



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



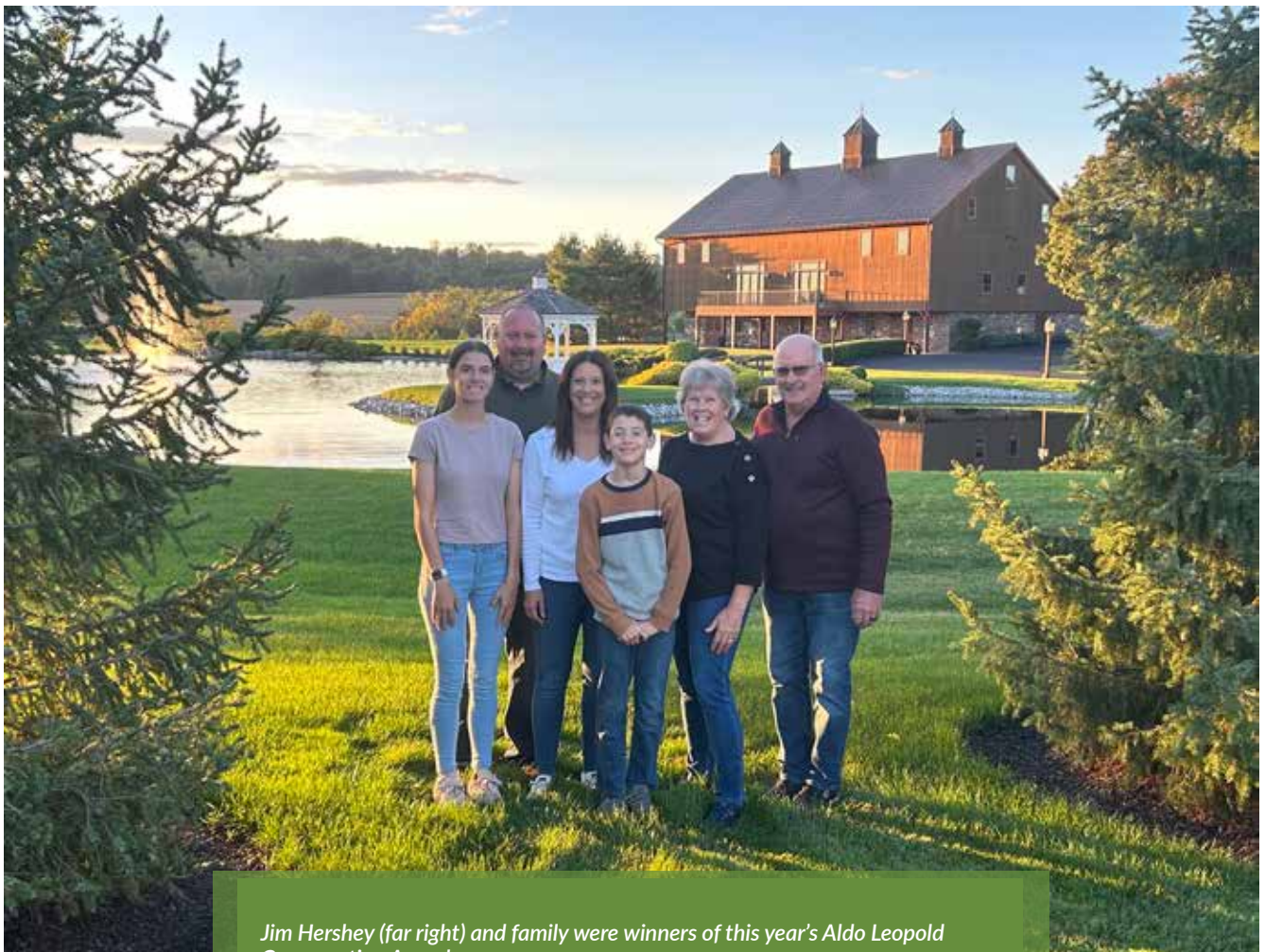
Pennsylvania NRCS Accomplishments

FY 2025





Pennsylvania NRCS Accomplishments



Jim Hershey (far right) and family were winners of this year's Aldo Leopold Conservation Award.



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NRCS staff and partners participated in an Advanced Wetland training course in FY 2025.

2025: A Year in Review

Our voluntary conservation programs provide technical and financial assistance to help farmers, woodland owners, and other land managers address natural resource concerns such as water quality, soil erosion, wildlife habitat, flooding, landscape fragmentation, and much more. Using our strategic approach to conservation, NRCS leverages partnerships across the Commonwealth

of Pennsylvania to invest in landscape-scale conservation.

