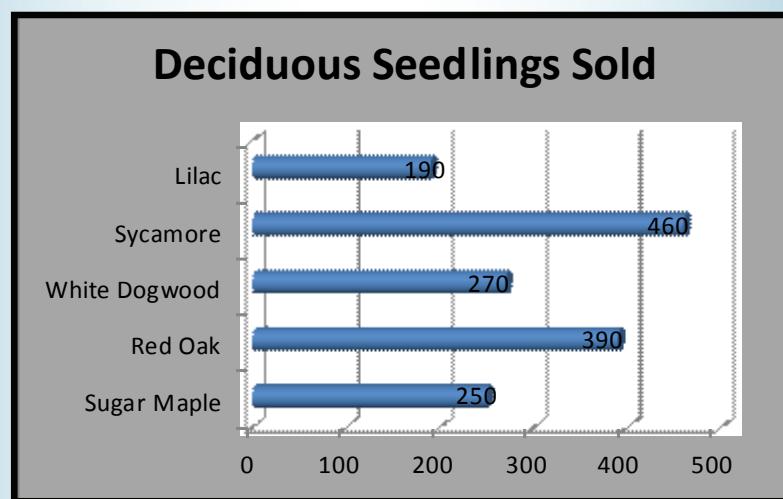
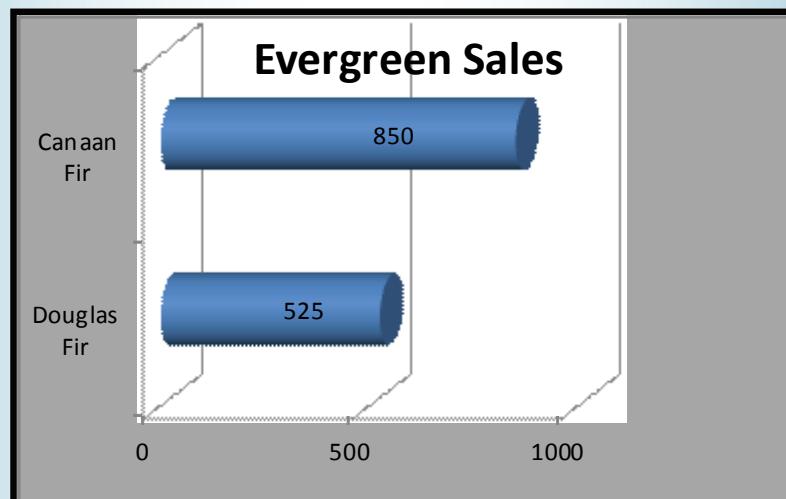


Annual Tree Sale

The Union County Conservation District once again sold tree seedlings in 2012. Our order catalog included seven species of tree seedlings; two varieties of evergreen and five deciduous. This program continues to be popular with county residents in that we had over 50 orders placed for approximately 2,935 seedlings.

The proceeds from our annual tree sale are used to support annual programs and educational activities. In addition to selling trees, seedlings are donated to the local school districts to be distributed through their Arbor Day programs.

Please reference the graphs below to see exactly how well seedlings sold.



Agricultural Land Preservation

2012 was a very big year for the Union County Agland Preservation Board. Two farms, comprising 252.24 acres, were preserved in 2012. The addition of these farms now brings the total agricultural land preserved in Union County to 7,328.85 acres.

The first preserved farm is owned by: Frances Kepler, Alice & Edward Moser, Lewis Kepler and Amy K Waldron. It is a 204.174 acre crop farm located in Kelly Township. This farm has had a lot of development pressure. This property is adjacent to 259.7 acres of already preserved farmland.

The second preserved farm is owned by: Robert & Barbara Jean Koch in White Deer Township. It is a 48.066 acres crop farm. The Koch's donated the development rights to their property to ensure perpetual agriculture. This farm is the first preserved farm in White Deer Township.

2012 marked another successful year with the addition of over 250 acres but we also lost a pioneer to our board. We received the unfortunate news that Cliff Valentine would resigned from the Union County Agland Preservation Board effective December 31, 2012. Cliff had been with the board since 1989 and dedicated a lot of time and effort to the Agland Preservation program. He was very instrumental in the development of the rules for the conservation easements. We thank Cliff for his hard work and wish him well with his upcoming retirement.

