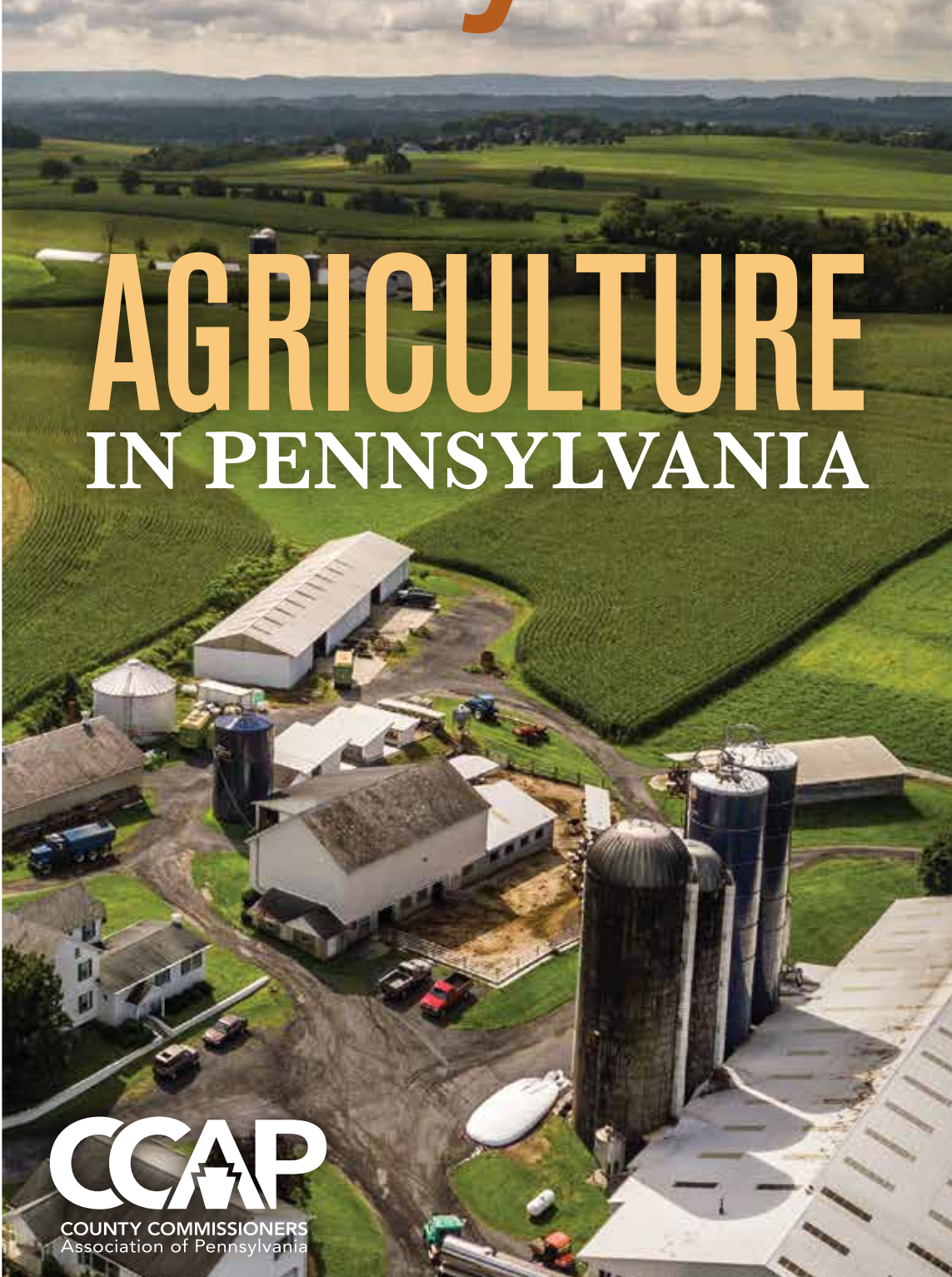


# PENNSYLVANIA county news

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The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP) is the voice of county government; a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan association representing all 67 counties in Pennsylvania. CCAP members include county commissioners, council members, county executives, administrators, chief clerks and solicitors. CCAP strengthens the counties' abilities to govern their own affairs and improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. It advocates for favorable state and federal legislation, programs and policies on behalf of counties. CCAP is committed to service excellence through education, information, insurance, technology and other programs that support effective county government. Founded in 1886, CCAP is a partner with the National Association of Counties.

To acquire an article idea submittal form for CCAP's *Pennsylvania County News* please email Ken Kroski at [kkroski@pacounties.org](mailto:kkroski@pacounties.org).

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spring  
**2020**

# **PENNSYLVANIA** **county news**

## AGRICULTURE IN PA

Farms remain a critical component of life and the economy in Pennsylvania. Numerous aspects, including preservation and technology, are featured in this issue.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

Recycling, conservation districts and stormwater management are among the topics that impact our environment. Learn more.

SPECIAL FEATURE

**F**  **CUS ON**



**44**

**Potter**  
*County*

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Far Reaching and Impactful



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**LISA SCHAEFER**

Executive Director  
County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania

# *E Pluribus Unum* – Out of Many, One

**T**his is not the column I originally wrote for this *County News*.

When I first wrote this column, it was late February. COVID-19 had not caused many challenges. I had driven nearly 1,200 miles in that month and enjoyed six county visits as far away as Greene and Potter counties, ending with a trip to Washington D.C. for the NACo Legislative Conference. I had a little more than 600 minutes in talk time on my cell phone and just shy of 900 texts.

Now, it's early April. I put on about 450 miles in March, or about 300 if you don't count the return trip from Washington. But I have almost 2,000 minutes and 1,500 texts on my cell phone since March 3. Things have changed.

No, this is not the column I originally wrote for this *County News*. Yet in some ways, it still is.

Many of you reading this message know that I have been with CCAP for about 9 and a half years as the direc-

tor of government relations, and so I was very familiar with the work of the Association and the issues faced by our counties. But one of the things I've most enjoyed about these past seven months as executive director has been the chance to *really* get to know and understand the CCAP staff and our counties in a completely different way.

I remain full of optimism at my new role and gratitude for the warm welcome and the level of support I have felt working with our leadership and getting to know all of you better. I continue to be inspired by the conversations I'm having with CCAP staff throughout the transition process, because they reflected not just our high level of talent, but the passion that each staff person brings to his or her role in serving our 67 counties. And I hope to soon continue enjoying my visits to counties, having already spent time with our friends in 16 of our 67 counties, listening to the challenges you face, hearing about the opportunities you are seizing to solve problems and seeing their day in, day out dedication to improving the lives of your residents. Plus, I appreciate being

able to envision your communities and where you might be sitting in your courthouses when we connect after I return to Harrisburg.

In some ways the current circumstances have afforded me the opportunity to connect with members and CCAP staff even more closely than usual. We've worked together to identify, and in some cases invent solutions to our challenges. We've figured out ways to keep operations going, maintain critical services and continue communicating with our many audiences while also doing our best to protect our employees and the public and stop the spread of this virus.

As it has throughout the transition, it continues to strike me that what we do as an association is not just about the big things. Our work advocating at the Capitol, our conferences and meetings, our insurance and technology programs—those are all at the core of what we do. But if you look beyond that, there are so many little things our staff are willing to do for our counties—little things that make a big difference to our members, but

to them, are just “part of the job” or “something I would have done anyway.” I am so proud of the character of the individuals who make up this amazing team and the way they have stepped up to make sure our counties continue to have our strong support, so that all of you can feel confident that you have a dependable resource to turn to. It is a privilege to lead such an incredible group of people.

Recently, the pastor at our church gave a message on the theme *E pluribus unum*—out of many, one. It reminded me that one of the convictions I have always felt during my time at CCAP is that while our counties all might be different—as we say, if you’ve seen one county, you’ve seen one county—our counties are all one in our mission to serve the people of Pennsylvania. Even within the Association, while each of our teams focuses on a different way of serving our members, at the end of the day it is that service to our members that makes us one dynamic, effective organization.

In case you can’t tell, I have a long-standing, unwavering belief in CCAP and in our members, a belief that remains unshaken in the face of this crisis. I believe that our hearts are in the right place and I believe that we will work together to face our challenges and embrace opportunities.

I believe that county government is committed to excellence in meeting the needs of its citizens.

I believe our team, from north to south, east to west, and across every level of the Association, will not shrink from our duty to public service but will keep pushing forward, learn from one another and do everything we can to stop the spread of COVID-19.

It may take weeks yet, or even months, but I believe that we will get through this situation together. And through it all, we will maintain our commitment to make sure our communities, our counties, and in turn Pennsylvania, are safe, healthy and resilient places to live, work and play.

It’s an honor to be your executive director. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to me at any time with your questions, concerns, ideas and feedback so we can build our future together. 🍷

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CCAP is pleased to offer a variety of opportunities to vendors who wish to do business with Pennsylvania counties including participation in the associate vendor membership program, TechNet membership program, Conference attendance and sponsorship, advertising in Pennsylvania County News magazine, and more. There is also an opportunity to participate in a bundled package which includes a variety of year-round benefits for firms looking to increase their exposure among Pennsylvania county officials. CCAP is pleased to welcome the following vendors who have signed on as 2020 participants in the bundled sponsorship packages. We thank them for their support of CCAP and Pennsylvania's counties.

**For more information about our vendor opportunities, please contact Mandi Glantz, director of member and vendor relations, at (717) 736-4739 or [mglantz@pacounties.org](mailto:mglantz@pacounties.org).**

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Contact: Kimberly Hall

The National Association of Counties (NACo) unites America's 3,069 county governments. Founded in 1935, NACo brings county officials together to advocate with a collective voice on national policy, exchange ideas and build new leadership skills, pursue transformational county solutions, enrich the public's understanding of county government and exercise exemplary leadership in public service. NACo's Programs and Services offer counties unique opportunities to help your residents, your employees and your county meet the needs of the future. CCAP has a long standing relationship with NACo and their sponsoring programs. As a CCAP member you have the opportunity to participate in the following endorsed programs: NACo Live Healthy-Dental and Health Discount Program ([www.naco.org/health](http://www.naco.org/health)) and NACo 457 Deferred Compensation administered by Nationwide Retirement Solutions ([www.nationwide.com](http://www.nationwide.com)).

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Contact: Fred Bean

The Pennsylvania Counties Health Insurance Purchasing Cooperative (PCHIPC) was launched in October 2005 with three counties. Today there are 22 counties that represent 9,094 county employees.

Membership is open to any Pennsylvania county as well as any county agency created under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act. It is governed by a Board of Directors made up of a representative from each of the member counties. Each member has a vote in governing PCHIPC.

The program has been successful due to total transparency of claim data and surplus returns that have generated cost savings to member counties.

An aerial photograph of a large farmstead. The central focus is a cluster of buildings including a large white barn, a smaller white house, and several tall cylindrical silos. A dirt road winds through the property. Surrounding the farm are vast green fields, some of which appear to be cornfields. In the background, rolling hills are visible under a sky filled with large, dramatic clouds. The overall scene depicts a well-maintained agricultural operation.

# Farmland Preservation

**FAR REACHING AND IMPACTFUL**



## Doug Wolfgang

Director

PA Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Farmland Preservation

## Pennsylvania leads the nation in farmland preservation with 5,675 farms and 579,940 acres preserved through purchase of permanent agricultural conservation easements.

The program is an investment in the future of Pennsylvania's robust agricultural economy and ensures food supply for a growing population. The commonwealth and 58 participating county programs have invested \$1.6 billion in this effort to date.

It all started in November of 1987 when voters approved by wide margin a bond referendum for \$100 million to fund the purchase of agricultural conservation easements. A year later, in 1988, the Ag Area Security Law was amended to create the state farmland preservation program.

Today, Pennsylvania is the standard-bearer for all similar programs across the United States. Farmland preservation is largely bipartisan and something most everyone agrees is important. It is well funded, supported by the public, and thrives on strong partnerships. However, one of the greatest reasons for farmland preservation's success is its administration at the grassroots level; initially, when the farm owner signs their land up in the township's Agricultural Security Area (ASA), thus making it eligible to be preserved; secondly, when applications are selected by volunteer county boards. In total, hundreds of people that make up county boards and ASA committees champion the program at the local level and are driven by passion for saving farmland for future generations.

## BALANCE AND CHALLENGES

Thirty-two years later, the reasons to continue preserving farmland are compelling. The latest Ag Census figures indicate that Pennsylvania lost thousands of farms from 2012-2017. The rate of conversion to other uses in some areas outpaces the rate at which it is being preserved. Growth is necessary and inevitable. The program is not intended to compete with development, rather to balance agriculture with other land uses.

Development pressures will continue to challenge the program as more people place more demands on energy and infrastructure. A recent example of this includes commercial solar development. Tax incentives are driving solar companies to look at farmland for solar development, as it is open and cleared. Discussions on how solar may be compatible with agriculture will continue, however current law requires that energy be used primarily on the farm. In addition, major electric powerline and gas pipeline projects are hotly contested due to potential impacts

to farmland. There are currently no additional protections for preserved farms beyond those provided by being in the ASA.

Entities such as public utilities are exempt from Agricultural Lands Condemnation Approval Board (ALCAB) jurisdiction, and thus avoid ALCAB's requirement to prove no reasonable and prudent alternative to taking prime farmland. Another example includes large warehouses that are replacing corn fields along major highways linking the Keystone State with the rest of the nation. Zoning provides for these uses at the local level. Zoning will change over time, unlike an agricultural conservation easement, which is perpetual.

## COUNTIES CONTRIBUTE

Preserving farmland in perpetuity is a wise but costly investment. With roughly 1,400 eligible farms on county backlog lists waiting to be preserved, there is much more work to be done. The state Agricultural Land Preservation Board set the 2020 spending threshold at \$43 million in February—the highest amount in more than a decade. Dedicated funding sources include cigarette taxes and Environmental Stewardship funds.

Counties contributed \$16.4 million this year. Each participating county is awarded a grant amount, based on realty transfer tax revenue as a gauge for development pressures. Counties that contribute funds also receive a match amount, based on a prorated percentage of overall county contributions. Counties have two years to spend or encumber funds. Higher funded counties,

such as Berks and Lancaster, preserve dozens of farms each year.

By comparison, counties with less funding must at times accumulate funds in order to purchase an easement. For example, the Crawford County Farmland Preservation Board accumulated five years of state and local funds in order to secure the 641-acre Dunn Family farm last year.

Private non-profit land conservation organizations, such as Lancaster Farmland Trust, partner through the Land Trust Reimbursement program, which helps to cover incidental costs associated with easements purchased using private dollars. Twenty-three active land trust organizations participate, including Lancaster Farmland Trust.

The United States Department of Agriculture is also a partner. The department is currently negotiating a new cooperative agreement to participate with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP), which reimburses up to half of the easement purchase price of qualifying farms. In addition, the department secured a federal Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) award to install conservation and best management practices on preserved farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

## THE FIRST STEP

Township involvement is instrumental. The first step in preserving a farm begins at the township level when the farm owner joins the ASA. There are now more than 1,000 townships across the state

with established ASAs, with enrollment topping 4.5 million acres. In addition to establishing ASAs, an increasing number of townships are contributing to easement purchases.

Northampton County has a long-standing partnership with municipalities to pool local funds for state match. Some townships, such as Silver Spring Township (Cumberland County) use a voter-approved increase in earned income tax to preserve farmland. Other townships, like Warwick Township (Lancaster County) and Clinton Township (Butler County), enacted Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) ordinances that require developers to pay to preserve farmland in agriculture zoned areas in exchange for higher lot densities in areas best suited for development.

## ROI

Although farmland preservation is an initial expense, the return on investment is great. The University of Pennsylvania, through an ag research grant awarded by the department, found that the total economic impact of farmland preservation ranges from \$1.9 to \$2.9 billion dollars each year. The study cited a direct correlation between the amount of farmland preserved and a county's economic performance related to agriculture. The environmental benefits of preserved farmland are estimated to be \$1.9 billion. The report also suggests that farmland contributes more in tax dollars than it demands in services and helps to offset shortfalls in local tax revenue. The study indicates



that many farmers reinvest proceeds in to farming operations by expanding, diversifying and reducing debt load. This in turn boosts local economies and reinvests funds into the agricultural infrastructure.