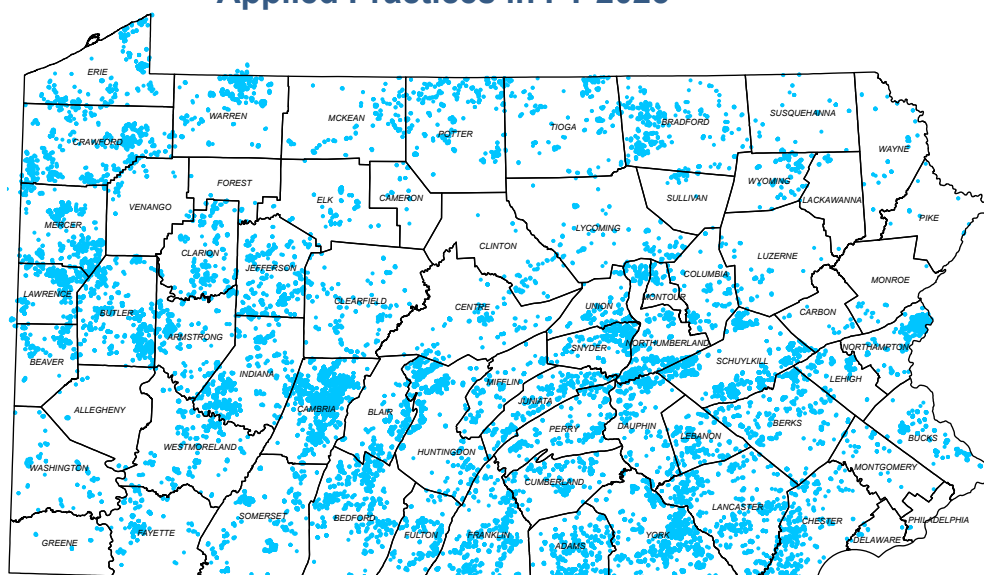
This report captures Pennsylvania NRCS's and its partners' successes throughout fiscal year (FY) 2025, which ran from October 1, 2024 to September 30, 2025.

42,958

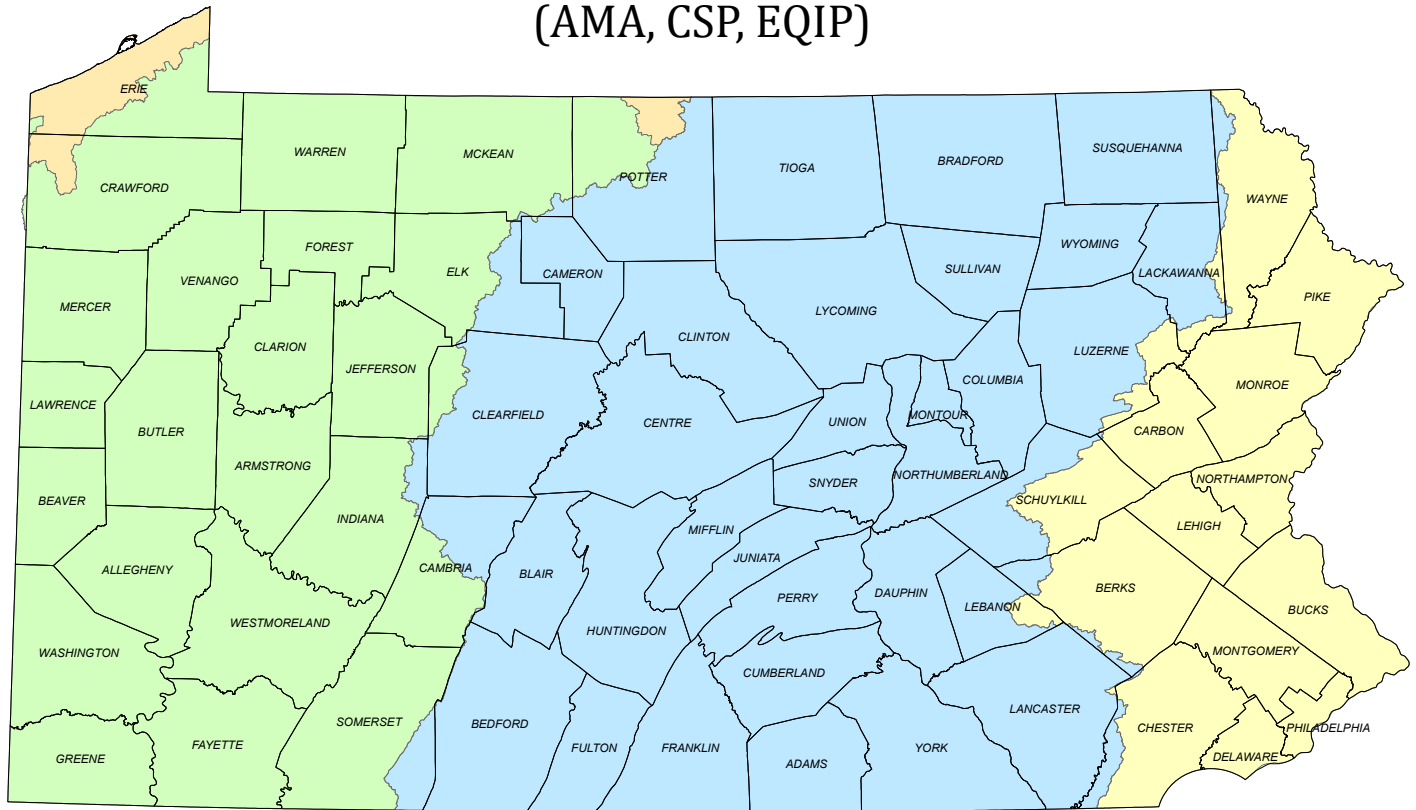
CONSERVATION
PRACTICES APPLIED

In FY 2025, more than 42,000 conservation practices and enhancements were applied on Pennsylvania's private lands to help improve soil, air, and water quality; enhance wildlife habitat; and preserve land for future generations.