Board Members

Dave Epler - Chairman

Cliff Valentine – Vice Chairman

Dave Masser

Larry Platt

Joe Snyder

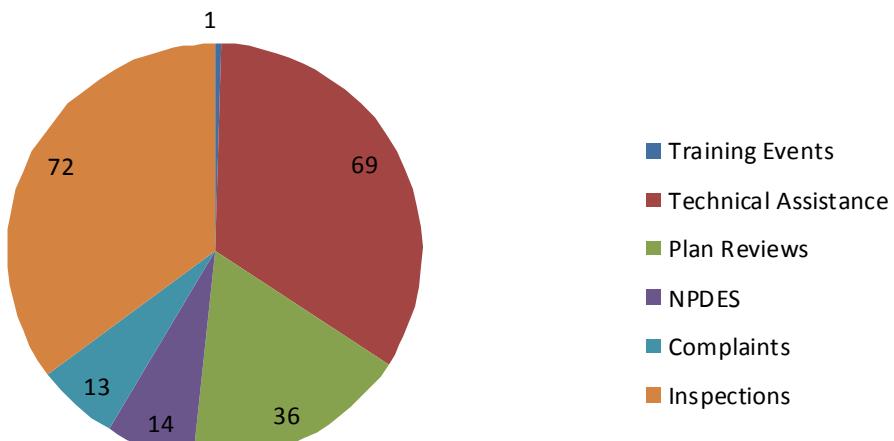
Wayne Stahl

Ed Frontz

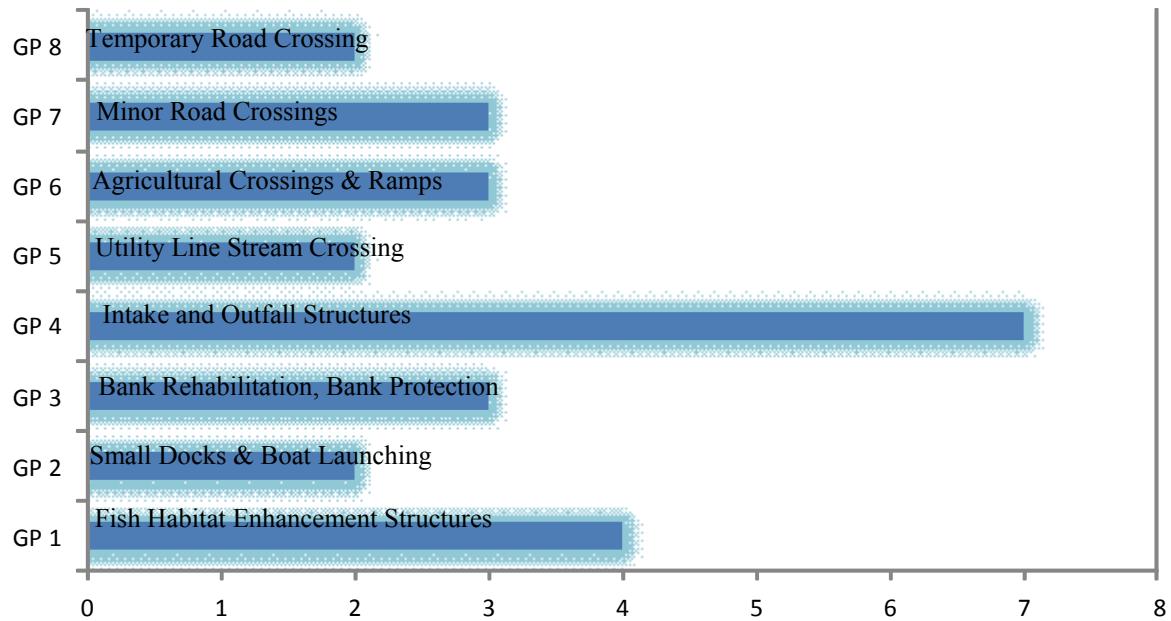


Chapter 102 - Erosion & Sedimentation

2012 E&S Activity



Chapter 105 - General Permits



Chesapeake Bay Program

During 2012, the Union County Conservation District offered two “Special Projects” grants from DEP, which provided funding for volunteer Act 38 Nutrient Management Plans and barnyard/pasture improvements. Funding assistance through this program was provided to four Union County farmers.