It is easy to tout the benefits of farmland preservation from an economic and food supply standpoint, but the human side is at times more difficult to capture. For some, the act of preserving the family farm is a defining moment in their lives. It is not a coincidence that many Century and Bicentennial Farms are also preserved. Pennsylvania's agrarian roots date back to colonial times. Farming is embedded in culture here and is a way of life that transcends generations. Love of farm and family is a common theme among the farming community.

Modern agriculture in Pennsylvania is diverse. From dairy to ducks, hemp to hops, mushrooms to maple syrup—the commonwealth has it all.

This diversity is represented in the farms that county boards are working hard to preserve. Crops here grow on some of the most fertile non-irrigated soils found anywhere in the world and are located within a day's drive of over half of the nation's population. Preserved farms will feed the region, nation and world in years to come.

Although focused on food production, farmland provides numerous co-benefits to the commonwealth. Preserving quality farmland provides carbon sequestration, water retention from extreme weather events, and a continuous food supply. All these benefits ensure a more resilient future for Pennsylvania.

## MARKETING AND AGRITOURISM

Direct marketing is a vast sector of Pennsylvania agriculture because some of the most productive farmland is close to major population centers. In fact, Pennsylvania ranks third in the nation in direct farm sales. Successful farms like Maple Acres farm, the last remaining farm in Plymouth Township (Montgomery County) was recently preserved. Maple Acres is a century old family farm that produces fresh fruits and vegetables and has a thriving farm market. It was the site of a celebration last year, as the local community viewed its preservation as a huge victory. By comparison, the larger traditional farming operations in more rural counties are equally important to preserve. Development pressures will inevitably encroach in these areas in

the future as population continues to grow. Purchasing easements in rural counties at today's values makes sense.

Agritourism on preserved farms is flourishing as farm owners capitalize on popular farm stays, barn weddings, harvest festivals, wine tastings and pick-your-own events. These farms rely on dependable broadband services for their customers and community. However, many parts of the commonwealth are unserved or underserved in regard to broadband services. The Governor's Restore PA plan ensures that every resident has access to these necessary services. In today's economy, many companies depend on the ability to reach customers directly and promote their product.

Erie County's preserved Mazza Vineyards grows grapes, which produce wine that is direct marketed. Related events on wineries draw the public to the farm. The Flinchbaugh preserved farm in York County invites the public to take part in pick-your-own pumpkins, a corn maze, and hayrides in the fall. The Flinchbaugh family takes pride in teaching children about agriculture and where food comes from. Direct marketing is considered agricultural production under the Ag Area Security Law, provided at least half of what is sold is produced by the farm operator. Sale of other products and farm related events are provided for in the county program's rural enterprise guidelines.



## FARMS IN TRANSITION

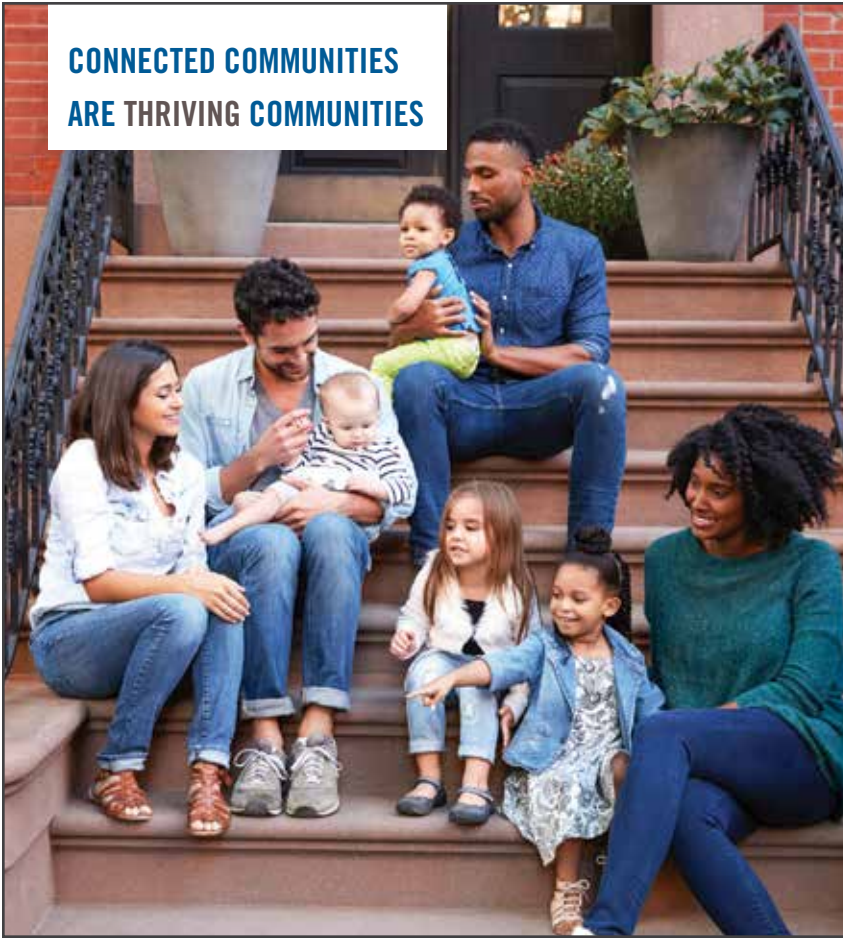
Dedicated county staff work to secure new easement purchases—and realize that work associated with farms already preserved is on the rise. Farms are required to be inspected biennially to verify that landowners are following the deed of easement. This is no small task. Stewardship responsibilities will continue to increase over time as more farms are preserved.

All farms, whether preserved or not, are in transition. The Pennsylvania Farm Bill provides an unprecedented opportunity for preserved farm owners to create business, transition and succession plans through the Ag Business Development Center. More than one-third of all preserved farms have transferred to new owners. This number is expected to increase to two-thirds by 2030. The Farm Vitality Grant Program, through the Ag Business Development Center, provides up to \$7,500 per farm owner for the costs associated with obtaining and implementing such plans.

Steve Reinford owns a preserved dairy farm in Juniata County that he has managed for the past thirty years. Steve is in the process of transferring the farm to his three sons and will take advantage of this grant to help offset costs. In addition, farmers like Chris Orben from Berks County will benefit from the new realty transfer tax exemption for preserved farms that are transferred to qualified beginning farmers. For the past five years, Chris has been involved in all aspects of day to day farm management and is ready to take over ownership. Success stories like these will help to shape the future of agriculture in Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania's Farmland Preservation Program is far reaching and impactful. The counties continued support is paramount to its future success. It is hard to imagine what farmland preservation will be like 32 years from now, but it is certain to have a lasting impact on the lives of all Pennsylvanians. As public officials who support the program year after year, this is in part your legacy. 🍷

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## A Commitment to Preservation



**Matt Knepper**  
Director  
Agricultural Preserve Board

*Commissioners of Lancaster County recognize that Lancaster County will sustain its share of future growth and that this growth should be accommodated with a minimum of conversion of prime agricultural land most appropriate for continued agricultural use. . .”*

It was 1980, Lancaster County was losing as many as 5,000 acres each year to nonagricultural development. The Lancaster County Board of Commissioners had just passed Resolution No. 74, officially establishing the Agricultural Preserve Board to implement a voluntary deed restriction program to preserve agriculture and agricultural land. This came after two years of study by the Agricultural Land Preservation Task Force, who concluded Lancaster County’s farmland was too valuable, that the county must act now, and waste no

time waiting for the state’s farmland preservation program.

The first farms were preserved in 1982 and 1983. By the time Lancaster County’s farmland preservation program was approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the first county program to be approved in the state, 64 farms had been preserved. Nearly thirty years later, a new Board of Commissioners would mark the milestone of 1,000 farms preserved by the Lancaster County Agricultural Preserve Board.

## PRESERVATION BY PARTNERSHIP

The farm that would be the 1,000th preserved farm wasn't a typical Lancaster County farm. It wasn't an Amish-owned farm. At 43 acres, it was smaller than average. It wasn't a dairy, and it wasn't even a live-stock operation. But it was what makes Lancaster County's farmland preservation program successful: it was preservation by partnership.

The 1,000th farm was preserved as a joint project between the Agricultural Preserve Board and Warwick Township. That partnership began in 1998 when Warwick Township became the first township in the county to share in the cost of preserving a farm with the Agricultural Preserve Board. Fittingly, the first ever county-township preserved farm is just across the street from the 1,000th preserved farm and is farmed by the same farmer.

The partnership to preserve the 1,000th farm extends beyond the county-township partnership. Warwick Township's funding for farmland preservation comes from its Transferable Development Rights (TDR) Program, a program that allows developers of non-agricultural land to increase density or lot coverage by purchasing development rights from farmers. Warwick Township brokers the deals, purchasing development rights from farmers when a farm is preserved and later selling them to developers. It's the partnership of developers, by participating in Warwick Township's TDR program, that generated the funds needed for Warwick Township to help preserve the 1,000th farm and 3,000 acres of farmland in their township.



*Celebrating 1,000 are Matt Knepper, Agricultural Preserve Board director; Craig Lehman and Josh Parsons, Lancaster County commissioners; Fredrick "Hunter" Hess, 1,000th preserved farm owner; Ray D'Agostino, Lancaster County commissioner; Andrea Shirk, Rock Litz general manager; W. Logan Myers, III, Warwick Township Supervisors chair; and Jeff Frey, Agricultural Preserve Board chair.*

## THE PACE OF PRESERVATION

Preservation by partnership extends to other townships that dedicate funding for farmland preservation in support of their comprehensive plan and community goals. When a township shares the cost of preservation, their farmers receive priority from the Agricultural Preserve Board, which allows the township to control the pace of preservation in their community and the Agricultural Preserve Board to leverage its funding, providing for the preservation of additional farmland elsewhere.

Partnership with townships extend beyond simple cost sharing, as planning and zoning requirements for preservation are implemented at the local level. Early on, the Agricultural Preserve Board recognized the importance of agricultural zoning

and established official policy that farms must be zoned for agriculture to qualify for preservation.

In the mid-90s, consistency with local land use planning was strengthened again, with the requirement that farms be located outside of a Designated Growth Area to qualify for preservation. Additionally, all farms must be in an established Agricultural Security Area prior to preservation. These three requirements are land use designations controlled by townships, ensuring the Agricultural Preserve Board and county townships concur when deciding which farms should be permanently preserved.

## THE COMMITMENT TO PRESERVE

Lancaster County's longest running preservation partnership is with Lancaster Farmland Trust. Founded

in 1988, the private, nonprofit Lancaster Farmland Trust was formed as a deliberate response to the need for a complementary preservation option for plain sector farmers who were reluctant to take part in a government funded program. To date, Lancaster Farmland Trust has preserved more than 500 farms, proving to be an invaluable partner in the county's farmland preservation effort. Recognizing the value of a private farmland preservation program, the Board of Commissioners provides an annual challenge grant to Lancaster Farmland Trust. Since 2001, that challenge grant alone has resulted in the preservation of 216 farms and leveraged more than \$46 million in private funds and landowner contributions.

The Agricultural Preserve Board's most significant preservation partner, in terms of funding, is the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and the Bureau of Farmland Preservation. In 1989, Lancaster County's farmland preservation program became the first authorized by the Department of Agriculture and the first farm in the county-state farmland preservation program was preserved in Lancaster. Since that time, Lancaster County has leveraged its own funding every year through the state's farmland preservation program,

where every dollar of county money allocated for farmland preservation is matched and returns more than a dollar of state funds.

But of all the Agricultural Preserve Board's partners, none are more important than the farmers who make the commitment to preserve their farms. Farmers volunteer to permanently restrict their farm to agricultural use and to limit the future potential value of their farm. Many also offer to preserve their farms at a bargain sale and to accept a lower payment. Bargain sales bring the average payment made to farmers for preserving their farms to 90% of the value, leveraging the county's resources even further, and allowing for the preservation of one or two additional farms each year.

## UNFADING COMMITMENT TO PRESERVATION

Through 30 years of partnerships, Lancaster County reached a milestone the original members of the Agricultural Preserve Board could only dream about—the preservation of 1,000 farms. It is a milestone even more significant than the number of farms and acres of agricultural land it represents. It is significant because of the promise it fulfills.

The first farmers to preserve their farms were pioneers dedicated to the long-term success of agriculture in Lancaster County. But they were also concerned that they might be the only ones to preserve their farms. What if farmland preservation never catches on among other farmers? What if agricultural zoning isn't adopted and neighboring farms are all sold for development? What if public support for farmland preservation wanes and the county stops funding the Agricultural Preserve Board? Would their preserved farm become an island in a sea of development?

The preservation of 1,000 farms represents Lancaster County's unfading commitment to agriculture and farmland preservation. It makes good on the promises made to those first pioneers. It was, and will remain, a team effort. A team of nonfarming public who recognize the value of farming, community volunteers serving on boards and committees, township supervisors making difficult land use decisions, county commissioners and state and federal legislators balancing budgets, and most importantly, Lancaster County farmers. ▼





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## Chuck Gill

Public Relations Specialist  
Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences

**T**he case was submitted by the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Three wild turkeys were acting strangely, stumbling around a backyard in suburban Erie. A wildlife officer captured one of them, and soon the bird—by now deceased—arrived in the lab of Eva Wallner-Pendleton.

At about the same time last fall, Wallner-Pendleton received reports of sick birds at a pheasant operation on the other side of the state, in Monroe County. Before their death, they appeared to have neurological issues, and a few of

those fowl also made their way to Wallner-Pendleton.

As a clinical associate professor and avian pathologist at Penn State's Animal Diagnostic Laboratory, Wallner-Pendleton performed necropsies on the birds, the brains of which showed microscopic evidence of encephalitis. Because encephalitis has several potential causes, samples underwent further examination using a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test, a tool that allows specific and rapid diagnosis of infectious diseases caused by viruses and bacteria. Meanwhile, the Pennsylvania Department of

Agriculture also was investigating separate suspected cases of encephalitis in horses in Carbon, Luzerne, and Mercer counties.

## QUICK DIAGNOSIS

In all of these cases, the PCR testing came back positive for Eastern equine encephalitis, often referred to as EEE, a serious mosquito-borne viral disease that is known to strike, as its name implies, horses. However, the pathogen also can affect upland game birds, wild turkeys, and rarely people. Only about 4-5% of people who get the virus develop encephalitis, but of those

who do, roughly 30% will die, and survivors may suffer permanent neurological problems.

An average of about seven human cases of EEE occur annually in the United States, but as of mid-December, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported 38 confirmed cases in 2019, mostly in the Northeast, mid-Atlantic, and Michigan, including 15 deaths. Although no human cases were reported in Pennsylvania, the quick diagnosis of the virus in animals enabled agriculture officials and Penn State Extension to issue timely warnings to residents—and in particular horse owners—to protect their animals and themselves from mosquitoes to reduce the risk of contracting the disease.

## PADLS

This sudden spike in EEE cases spotlights the important role of Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences, the college's Animal Diagnostic Lab, and Penn State Extension in disease surveillance, diagnosis, preparedness and response. The college's scientific expertise, research infrastructure, and educational networks combine to help create a powerful bulwark that protects and promotes animal and human health, as well as the economic success and sustainability of Pennsylvania's animal-agriculture industries.

The Animal Diagnostic Lab is a keystone in that effort. The lab is part of the state-funded Pennsylvania Animal Diagnostic Laboratory System (PADLS) which also includes the Pennsylvania Veterinary Laboratory at the Department of Agriculture in Harrisburg and the



*With help from farmers across the commonwealth, Penn State's Animal Diagnostic Lab is prepared to respond quickly to disease threats. Photo: Michael Houtz*

University of Pennsylvania's New Bolton Center in Kennett Square. Together, the three labs each year perform more than a half million tests for all animal diseases. What sets the Penn State lab apart is its connection to the university's land-grant research, extension, and educational enterprises.

The \$1.7 billion poultry industry, Pennsylvania's second largest agricultural sector after dairy, relies heavily on PADLS for surveillance and diagnostic services related to poultry diseases, such as avian influenza. The state has been on high alert for avian flu after a major 2014-2015 outbreak, mostly in the Midwest, led to the death of more than 50 million turkeys and laying hens in 21 states, with estimated economic impacts in the billions of dollars. The Keystone State was spared during that outbreak, but because avian flu viruses are carried by migrating waterfowl, the threat is ever-present.

"We performed nearly 71,000 tests for avian flu in the past year," said Wallner-Pendleton. "We've recently seen about a 30 % increase in submissions from sources such as the Game Commission, veterinarians, and owners of both commercial and small pet flocks. Also, with small 'backyard' flocks rising in popularity, we're sometimes seeing diseases that we haven't seen in years. Because these birds typically are outdoors, they're encountering things that up until a few years ago were fairly rare."