Applied Practices in FY 2025



Funding by Watershed (AMA, CSP, EQIP)



■ Ohio River Watershed	■ Great Lakes Watershed	■ Chesapeake Bay Watershed	■ Delaware River Watershed
Contracts.....232	Contracts.....15	Contracts.....560	Contracts.....100
Acres.....47,271	Acres.....1,592	Acres.....123,075	Acres.....14,612
Dollars.....\$14.2 million	Dollars.....\$876,033	Dollars.....\$44.4 million	Dollars.....\$6.6 million

* Easements are not included in totals.

PENNSYLVANIA NRCS FY 2025 INVESTMENTS ON PRIVATE WORKING LANDS

EQIP Environmental Quality Incentives Program		AMA Agricultural Management Assistance Program	
	153,940		26
	718		8
	\$57.28 M		\$192,532
CSP Conservation Stewardship Program		CTA Conservation Technical Assistance	
	32,583		390,627
	181		1,712
	\$8.6 M	Symbol Key  Acres  Funding  Contracts  Plans	

FY 2025 INITIATIVES

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI)

\$1,778,309

Organic Initiative (Certified & Transition)

\$142,671

High Tunnel Initiative

\$130,120

Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)

\$249,946

Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Partnership

\$797,998

TABLE 1: TOP CONSERVATION PRACTICES APPLIED IN FY 2025

Practice	Count	Measurement
Livestock		
Waste Storage	105	No
Heavy-Use Area	388,892	SF
Trails & Walkways	22,531	Ft
Stream Crossings	42	No
Fence	450,664	Ft
Roof Runoff	121	No
Prescribed Grazing	2,551	Ac
Agronomic		
No-till	13,446	Ac
Cover Crop	102,477	Ac
Nutrient Management	19,560	Ac
Soil Erosion		
Diversion	10,314	Ft
Waterway	33	Ac
Terrace	31,565	Ft
Lined Outlet	7,130	Ft
Buffers		
Herbaceous Buffer	X	Ac
Forest Buffer	108	Ac



This Franklin County, PA farm lies within the Kittatinny Risse Conservation Landscape. (Credit: Audubon Pennsylvania)

Preserving Pennsylvania's Lands

Easement Stewardship

The Pennsylvania NRCS Easement Stewardship Staff had a very successful year working through the first year of a five-year agreement to contract and implement repair maintenance projects on Wetland Reserve Program (WRP) and Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE). In Fiscal Year 2025, PA NRCS staff contracted over \$375,000 to repair or maintain 118.8 acres on 11 different easements throughout Pennsylvania. The repair maintenance work consisted of practices including, but not limited to, invasive species control, replanting native grasses, reestablishing native trees and shrubs, rehabilitating wetland embankments, and replacing water control structures in wetland systems.

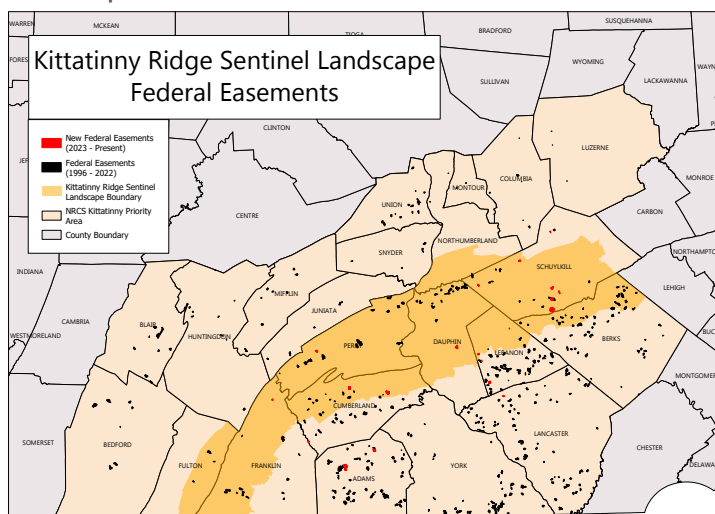
The Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape

The NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape Project, launched in 2021, aims to protect sensitive forest and agricultural lands along the Ridge and buffer key military installations in Pennsylvania.

The NRCS Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape Project, launched in 2021, aims to protect sensitive forest and agricultural lands along the Ridge and buffer key military installations in Pennsylvania. NRCS Partners currently leveraging RCPP funding to preserve

lands in the Kittatinny Ridge project area include the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Berks Nature, Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, Lebanon County Conservation District, Lebanon Valley Conservancy, Manada Conservancy, and the Schuylkill County Conservation District.

At the end of fiscal year 2025, RCPP Partners had leveraged \$1.4 million to acquire eight easements to protect 1,174 acres, and had initiated nine additional contracts worth \$2.1 million to protect an additional 1,172 acres. The current RCPP land preservation easements are spread across five counties in the Kittatinny Ridge highest protection area - Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lebanon, and Schuylkill Counties. There are currently \$ 3 million in RCPP federal funds remaining that can be used towards the purchase of permanent land protection easements in the Kittatinny Ridge project area. The project has been extended one year, and will continue to fund new applications until April 2027.