Projects completed through these grants included 2 nutrient management plans, roof runoff controls, streambank fencing, and a milk house waste transfer system. These best management practices (BMPs) help to minimize sediment and nutrients from entering our local water, while helping farmers reach baseline compliance with environmental regulations.

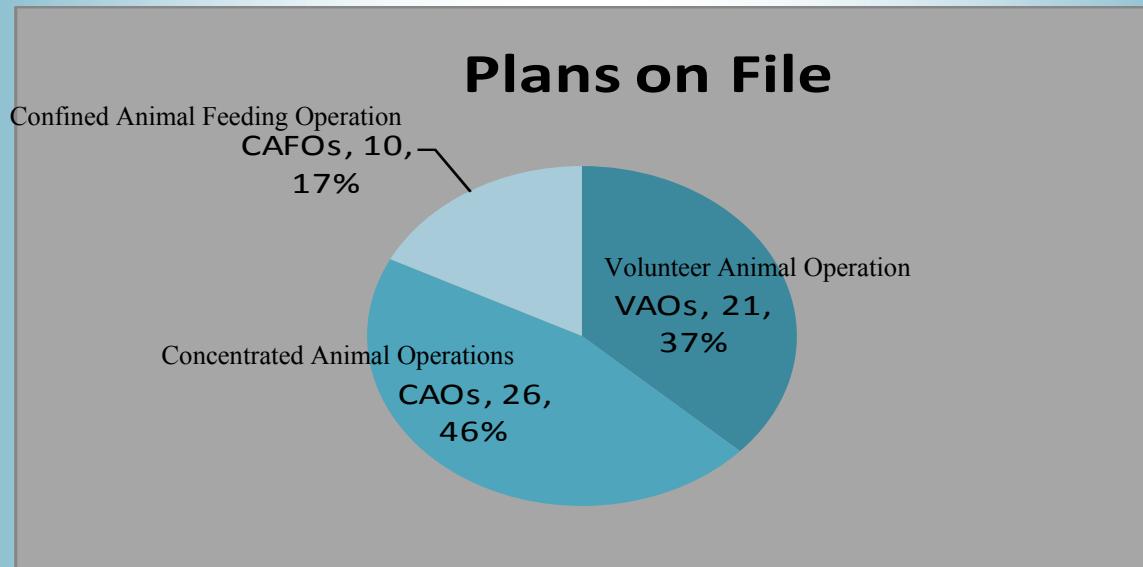
Also, Union County Conservation District maintains a fleet of equipment available for farmers to rent to assist with their farming ventures:

The John Deere no-till corn planter was utilized on 159 acres in 2012. This has been a valuable asset for those farmers wishing to transition to no-till.

The Haybuster no-till drill was rented out for 941 acres. This is the most popular piece of equipment we currently have available.

The Pik-Rite low application Hydra Ram manure spreader was utilized by 12 farmers last year.

