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Conservationists Recognized for Making a Difference

(Harrisburg, PA) – The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD)/State Conservation Commission’s 73rd Joint Annual Conference was held virtually due to the coronavirus. Several conservationists were recognized during the online event on July 23, 2020.

“These individuals are shining stars among Pennsylvania’s 66 conservation districts. Today we recognize their efforts going above and beyond for clean water and healthy soil,” said Brenda Shambaugh, PACD Executive Director. “Congratulations to all these individuals and organizations on this recognition.”

The 2020 PACD honorees are as follows:

Legislator Leadership Award

This award is presented to legislators recognized for their outstanding efforts to further the activities and accomplishments of the state's conservation districts or PACD on a statewide basis.

Representative Mark Keller (PA 86th District)

Representative Mark Keller was nominated by the Perry County Conservation District. He is currently in his eighth and last term representing the 86th Legislative District in Perry and Cumberland counties. Representative Keller has brought a wealth of experience in both state and local government to the Pennsylvania House of Representatives as a Perry County Commissioner and as Representative. His experience has prepared him to be a strong, effective voice for agriculture. He serves as chairman on the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee. Representative Keller advocated for the conservation district on

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numerous legislative funding initiatives and on local resource concerns. Conservation district inquiries, requests for assistance, and outreach efforts are promptly addressed.

President's Award

Selected by PACD Executive Board President, this award is given, at the discretion of the President, to an individual, organization, or agency in recognition of their outstanding efforts that have resulted in furthering the accomplishments of PACD.

Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission

The Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission (SCC) provides financial and other support for the Building for Tomorrow Leadership Development Program. Starting in 2018, the SCC provided funding to hire a full-time program coordinator. This position allows consistent and regular training for conservation district directors, associate directors, and staff. Building for Tomorrow programming includes Regional Director workshops, Staff Conference, and the Management Summit as well as training for new managers and directors. These trainings strengthen conservation districts across the state in fostering influential leaders, competent managers, and well-rounded staff. The SCC's continued support of leadership development for Pennsylvania's conservation districts helps to further the mission of PACD and is why they were selected for the President's Award.

Ann Rudd Saxman Conservation District Director Excellence Award

This award is given to a conservation district director or associate director for his or her outstanding volunteer efforts, which have furthered the activities and accomplishments of conservation districts on a statewide basis.

Sonia Wasco (Lancaster County)

Sonia Wasco has been connected to and supported the work of the Lancaster County Conservation District (LCCD) for more than 40 years. Sonia is currently serving as a director on the LCCD board of directors for 12 years after serving as an Associate Director for ten years. She is also an active member of the PACD Executive Board, serving as treasurer. Sonia's most unique and priceless volunteer work benefitting generations of students is her passion in serving as the co-director of the Lancaster County Youth Conservation School. For more than 40 years, Sonia has donated her time to facilitate a residential field school for students 14-16 years old. Working with county cooperating agencies or state legislators, Sonia is well informed and up to date regarding conservation issues in Pennsylvania. Communications is a skill Sonia practices, whether at a board meeting, legislative breakfast, volunteering at farm tour, or meeting in a small group to help organize LCCD events.

Conservation District Employee Excellence Award

This award is given to a conservation district employee for his or her outstanding efforts that have furthered the activities and accomplishments of conservation districts on a statewide basis.

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Brooke Russick (Indiana County)

Brooke has worked for the Indiana County Conservation District for five years. She started out as a watershed specialist, then moved to the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program Specialist position. Through this position, Brooke built relationships with nearly every municipality in the county. This allows the District to receive \$1.5 million in requests for program funding each year. Brooke goes above and beyond to maintain the highest level of quality for the projects. Her grant writing and dedication to the District has helped secure its financial future. Brooke is a team player, respectful of other's opinions, and capable of accomplishing tasks under challenging circumstances. Brooke has a deep passion for making a positive impact on water quality. She is an invaluable asset to the District and water improvement efforts in the Commonwealth.

Conservation District Employee Service Recognition Program Awards

The Conservation District Employee Service Recognition Awards recognize conservation district employees for their years of dedication to conserving Pennsylvania's natural resources.

30 Years of Service

- Susan Gallagher, Chief Naturalist, Carbon County
- David Stoner, District Manager, Franklin County
- JoAnn McCready, District Manager, Lawrence County
- Patrick McKinney, Environmental Education Coordinator, Schuylkill County
- Keith Largent, E&S Technician, Somerset County
- Sylvia Thompson, Fiscal Coordinator/Bookkeeper II, Wayne County

35 Years of Service

- Donna Fisher, District Manager, Blair County
- Robert Sweitzer, District Manager (retired), Centre County
- Roger Spotts, Head Naturalist, Monroe County
- Mark Kimmel, District Manager, York County

For more information about the work of the state's 66 conservation districts, visit www.pacd.org. You can also follow PACD on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/PAConservation>.

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The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD) is a non-profit organization whose guiding values include: Sustainable Resource Conservation; Integrity, Local; Education and Outreach; and Partnerships. PACD primarily serves as the collective voice for Pennsylvania's 66 county conservation districts. For more information about PACD, visit www.pacd.org.