EASEMENT ACTIVITY

ACEP-ALE

Ag Conservation Easement Program -
Agricultural Land Easement

Enrollments



1,004



\$1.4 M



12

Closed/Acquired



1,180



\$2 M



9

RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership
Program

Enrollments



759



\$1.9 M



6

Closed/Acquired



723



\$855,110



3

ACEP-WRE

Ag Conservation Easement Program -
Wetland Reserve Easement

Enrollments



17



\$117,686



2

Symbol Key



Acres



Funds



Contracts



Inter-Agency Wetland training cadre. From left to right: Frank Plewa ACOE, Yuri Plowden, NRCS, Andrew McDonald, DEP, Tyson Myers, NRCS and Keith Shadle NRCS.

Improving Soil Health

Soil Health and Soil Activities

In 2025, NRCS field staff continued to highlight regenerative agricultural practices that improve the health and vitality of Pennsylvania's farmlands. Efforts are paying off, as noted by one NRCS District Conservationist who marvels at the increase in fields of green blanketed in cover crops throughout her county, even as winter approaches. She attributes this to NRCS and partners' ongoing efforts to promote soil health practices. In 2025, over 3,100 people, including farmers, students, teachers, ag-professionals, and the general public, attended soil health events sponsored by NRCS and partners.

For example, the soil health benefits of rotational grazing were demonstrated at the George Lake Field Day in Blair County where 125 farmers heard from Dr. Allen Richards, an internationally renowned regenerative agriculture speaker. Other grazing events included the Equine Station at Ag Progress Days in Centre County; the Western PA Grazing Conference in Clarion with 175 farmers and ag professionals; and the Southwest PA Soil Health Conference in Westmoreland County.

You are never too young to learn about soil health. The Franklin County NRCS staff used a rainfall simulator to demonstrate to nearly 1,400 fourth graders how cover cropping and pasture management prevent soil erosion and increase water infiltration compared to conventional tillage at the Franklin Fall Farm Fun Fest. At the Green Days event in Warren County, 200 elementary school students made mini-soil monolith cards and

learned about farm conservation practices. Middle school students and their teachers at Red Bank Valley school in Clarion County discovered that soils are alive with a hands-on soil biology lab. In Venango and Cumberland Counties, Envirothon Study days included lessons on soil health, physical soil properties, soil survey, and careers in conservation.

Workshops were delivered directly to farmers on cover cropping, nitrogen fertilizer management, soil organic matter, and ways to improve the natural vitality of the soil. Events were held in Centre, Juniata, Snyder, and Warren Counties. These are just a sample that show NRCS's and its partners dedication in educating Pennsylvania farmers and the general public about the benefits of conservation and soil health practices.

In 2025, NRCS delivered the Soil Health and Sustainability Training to 18 conservation professionals from NRCS, the Conservation Districts, Pheasants Forever, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, and Farmland Preservation. We returned to Happy Hollow Farm in Juniata County, owned by David Hunsberger who has used no-till and cover crops since the 1990's. Students utilized the In-Field soil health assessment card and the Pasture Condition Score card to evaluate his soil for the presence of soil health indicators.

Compliance and Wetlands

Farmers who receive USDA benefits must comply with the Highly Erodible Land Conservation

(HELC) and Wetland Conservation (WC) provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill, as amended (also known as the Food Security Act). Designated staff from NRCS complete these determinations whenever a USDA program participant makes changes to their farm or brings new areas into production. In 2025, NRCS completed over 1,197 HELC determinations and close to 458 WC determinations.

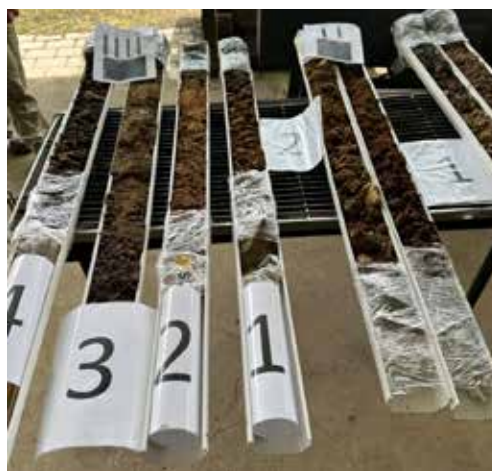
To help our farm customers comply with federal, state, and local regulations, conservation professionals must be able to identify wetlands. Pennsylvania NRCS collaborated with the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) to hold two Inter-Agency wetland trainings: an Advanced Wetland Training in Cumberland County, and a Hydric Soils Training in Huntingdon County. Topics included hydric soil indicators, problematic soils, areas lacking wetland hydrology, problematic vegetation, and the importance of thorough preliminary data gathering. Over 75 conservation and regulatory professionals attended these trainings.

NRI

The National Resources Inventory (NRI) program collects and produces scientifically credible information on the status, condition, and trends of land, soil, water, and related resources on the Nation's non-federal lands in support of efforts to protect, restore, and enhance the lands and waters of the United States. In FY 2025, Pennsylvania reviewed 910 segments from 2024 and finished well ahead of the January 2026 deadline.

Technical Soil Services

NRCS Soil Scientists provided technical soil services to over 6,700 people affecting nearly 28,000 acres in Pennsylvania in 2025. Types of services included the Northeast Collegiate Soil Judging competition, wetland trainings, assistance with Envirothons, urban soils investigations, Food Security Act compliance, soils evaluations for conservation practices, providing soil survey information, Farmland Protection Policy Act evaluations, PA DEP



Soil cores taken from Greenwood Furnace charcoal hearths on display at the PA Soils Conference, 2025.