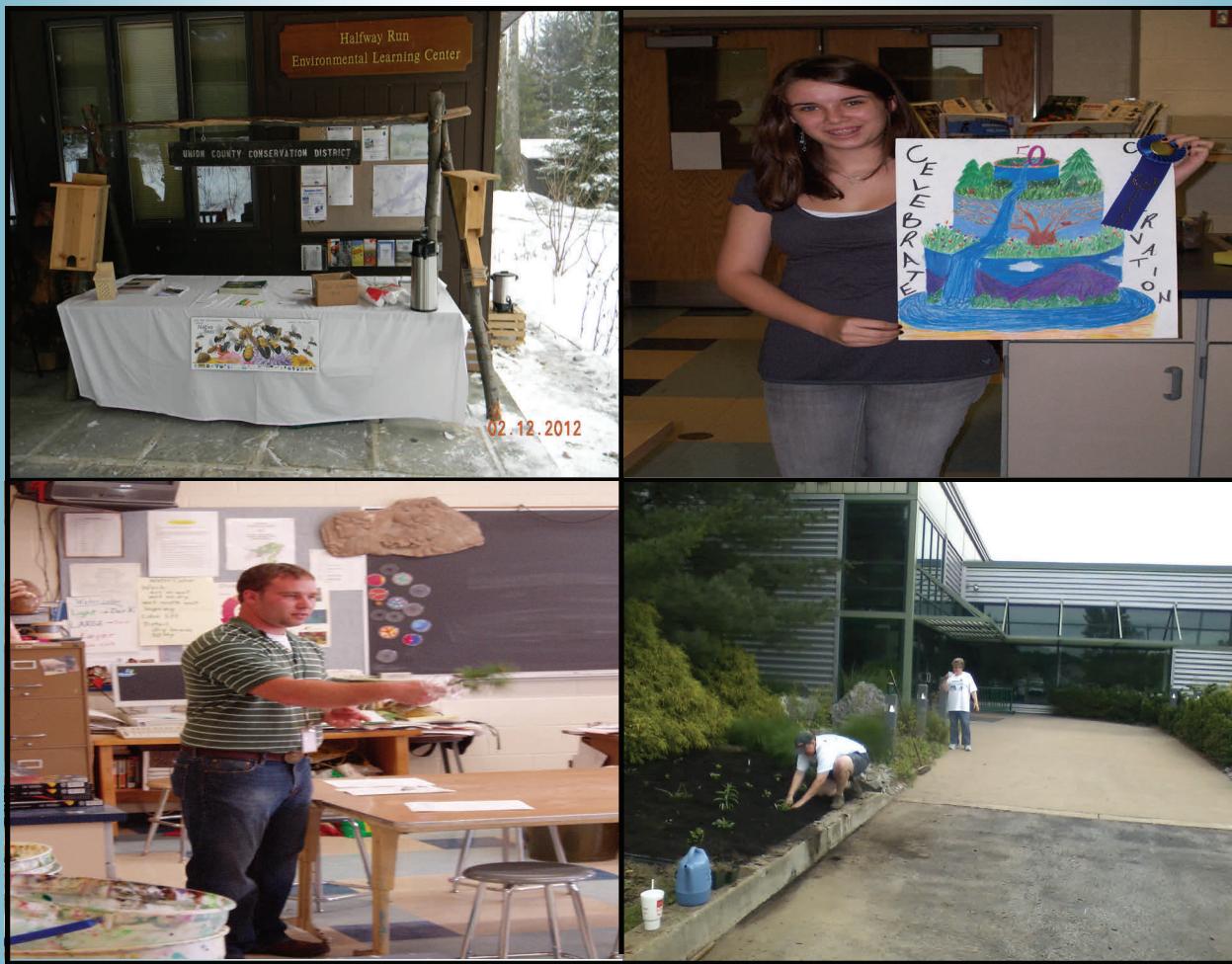
Nutrient Management



Environmental Education

The traditional educational programs continue to be held on an annual basis. These include, but are not limited to: displays at R.B. Winter State Park “Snowfest”, Icebreaker Sportsman’s Show, Valley Outdoor Expo, and the Union County West End Fair. Presentations were delivered to a group of Girl & Boy Scout and a class of Penn State University Freshman. The “Conservation Club” at Donald Eichorn Middle School, under the guidance of Mrs. Dawn Bertinet, received an Arbor Day presentation and tree seedlings. In addition, participants at R.B. Winter State Park “Summerfest” and the West End Fair “Kid’s Day” had the opportunity to build birdhouses.

In addition, there was a Forestry Landowner Workshop held in March and the Annual Poster Contest was once again held in conjunction with our Annual Awards Banquet. Office staff also helped NRCS install and plant a native community garden outside of our office building.



Susquehanna Valley Envirothon

The 25th Annual Susquehanna Valley High School Envirothon was held on Tuesday, May 8, 2012, at the Shikellamy State Park, Sunbury, PA. A total of 42 teams from Columbia, Montour, Northumberland, and Union counties were present. Union County was represented by a total of 8 teams; four each from Mifflinburg and Lewisburg High School.