## A RARE DISEASE

One such disease is avian coryza, a bacterial respiratory infection. Infected chickens display symptoms similar to a severe head cold: facial swelling, discharge from the nose and eyes, sneezing, and coughing. Feed intake is decreased, slowing broilers' growth rate and delaying their market age, and layers will show a sharp drop in egg produc-

tion—as much as 40%. The illness typically is not fatal, but producers must absorb the costs of lost production and needed veterinary care, such as antibiotics and vaccination.

“We’ve seen more than 60 cases of coryza across Pennsylvania since early 2019,” Wallner-Pendleton said. “That’s very unusual. This is an illness that typically is more of a problem on the West Coast and in the South, and only occasionally in the Northeast. An outbreak like this is unprecedented, and we still don’t completely understand how it’s spreading all over the state.”

Microbiologist Suresh Kuchipudi is among college researchers studying these coryza outbreaks. A clinical professor of veterinary and biomedical sciences and assistant director of the Animal Diagnostic Lab, he led an effort to develop a real-time PCR test for coryza to speed diagnosis and get a handle on how the pathogen is spreading.

“Until recently, the only labs that had a confirmatory test for coryza were in Georgia and California,” Kuchipudi said. “We were sending samples to Georgia, which added costs for shipping, and we had to wait four to six weeks for results. At the same time, there was significant concern from the poultry industry, which needed answers to respond to this emergency.”

Kuchipudi first worked with other labs and college experts to sequence the genome of the coryza pathogen in a matter of a few months. Using this sequencing, his team developed an assay for coryza, which was validated and

received fast-track approval from the Pennsylvania Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission.

“The outbreak started in late December of 2018, and by June we could offer this test, which is the first probe-based PCR assay for this disease in the world,” he said. “Now, many states are sending samples to us, and we earned the trust of the poultry industry, which knows when they face a crisis, Penn State has the capability to step in and help find solutions.”

The availability of the new rapid test, Wallner-Pendleton noted, means that clients sending suspected cases of coryza to the Penn State lab now can expect to receive results within two days—a critical factor in limiting the spread of the disease.

## BIOSECURITY ON FARMS

With information from the coryza genome sequencing in hand, scientists determined that the same pathogen—rather than unique strains—has been involved in cases around the state, indicating that farm-to-farm transfer likely is the primary avenue of infection. And that illustrates the critical need for sound biosecurity on farms, which researchers and extension specialists say is the single most effective method for keeping flocks and herds healthy.

The importance of biosecurity in safeguarding the health of food animals becomes apparent when you consider the economic contributions of animal agriculture in Pennsylvania, contends David Swartz, Penn State Extension assistant director for animal systems

programs. He highlights the fact that nearly 70% of Pennsylvania’s agricultural receipts come from animal ag, and with razor-thin margins, producers who lose production to disease—even if not fatal to animals—may have their profits wiped out.

“When we ask the swine and poultry industries what their top priorities are for partnering with extension to address, the first one is animal health, including biosecurity and disease monitoring and prevention,” said Swartz. “Education on biosecurity and disease detection is part of almost every livestock and poultry program we offer.”

That includes 4-H, Swartz said. “The co-mingling of show animals at a place like the Pennsylvania Farm Show or a large county fair is an incredible risk for disease transmission. We push biosecurity information out to every 4-H member that does an animal science project, and we educate them about the signs of disease to look for in their animals. That’s a very important part of their 4-H education.”

Swartz points out that biosecurity is a challenge for many producers. “These operations depend on so many partners, such as service people who are bringing feed, supplies, and new animals onto the farm,” he said. “And that means they’re dependent on those service and delivery partners to follow biosecurity protocols and maintain vigilance as well. Producers also need to instill biosecurity awareness in their workforce—they really depend on their farm managers and workers to do the right thing every single day with no let up.”

## DISEASE FROM ABROAD

Elizabeth Hines says animal health and biosecurity long have been high priorities for pig producers, but they are especially “top-of-mind” with the current threat of African swine fever looming over swine herds around the world. The assistant professor of animal science serves on a state-led African swine fever task force, which is planning for how the state would respond should this devastating disease come to American shores.

So far, African swine fever, which is not a threat to people, has killed or led to the culling of hundreds of millions of swine in Asia and Europe, amounting to roughly a quarter of the world’s domestic pigs. The viral disease has roiled global pork markets and caused shortages in many countries. Hines said the task force has concentrated heavily on what protocols and

procedures will be triggered in a potential Pennsylvania outbreak. But protecting the state’s pigs starts with biosecurity, which Hines promotes as she works with producers on production and management issues in her role as an extension swine specialist.

“For swine farmers and other livestock producers, it’s really about controlling, to the best of their ability, what interacts with their animals,” Hines said. “It’s about putting hurdles in front of pathogens or anything else that may threaten animal health. You don’t want to allow people onto your premises who may carry an animal disease from another farm. Washing or disinfecting of shoes and vehicles and buying feed from a reputable feed mill that has quality control are great first steps to protecting the health of your herd from outside threats. Make sure animals are vaccinated and that sick

animals are treated promptly and properly to prevent and minimize disease spread within your herd. “Biosecurity protocols may seem inconvenient but taking a couple extra steps to protect your herd can be one of the best investments you make.”

Last fall, PA Pork’s Strategic Investment Program funded eight workshops in which Hines walked producers through the Secure Pork Supply initiative, which focuses on building an advanced biosecurity plan. The voluntary program helps producers to protect their herds and stay in business in the event of an infectious disease outbreak, during which government regulatory agencies would limit the movement of animals and animal products to control disease spread. “For many producers who participated in the workshops, this was the first time they had a written biosecurity plan,” she said.



## WELL POSITIONED

Hines also is working with Kuchipudi to expand linkages between the Animal Diagnostic Lab and Penn State Extension related to diseases affecting pigs, and the two are developing a swine health short course that Hines hopes to offer to producers for the first time in spring 2020.

The Extension Poultry Team is involved in similar efforts, Swartz said. Members of the team serve on a state avian flu task force and hold a poultry health meeting eight times per year in Lancaster to update industry leaders on new research and disease information.

As a result, if an outbreak of African swine fever, avian flu, or other major disease occurs, Penn State

Extension is well positioned to support government agencies in the response. While the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture and USDA may impose quarantines and restrict the movement of animals, extension specialists and county-based educators will provide expertise and local knowledge.

"Educators may have knowledge of a specific swine operation and may be called upon to consult," Hines said. "They can advise on how a farm is set up or the age of the animals at the site, which can influence the exact response plan. We also have educators that are trained on methods for depopulating a herd or flock and composting or otherwise disposing of a potentially large number of carcasses, if that would become necessary."

A key asset that Penn State Extension brings to its partnerships with government agencies and the animal-ag industry is its statewide presence, according to Swartz. "We have people across the state, and we are requiring all our educators to learn about animal diseases, even for species outside their regular program areas," he said. "I want our dairy educators to have a working knowledge of African swine fever. I want our equine educators to have a working knowledge of avian flu. I want all the people in our system who have animal science responsibilities to have cross-training and baseline knowledge so they're able to more quickly respond to what's in front of them." 🍷

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# The Current State of Recycling



## in Pennsylvania

### Jodi Brennan

Clearfield County Recycling Coordinator

**R**ecycling in Pennsylvania was kicked into gear back in 1988 with the passage of the Municipal Waste Planning Recycling and Waste Reduction Act (Act 101). The Act requires certain communities, based on population, to recycle. It further requires each county to develop county plans to manage its own wastes and assure a minimum of ten years disposal capacity.

So, how far have we come and what remains to be achieved?

Your county recycling coordinator is a great resource. These folks have their finger on the pulse of recycling in your county.

Coming from a county recycling coordinator perspective this article is designed to give the reader a snapshot of what recycling looks like today, the challenges, the opportunities, and what is needed to sustain and grow recycling in Pennsylvania.

### ACCESS TO RECYCLING

Today, more than 11.6 million residents, at least 94% of the state's population, have access to recycling. About 79% have convenient access to recycling through about 1,050 curbside pickup programs. Since Pennsylvania is largely rural, 870 drop-off programs extend recycling to a number of additional communities. While 94% access is good, we still have underserved areas across the state.

Additionally, many municipalities and counties offer recycling, composting, and/or safe waste disposal programs for special materials such as tires, white goods, household hazardous waste (HHW), electronics, and yard/wood waste.

## AMOUNT OF RECYCLING

Since the state started tracking recycling data the amount of tons recycled per year has been on the increase. Publicly available data shows that for 2016 Pennsylvania recycled more than 7.84 million tons of recyclables, 4.80 million tons in 2006 and just 2.55 million tons in 1996. So, in terms of growth, we've seen an average increase of 75% per decade.

## PROGRAMS OFFERED

One size doesn't fit all, which is why recycling programs differ across the state from curbside collections to public drop-off programs. Programs serviced by both private and public sector entities with some public programs relying on volunteer labor to keep their programs sustainable.

We have seen source-separated collections move to single stream collections and unstaffed drop-off sites evolve into gated card key entry only drop-off sites. Programs transition depending on the local community's needs or available service capacity.

The biggest transition over the past decade has been a transition from source separated collection to single stream collection. Lycoming County Recycling Coordinator Lauren Strausser shares with us their experience with single

stream, "Single stream recycling eliminates the need to separate your household recycling allowing the convenience of disposing all recyclable materials into one container. Although single stream allows for more types of materials to be recycled, there has been an increase of "wishful recycling," this is when people believe or want an item to be accepted even if it's not. This can also be observed at the source separated drop off sites (predominantly for plastics). Contamination and unwanted materials have always been a concern, which is why it is important to invest in proper educational outreach methods. Especially since the recycling markets have been down for a few years, it is becoming more difficult to maintain a sustainable recycling program."

## WHAT'S GETTING RECYCLED?

Curbside and drop-off programs typically accept aluminum and steel cans, glass bottles, jars, plastic



bottles, jugs and paper. Over the past decade our municipal solid waste (MSW) composition has evolved. We are seeing less newsprint, office paper, glass containers, more plastic packaging and corrugated cardboard.

Additionally, we are seeing lighter weighted aluminum, steel and plastic containers. Packaging innovation has resulted in the production of lightweight packaging, such as multilayer, multi-resin pouches, and more products in shelf-stable aseptic cartons. Unfortunately, many recycling programs do not accept these materials due to market limitations.



Glass, one of the heaviest commodities recycled, has been dropping from programs across the state due to processing and contamination issues. This changing waste stream means material recovery facilities (MRFs) are handling lighter weight materials with less scrap value.

## RECYCLING IS NOT FREE

Regardless of the type of recycling program, one thing they all have in common is the services are not free. Sure, perhaps as a resident you don't receive a direct invoice for service but there most definitely are costs associated with providing those services. Costs associated with the collection, transportation, processing and marketing of those recyclables.

## REVENUE FROM SALE OF RECYCLABLES & STATE GRANTS ARE INSUFFICIENT

Revenue from the sale of recyclables is insufficient to financially sustain recycling programs. Even

when you throw into the mix state recycling grants it still may not be enough. This is particularly true in less populated areas of the state. Smaller populations equate to fewer mandated recycling communities and less private sector provided services, resulting in many counties filling the gap in recycling services.

## STATE RECYCLING GRANT FUNDS ARE ROUTINELY RAIDED FOR NON-RECYCLING USES

The annual revenue for the State Recycling Grants Fund has decreased over the years and has leveled out to around \$38 million. Additionally, based on the current cost of living index, the \$2/ton fee established in 1988 to fund recycling, adjusted for inflation, is currently worth just \$.97/ton.

As there are fewer funds available the state has adjusted how much they distribute and additional requirements for accessing those funds have been implemented.

While counties and municipalities have less available state recycling grant dollars to draw upon to sustain their programs, state legislators believe that the State Recycling Grants Fund is rich with surpluses. As such these funds, along with other special state funds, have been raided routinely over the past number of years. These "surpluses" actually contain encumbered funds already committed to many county and local municipalities and are paid out over several years.

In recent years, the following amounts were transferred from the State Recycling Fund to the General Fund: \$15 million in 2008/09; \$9 million in 2016/17; \$15 million in 2017/18; and \$10 million in 2019/20.

## MARKETS

One of the biggest impacts on recycling over the past few years has been China's new waste import policy (China National Sword). As one of the largest consumers of recyclables China has banned the importation of certain types of recyclables, as well as set strict contamination limits on recyclable materials. No longer will they accept shipments that are mixed with trash, the wrong type of recyclable, or low-quality recyclables.

While market fluctuation is not new to recycling, China's new waste import policy has severely impacted the global market for recyclable material. The major recycling commodities that have been impacted have been mixed paper, mixed plastics and corrugated containers. It's all about supply and demand. Now supply is greater than demand severely diminishing the value of these materials.



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## CONTAMINATION & WISH-CYCLING

While contamination has always been an important factor in recycling, China's new waste import policy restrictions on contamination have been the most hurtful in terms of recycling revenue. The acceptable level of contamination in scrap and recyclable materials not banned is now expected to have a contamination level no greater than 0.5%. China's National Sword has contributed substantially to a 50% reduction in the revenues received from the sale of recyclables recovered through curbside recycling.

Waste Management, a significant collector and processor of recyclables in Pennsylvania notified many recycling coordinators across the state of the huge impact contamination has had on their recycling operations. Effective immediately they would be rejecting obviously contaminated loads and eliminating, where possible, glass from their recycling programs.

In fact, that has been the case as glass has dropped from a number of recycling programs over the past few years. We have also seen certain plastics (#3, 4, 5 and 7) be eliminated from recycling programs as well. Penalized thousands of dollars by their contractor for the contamination mixed with the recycling, counties such as Crawford and Erie have completely eliminated their programs.

This concern was echoed by Lawrence County Recycling Coordinator Jerry Zona, "We've watched other regional programs shuttered due to contamination and the pen-

alties that came with it. Our RFP included safeguards against penalties but, overall, our current cost of approximately \$200,000 (both Mercer and Lawrence annually) for the program would have increased to almost \$360,000. That was not an economically sustainable option for our counties. Ultimately, we decided to eliminate the bottles, jugs, cans and jars from our program rather than close sites. Although disappointing, this change allowed us to push forward without closing sites while remaining within our budget constraints."

Wish-cycling, as mentioned earlier, which is the practice of folks placing unacceptable items into the recycling bin with the wishful thinking it gets recycled, is a serious contributor to contamination. When a batch of recyclables is contaminated, there's a good chance it'll be rejected and end up in a landfill. Contamination drives up costs, limits the ability to market recyclables, and decreases the value of what is recycled.

## THE BENEFITS OF RECYCLING

It seems that every time recycling is faced with a challenge the benefit of recycling is questioned. Selling folks on the environmental benefits alone is no longer sufficient in today's environment where climate change is believed by some to be a hoax. It's just as important, if not more so, to show the economic benefits as well.

The Pennsylvania Recycling Markets Center (RMC) released an economic study that evaluated the economic impact of recycling within our state. What they found

was that across Pennsylvania, the recycling marketplace supported 175,586 jobs, stimulated \$50.9 billion in sales, and produced \$511.2 billion in wages. Wages were 23% above the Pennsylvania average, sales activity was valued at \$50.9 billion, \$22.6 billion was contributed to Pennsylvania's Gross State Product and \$4.4 billion was paid in federal, state, and local taxes.

When you combine the economic benefits with the environmental benefits, also reported in this study, then we have some solid compelling reasons why you should support your local recycling program.

## ILLEGAL DUMPING/ ELECTRONICS (CDRA)

Even with the strides we have made in terms of providing recycling and safe disposal options for Pennsylvanians, illegal dumping continues to plague the state. If folks think illegal dumping is just a rural problem; think again.

Recently, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful commissioned a survey of nine cities on the money they spend to manage litter and illegal dumping. Participating cities included: Allentown, Altoona, Erie, Harrisburg, Lancaster, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Reading and Scranton. What they found was that the cities collectively spend more than \$68 million/year on prevention, education, cleanup and enforcement to address litter and illegal dumping, and 80% of these costs go toward cleanup.

Adding to an already tasking problem is the Covered Device Recycling Act (Act 108 of 2010). The

Act established free manufacturer recycling programs for residents and a disposal ban for all covered electronic devices. The devices covered by the law include TVs, desktop and laptop computers, computer monitors, and peripherals (anything that connects to a computer such as a mouse, printer, keyboard, hard drive, etc.).