Surface Mine permit reviews, legacy sediment investigations, PA Boot Camp trainings, soil health trainings, and outreach events. In 2025, NRCS conducted 10 pXRF site investigations to check for heavy metal contamination for several of our current and potential urban farm customers.

NRCS assisted with soils description at a project in White Clay Creek Preserve in Chester County, PA. Trench excavation was funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR) and the National Park Foundation. The site was a former mill pond that had silted in and buried a pre-colonial wetland.

Pennsylvania Soils Conference

Sixty soil scientists from the public, academic, and private sectors gathered in Centre County for a two-day conference that showcased soils activities in Pennsylvania including NRCS soil survey work for the past 5 years, Penn State research on the historic effects of charcoal production on forest soils, legacy sediments, use of pXRF to determine heavy metal content in urban soils, the PA DEP Clean Water Academy, soils programs at various PA colleges and universities, use and misuse of soil survey data, and a panel on NRCS soil survey mapping through the decades. A field day followed the conference that highlighted some of the topics presented the first day.



Managing Forests and Wildlife

Forest Enhancement through the Conservation Stewardship Program

Non-industrial private forest landowners are increasingly tapping into forest conservation opportunities through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). In FY 2025, 4,346 forestland acres were enrolled or renewed through CSP on 70 contracts. This totaled \$3.76 million in financial assistance obligations throughout the Commonwealth.

CSP aids participants by helping them increase their level of forest stewardship. CSP offers forest managers an opportunity to enhance their operations while adopting conservation enhancements that can improve the conservation of natural resources. Popular enhancements used on Pennsylvania forestlands through CSP include Wildlife Habitat Planting, Tree/Shrub Establishment, Forest Stand Improvement, Herbaceous Weed Treatment, and Upland Wildlife Habitat Management.

Managing Forests

Pennsylvania is a heavily forested state with forest lands totaling 16.8 million acres, which cover about 58 percent of the state. Non-industrial private forest lands cover about 11.5 million acres in Pennsylvania which is owned and operated by more than 738,000 private forest landowners.

Through financial and technical assistance, and in coordination with partners, NRCS is making significant steps towards a goal of maintaining and improving the health and resiliency of forested ecosystems on private forest lands.

In FY 2025, the multiple NRCS initiatives and programs that provided assistance on forest lands included EQIP Forestry, EQIP Forest Management Plan Development, EQIP Working Lands for Wildlife Golden Winged Warbler Initiative, Joint Chiefs', and CSP Forestland. These individual programs and initiatives share a common thread of addressing the degraded health and resiliency of Pennsylvania's forests.

Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership

The Joint Chiefs' Landscape Restoration Partnership enables NRCS and the Forest Service to collaborate with states, agricultural producers, forest landowners, tribes and public land managers to invest in conservation and restoration at a big enough scale to make a positive difference. Working in partnership, and at this scale, helps reduce wildfire threats to communities, protect water quality and supply, and improve wildlife habitat for at-risk species. In FY 2025, PA NRCS implemented 15 total Joint Chiefs' contracts on 1,015 acres for \$765,754.86, and 10 activity plans and assessments on 992 acres for \$32,242.94.

In FY 2025, Pennsylvania NRCS also completed work on the Allegheny Plateau Habitat Restoration project. Through this three-year agreement, habitat development treatments were prioritized through collaborative management for two at-risk species: the ruffed grouse and cerulean warbler. In turn, this project benefits communities by maintaining healthy, resilient forests through sustainable management while ensuring a consistent supply of ecosystem services.

Working Lands for Wildlife

Through the Working Lands for Wildlife Initiative, Pennsylvania NRCS is assisting private forest landowners in creating and maintaining desirable habitat for golden-winged warblers. The Initiative is focused on encouraging the growth of desirable trees, such as oak and hickory, and controlling invasive species in the forest understory.

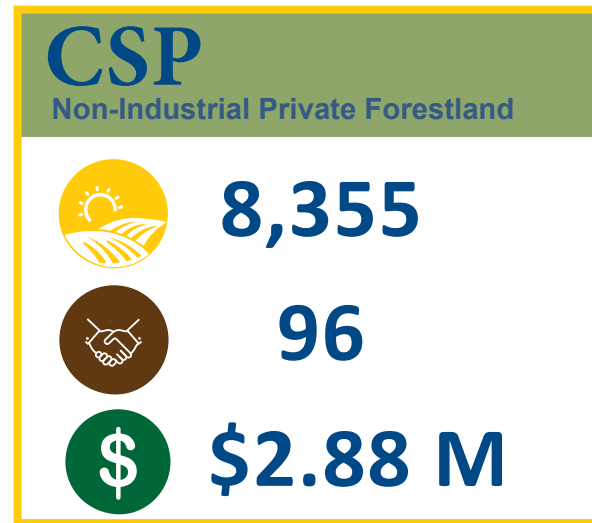
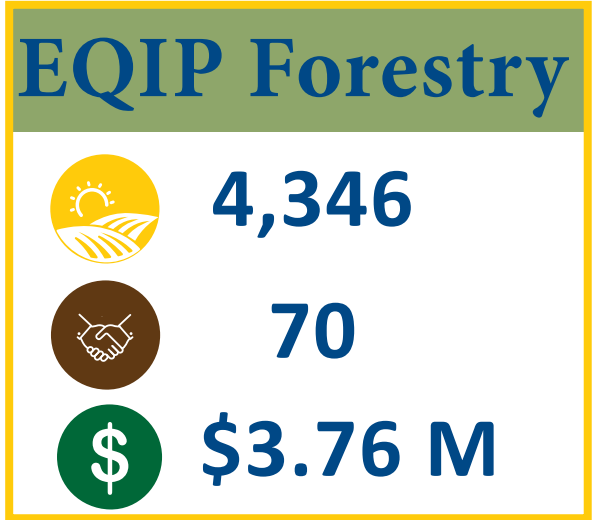
Conservation efforts in support of the golden-winged warbler benefit many other species that depend on similar habitat, such as the American woodcock, eastern towhee, and field sparrow. Forest management is crucial in creating and maintaining habitat necessary to sustain breeding populations of golden-winged warbler and creating early successional habitat.

