

## **Elk County Conservation District Holds Forestry Days for Districts**

*Elk County, PA* – The Elk County Conservation District (ECCD), in collaboration with neighboring conservation districts and other industry partners, hosted “Forestry Days for Districts” on July 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> in Johnsonburg, PA. This two-day workshop was open to all conservation districts statewide and representatives from over 20 districts were present! The objective was to provide a “training by districts, for districts,” with a focus on timber harvesting and how to effectively communicate sustainable, timber practices. Throughout PA, each district encounters varying degrees of forestry sites and timber operations. “Forestry Days for Districts” allowed district employees to come together from all corners of the state to discuss their own experiences and learn directly from those in the forestry industry.

Day one of the workshop included a classroom component, which was held at the Johnsonburg Fire Department’s Social Hall. Throughout the day, there were several presentations given that explained the importance of sustainable, forestry efforts, as well as maintaining healthy partnerships with those in the logging industry. The topics included, “Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) Program and Logger Training,” “Fundamentals of Timber Harvesting,” “Fundamentals of Regulations,” “Timber Harvesting Erosion & Sediment Plan,” “Best Management Practices and Common Site Problems,” “Resources,” and “The Center for Agricultural Conservation Assistance Training.” Sandy Thompson, District Manager of the McKean County Conservation District, also explained the significance of working together as conservation districts in her presentation, “The How and Why of Conservation District Collaborative,” because it makes events such as these possible. The consistent take-away from each presentation is to continually educate ourselves at the district level, and to have the ability to communicate what we learn to our timbering partners.

The second portion of the workshop included a field component where participants visited an active harvesting site. Mike Hovatter, of LandVest and Board Chairman of ECCD, provided an overview of the timber sale, site operations, and the harvesting methods in use. Across the site, Mike explained the shifts the forest ecosystem has encountered throughout the decades, and how the present forest is not the same as it would have been 100 or even 1,000 years ago. The attendees also had the opportunity to meet with Tom Carlson, a logger for almost 49 years. Tom explained the different pieces of equipment found onsite and how they operate. He stressed the importance of safety when on the job, and the importance of being responsible of yourself and others on a site. The participants were able to sit in two pieces of logging equipment not in use at the time: a grapple skidder and a feller buncher. This was a great opportunity to view a jobsite from a logger’s point of view, including the limited visibility they have when operating a piece of equipment. Again, this stressed the importance of safety on not only an active timber harvest, but on any construction site. Finally, the attendees were able to view an active demonstration of the feller buncher from a distance.

As a thank you to all our guests for participating, sponsors from Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group, Domtar, Pixelle Specialty Solutions, and Metzler Forest Products, LLC organized a tour and dinner at Straub Brewery Visitor Center & Tap Room, located in St. Marys, PA. We would also like to thank Katering by Kate for providing us with a spectacular lunch. Thank you to all our presenters; these would include Chuck Coup (PA SFI), Kate Radock (LandVest), Amy Shields (AHUG), Sandy Thompson (McKean CCD), Glenn Dunn (Potter CCD), Jim Zoschg (Cameron CCD), Kate Wehler (Elk CCD), and Jacob Tomlinson (Penn State Extension). Additionally, our final thanks to all those who organized this workshop; these include Elk CCD, McKean CCD, Potter CCD, Cameron CCD, Tioga CCD, LandVest, PA Sustainable Forest

Implementation Committee, the Center for Agriculture Conservation Assistance Training, and Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group.