All covered devices were to be recycled at no cost. To further ensure these electronics were dealt with properly, landfills and other solid waste disposal facilities could no longer accept these items or their components.



This legislation, however, did not work out as intended. Many residents across the state don't have access to these manufacturer-sponsored "free" electronic recycling programs. What happens when counties have no available electronics recycling outlet, or an affordable recycling option and their garbage man is not allowed to take that old TV? Well, sadly, it has caused an upsurge in the illegal dumping of electronics.

In some parts of the state, residents travel 50+ miles to get to an e-waste recycling facility or collection event and then end up paying 60 cents per pound for their old television. Legislation aimed at addressing the issue has gone nowhere for way too many years.

According to Clinton County Recycling Coordinator Mike Crist, "The Clinton County Solid Waste Authority has offered electronics recycling since 2005. At the beginning of 2018, the Authority switched from a free residential electronics recycling program to a fee-based program in an effort to cope with the issues created by the CDRA. It is our opinion that the Act should be amended to make electronic recycling sustainable throughout the commonwealth. One way to do this would be to remove CRT devices from the list of banned landfill materials."

## RECYCLING PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

So, given the current conditions, what does the future hold for recycling in Pennsylvania? While we have lost a number of recycling programs along the way, many of our programs are still stand-

ing, albeit perhaps offering less services than previously. We are determined to keep our programs operational into the foreseeable future. We have learned to adapt, be more creative, more resourceful, and rely more than ever on our communities' continued support.

The key message your county recycling coordinator wants you to know is that there is still strong public support for recycling in Pennsylvania regardless of age or geographic location. Fellow Centre County Recycling Coordinator Joanne Shafer sums that message up perfectly, "A whole generation of Pennsylvanians have grown up with the concept that recycling is expected. More Pennsylvanians recycle than vote. But the notion that it is cost-free and self-supporting is a fallacy. With current market conditions, support for local recycling programs is needed more than ever. Local recycling programs mean local jobs for local people."

There is still work to be done. Large quantities of marketable materials continue to be disposed of instead of recycled. Legislative fixes are needed to address those impediments mentioned earlier related to sustaining recycling programs, providing additional recycling options to the underserved, and providing convenient and affordable access to electronics recycling. Opportunities exist for those recyclable materials that either are no longer sent overseas or currently go into a landfill.

Opportunities exist to create new products and new jobs here in the United States ... here in our great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. ▀

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# Implementing the Allegheny County Act 167 SWMP

**Kay K. Pierce**

Manager, Planning Division  
Allegheny County Economic Development

**A**llegheny County lies entirely within the Ohio River Basin. Its 730 square miles is divided into 25 major watersheds defined under PA Act 167 (Pennsylvania Stormwater Management Act of 1978), which ultimately drain to one of the county's four major rivers: the Youghiogheny, the Monongahela, the Allegheny and the Ohio. The county's hilly topography and approximately 2000 miles of stream further divide the 25 major watersheds into numerous sub-sheds. Conditions vary widely from one subshed to another; and an estimated 772 miles of stream are impaired.

## HISTORIC PATTERNS

Many of the county's water-related problems stem from historic patterns of land use and development. For example, floodplains, streams and wetlands were filled in, piped or developed. Steep, landslide-prone hillsides were stripped of stabilizing vegetation. Industrial-style activities, handling of sewage, erosion, uncontrolled runoff and other factors impacted water quality. While these days we have a better understanding of the important relationship between land use and water management, changing weather patterns have introduced a new, complex factor into the mix.

In Allegheny County, which has 130 municipalities, water issues are also an equity issue. Municipalities at the bottom of a watershed are often disproportionately impacted by flooding that originates upstream. Many of these municipalities are former industrial river towns with aging water and sewer infrastructure, declining populations, and eroding tax bases. In Allegheny Places, the county's comprehensive plan, a county-wide Act 167 plan was recommended as the most equitable and cost-effective way to ensure that all of our municipalities would have the tools they need to manage stormwater runoff.

## SWMOS

Subsequently, in December of 2017, Allegheny County adopted a county-wide stormwater management plan (SWMP), which was approved by the PADEP on May 31, 2018. PA Act 167 requires that municipalities adopt a compliant stormwater management ordinance (SWMO) within six months of the date that the PADEP's approves the watershed plan. To both encourage and enable municipalities to adopt a compliant stormwater management ordinance, Allegheny County created a "mini grant" program that was funded through the Allegheny County capital budget.

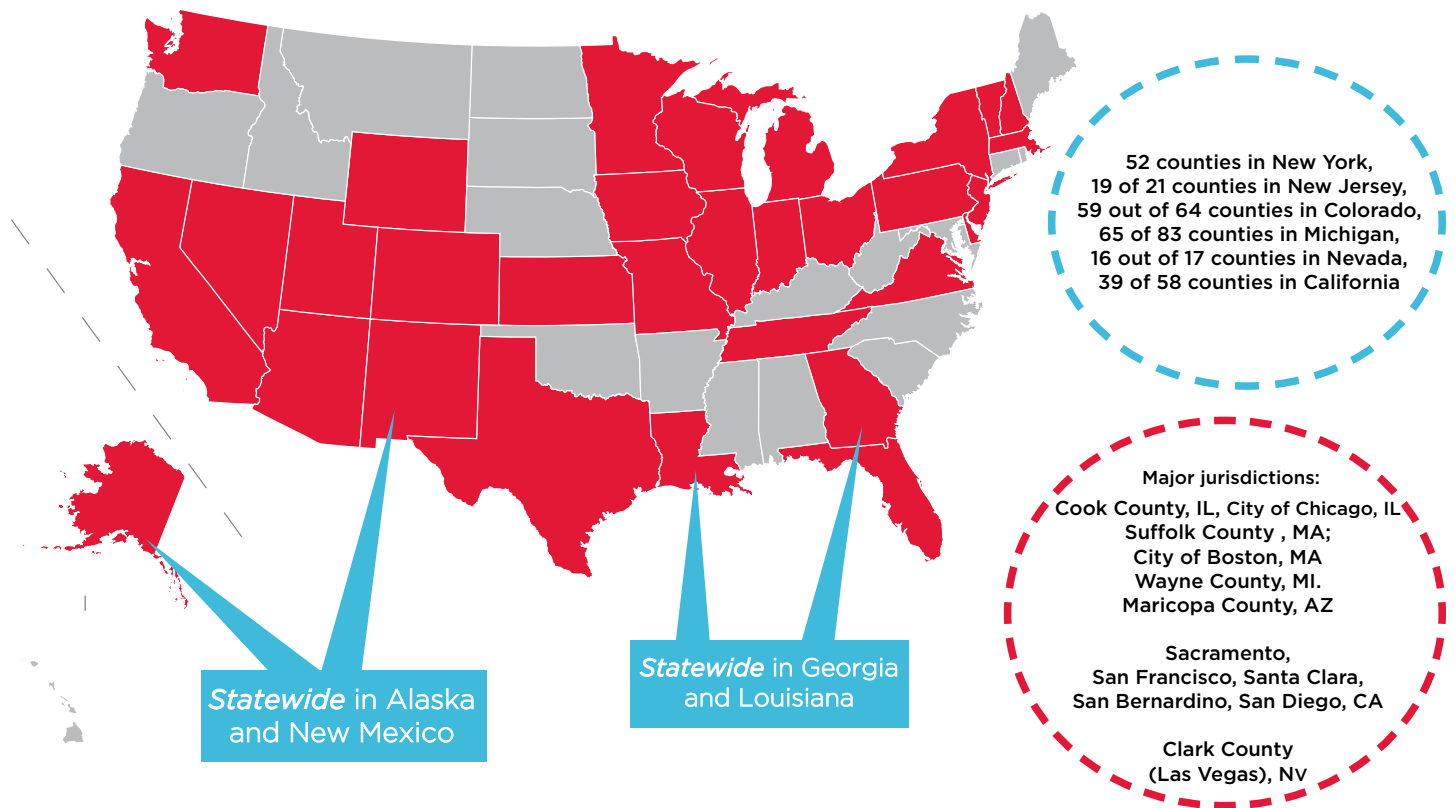
The maximum grant amount per municipality was \$2,000.00, with a 25% match requirement. The funds could be used for costs directly associated with preparing and adopting a SWMO, such as engineering and legal reviews, legal advertising, and printing and distributing the ordinance. The application process was designed to be as simple as possible, so that municipalities could apply for and receive a notice of award quickly. However, in order to be reimbursed for their expenses, municipalities had to provide a copy of their adopted SWMO along with their invoices.

By the end of the program, \$160,000 had been awarded to 81 municipalities. Although every municipality asked for and was awarded the maximum amount, a surprising number of municipalities didn't use the full amount. Very few municipalities that received an award never adopted a SWMO. There were also a few municipalities that adopted a compliant SWMO without any funding from the grant program. All told, by the end of the program 87 municipalities had adopted a compliant SWMO. 🍷



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- PTG is the leading provider of web-based pension administration software systems serving the public employee retirement community.
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# Conservation Districts

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

## Mike Price

President, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc.  
Chair, Beaver County Conservation District

**A**s volunteers, we give our time, our talent, and our treasure. But what do we get in return? I've found that what we give, we get back exponentially. Through volunteering with Pennsylvania's conservation districts, I've turned my passion into pride. Whether it's educational programs, improving rural roads, cleaning up streams for better fishing, or helping farmers avoid fines for polluting, conservation districts make a difference in our communities by ensuring there is enough clean water for future generations. I'm proud to be leading this effort in Pennsylvania. I was working full-time for the Ricoh Company when I was asked to be an associate member of the Beaver County Conservation District (BCCD) in 1996. A year later, I was a full director member of the board, and in 2004 I became chairman of the board.

A board of directors governs conservation districts. These volunteers study county natural resource issues and make decisions that enhance and protect the local community. Each board includes one county commissioner along with public and farmer members. Being a director of a county conservation district while working full-time wasn't easy, but if you are passionate about something, you make time for it.

My involvement with the conservation district and environmental education began when I found out that wetlands at the Pittsburgh airport were being mitigated. The BCCD handled the process. My wife encouraged me to get more involved with the conservation district because she saw how passionate I was about the project.

I was at the district from the time of wetland construction and realized it would make a great educational classroom. In the end, the BCCD built an environmental center classroom and added offices that housed the district after we split from the county in 2004 to become independent. From the beginning, the district leadership decided that students using the classroom would do so for free. Our 80-acre property and facilities include an indoor classroom and also a picnic pavilion, restrooms, hiking trails, wetlands, meadow, woodlands, and access to Raccoon Creek. We hold fundraisers throughout the year to ensure that the only cost to schools to visit the center is the cost of bus transportation.

Conservation districts were initially established to promote the value of conserving soil and water to farmers. Today's districts have evolved; their areas of interest and expertise involve almost every area of natural resource conservation imaginable.

## DISTRICTS EVOLVING

Conservation districts work to better the community as a whole. They help citizens identify available natural resources and establish plans for their wise use. Many conservation districts have delegated agreements with partners to further conservation efforts in Pennsylvania. Since each county faces different challenges, the local conservation district office can address those specific needs. Examples include helping horse owners in southeast Pennsylvania write a manure management plan which is required by law. In central Pennsylvania, stream erosion and flooding may be the biggest issue facing a county. In northern parts of the state, conservation districts stand ready to help the timber industry do their work with the least amount of impact on the forest ecosystem. In south-central Pennsylvania, the biggest concern may be the erosion of farm fields and staff have the knowledge and access to equipment to help farmers keep more of their valuable topsoil in place. In western Pennsylvania, district staff may find that poorly maintained dirt roads pollute streams, and they have the funding and knowledge to help their county solve this problem.

As a conservation district director, I see first-hand how conservation

districts bring conservation practices to landowners quicker than ever before. Each county in Pennsylvania has a conservation district except Philadelphia. That's 66 offices around the state tackling pollution issues in their backyard. The fact that conservation districts are locally led is their key to success. Who knows the problems facing our communities better than those that live and work there? Conservation districts were initially established to promote the value of conserving soil and water to farmers. Today's districts have evolved; their areas of interest and expertise involve almost every area of natural resource conservation imaginable.

## ENVIROTHON

Education is woven throughout what we do at conservation districts. An annual program we do for students is the Envirothon. The Envirothon is a competition where five-member teams participate in a series of tests that focus on five topic areas - soils and land use, aquatic ecology, forestry, wildlife and environmental issues. The district hosts the county level competition. The winner of the county level competition is then sent to represent their county at the Pennsylvania State Envirothon. These kids are sharp! Kudos to the kids because it is not an easy test. The winners get scholarships, so the stakes are high.

## DIRT, GRAVEL, AND LOW VOLUME ROAD PROGRAM

The Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program began in 1997 from a dirt and gravel road initiative by Trout Unlimited in conjunction with Penn State's Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads, the State Conservation Commission and local conservation districts. The goal of the program is to reduce pollution to nearby streams while improving the rural road network. One of the qualification requirements of the program is to direct funding to "worksites" where road runoff is affecting water quality of the nearby stream. As a result of Act 89 (PA Gas Tax), additional funding has been allocated to the program, which will now include Low Volume Roads (<500 vehicles per day). Technical assistance is available and provided by the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road studies and the conservation district.

## STREAM CLEANUPS

On September 7, 2019, the BCCD hosted a stream cleanup on a tributary to Big Sewickley Creek. It is a vital creek that people use for fishing, swimming, bird watching and many other outdoor activities. The tributary runs along Cooney Hollow Road, which is a problem area for people dumping their trash. Twenty-two volunteers attended. Together they cleaned up an estimated 30 tires, 20 televisions and other miscellaneous items which were discarded in the stream and surrounding areas. Everyone at the stream cleanup had fun spending time outdoors doing their part to clean the stream. Many conservation districts host similar, successful events.

## AGRICULTURE

Soil is an ecosystem with many living organisms. Soil health is managing the soil to improve ecosystem function. All crops have their roots in the soil ecosystem. It is necessary to improve soil health to improve crop yields. No-till planting is key to improving soil health and planting cover crops provide energy and other benefits to the soil.

Conservation districts help farmers ensure they comply with environ-

mental laws. They work with construction companies to make sure they are using best management practices to reduce pollution and avoid costly fines.

The BCCD purchased a no-till drill that is available for rent to interested farmers in Beaver County. The purpose of the drill rental program is to encourage and assist farmers in implementing no-till crop production systems, including cover crops, as well as promote better pasture management. Reducing tillage can improve soil health and improve farm economics. Renting this drill provides farmers with a low-cost opportunity to try no-till planting and determine if it can be an asset to farm management.

Renting the no-till drill from the conservation district provides a cost-effective tool to try planting a cover crop. Additionally, all farms that are tilling greater than 5,000 sq. ft. must have a conservation plan. All farming operations that apply manure need to develop and implement a manure management plan. Conservation districts support farmers in developing these plans.


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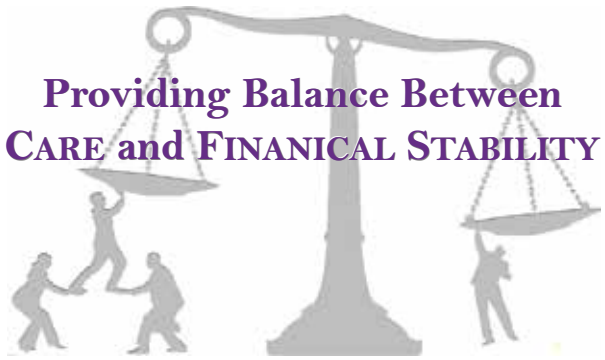
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## STATE ASSOCIATION

In July 2019, I was elected President of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). Our state association represents all the districts on the state and national levels. I lead the board of directors, which helps set the grassroots policy that guides the association.

Our strength comes from partnerships with agencies and organizations such as the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Together, we can put more boots on the ground to implement locally led conservation activities.

I am honored to be part of PACD's executive board. It's a high honor to be chosen to lead the state's conservation districts. The state association goes above and beyond to make sure the conservation district directors are trained in leadership, and staff is trained in technical subjects.

Conservation districts stand ready to offer technical assistance and educational guidance to landowners and managers, local governments, teachers, students and people from every walk of life. They can provide

information and help on matters such as reducing soil erosion, protecting water quality, acid mine drainage or preventing hazardous situations such as floods.