EQIP Pollinator Act Now

Populations of many pollinators are in decline, and the loss of benefits derived from them is being felt by the agricultural community. Pennsylvania NRCS is providing technical and financial assistance to develop over 400 acres of pollinator habitat through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program.

Insects and other animal pollinators are vital to the production of healthy crops for food, fibers, edible oils, medicines, and other products. Three-fourths of the worlds flowering plants depend on pollinators to reproduce. Fruit and vegetable growers in Pennsylvania can attest to the significant role pollinators play in the production of many of our crops. The commodities produced

with the help of pollinators generate significant income for producers and those who benefit from a productive agricultural community. Pollinators are also essential components of the habitats and ecosystems that many wild animals rely on for food and shelter.



Forestry Success

NRCS Helps Camp Owners Manage Forest and Wildlife

By Dwight Landis, Conservation Technician

Bill and Sue Heckman own The Heckman Camp, which is about 99 acres of rugged forested ground on the flanks of Nittany Mountain in Centre County. For generations this land and its small cabin have been a gathering spot for family and friends to enjoy hunting, the scenic mountain views, and observing birds and other wildlife.

The Heckmans want to manage this land long term for a healthy forest. But as in most places, forestry has its challenges! Hemlock trees have been degraded by wooly adelgids, and oaks have been periodically attacked by spongy moths. Regeneration of native trees and shrubs has been limited by over-browsing by high numbers of deer, and competition from invasive plants.

The Heckmans are particularly interested in improving regeneration of trees and shrubs because they are the future of a healthy forest and also provide wildlife habitat for hunting and observing birds and other wildlife.

Fortunately, assistance was available for them. PA DCNR Service Forester Tim Cole provided technical advice in the planning stages and has continued as the work has proceeded.

NRCS assisted with getting a forestry management plan written by a consulting forester to guide their work.

NRCS also had assistance available for forestry practices through the EQIP Golden-winged

Warbler Initiative. Golden-winged Warblers are beautiful songbirds whose populations have declined because their preferred habitat is in limited supply. Golden-winged Warblers need early successional “young forest” habitat. These are landscapes with large openings where the sunlight promotes regeneration, scattered with a low density of larger trees. This was a good fit with the Heckmans’ goals.

After signing up with an EQIP Golden-winged Warbler contract, the following practices were implemented in the project area: 1) Invasive plants were controlled with herbicide treatments to reduce competition with regenerating trees and shrubs. 2) A deer fence was built around the project area to protect against over-browsing by deer. 3) A cutting practice called Early Successional Habitat Development was done to create openings to promote regeneration of native trees and shrubs; and 4) A follow up herbicide treatment was done to continue control of invasive plants.

The Heckmans have also done extensive planting of trees and shrubs to try to increase the variety of vegetation on their property.

The results can be seen in the photos. Photo 1 shows the project area after the cutting practice, with a mixture of openings and a low density of retained seed trees.

Photo 2 shows thriving regeneration of seedlings in the project area. This early successional “young forest” habitat is beneficial for Golden-winged warblers, and many other birds, and wildlife species, including deer and wild turkeys.



Photo 1



Photo 2



NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality in priority watersheds with ag-impaired streams through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI).

Enhancing Water Quality

National Water Quality Initiative

NRCS provides financial and technical assistance to farmers and forest landowners interested in improving water quality in priority watersheds with ag-impaired streams through the National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI). NWQI is currently being offered in the following Pennsylvania watersheds (because of the significant natural resource challenges they face):

- ◆ Warrior Run
- ◆ Fishing Creek (Bull Run, Cherry Run)
- ◆ Upper Kishacoquillas Creek
- ◆ Swatara Creek
- ◆ Maiden Creek

NRCS strives to improve water quality by preventing sediments and nutrients from reaching surface water including streams and drinking water sources. The ultimate goal of NWQI consists of water quality improvement, source water protection, and removal of stream from the ag impaired streams list. In FY 2025, \$1,777,327 in contracts covering 1,565.7 acres were awarded. Stream monitoring was conducted by partners, in some cases via super gauge monitoring stations, to establish baseline levels and track changes over time. Of the watersheds listed, Swatara Creek and Maiden Creek watersheds are source water protection pilot projects aimed at protecting the source of public drinking water for communities.