The overall winner of the Susquehanna Valley Envirothon was Lewisburg High School Team C. The team also was the high scorer in Soils, Forestry, and Wildlife. Advancing on to the State Envirothon, held at the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown, were team members: Jane Jordan, Erin Kelley, Cassidy Gasteiger, Hannah Jones, and Anna Jordan.

The 12th Annual Susquehanna Valley Middle School Envirothon was held on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, at the PPL Montour Preserve. 28 teams from Columbia, Northumberland, Snyder and Union counties participated in the event.

Union County was represented by four teams from Mifflinburg Middle School. Although Mifflinburg Team D was the high scorer at the soils and aquatics stations, they finished second place overall.

This event continues to be a great learning experience for the students as they prepare to compete at the High School level. All teams expressed a desire to continue attending the event.



Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance



The BCWA of the Merrill Linn Land & Waterway Conservancy has as its central purpose to encourage ecologically responsible stewardship of Buffalo Creek, its tributaries, and the environment within its watershed.

- Celebrated our 10th Anniversary at the annual membership meeting.
- Created a water trail brochure to educate the public about the watershed and encourage canoeing and kayaking on the creek from Cowan to Lewisburg. The brochure has a map of that 14-mile stretch of creek and information about the history, economy, and culture of the watershed. The brochure is now available at outdoor related locations in the area and online at <http://www.buffalocreek.org/watertrail.html>.
- Played a role in getting funds to establish a wetland on the Ard's farm in cooperation with: Ard's Farm Market, the Union County Conservation District, Bucknell Department of Civil Engineering, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. BCWA continues to work with these same groups toward establishing more wetlands in the watershed.
- Continued active maintenance of the headwaters acid remediation site, including the planting of 300 trees and shrubs. Tests by PA Department of Environment Protection show improved water quality downstream of the site.
- Continued our active monitoring of the water quality on the mainstream of the creek, sites above and below the acid remediation site, and other sites where the Union County Conservation District has been working with farmers to best management practices. BCWA also took water samples for PA DEP testing of bacteria in the stream.
- Continued our public education efforts with our display table at community events, sending pertinent articles to the press, and by promoting streambank fencing on Mennonite farms.

Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association



The Lower Penns Creek Watershed Association has a central mission to protect, conserve, and improve the Lower Penns Creek Watershed by promoting the wise stewardship of the land and aquatic resources. The LPCWA continues to uphold its mission by striving to educate the citizens of the watershed and enabling landowners to make responsible, ecological choices.

Activities during 2012 included:

- Conducted two Rain Barrel Workshops in which 60 barrels were distributed.
- Conducted five streamside clean-ups.
- Held Ecology Day Program on Penns Creek in which 100 children and adults got their feet wet and learned about the aquatic species living in the creek.
- Facilitated “Open Your Eyes to Litter” programs for homeschoolers and Cub Scout Packs. Prizes were awarded for best posters, including donated fishing equipment, and all participants were invited to a “Learn How to Fish” cook-out session on Penns Creek.
- Continued maintenance of the New Berlin Recreational Area Rain Gardens, which have worked well to halt erosion and retain stormwater.

The LPCWA also had several interesting speakers including Tony Shively on lumbering in the West End; Bill Lynch on Penns Creek Pottery and Mill; and Robin Brightbill of the USGS on their biological sampling program.



Dirt & Gravel Roads

There were no project applications submitted in the fall of 2011 likely due to the overwhelming municipal workload created by Hurricanes Irene and Lee. Subsequently, there were no projects completed in 2012. Three applications have been received for the 2013 construction season.

Annual Training is coming to Union County

The 2013 Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Workshop details are in the process of being finalized. The likely venue, although not official yet, is the “CountryCupboard” (Best Western) in Lewisburg, PA. Lewisburg is in close proximity to several potential field trips partnering with several nearby Conservation Districts and State Forest Districts that are active in the Dirt and Gravel Road Program. It will contain a mixture of classroom sessions and field trips relating to Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance. The workshop usually draws approximately 200 attendees and is scheduled for October 1&2, 2013.

Stream Monitoring

District staff assisted the North Central Regional Office of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection with biological testing of Buffalo Creek upstream and downstream of the BCWA Headwaters Remediation site to investigate its effectiveness. Test results show that there has been positive progress in restoring the waters downstream to its natural state as good habitat for aquatic wildlife, as multiple age classes of brook trout were present in sections of stream that previously were void of trout.