Like the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, conservation districts work to improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. Let's work together toward our common goal.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

County commissioners can support their conservation district by making sure the district has the best leadership in its directors as possible. Commissioners can support districts by including them in the county budget financially, or through in-kind services. Also, talk to legislators to make sure they aren't forgotten in the state budget. Commissioners can support farmers and their agricultural products in their county. Without farms, we will starve, period. For more information on conservation districts, visit [www.pacd.org](http://www.pacd.org). 🍷

Like the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania, conservation districts work to improve the well-being and quality of life for every Pennsylvania resident. Let's work together toward our common goal.





# FOCUS ON **Potter** *County*

Rustic wooden signs reading “God’s Country” greet visitors at each of the four gateways to Potter County, situated at the peak of the Pennsylvania triangle on the New York State border. Despite its religious overtones, the reference is meant to highlight the bountiful natural resources within the county’s borders and the strong sense of community that binds together its citizens.

Tourism promoters long ago recognized that these assets are marketable. To some, they recall the bucolic small-town lifestyle epitomized by TV series such as *The Andy Griffith Show*. Deer hunters, trout anglers and outdoor enthusiasts began flocking to Potter County after World War II and they’re still coming. In more recent years, the county is seeing an influx of a demographic often referred to as “active, younger adults” establishing seasonal homes in the mountains which offer a respite from a faster-paced life downstate.

While tourism is holding its own as the county’s second-leading industry, trailing only agriculture/forest products, other sectors of the economy have been declining. As a result, Potter County’s population has continued to spiral downward. It stood just north of

16,600 as of 2018, a 9% drop since the beginning of the century, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Meanwhile, the county’s median age ratchets up with every census report. It stood at 46.7 years in 2017; the national figure was 38.0.

## **PERSEVERANCE**

With the dawn of a new decade, Potter County leaders have resolved to do something about it. They’ve launched “Project 2025.” It’s a full-scale mission to reverse the population loss and retain and slow the outmigration of the county’s young adults. The goal is to produce measurable results that are reflected in the mid-decade census figures.

It won’t be easy, but county leaders are undaunted. And that’s nothing new. Potter County’s government has earned the respect of its peers for its perseverance and ability to overcome obstacles.

“One of our biggest challenges is that we’re rural,” said Doug Morley, a lifelong Potter County resident who completed a 12-year career on the Board of Commissioners in 2019. “But, at the same time, one



Photos by Curt Weinhold.

Top Photo: Kori and John Ditty are dressed for the Roaring '20s at Coudersport's Eliot Ness Fest and the new Eliot Ness Museum.

Bottom Photo: Lyman Run State Park.



the local UPMC hospital, are multi-generational natives of the county. Ellen earned a Master of Business Administration degree and was working with a health care agency when she saw the county's advertisement for a community development director in 2019.

"I jumped at the chance," she recalled. "Both Garrett and I experienced life in more populous areas, and we were fortunate enough to get good educations. But we both realized that the things in life that were the most important to us were right back where we came from."

## NATURE AND COMMUNITY

And it's not just those with local roots who have been drawn to Potter County. John and Kori Ditty, a young couple from the Philadelphia suburbs, picked up a dart and threw it at a map of rural Pennsylvania. It landed just outside of Coudersport.

The Dittys say things couldn't have worked out better. They both found jobs, and they frequently smile at social media messages from downstate friends who envy their new lifestyle. Kori and John knew they were searching for—an area where they felt safe and connected to both nature and their community.

They've made local friends, and most recently they have signed on to portray Roaring '20s characters for Coudersport's Eliot Ness Fest and at the new Eliot Ness Museum downtown. They appreciate what Kori describes as the "aura of Potter County" - its clean air and water, the lack of congestion and the therapeutic impact of spending time outdoors. The Dittys have also joined the growing legion of regular visitors to the Cherry Springs State Park International Dark Sky Preserve. They've hosted downstate guests who have joined them in marveling at the wonders of the night sky.

When asked if they expect to ever return to the suburbs, both were quick to respond in near unison, "Absolutely not! This is home now."

of our greatest strengths is that we're rural. We know how to 'do more with less.' We are small enough that we can work together to solve a problem because, really, we have to. We've become resourceful because people here know each other."

The two department heads who have been charged by current Commissioners Nancy Grupp, Paul Heimel and Barry Hayman to spearhead Project 2025—Planning Director Will Hunt and Community Development Director Ellen Russell—are natural ambassadors.

Hunt worked for the GIS Department in adjacent Tioga County and served on the town council in Tioga Borough when he heard the call of God's Country. He initially commuted to work as Planning/GIS Director in the county seat of Coudersport, but it wasn't long before Hunt bought a home on a rural road and moved there with his family of five.

"We love it here," Hunt said with a smile. "The kids have adjusted well to the new school and we spend a lot of time in the outdoors, sort of bonding as a family. My wife is taking classes to become a real estate agent and we feel right at home."

Russell's appreciation of Potter County is home-grown. She and her husband Garrett, a physician assistant at



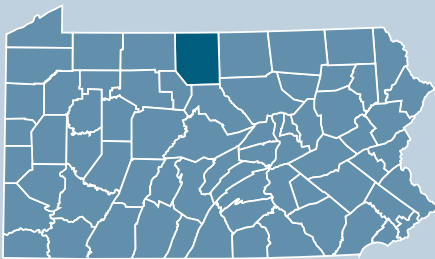
Coudersport, the county seat.

## CONNECTED

So just what does a quiet, rural county such as Potter have to offer for young adults who grew up there and young families looking for a new home?

In addition to the abundance of outdoor recreational activities and small-town charm, Potter County has broader internet coverage than most rural areas. All of its larger communities are wired, and an aggressive broadband expansion project launched in 2019 by the local electric cooperative will bring service to more remote areas. Research confirms that internet access is a prerequisite for the lifestyles and work demands of younger adults and professionals looking to relocate. Potter County is seeing an influx of people who can work in their homes, connected to corporate offices or other distant workplaces.

That growth potential is prominently recognized in the 2020-29 Potter County Comprehensive Plan, which calls for public/private initiatives to support businesses that capitalize on telecommuting, tourism and manufacturing, particularly in the forest products



### Putting Potter County on the map


Crimefighter Eliot Ness spent the final years of his life there and actor Gabby Hayes lived there for a while. World-famous Norwegian violinist Ole Bull established a colony for his countrymen here. The Brinks Gang broke into a local clothier while they were on the lam. And tourist promoters insist that “The Ice Mine Eighth Wonder of the World”—a magic valley where ice forms in the summer and melts in the winter—can be found here.

Those are among the headlines that have put Potter County on the map over the years.

More recently, Potter County has been recognized for some significant achievements by its county government:

- Pennsylvania Governor’s Award for Local Government Excellence (2015) for Environmental Stewardship; honoring the Triple Divide Watershed Coalition, dedicated to protecting all of the county’s public drinking water sources.
- National Association of Counties Excellence Award (2017) for innovative criminal justice reform measures; “Smart Justice: If it’s broke, FIX IT!”
- 2017 International Special Achievement in GIS Award from Environmental Systems Research Institute (Esri) for effective use of GIS technology, presented to the Potter County Planning/GIS Department. The GIS services supported the Pa. State Land Tax Fairness Coalition’s successful campaign to increase payment-in-lieu-of-taxes on state-owned land.
- National Association of Counties Excellence Award (2018) for exemplary service to military veterans; “No Veteran Left Behind.”



 Things are hopping at the frog-jumping contest at the annual “Barkpeelers Convention,” hosted by the Pennsylvania Lumber Museum, to relive the rollicking Lumber Era (1890-1910) in northcentral Pennsylvania.

and powdered metals industries, as well as energy production, from rich natural gas reserves to wind and solar energy opportunities, and a diverse agricultural foundation.

For decades, dairy farms and potato fields dominated the landscape in the county’s northern sector. Growers from across the nation gathered annual at “Camp Potato” and “Potato City Motor Inn” for conventions. Prominent agricultural researchers used the high-altitude fields on the Eastern Continental Divide in Potter County for seed trials and cold-climate growing experiments.

Today’s agriculture is dominated more by hay and grains, although some active potato farmers have found a ready market with chip manufacturers. Thousands of acres have been acquired by Amish farmers who have relocated from southeastern Pennsylvania. A handful of certified organic farms have sprung up over the past decade. At the same time, maple syrup producers are growing more sophisticated in their marketing activities; just 10% of Potter County’s maple trees are tapped.

## DEMAND AND INNOVATIONS

The Comprehensive Plan recognizes growth potential for local agriculture, capitalizing on a growing demand for organic food and home-grown food in general. Local food processing, agritourism and farmers’ markets are all part of the blueprint.

With 40% of the county’s total acreage consisting of state forest, park or game lands, there’s little chance that Potter County will ever lose its rural appeal. However, the county is not immune to some of society’s major challenges.



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The national opioid epidemic has spawned innovations such as District Attorney Andy Watson's "CLEAN Protocol," short for Concerned Law Enforcement Against Narcotics. After researching a similar initiative in Massachusetts, the D.A. developed guidelines for police to serve as referral points for addicts seeking treatment.

"Obviously, there are limitations to CLEAN – with exceptions for those who under active investigation for criminal activity and other factors - but this protocol is a sensible alternative to the more traditional law enforcement," Watson explained. "It's an approach that's similar to our DUI and Drug Specialty Courts, with a goal of seeing people recover from addiction and become productive members of society."

Potter County's poverty rate is above the national average. The county's Human Services Department has responded with a series of measures to make certain

the safety net is not frayed. For example, one very rural school district has become the primary food source for many families. The county has supported a "weekend meal backpack" that students carry home each Friday afternoon to tide them over until Monday.

As in many rural areas, good-paying jobs can be hard to find in Potter County. While there are gainful employment opportunities in health care, energy and some other sectors, many of the jobs that are typically available are entry-level.

That's not unusual, according to Will Hunt. "In our Comprehensive Plan development, we found that many people look at it as a trade-off," Hunt explained. "Once they reach a certain age, typically their early 30s, they have a different definition of 'standard of living.' They're willing to forego the goal of getting rich in favor of having a better overall quality of life." ▾

### **Potter County's Mission: 'Project 2025'**

A strategy to address two of the most serious challenges facing Potter County is now in the implementation stage. "Project 2025" was launched in January 2020, just two weeks after Commissioners Nancy Grupp, Paul Heimel and Barry Hayman were sworn into office. It's a blueprint to reverse the steady descent of the county's population, coupled with the growing outmigration of young adults.

These trends have serious implications for the future vitality and quality of life in Potter County. Most recent U.S. Census Bureau figures reflect another 5% drop in population, from 17,462 in 2010 to 16,622 as of June 2019. At the same time, the county's median age has gradually risen to 47 years, far above the statewide median of 41.

The commissioners have assigned Planning/GIS Director Will Hunt and Community Development Director Ellen Russell to develop and implement Project 2025. Its lofty goal is to assemble stakeholders, conduct intensive research, and implement a strategy to reverse the population loss and median age growth by the end of 2025.

Some of the options are spelled out in the 2020-29 Potter County Comprehensive Plan. That document reflects input provided by hundreds of community

leaders, business owners, conservation advocates, education and tourism officials, and others with an interest in the county's future.

"Project 2025 is going to require a real team approach and some changes in culture," Russell explained. "Too often we hear the words, 'because we've always done it this way,' and that is a mindset that will have to change if we are going to succeed."

Among the initial objectives that have been identified are:

- More effectively seeking input from teens and young adults on the future of their communities;
- Supporting a complete count in the 2020 U.S. Census;
- Capitalizing on the emergence of high-speed internet service in marketing Potter County as a place to live and start or expand a business;
- Enhancing promotion of state parks, attractions, and natural resources for tourism and relocation to the county;
- Implementing business and economic development strategies, kicking off with a Small Business/Entrepreneur Workshop;
- Developing innovative strategies to enhance local career exploration for both high school students and adults.

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# **HEALTHY WATERS, HEALTHY COMMUNITIES**

## **Pennsylvania's County-Based Plan for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed**

**With 86,000 miles of streams and rivers, Pennsylvania is second in the nation in waterways, and keeping them healthy means much to quality of life statewide.**



**Neil Shader**

Director of Communications  
Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Healthy streams and rivers not only provide a source of drinking water, but also serve enormous farming, commercial, and industry uses in Pennsylvania. They contribute to an outdoor recreation industry that delivers millions of jobs and about \$13 billion to the state economy annually. Healthy waters also support thriving communities, as people increasingly look to live near access to green space.

Agricultural, business, and residential development has changed Pennsylvania’s landscape over decades. Natural areas have been replaced with compacted soil, parking lots, roads, roofs, and other hard surfaces. Rainfall that should soak into the ground instead runs off these surfaces, carrying pollutants into streams, rivers, and lakes. Excessive eroded sediment and two nutrients that come from fertilizer—nitrogen and phosphorus—are key runoff pollutants.

Today over 25,400 miles of water are impaired in Pennsylvania, and more than 12,700 of them are in the 43 counties that lie entirely or partially in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

An unprecedented multi-partner initiative is underway that helps communities address runoff pollution in Pennsylvania’s share of the watershed in the form of Pennsylvania’s Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan or just Phase 3 WIP.



**PENNSYLVANIA’S PLAN FOR THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has calculated the amounts of nutrients and sediment that Pennsylvania is sending into the Chesapeake Bay, and requires us to lower them by 2025:

- Nitrogen: Reduce by 34 million pounds/year
- Phosphorus: Reduce by 0.765 million pounds/year
- Sediment: Reduce by 531 million pounds/year

The Phase 3 WIP breaks runoff pollution down by each county in the watershed and identifies the

nutrient and sediment reductions needed in the county. It presents a framework to help local teams develop and implement County-wide Action Plans to achieve these reductions. Agriculture, forestry, stormwater management, and wastewater treatment are main areas of focus.

Counties are grouped into four tiers, depending on their nutrient and sediment runoff amounts. Counties that generate the most runoff form Tier 1 and completed their plans first, while counties that generate the least runoff form Tier 4 and will complete their plans last.

State government programs are working in tandem, implementing

measures in agriculture, air quality, brownfield redevelopment, forestry, mining, oil and gas operations, stormwater, wetlands, and wastewater to reduce nutrient and sediment levels.

## COUNTYWIDE ACTION PLANS

The Phase 3 WIP countywide framework was developed with extensive expertise from the ground up, and it shows. Lancaster, York, Adams and Franklin Counties pilot-tested the framework to complete their Countywide Action Plans, and they and many other partners provided insights that have informed and improved the plan. The result is an innovative yet ground-truthed and realistic framework that is energizing communities around the potential to link local water quality improvements and community goals.

Four more counties are now developing their plans—Bedford, Centre, Cumberland and Lebanon—and in coming months, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Chesapeake Bay Office will reach out to kick off the process in more counties.

Developing and implementing a Countywide Action Plan enables counties to address local water quality improvement proactively, making it part of community priorities and planning without potential further regulation. Some county leaders have found the process creates new broad partnerships of agriculture, municipal government, forestry, business, and environmental advocacy leaders. This presents an opportunity



to identify and pursue additional local goals, such as improving economic development, flood protection, local recreation opportunities, fish habitat, and more.

DEP has developed the Clean Water Toolbox specifies sources of nutrients and sediment by sector, provides maps show the locations of water monitoring stations, and identifies trends based on the monitoring data. Suggestions are provided for relevant, cost-effective reduction methods and planning and engagement resources, and a template for the team to record planning actions and track and report progress is included.

DEP also provides staff resources to assist the county with developing and implementing its Countywide Action Plan, as well as other tools the county needs to accomplish its goals.

## FROM PLANNING TO PROJECTS TO SUCCESS

Once the Countywide Action Plan is completed, the coordinator and team shift gears to getting projects on the ground that reduce nutrients and erosion in agricultural, municipal, commercial, and industrial areas and improve local water and quality of life. Lancaster, York, Adams, and Franklin Counties are again leading the way, breaking ground on projects they've identified in their Countywide Action Plans.

The unprecedented partnership that developed Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP is driving its implementation with the same high energy and extensive expertise.

Federal, state, county and local government leaders, along with farmers, foresters, community or-

ganizations, education institutions and environmental advocates, are working together as a state team to marshal everything they can, including funding sources and technical tools and training, to help county teams succeed

Many community leaders have endorsed Governor Wolf's Restore Pennsylvania initiative as a potential source of large-scale funding. If passed by the legislature, would invest \$4.5 billion statewide in resources for water quality as well as blighted properties, internet access, storm preparedness, and disaster recovery.