Super Gauge Monitoring

Pennsylvania NRCS has provided \$500,000 per super gauge for the U.S. Geological Service to install and monitor super gauge monitoring stations at the following locations: Chiques Creek – Lancaster County, Swatara Creek, Dauphin County. The newest ones being installed are on Swift Run– Adams County, Towanda Creek – Bradford County, Saucony Creek – Berks County, Fishing Creek – Clinton County, and Conneaut Creek – Crawford County. The real-time, continuous sampling devices contain sensors capable of collecting data on temperature, specific conductance, pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, nitrites, and turbidity. Increments of monitoring will be every 15 minutes. This is a significant departure from monitoring samples that occurred during high flow or an established date once per month. Other factors can be estimated using a surrogate regression model. For instance, suspended sediment is determined via

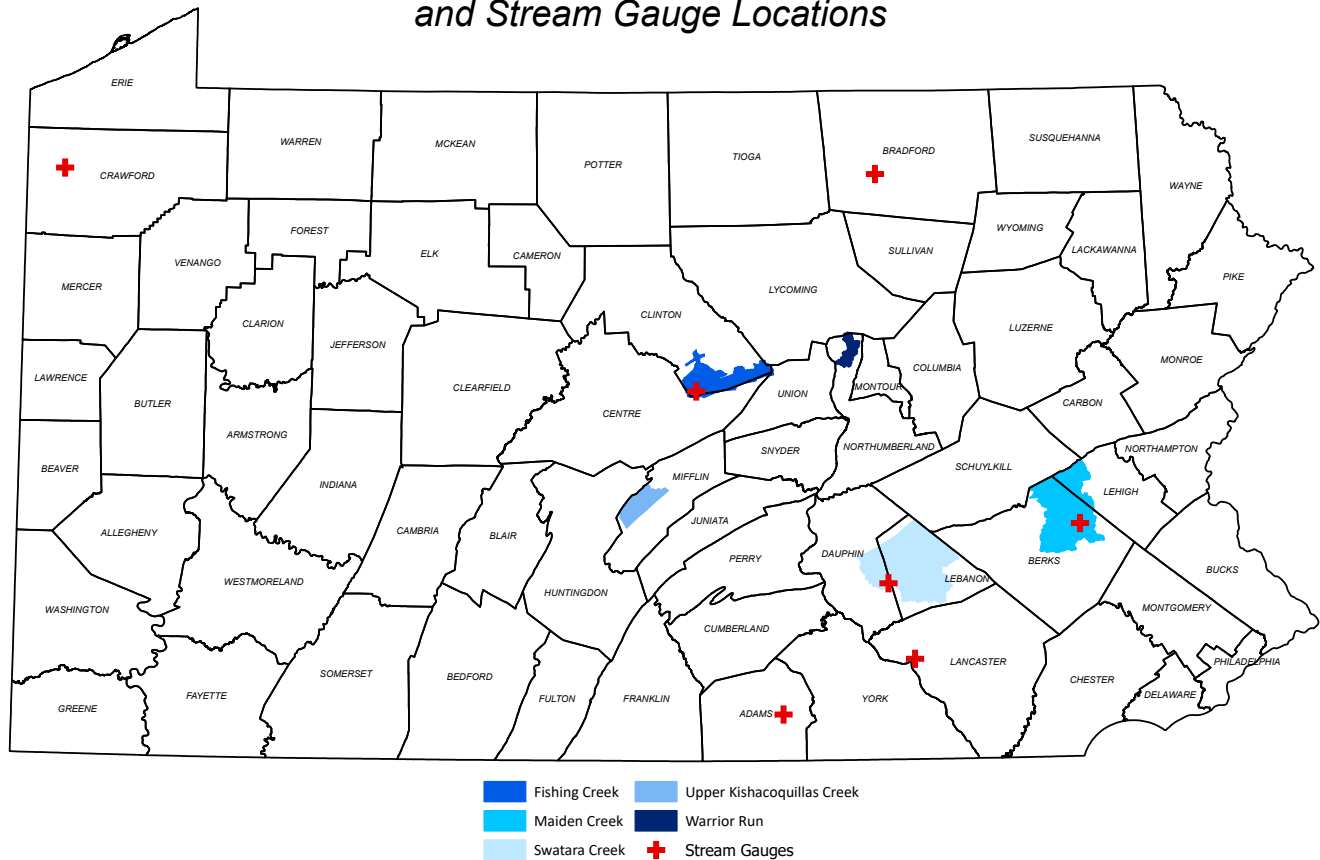


A super gauge is a continuous sampling device containing sensors capable of collecting data on temperature, specific conductance, pH, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, nitrites, and turbidity. (Credit: USGS)

turbidity measurements while total nitrogen is calculated from nitrate and nitrite levels, and total phosphorus is predicted from temperature, specific conductance, and turbidity. This information is useful in determining water quality and provides an indication of the results of conservation efforts higher in the watershed.

The map below shows our current National Water Quality Initiative watersheds in the state as well as the location of the USGS Super Gauge sites that NRCS has allocated funds to install. It is anticipated NRCS will continue to support these super gauge stations for the next ten years, provided funds are available.