Chesapeake Bay Farm Visits

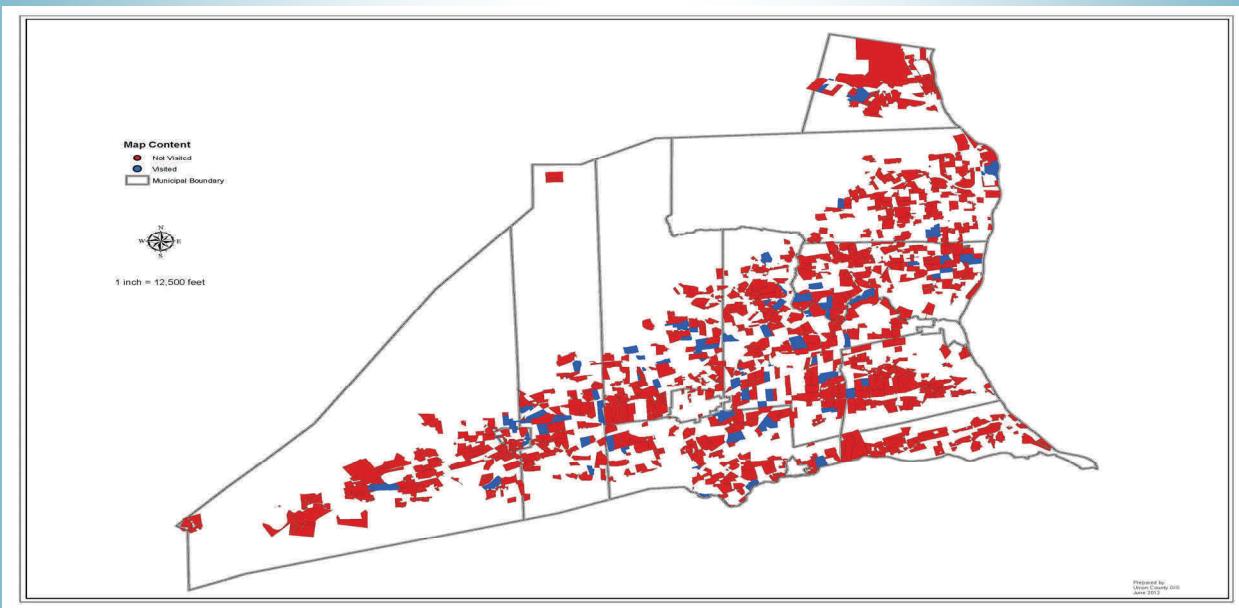
2012 was a continuation of the Chesapeake Bay educational outreach. After a successful, but somewhat short, campaign in 2011, we hit the ground running to update the farmers. Farmers did seem to be more receptive to the idea that they need a written conservation plan or agriculture erosion and sedimentation plan AND a nutrient management plan or a manure management plan. In addition, the state is taking a hard stance on pastures. Brown lots will not be acceptable pasture areas.

The success in 2012 was probably due to word spread that representatives from the Department of Environmental Protection are conducting their own outreach visits. We had a large number of requests for mapping and assistance as a result of the state's visits.

The Union County Conservation District also continues to work towards the goal of 250 farm visits by June 30, 2013 as part of a Growing Greener Grant. The Growing Greener funds made it possible to have another tool to deliver during each farm visit. Union County Conservation District assembled notebooks filled with an explanation of the new regulations, sample E&S and manure management plans, and additional information relevant to general farm operations.

108 farm visits were completed in the 2012 calendar year!

*Note: Map shows farms visits in blue and farms that need visits in red.



United States
Department of Agriculture



Farm
Service

Snyder/Union County FSA Office
405 West Market Street
Middleburg, PA 17842-1038
Phone: 570/837-0007
Fax: 570/837-1038

UNION COUNTY FSA OFFICE

During 2012, the following programs were administered by this office. A list of accomplishments for each program is also listed.