## EXPANDED FUNDING

In the meantime, state agencies are providing as much funding as they can. The 2019 Pennsylvania Farm Bill, a historic \$23.1 million investment, includes new and expanded conservation funding, including grants to assist farmers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed with implementing best management practices.

This year DEP, responding to county leaders' feedback, launched a new block grant program with EPA support to make it easier for counties to access and use funding for projects in their Countywide Action Plans. Lancaster, York and Franklin Counties applied for and received grants to complete projects by September 30, and the goal is for DEP to award these block grants to counties annually, as they make progress.

More funding is available to counties from the DEP Growing Greener and Agricultural Plan Reimbursement Programs, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Community Conservation Partnerships Program, the Keystone Tree Fund, and other sources. To bring them all together, PENNVEST is developing a new one-stop shop of resources called the Center for Water Quality Excellence for landowners working to reduce runoff pollution.

Likewise, partners are developing innovative tools to help counties

put projects in place, including a Community Clean Water Implementation Guide and online and in-person training. Once they begin implementing their Countywide Action Plan projects, counties can use a new web portal to chart their progress in reducing nutrient and sediment levels.

If this sounds like a whole new level of excitement in improving local water quality in Pennsylvania, it is. And it's fueled by county leaders and stakeholders. Counties have played a key role in planning the Phase 3 WIP, are central to enacting change on the ground, and have much to be proud of as Pennsylvanians work together for healthy waters and healthy communities in 2025 and beyond. 🍷

## LEARN MORE

- Pennsylvania's Phase 3 WIP and Countywide Action Plans: [www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebay/phase3](http://www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebay/phase3)
- Reducing runoff pollution in Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed: [www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebaywatershed](http://www.dep.pa.gov/chesapeakebaywatershed)
- Three counties' take-aways from their Countywide Action Planning experiences:  
**Lancaster:** [www.dep.pa.gov/OurCommonWealth/Pages/Article.aspx?post=36](http://www.dep.pa.gov/OurCommonWealth/Pages/Article.aspx?post=36)  
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# THE FUTURE OF PENNSYLVANIA AGRICULTURE

## Is Our Broadband Infrastructure Up to The Task?





**Kelly Kundratic**

Manager, Agriculture Policy and Programs  
Team Pennsylvania

**O**ur commonwealth's agricultural community relies on many of the same infrastructure needs as any other business, and the availability of broadband is no exception. Two years ago, in an effort to chart out the future of the agricultural economy in Pennsylvania, Team Pennsylvania commissioned, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, an analysis and road-map for Pennsylvania Agriculture.

Within the 2018 report are a set of six recommendations to keep Pennsylvania agriculture competitive and fuel its growth. Furthering investments in infrastructure was one of those recommendations. Specifically, we identified access to broadband as an investment essential to the future success of the industry in the commonwealth. The links between agriculture and rural broadband access are becoming increasingly critical to address and may pose potential solutions to other challenges Pennsylvania farms experience.

## **HINDERING INNOVATIONS**

Many of Pennsylvania's farms and agribusinesses are hindered in their ability to adopt business-enhancing innovations because of limited broadband availability. The roll-out and availability of broadband to our farms in Pennsylvania has lagged behind other industrial clusters. According

to recent statistics provided by USDA, only 64% of Pennsylvania farms have internet access at all. Of those, almost a third do not have broadband (31%).

In a recent review of the state's overall economic performance in relation to peers, we recognized Pennsylvania as ranking 8th nationally in broadband infrastructure determined by coverage rate and speeds, with the caveat that we had a low number of farms with internet access compared to the other comparable states farm access.

Without access to high-speed internet (or internet at all), farms are restricted in their ability to adopt innovations that improve farm productivity and efficiency and connect to a customer base interested in their product.

A farm with broadband could:

- Use data to create decision tools that estimate potential profits and risks associated with different varieties of crops;
- Make fertilizer and pesticide application decisions, which could aid in reaching goals associated with the Watershed Implementation Plan for the Chesapeake Bay;
- Monitor animal health and nutrition with sensor technology, supporting advances in animal welfare, health, and disease prevention;
- Use real-time digital notifications to better leverage the time and resources of a limited farm workforce.

Lack of broadband similarly limits farmers' ability to participate in new market opportunities that could bolster and diversify income streams, like participating in e-commerce or direct-to-consumer distribution (a growing opportunity in our study was the growing trend to purchase local and organic). Additionally, as retail giants and tech companies partner in solutions for food traceability (i.e. blockchain), farmers without internet will be left behind while those struggling with internet speeds will fail to keep pace. The disconnect creates a further division between where consumers want their food to come from and where food may truly come from. Consumer desire to support local farms could be challenged as retailers are required to source from

perhaps further, more digitally connected areas to meet traceability demands.

## IMPACTS EXTEND FAR

The impacts of access to broadband on farms are well-documented in several studies, but the challenge isn't confined to the farm gate; it extends throughout rural communities to include agribusinesses that support farms, including cooperatives, dealers, consultants, suppliers and financiers. While many farms themselves are placed at a disadvantage when it comes to broadband accessibility, the compounded effects of businesses that support agriculture also contribute to this threat.

As a nonpartisan, nonprofit, public-private partnership, Team

Pennsylvania believes in utilizing data to drive public policy and investments that will make a positive difference in the lives of Pennsylvanians and our economy, because data without policy is "just numbers."

We know we lag behind competitors in our access to broadband. We need to convert this data we know into policy that can drive growth. We believe that by working together, we can forge a future for Pennsylvania that can rival even the greatest challenges of our time. We encourage state, federal, private and public leadership to act based on the best available data because the future of our rural economies and agriculture industries will depend on it. ▼



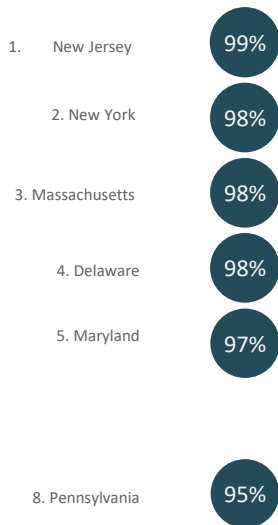
## INFRASTRUCTURE

### BROADBAND

Broadband access has become increasingly important as our economy continues to become centered around technology and the internet. In fact, more than 90% of small businesses in the United States are Internet dependent. Of PA's competitor states, New Jersey has both the highest coverage at 99% and the fastest broadband speed at 52 Mbps. Pennsylvania comes in 8<sup>th</sup> in this ranking with a 95% coverage rate and an average broadband speed of 41.4 Mbps. The lowest of our competitive states, West Virginia, has only 75% coverage and an average broadband speed of 29.9 Mbps.

While Pennsylvania ranks relatively well in terms of broadband coverage, the state does not perform as well when it comes to coverage of farm businesses. While 71% of farms use smart phones, tablets or computers to manage their businesses, only 62% of farms actually have internet access (as of 2017).

Broadband Coverage, 2018



Share of Farms with Internet Access, 2013-2017



Source: US Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service (2018)

Source: Pennsylvania Economic Competitiveness Dashboard, 2020





# Addressing Climate Change In Our Communities

**Neil Shader**

Director of Communications

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

**R**ecently, Pennsylvania and the world celebrated the 50th anniversary of Earth Day, participating in community events, cleanups, and other activities all across the state and the country. The theme for this momentous milestone was climate action, an issue that is being acutely felt across Pennsylvania, as the impacts of climate change are being felt in communities across the state.

Climate change is one of the most, if not the most, pressing issue

facing our planet. It impacts every aspect of our lives: the roads we drive on, the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and more.

One of the ways communities are feeling the effects of climate change is from increased frequency and intensity of flooding. Stronger floods can stress local budgets more than they already are, making flood preparation even more critical. That's why flood preparedness and prevention efforts should be in place before a single rain drop falls.

## **STREAM MAINTENANCE**

There are many ways that individuals and communities can prepare for flooding and take steps to prevent or reduce the impact of floods.

First, we must invest time in our local streams, which can easily rise during and after a severe weather event. There are simple steps that residents and communities can take to maintain streams and lessen damage from heavy rains and high water.

At the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), we've developed a guide for stream maintenance that helps citizens understand how they can help lessen the threat of a flood. This guide is available on our website, [dep.pa.gov](http://dep.pa.gov) under our "Stream Maintenance" section.

We have identified three levels of actions that can be taken, using the example of a traffic signal.

Green Light actions are actions that do not need DEP notification or permits, like removing debris from streambanks and riparian areas and removing gravel and debris from around bridges and culverts, including the use of handheld equipment, such as chainsaws, but not heavy equipment. These are steps any individual or community can do on their own.

Yellow Light actions are actions that might need pre-approval or emergency permits, like rebuilding roads and bridges across streams; streambank stabilization projects; removing in-stream gravel bars with heavy equipment; and repairing or removing a bridge or culvert. In these instances, citizens are urged to contact DEP before proceeding.

Finally, Red Light actions require permits from DEP and possibly other agencies. These include redirecting stream flow or relocating a stream; building a new bridge or culvert; and dredging or damming streams.

This guide can be found on DEP's website under Stream Maintenance.

One of the ways communities are feeling the effects of climate change is from increased frequency and intensity of flooding.

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## GREEN AND GRAY

While it's important to maintain our waterways, we can take further steps to prevent heavy rains from becoming dangerous flooding through infrastructure maintenance and improvements.

There are two types of infrastructure that we can invest in: Green and gray.

"Green" infrastructure includes floodplain restoration, bioretention basins, and rain gardens. These practices promote infiltration which, in turn, reduces surface runoff volume. "Gray" infrastructure includes dams, levees, concrete flood walls and channels and detention basins. These systems are designed to control flooding.

Proper maintenance of infrastructure is critical, whether or not a flood is an imminent threat. Much of our modern infrastructure in Pennsylvania is 40, 50, 60 years old and in need of upkeep.

Of course, infrastructure projects require funding for maintenance and improvements. Maintaining aging infrastructure and implementing more green projects requires an enormous investment, but we must invest in our communities to ensure that they have the tools and structure in place to respond in the event of severe weather.

## RESTORE

The Wolf Administration has proposed an aggressive plan to address our infrastructure needs called Restore Pennsylvania. This initiative would provide a funding source to communities to manage heavy rainfall, to reduce the impact of storms, and to recover from the most severe storms and flooding.

Restore Pennsylvania proposes a commonsense severance tax that would invest \$4.5 billion over the next four years in significant high-impact projects throughout the commonwealth that would rebuild Pennsylvania's infrastructure, increase resources for blighted properties, and storm preparedness and disaster recovery, and help make Pennsylvania a leader in the 21st century.

I and other DEP staff have been to traveling communities across the state to tour local projects and sites that could benefit from funding proposed in Restore Pennsylvania. We're hearing from local officials and residents about the impacts that these sites have on the community, and how there aren't the resources to fix them.

The site visits have focused on stream stabilization and green infrastructure, stormwater sewer infrastructure, abandoned mine land reclamation, and hazardous sites and brownfields cleanup efforts—all of which Restore Pennsylvania could address.

## PREVENT AND REDUCE

Stream restoration was the focus of a DEP staff visit to Mansfield, Tioga County, where a proposed stream improvement project on an unnamed tributary of the Tioga River is underway. The site, which is owned by Mansfield University and sits adjacent to their baseball field, lies immediately upstream of the Clinton Street Archway, which has repeatedly flooded, impacting nearby streets and homes.

In Pottstown, Montgomery County, DEP staff and elected officials talked about addressing critical storm sewer infrastructure needs in the borough. Specifically, historic underground arch systems were built over existing streams as municipalities were built and developed over top, and these enclosures can collapse due to factors such as age, erosion, heavy rains, clogged storm sewers, or tree roots.

If we invest in these types of projects now, we will help prevent or reduce potentially devastating and costly damage to homes, businesses, transportation infrastructure, and our precious natural resources.

We're also taking preventative steps to reduce the impact of climate change, including reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

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It's a unique opportunity for Pennsylvania to become a leader in combatting climate change.

## A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

Last October, the governor signed an executive order instructing DEP to begin the process to participate in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), a market-based collaboration among nine Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and combat climate change while generating economic growth.

Participating states have agreed, either through regulation or legislation, to implement RGGI through a regional cap-and-trade program involving CO2 emitting electric power plants. These states (Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont) set a cap on

total CO2 emissions from electric power generators in their states.

It's a unique opportunity for Pennsylvania to become a leader in combatting climate change and grow our economy by partnering with neighboring states. As a major electricity producer, Pennsylvania has a significant opportunity to reduce emissions and demonstrate its commitment to addressing climate change through a program with a proven track record.

By taking preventative steps like flood mitigation and introducing comprehensive policies like Restore Pennsylvania and RGGI, we are investing in our communities and, most importantly, in the environmental health of our commonwealth. 🍂



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# Pennsylvania Names the **Ghost Town Trail** as **2020 Trail of the Year**



Pennsylvania is a national leader in trail development, providing its citizens and visitors with more than 12,000 miles of trails across the commonwealth, from gentle pathways threading through miles of preserved greenways, to remote, rugged trails scaling the state's highest mountains. And, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has named the Ghost Town Trail Pennsylvania's 2020 Trail of the Year. The trail draws bicyclists, hikers, runners, walkers, birders and, in winter, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and fat-tire biking enthusiasts.



*Twin Rocks cyclist. Credit Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority*

Cooperatively managed by the Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority (CCCRA) and Indiana County Parks & Trails, the trail is named for long-gone coal-mining communities once dotting the railroad corridor. Formed in 1994 as a 12-mile segment, Ghost Town Trail was the first trail in the state constructed with transportation enhancement funding. In 2005, the 32-mile main

stem of the trail was completed from Blairsville, Indiana County to Ebensburg, Cambria County.

Recently marking its 25th anniversary, Ghost Town Trail needs only 5.5 miles to complete the first continuous loop of rail trail in the Eastern United States. It is estimated approximately 80,000 users enjoy the trail each year. Ghost Town Trail was designated as a National



Recreation Trail in June 2003 and was ranked 7th on the “Best Hiking Trails in the United States” list by American Towns Media in 2016.

Each year, DCNR’s Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee designates a Trail of the Year to help build enthusiasm and support for both large and small trails and raise public awareness about the value of Pennsylvania’s trail network. In 2019, DCNR named Mid State Trail, Pennsylvania’s longest trail, as Pennsylvania’s Trail of the Year.

The Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee is charged with implementing the recommendations of the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles. The 20-member DCNR-appointed committee represents both motorized and non-motorized trail users and advises the commonwealth on use of state and federal trail funding. ▾

## CCAP's Mandi Glantz Achieves CAE

CCAP's Director of Member and Vendor Relations Mandi Glantz has achieved the Certified Association Executive credential from the American Society of Association Executives. The CAE is the highest professional credential in the association industry and Mandi is the first CCAP employee to receive this honor. To be designated a CAE, Mandi completed 100 hours of specialized professional development and passed a stringent four-hour exam. The CAE program is accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies.

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eCivis, a business unit of GTY Technology Holdings Inc., a leading provider of SaaS/Cloud solutions for the public sector, is the most trusted and widely used grants management system enabling 1,000+ state, local and tribal governments to maximize grant revenues, track financial and program performance, and prepare cost allocation plans.

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**CONTACT: Desiree Nguyen, Executive Director, SCHRPP, [dnguyen@pacounties.org](mailto:dnguyen@pacounties.org) or (717) 736-4779.**



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**Dr. Pamela Rollings-Mazza**

Vice President Behavioral Health Services  
Co-Corporate Medical Director  
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**P**ennsylvania statistics indicate that approximately 96,000 people from Pennsylvania are behind bars today and 37,000 of them are in the county facilities. Rates of incarceration have dramatically increased over 50 years. Mirrored in this increase in incarceration is the increase in the number of incarcerated people with mental illness. A conservative estimate from various sources indicates that approximately 35% of all incarcerated individuals have mental illness and some studies show it at higher than 50%. Along with mental illness, rates of chronic medical issues and substance use problems are more prevalent in jails and prisons than in the community.

The reasons for the increase in incarcerated mentally ill individuals are controversial. There is an association with a decrease in access to psychiatric services in the community, a shortage of psychiatric providers, closures of acute care beds and lack of general mental health supports in the community. It has been highlighted that jails and prisons have become the de facto mental health systems of care for Pennsylvania communities.

