Conservation District Week

April 10-16, 2022

Thank You for Supporting the Commonwealth’s 66 Conservation Districts!

2022-2023 Budget

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD), representing all 66 of the Commonwealth’s conservation districts, thanks members of the PA House and Senate for supporting the districts by providing the funds necessary to preserve and protect our Commonwealth’s natural resources through the state budgetary process.

Conservation districts are local units of government established under state law to carry out natural resource management programs. Districts work with landowners and local governments to help them manage and protect land and water resources on private and public lands. Each Conservation District is led by a Board of Directors comprised of local people from all walks of life, including members of the agricultural community.

To ensure that conservation districts can maintain current programs and services for local communities, PACD is respectfully requesting the Commonwealth’s 2022-2023 budget increase the “Transfer to the Conservation District Fund” lines in both the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture (PDA) and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) budgets, which have not been increased since the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

**In order for conservation districts to serve their counties, they rely on state support, which is why PACD requests a budget increase to $1.738 million in the PDA budget for the Conservation District Fund line and a budget increase to $5.010 million in the DEP budget for the Conservation District Fund line to assist with conservation planning, project development and installation, ensuring critical conservation practices are put in place enhancing and protecting PA’s natural resources.**

Invasive species

Pennsylvania’s diverse geography is home to thousands of different plant, animal, and invertebrate species. Unfortunately, not all of these organisms are beneficial. Pennsylvania’s natural resources and economy are threatened by unwanted invaders in the Commonwealth – nonnative invasive species. Often, they are unintentionally introduced through the everyday activities of citizens – hiding in firewood, attached to boats and other gear, or concealed in merchandise. Once established, they have the potential to change Pennsylvania forever.

The Pennsylvania Invasive Species Council is developing a statewide program called Pennsylvania Regional Invasive Species Management or PRISM. The PRISMs would be locally based, made up of existing local organizations concerned with invasive species, such as conservation districts, conservancies, watershed groups, conservation groups and others. A PRISM would not only manage existing invasive species, but, perhaps more importantly, be on the lookout for new invaders so that they can be controlled and eradicated before they become a major economic and environmental problem.

**PACD supports the PRISM concept to manage invasive species in the Commonwealth.**

Non-Point Source Pollution Reduction Legislation

PACD endorses HB 1901 because we believe the legislation allows for the opportunity to pilot a number of programs geared toward putting much needed Best Management Practices (BMPs) on the ground, thus reducing the amount of nutrients getting into Pennsylvania’s ground and surface water. Funding for the legislation is derived from the federal stimulus appropriation.

The bill is fashioned after the PA Dirt and Gravel Roads program, allowing conservation district to assess the proposed projects in their local area to best utilize our limited financial resources. As such, the legislation is essentially a return on an investment to protect our valuable natural resources. Additionally, the legislation provides conservation districts with funding to administer the program and provide the technical assistance necessary for a successful program. We strongly support the provision in the legislation allowing districts to use 12% of the funding to administer the program along with the provision allowing the State Conservation Commission 4% of the funding to administer the program. Conservation districts need the staff complement to provide the technical assistance necessary to plan and develop BMPs.

Clean water is vital to all Pennsylvanians and HB 1901 provides a mechanism to utilize federal dollars in a variety of programs. Our hope is that PA passes this legislation, but also considers future state funding opportunities to continue the programs established in HB 1901 when federal stimulus money is exhausted.

**PACD supports HB 1901**