- 1 Guaranteed Farm Ownership Loan totaling \$192,818.00
- 1 Guaranteed Operating Loan totaling \$100,000.00
- 6 Direct Operating Loans totaling \$116,890.00
- 1 Youth Loan totaling \$1,000.00
- 1 Direct Farm Ownership Loan totaling \$170,000.00

DCP/ACRE – Direct and Counter-Cyclical Payment Program - In 2012, producers earned a total of \$209,025.

Marketing Eligibility Loans - In 2012, commodity loans for soybeans and corn were disbursed to producers who reported their crop acres and followed their conservation plans. A total of \$323,697.80 was disbursed in commodity loans in 2012.

Conservation Reserve Program --CREP or Continuous CRP participants earned a total of \$289,001 in rental payments. Producers who participate in CRP remove the acreage from crop production for the period of the contract. Acres must be in a sod cover, trees or a conservation practice. Producers also received \$23,505 in cost sharing for practices completed in 2012. Practice incentive payments of \$18,815 were issued to producers who had completed practices eligible for the PIP.

In 2012, producers also were eligible for Livestock Indemnity Payments for loss of livestock due to the extreme heat. A total of \$1851 was paid to producers for livestock losses.

In addition, the Emergency Livestock Assistance program reimbursed producers who suffered losses due to natural disasters. A total of \$89,280 was paid under this program.

Producers who grow crops that do not have crop insurance coverage in the county can pay a fee to participate in the Noninsured Assistance Program. In 2011, participants earned a total of \$2580 for crop losses suffered in 2011/2012.

TOTAL DISBURSEMENTS IN 2012: \$957,754.8 with \$323,697.80 being loan principal that will be repaid.

Ard's Wetland

For the past year and a half the Watershed Specialist has worked with a number of organizations, including Ard's Farm Market, the Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance (part of the Merrill W. Linn Land & Waterways Conservancy), the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bucknell University, the Game Commission, and volunteers of all varieties have been working to make this wetland a reality. With the help of a grant from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds planning began, and the permitting process was eased by the expertise of the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners Program.

The 1½ acre wetland has a watershed of approximately 110 acres and is fed by an unnamed intermittent tributary and a spring. The wetland outflows into Limestone Run. The wetland design was put together by Bucknell engineering students under the supervision Dr. Matt Higgins. It was further modified by a team from US Fish and Wildlife that used its skills and equipment in construction. In April 2012 the wetland was constructed, planted with native shrubs, and supplemented with wildlife boxes. The wetland will be the subject of study by Bucknell engineering and biology students beginning in January 2013.

The wetland is the first in what is hoped to be a series of wetlands throughout Union County. A committee, including folks from UCCD, Buffalo Creek Watershed Alliance, US Department of Agriculture, Bucknell and the PA Department of Environmental Protection has been working for several years on other wetland options.





Limestone Run Streambank Stabilization

The Victorian Lady, Inc. partnered with the Watershed Specialist to apply for funding to address their failing streambanks. The UCCD Watershed Specialist worked with the landowners, Linn Conservancy Coordinator, Bucknell faculty and students, PA Association of Conservation Districts, PA Fish and Boat Commission, and the Department of Environmental Protection to study the site and design a solution. A Growing Greener grant application was submitted and funding was awarded to the Union County Conservation District to implement the project.

The ultimate goal of this project was to stabilize eroding streambanks and improve the in-stream habitat and water quality of Limestone Run (A.K.A. "Bull Run"). The entire watershed is listed on the PA Department of Environmental Protection's List of Impaired Streams. The watershed is impaired from non-point sources of pollution. Those sources include agricultural nutrients and siltation and urban storm-water runoff as well as suffering from high pathogen levels.

The actively eroding streambanks were stabilized by utilizing a combination of techniques that included log habitat structures and riparian plantings. The establishment of the riparian buffer will filter urban runoff, allow for more storm-water infiltration, add root stability to the banks, shade the stream, and add leaf litter to the stream. By implementing this project it will improve water quality by reducing excess sediment and nutrients entering our waterways and will provide additional terrestrial and aquatic habitat. Educational signage and promotion of the project benefits by the restaurant owners and staff will only enhance the value of the project to the local community and downstream users. The project was constructed in the summer of 2012 and the landowners are very enthusiastic about the results.