The increased prevalence of people with psychiatric illness in correctional facilities has unintentionally led to the evolution of a challenging sub-specialty of psychiatry; correctional psychiatry. Psychiatrists are on the front line and uniquely positioned to cope with challenges and advocate for change. Correctional psychiatric providers need a special

set of skills and an understanding of the unique nature of the corrections environment. Traditional psychiatric training cannot be easily adapted to jails and prisons. There must be an appreciation of the interplay between providing appropriate psychiatric care and recognizing the legal and safety measures necessary in the corrections environment. The field of correctional psychiatry is rapidly evolving at a quick pace, but works best in the interdisciplinary team model, with medical, security and administrative staff working together to address the growing demand and need for health care services for inmates.

With this foundation I would like to address my observations from the past 12 years of practice in correctional settings as to the good, bad and rewards of this challenging field.

## THE GOOD

While a number of negative trends have led to this crisis and the evolution of this sub-specialty of psychiatry, there have been many recent positive changes in Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania counties, for the most part, have become increasingly aware and educated about the challenges of incarcerating patients with serious mental illness. The County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania Behavioral Health Task Force has worked diligently to highlight the issue of mental illness behind bars and many counties have taken initiatives to address the challenge.

Likely the most positive good is the mere increase in mental health providers treating in correctional facilities. Wherein 20 years ago such specialized care would have been almost unheard of now there is recognition of not only the need for psychiatry services but, also, psychologist and mental health clinicians/counselors and psychiatric nurses. The ability to address the mental health needs through a team comprised of individuals specifically trained to assess and assist in the treatment of mental illness has been a huge improvement.

Correctional health care has also enjoyed the benefits of the recognition of the need to treat the whole person/body. The accep-

tance of mental health illness as truly a disease and not merely a weakness has improved the interdisciplinary approach to treating a patient's overall health.

Although the prevalence of mental illness has not received the Governor's stamp of an epidemic, as the opioid crisis has, it still is recognized much more readily as a crisis on the local level. This local recognition has led to numerous county governments taking steps to address the crisis. These initiatives include the creation of multi-disciplinary committees focused on providing the best possible outcome for incarcerated individuals suffering from a mental illness. These committees typically have representatives from the correctional treatment team, the county MH department, the court, as well as, the District Attorney's and Public Defender's offices. The committee meets on a regular basis to discuss treatment and placement options. The involvement of all participants ensures the patient is not forgotten and that a patient specific plan of treatment can be developed relying on the talents and resources of all participants.

**CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES CAN BE DIFFICULT PLACES TO WORK. AT TIMES THE ENVIRONMENT CAN BE HOSTILE AND PLACE AN EMOTIONAL BURDEN ON THE PRACTITIONER. ADDITIONALLY, THE CORRECTIONS ENVIRONMENT, WITH A PHYSICAL STRUCTURE OF STEEL, CONCRETE AND BARS, IS INHERENTLY NOT A THERAPEUTIC ENVIRONMENT AND CAN BE COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE TO THE TREATMENT PLAN AND MAINTAINING MENTAL STABILITY.**

An additional positive has been the drastic reduction in the wait time to get a patient transferred to a state hospital for inpatient care. Whereas, as recently as two years ago, it could take up to 18 months to have someone placed for inpatient care it can now occur in weeks if not days. This is extremely beneficial for the individuals who simply need greater care than can be rendered in a correctional setting.

Recognizing the crisis has also produced some benefits in the treatment systems. With less than 1,000 psychiatrists licensed in Pennsylvania there has been a growth in the number of mid-level providers, as well as, an acceptance of this addition to the treatment team. Although many elected officials do not appreciate the difference between a psychiatrist and a psychologist there remained a reluctance to allow certified psychiatric nurse practitioners or physician assistants to treat the incarcerated mentally ill. By pointing out people receiving care in the community are more frequently seen by mid-level providers it has become possible to persuade officials the mid-level providers can appropriately render competent care.

Additionally, telepsychiatry has gained a greater level of acceptance. Similar to the use of mid-level providers, telepsychiatry is now frequently recognized as a valuable tool as opposed to a corner cutting mechanism. By utilizing this treatment tool, the providers that are available can operate more efficiently and touch a larger patient base. Given the rural nature of some Pennsylvania counties the only way a patient would have access to a psychiatrist or mid-level psych provider would be travel great distances or utilize telepsychiatry.

## THE BAD

Correctional facilities can be difficult places to work. At times the environment can be hostile and place an emotional burden on the practitioner. Additionally, the corrections environment, with a physical structure of steel, concrete and bars, is inherently not a therapeutic environment and can be counterproductive to the treatment plan and maintaining mental stability.

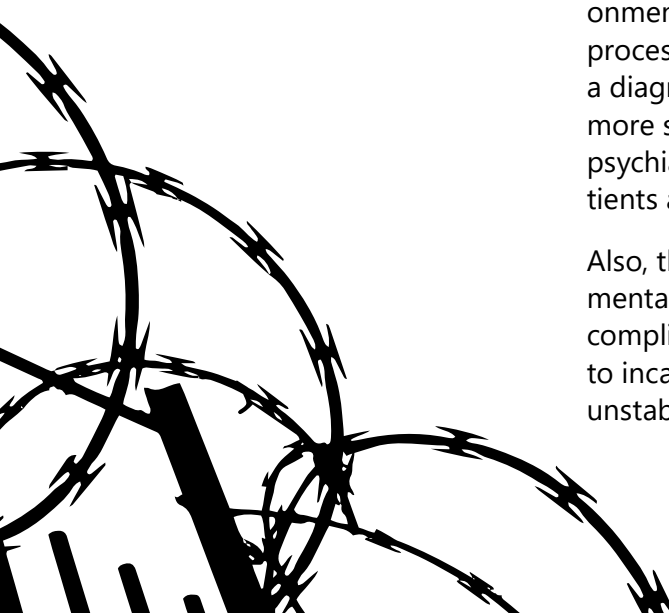
Incarceration on its own is difficult due to things such as overcrowding, isolation from family, privacy issues, and uncertainties about the legal process and life after imprisonment. It can be a dehumanizing process. Couple these issues with a diagnosis of mental illness, and more specifically with a serious psychiatric illness, puts these patients at increased risk.

Also, the patients with serious mental illness are frequently non-compliant with treatment prior to incarceration and, therefore, unstable on admission to the cor-

rectional facility. The provider must recognize the patients at risk and consider these glaring deficits and adapt to provide the most optimal care possible. Correctional psychiatrists take on an important role as advocate for patient care. Providers are ethically bound to deliver care but that sometimes conflicts with the functionality of the correctional system. An understanding of the nuances of the facilities and an ability to operate within the correctional parameters is an asset.

Another challenge lies with the patients themselves. People with serious mental illness who are not compliant in the community enter the facilities unstable. These individuals lack the insight into their illness and refuse to participate in treatment plans. They are often severely impaired and vulnerable. The Correctional Psychiatric provider is left to deal with a patient who is psychotic, agitated, not eating and drinking, and not providing self-care. These patients, in a correctional facility, are not only at risk to themselves but also to the staff and inmates around them. The correctional environment restricts the ability to force treatment. Court orders may need to be obtained to provide involuntary treatment. This can be a difficult process with many county courts still not familiar with the landscape and treatment limitations in the correctional facility.

Other problems in the correctional setting include the fact that access to your patients can be denied because of administrative/security concerns. Historically correctional facilities have segregated patients with serious mental illness. This





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was often done out of a naive belief that this would protect the patient, as well as, staff and other patients. We now know that long-term segregation can exacerbate or cause mental illness or prevent patients with mental illness from improving. There has to be a balance between optimal patient care and the need for institutional policies and safety.

Furthermore, the length of incarceration for someone suffering from a mental health issue is longer than that of someone who does not require mental health treatment. Despite the fact there may be recognition that due to their mental health issues the individual should not be incarcerated there often times is nowhere else for them to go. Although the wait time for state hospitals have been reduced, there remain times that if the state hospital cannot restore the individual they will be returned to the correctional facility. With respect to mental illness behind bars the focus cannot be

only on improving conditions within the facilities but also on the community as a whole. There needs to be an increase in community services, supports and programs. Further education of the judicial system could allow for better recognition of patients with mental illness and policies for mandatory minimal sentencing for these patients.

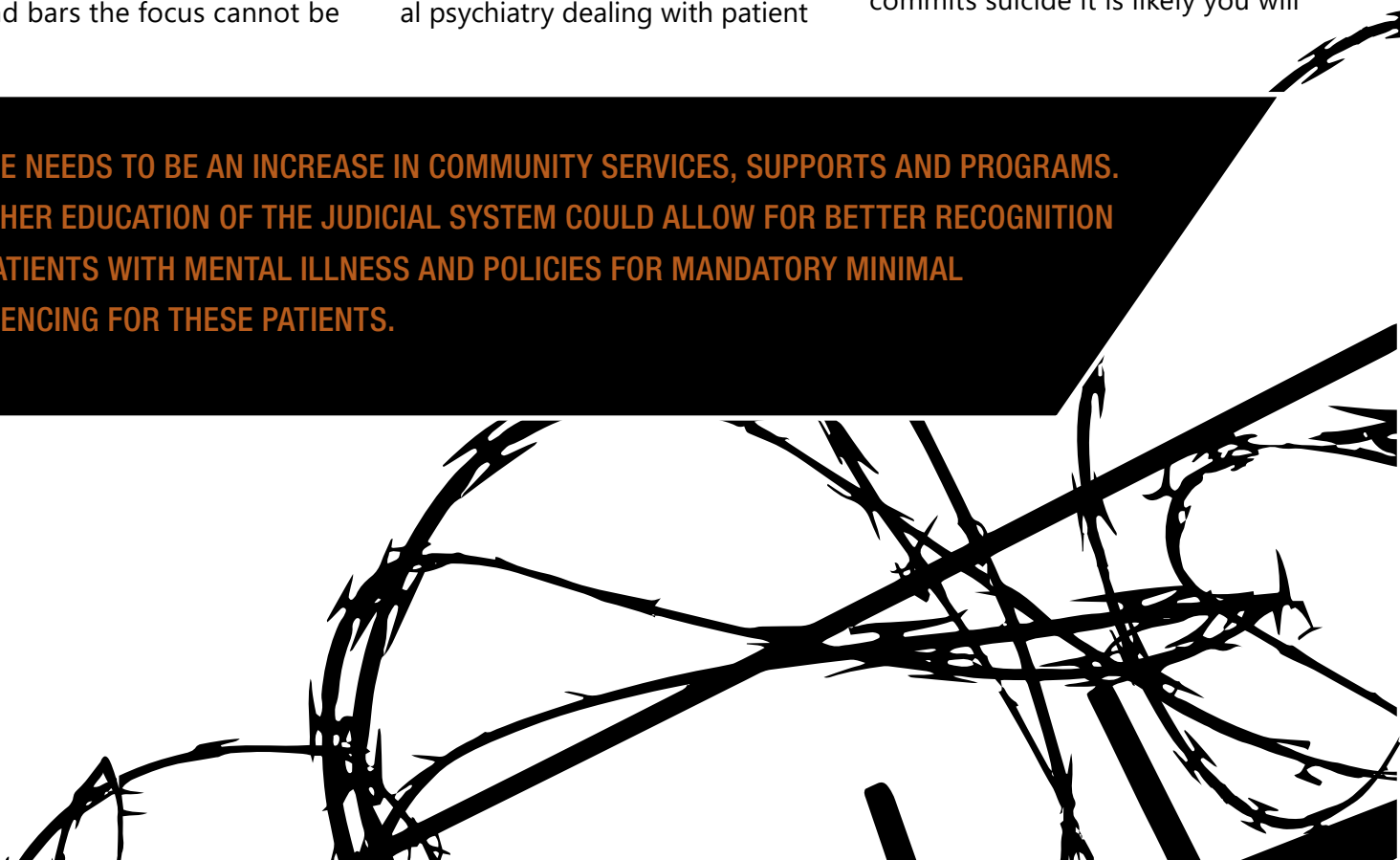
As a psychiatrist one of the most negative aspects of county correctional psychiatry is that suicide is a leading cause of death for incarcerated individuals. The rate is much higher than the general population or even state correctional facilities. Coping with a patient suicide is challenging for psychiatric providers. As clinicians, psychiatrists are trained to screen for safety and identify risks of suicide, but that training is not absolute. As with other branches of medicine, having a patient die, specially die by suicide, can be an emotional and occupational strain. In correctional psychiatry dealing with patient

suicide is all more real due to the increased risk associated with factors that can be unforeseen and uncontrollable.

In the correctional facilities, efforts are made to screen and identify those at risk. Unfortunately, environmental and psychosocial factors are in flux. As providers we watch diligently people new to the facility, people who are detoxing, people who have never been incarcerated before, and people with serious mental and medical illness. There are standardized screening tools we use and protocols in place. The reality, however, is not secure enough.

Correctional psychiatrists will at some point in their career have to deal with the death of a patient. As providers we have to identify how a loss can impact the facility, the medical staff, and the security staff and also identify the impact to self. To compound the personal sense of loss when a patient commits suicide it is likely you will

**THERE NEEDS TO BE AN INCREASE IN COMMUNITY SERVICES, SUPPORTS AND PROGRAMS. FURTHER EDUCATION OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM COULD ALLOW FOR BETTER RECOGNITION OF PATIENTS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AND POLICIES FOR MANDATORY MINIMAL SENTENCING FOR THESE PATIENTS.**



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be sued for the death. If a suicide occurs in a community, there is often an outpouring of support for the family. If it happens in a correctional facility there is likely to be a law suit filed pointing blame for the individual's decision to take their own life. These law suits are pursued by family members who frequently had no or little contact with the patient and the psychiatrist's actions will be second questioned using hindsight before judges and juries who do not understand the challenges and realities of mental illness in correctional facilities.

## THE REWARDS

While correctional psychiatry has its unique set of challenges, it also has its rewards. Once a correctional psychiatrist has come to terms with the realities of the practice, the environment and the liability, the professional choice of working in corrections can be fulfilling.

As a health care professional, I selected my career out of desire to help people. The reward of helping those that many have turned their back on and who are the neediest of patients is a reward beyond words.

Patients with serious mental illness, who lack supports and follow up in the community, can reach a state of stability in a structured environment. While correctional facilities are not psychiatric hospitals, for some patients they provide time for a patient to have optimum response to treatment before release allowing for a greater likelihood of success in the community. Patients have come

into jail not on needed medications and not even knowing if they have any medical issues, because of the comprehensive care they receive while incarcerated they are able to receive needed treatment and reach a higher level of wellness. When successful with obtaining compliance with taking necessary medication the patients are much healthier than when they arrived.

I have had patients and families express an appreciation for the care received in the facilities. The incarceration for some becomes a life turning point or a 'rock bottom.' Patients are able to stabilize and make a change and the biggest reward is when those patients never return to the facility.

## THE FUTURE

With the greater appreciation of the current crisis it is the hope that improvements in the correctional delivery system will improve. Just as it was recognized the historical practice of locking people away in state mental hospitals was inhumane so is the same conduct with correctional facilities. As the population of those needing mental health treatment continues to grow so must the resources. Hopefully those resources will create an environment when community-based treatment availability prevents mentally ill individuals from being incarcerated or at least reduces the length of their incarceration. Ultimately the best option for patients with mental illness is to divert them from correctional facilities whenever possible. 🍷





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*All facts and figures are as of December 31, 2019.*



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# 2020

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# COUNTY BUDGET SURVEY

THE COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA HAS RELEASED ITS SURVEY OF COUNTY BUDGET AND TAXATION RATES FOR 2020.

THE BUDGET CHART ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES LISTS THE 2020 BUDGET FIGURES FOR EACH COUNTY (GENERAL, SPECIAL AND OTHER FUNDS) AND COMPARES THIS YEAR'S DATA TO 2019.

THE TAXATION CHART LOOKS AT MILLAGE RATES, PREDETERMINED RATIONS AND THE LATEST ASSESSMENT CHARGES.

# 2020 COUNTY BUDGET SURVEY

County	2020 BUDGET				PERCENT BUDGET INCREASE/DECREASE FROM 2019			
	General	Special	Other	Total	General	Special	Other	Aggregate
Adams	55,444,803	14,297,075	1,130,000 [1]	70,871,878	-12.89	1,556.82	112,999,900.00	9.86
Allegheny*								
Armstrong	24,464,129	36,486,527		60,950,656	6.02	5.60		5.77
Beaver	81,174,508	128,183,874	2,310,524	211,668,906	1.73	-4.36	0.00	-2.07
Bedford	20,922,121	1,340,000	13,500,000	35,762,121	7.71	0.00	0.00	4.37
Berks	257,272,667	322,429,093	0	579,701,760	8.63	0.92		4.03
Blair	56,782,292	20,637,526	9,931,312	87,351,130	2.65	-0.32	4.56	2.14
Bradford	91,919,515			91,919,515	7.89			7.89
Bucks	263,838,800	344,477,000	126,220,000	734,535,800	1.63	8.15	-14.29	1.26
Butler	68,115,795	104,738,406		172,854,201	4.53	3.19		3.71
Cambria	58,912,047	104,818,098	18,998,046	182,728,191	-1.90	-0.14	6.90	-0.04
Cameron	5,484,085		5,652,062 [2]	11,136,147	0.35		277.51 [3]	23.67
Carbon	25,813,000	23,582,604	14,566,483	63,962,087	4.69	8.52	-11.19	1.87
Centre*								
Chester	178,472,203	233,712,236	151,265,157	563,449,596	3.41	4.14	6.20	4.45
Clarion	20,060,450	7,665,809	1,839,394	29,565,653	9.38	10.90	21.35	10.45
Clearfield	22,160,185	15,373,828	0	37,534,013	6.36	-6.59		-0.48
Clinton	23,074,477	15,179,446	810,104	39,064,027	-0.18	-5.29	5.21	-2.13
Columbia	29,448,881		1,078,800	30,527,681	9.98		148.69	12.19
Crawford	57,576,452	3,465,131	12,850,125	73,891,708	-6.25	7.48	3.52	-4.10
Cumberland	94,962,984	80,001,369	81,324,084	256,288,437	5.31 [4]	0.70	12.88 [1]	6.05
Dauphin	186,647,348	163,426,218		350,073,566	2.97	3.39		3.17
Delaware	283,815,000	326,628,000	74,266,000	684,709,000	2.09	6.10	-3.39	3.32
Elk	13,779,978	22,307,311	8,445,611	44,532,900	1.74	-0.52	92.66	10.36
Erie	112,043,394	250,744,293	92,871,980	455,659,667	7.79	1.56	6.29	3.98
Fayette	41,063,215	44,830,498		85,893,713	7.18	1.44		4.11
Forest	3,120,487		853,400	3,973,887	4.04		-2.73	2.51
Franklin	53,942,845	38,101,600	65,883,176	157,927,621	2.99	-24.85 [4]	3.04	-5.44
Fulton	8,225,859	5,687,698		13,913,557	10.64 [5]	25.25 [5]		16.18
Greene	19,961,790	15,864,700	7,122,733	42,949,223	3.76	93.03	535.96 [6]	50.29
Huntingdon	21,268,203	489,008	159,075	21,916,286	-1.03	-0.18	-23.18	-1.22
Indiana	45,949,644	615,209		46,564,853	1.25	-6.17		1.14
Jefferson	15,263,204	14,338,931	2,112,607	31,714,742	9.34 [7]	20.11 [8]	-38.71 [9]	8.08
Juniata	12,439,409		3,966,900	16,406,309	13.26		16.14	13.94
Lackawanna	133,293,570	63,176,785	20,646,975	217,117,330	4.75	1.31	1.35	3.40
Lancaster	165,315,362		108,957,318	274,272,680	1.61		2.31	1.88
Lawrence	35,188,153	456,856	33,272,183	68,917,192	4.35	0.20	-4.14	0.05
Lebanon	51,769,410	2,188,842	32,852,679	86,810,931	10.71	-14.65	-3.76	4.01
Lehigh	126,345,703	286,939,075	101,119,147	514,403,925	2.73	3.45	-5.30	1.43
Luzerne	152,355,677	190,476,202		342,831,879	10.53	13.26		12.03
Lycoming	74,008,844	17,867,481	19,578,087	111,454,412	11.12	7.39	-3.15	7.73
McKean	18,704,115		24,328,178	43,032,293	0.04		8.20	4.49
Mercer	33,853,474		2,855,000	36,708,474	4.45		8.61	4.76
Mifflin	29,284,363	2,534,363		31,818,726	0.93	-22.53		-1.45
Monroe	65,567,831	35,388,118	13,266,675	114,222,624	5.00	4.17	10.48	5.35
Montgomery	428,458,786	177,234,365	166,654,123	772,347,274	1.99	8.31	13.28 [4]	5.68
Montour	8,863,080			8,863,080	8.44			8.44
Northampton	127,458,800	297,695,100	20,246,100	445,400,000	1.40	0.10	-82.08	-16.92
Northumberland	26,989,952	50,711,461	1,819,042	79,520,455	1.81	4.79	15.27	3.97
Perry	21,673,174			21,673,174	8.55			8.55
Philadelphia	5,025,266,000	3,696,831,000	1,340,633,000	10,062,730,000	17.54	8.07	-0.22	11.31
Pike	41,061,203	2,577,165		43,638,368	-2.05	69.50		0.45
Potter	10,857,782			10,857,782	4.88			4.88
Schuylkill	66,308,506	78,355,942	8,968,582	153,633,030	3.72	4.35	25.04	5.09
Snyder	19,956,621		30,996,750	50,953,371	-3.54		-2.23	-2.75
Somerset	52,873,497			52,873,497	6.80			6.80
Sullivan*								
Susquehanna	21,212,071	24,928,792		46,140,863	-9.14	70.31		21.48
Tioga	20,864,834	16,330,250		37,195,084	4.27	1.17		2.88
Union	19,364,637			19,364,637	-0.38			-11.12
Venango	43,410,699	14,058,573	1,512,882	58,982,154	-0.25	-6.31	-20.64	-2.40
Warren*								
Washington	98,729,128	26,122,428	25,692,128	150,543,684	3.56	-11.57	2.69	0.43
Wayne	37,737,944	67,868,593		105,606,537	14.23	15.72		15.18
Westmoreland	133,090,912	81,585,182	126,414,928	341,091,022	-9.17	-1.80	6.68	-2.01
Wyoming	14,437,089	2,753,095	1,013,662	18,203,846	9.67	0.00	-0.02	7.52
York	244,921,194	273,606,795	61,202,916	579,730,905	-3.05	5.09	1.13	1.09
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>152,422,892</b>	<b>158,145,060</b>	<b>63,093,065</b>	<b>301,357,284</b>	<b>3.82</b>	<b>38.15</b>	<b>2,627,928.39</b>	<b>4.95</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>				<b>20,190,938,060</b>				

**Footnotes:**

- [1] Increase/Decrease due to bridge projects/funding
- [2] Change in financial software/accounting reporting
- [3] Increase/Decrease due to grant programs/misc. accounts
- [4] Increase/Decrease due to Capital Projects
- [5] Increase/Decrease due to 911
- [6] Increase/Decrease due to liquid fuels and Act 13
- [7] Increase/Decrease due to C&Y funding
- [8] Increase/Decrease due to independent living
- [9] Increase/Decrease due to Capital Reserve and/or Debt Service

\*no data submitted

	MILLAGE RATE				MILLS INCREASE/DECREASE FROM 2019				LAST ASSESSMENT CHANGES		
	General	Special	Debt	Total	General	Special	Debt	Total	Assess- ment Ratio	Full Reass- essment	Ratio Change
Adams	4.19			4.19	0.00			0.00	100%	2010	
Allegheny				0.00				0.00	100%	2012	2000
Armstrong	14.80		4.20	19.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1997	1985
Beaver	25.00		1.00	26.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1982	1982
Bedford	2.97		0.61	3.58	0.54		0.00	0.54	100%	2012	
Berks	7.67			7.67	0.00			0.00	100%	1994	
Blair	3.68	0.02	0.38	4.07	0.16	-0.01	0.00	0.15	100%	2017	
Bradford	10.43			10.43	0.00			0.00	50%	1999	1992
Bucks	20.10		5.35	25.45	1.01		-0.01	1.00	100%	1972	2004
Butler	21.50	2.94	3.20	27.63	0.04	0.00	-0.04	0.00	100%	1969	
Cambria	27.50	2.00	4.00	33.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	1972	2004
Cameron	20.50	1.50	5.00	27.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	50%	1986	
Carbon	0.00	11.40	0.85	12.25		11.40	0.60	12.00	50%	2001	
Centre	6.65		1.19	7.84	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1995	
Chester	3.10	0.25	1.02	4.37	0.09	0.00	-0.09	0.00	100%	1998	
Clarion	20.50		1.50	22.00	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1975	2008
Clearfield	25.00			25.00	5.50			5.50	25%	1989	
Clinton	6.20			6.20	0.20			0.20	100%	2009	2009
Columbia	11.35		1.00	12.35	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1992	
Crawford	20.25	0.70	0.90	21.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	75%	1971	1985
Cumberland	2.20	0.17		2.36	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	2010	
Dauphin	6.88	0.35		7.23	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	2002	2002
Delaware	4.54		0.92	5.46	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	2000	
Elk	15.40		0.75	16.15	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1984	2006
Erie	5.71			5.71	0.00			0.00	100%	2013	2003
Fayette	5.36		1.40	6.76	0.08		1.17	1.25	100%	2003	
Forest	18.91			18.91	0.00			0.00	100%	1974	2017
Franklin	25.00	1.30	4.10	30.40	0.00	0.25	0.00	0.25	100%	1961	2001
Fulton	12.40			12.40	0.00			0.00	100%	1990	2002
Greene	6.77	0.07	0.70	7.54	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	2003	2003
Huntingdon	20.00	0.97	0.41	21.38	3.75	0.56	-0.56	3.75	80%	1978	2013
Indiana	3.64	0.00	0.81	4.45	0.13		0.81	0.94	100%	2016	2016
Jefferson	12.50			12.50	0.50 [7]			0.50	100%	1972	2004
Juniata	22.75			22.75	0.00			0.00	100%	1974	
Lackawanna	47.60	3.82	12.50	63.92	7.11	0.00	-0.61	6.50	100%		1986
Lancaster	2.91			2.91	0.00			0.00	100%	2017	
Lawrence	7.53	0.14	0.65	8.31	1.02	0.00	-0.02	1.00	100%	2003	
Lebanon	3.29			3.29	0.00			0.00	100%	2012	2005
Lehigh	3.78			3.78	0.14			0.14	100%	2013	2013
Luzerne	6.17			6.17	0.19			0.19	100%	2009	2009
Lycoming	6.50			6.50	0.00			0.00	100%	2005	2005
McKean	12.25			12.25	1.00			1.00	100%	1998	2005
Mercer	22.25		1.40	23.65	0.00		0.00	0.00	100%	1974	2002
Mifflin	15.77			15.77	0.00			0.00	50%	1999	
Monroe	2.77	0.17	0.46	3.40	-15.64	-0.93	-2.38	-18.95	100%	2019	2019
Montgomery	3.46	0.39		3.85	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	1998	1998
Montour	3.78			3.78	0.18			0.18	100%	2004	
Northampton	11.80			11.80	0.00			0.00	50%	1995	1972
Northumberland	25.00		5.89	30.89	1.27		-0.60	0.67	100%	1972	2005
Perry	3.31			3.31	0.00			0.00	100%	2010	
Philadelphia	14.00			14.00	0.00			0.00	100%	2019	
Pike	18.82	0.10	2.32	21.24	1.50	-2.22	2.22	1.50	25%	1981	1996
Potter	18.50		0.70	19.20	0.00		-0.04	-0.04	100%	1977	2002
Schuylkill	15.38		0.60	15.98	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1996	
Snyder	21.63	0.19		21.82	0.00	0.00		0.00	100%	1973	2007
Somerset	11.26		2.10	13.36	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1998	1998
Sullivan	4.05			4.05	0.00			0.00	100%	2004	
Susquehanna	10.50	0.33		10.83	0.00	0.00		0.00	50%	1993	1993
Tioga	6.75			6.75	0.00			0.00	100%	2002	
Union	4.56	0.16	0.84	5.56	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	100%	2005	2006
Venango	6.00			6.00	0.00			0.00	100%	2000	2004
Warren	21.50			21.50	0.00			0.00	50%	1989	
Washington	2.43			2.43	0.00			0.00	100%	2017	2017
Wayne	4.61		0.38	4.99	1.00		0.00	1.00	100%	2005	2005
Westmoreland	21.49			21.49	0.50			0.50	100%	1972	
Wyoming	23.87		1.98	25.85	0.00		0.00	0.00	50%	1988	1996
York	5.90	0.09		5.99	0.19	0.00		0.19	100%	2006	
AVERAGE	12.16	1.23	2.09	13.42	0.16	0.43	0.01	0.29	86%		



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- Josh Lang, Commissioner, Bedford County
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- Daryl Miller, Commissioner, Bradford County
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# THERE WILL BE GOOD DAYS AND BAD DAYS



## LEARN FROM BOTH

**Tim Rahschulte, Ph.D.**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Professional Development Academy

**E**veryone wants to be great. But I am sure we can all agree that some days are easier than others. Some days we wake up, and our hair is already perfect, our clothes look great on us, we feel great, it's a sunny seventy-five-degree day, the coffee we just brewed brings back experiences of a time in Spain when the coffee had just the right amount of richness under just the right amount of cream, the songs on our drive into the office are favorites, all the traffic lights are green in our favor, the office is abuzz with positive energy, all the work our colleagues promised would be done by today

is done, and our big presentation wows your fellow county leaders. It wasn't just a good day; it was a great day.

However, great isn't a word used to describe all our days or how we think of ourselves every day. Some days we wake up late because our phone's alarm didn't go off since the battery ran dead (stupid short-life battery!), which means we need to rush through our morning routine and miss our workout. We open a container of yogurt for a quick breakfast just to find a moldy science project has started growing inside (argh!), jump into the shower for two minutes, can't find anything good to wear and just

throw on an old pair of khakis and a clean shirt, get to the platform just in time to see the train rolling away, and finally reach the office only to have a colleague point out the ripped seam in the back shoulder of the clean shirt (which could be due to excessive workouts creating bulging muscles beneath the shirt ... but that would be a lie). The new presentation we worked on all night for the big community meeting today has been canceled. Great! In fact, it's pretty bad. We all have days like these. Some days are up. Some days are down. Some days it seems everything is in our favor. Other days it seems everything is working against us.

If you're human (which I am going to assume), you've experienced good days and bad days. In fact, when asked, most days fit into either of those two categories - some with immense joy and others with equally profound sorrow, some quite productive and others dogged by distraction, some faced with passionate procrastination and others with abundant enthusiasm. We don't control all the variables that make up our experiences, but some things are going to go the way we intend (or possibly even exceed expectations), and some aren't going to measure up (or will be downright lousy!). We each have limits as well as potential within each of our days.

The positive in all this is that both good days and bad days, good moments and not-so-good moments, contain lessons—things we can learn from. It's more widely practiced to learn from bad days. A team that misses project targets, the time you made a critical error that resulted in severe consequences, the moments of crisis that shake us, or any other experienced slump—all these will often cause immediate action to

The positive in all this is that both good days and bad days, good moments and not-so-good moments, contain lessons—things we can learn from.

reflect on what went wrong so it doesn't happen again. That's good learning and a part of good leadership.

Some might say a failure is only a failure if we don't learn something from it. But we also need to learn from the good days. What made it a good day? How can we repeat that experience? How can we take what worked and make it even better?

The key to learning is to develop learning consistency and to approach each and every situation as an opportunity to learn—whether you've had a radical success, dismal failure, or something in between. In other words, regardless the situation, go in as a learner. Leadership is not a reserved right for a select few. Leadership is a learnable set of behaviors and capabilities. It's an attitude. It's a mindset. It's a belief and determination to get better and better over time and with experience. As learned from Regis Mulot, the chief human resource officer at Staples, "The best leaders make every day a learning experience."

There's an adjacent rule here to point out in addition to learning from good days and bad and that is to always look for opportunities to learn, but don't dwell on opportunities missed. When learning from bad days, bad moments, and bad experiences, the value is in learning and moving on. If we get stuck and dwell on the lessons of missed opportunities, we'll miss the next opportunity, which is certain to be right around the corner. So be constantly on the lookout for opportunities to learn—in both the good and the bad. Then take that learning and look for the next opportunity to apply it. 🍷

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Reprinted from the National Association of Counties' County News. Tim Rahschulte is the chief architect of the NACo High Performance Leadership Program ([www.naco.org/skills](http://www.naco.org/skills)).





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