National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) Watersheds and Stream Gauge Locations





This grassed waterway in Lancaster County was implemented through RCPP.

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

What is RCPP?

The Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) is a partner-driven approach to conservation that funds solutions to natural resource challenges on agricultural land. RCPP agreements are set for five years, so funds listed include all five years of the project.

RCPP projects fall under two different categories: RCPP Classic and RCPP Alternative Funding Arrangements (AFAs). RCPP Classic projects are implemented using NRCS contracts and easements with producers, landowners and communities, in collaboration with project partners. Through RCPP AFAs, NRCS provides funding to partners to support conservation activities with eligible producers and landowners on eligible land. RCPP AFA funding reimburses partners for conservation activities done for or on behalf of producers, landowners, or other entities.

There are four primary focus areas of the active and pending RCPP projects: water quality, land preservation, emissions reduction, and reforestation/revegetation. Some projects impact more than one focus area.

Water Quality – 7 projects

Preservation - 3 projects

Emissions reduction – 2 projects

Reforestation/revegetation – 1 project

RCPP

Regional Conservation Partnership Program

Active



9



\$147.9 M

TABLE 3: 2025 ACTIVE REGIONAL CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM PROJECTS

FY Funds	Start Date	Total NRCS Contribution	Total Partner Contribution	Project Name	Lead Partner	Purpose	Geography
2019	4/28/2021	\$9,928,571	\$38,982,500	Kittatinny Ridge Conservation Landscape	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture	Four state agencies and five conservancies will work together to permanently conserve agriculture and forest lands in the Kittatinny Ridge landscape.	Kittatinny Ridge in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
2019	1/28/2021	\$2,232,143	\$2,294,875	Ag BMP Implementation in the Chesapeake Bay	Berks County Conservation District	Partners will address resource concerns on agricultural operations in subwatersheds of the Chesapeake Bay in Berks County.	Little Swatara Creek and Conestoga Creek Watersheds in the Chesapeake Bay portion of Berks County
2019	2/1/2021	\$1,169,618	\$1,163,815	Buffalo Creek Watershed Conservation Alliance	Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania	The Alliance will conduct land management planning, implement conservation practices, and purchase easements to support a long-term goal of de-listing the watershed.	Buffalo Creek Watershed
2020	10/1/2021	\$7,400,000	\$10,884,413	Lancaster's Common Agenda for Clean Water	Conservation Foundation of Lancaster County	Implement comprehensive conservation systems needed to achieve stream delisting and Chesapeake Bay restoration on agricultural lands in priority watersheds in Lancaster County.	Conestoga, Pequea, Chiques, and Octorara Watersheds in Lancaster County
2021	11/16/2021	\$4,000,000	\$5,707,993	Turkey Hill Clean Water Partnership	Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay	This project will expand the technical and financial assistance available to develop and implement CNMPs on livestock operations to reduce nutrient and sediment loss to surface waters.	All PA Counties within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed
* 2021	9/28/2022	\$2,178,500	\$3,598,746	Healing Mine-scarred Landscapes via Restoration	US Endowment for Forestry and Communities	This project will plant trees on land that has been previously mined.	PA Statewide - with focus on NW PA to start.
2022	6/12/2023	\$7,850,000	\$12,795,255	Farmland Preservation and Climate Change Mitigation	Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture	Implement climate-smart practices on preserved farms + Ag and Forest easements	PA Statewide
2022	2/28/2023	\$9,996,006	\$11,495,313	Delisting Ag-Impaired Streams in Central PA	Chesapeake Conservancy	Land management practices for water quality with intent to help "delist" ag-impaired streams	Central Pennsylvania
* 2023	6/6/2024	\$0	\$16,225,000	Scaling Adoption of Adaptive N Management	The Nature Conservancy	Implement advanced nutrient management/cover crop system utilizing remote sensing technology to develop N rates	South Central PA, portions of MD and DE
		\$44,754,838	\$103,147,910				

* Alternative Funding Agreements



Ribbon cutting for a completed EWP project in Westmoreland County.

Emergency Watershed Protection

Flooding

2023 Events

There were two flash flood events that hit the southeast and northeast in the summer and fall of 2023. Of the 17 sites that were considered eligible for EWP. Fifteen of those projects were completed in FY 2025.

The Conservation Districts in 6 Counties; Berks (5 sites), Chester (2), Bucks (2), Wyoming (1), Luzerne (2), and Lackawanna (5) acted as the local Sponsor for the projects.

The total construction cost for these two events totaled \$1.36M

2024 Events

Another flood event hit Western PA counties in April 2024, resulting in 8 projects in 7 counties: Allegheny (1 site), Beaver (1), Cambria (1), Clinton (1), Elk (1), Westmoreland (2), Armstrong (1).

Seven of the projects were completed in FY 2025. The remaining project is in Allegheny County and will be completed by the beginning of FY 2026.

Sponsors included Conservation Districts and local municipalities and the total construction cost of this event was approximately \$1.1M.

2024 Tropical Storm Debby Event

In August 2024, Tropical Storm Debby led to significant flooding and widespread damage in north-central Pennsylvania, resulting in a

Presidential disaster declaration. Significant staff time was spent to coordinate with state, county, and local agencies, as well as private property owners, to assess site damages and complete design and implementation activities for 80 sites

The 80 sites were spread over 10 counties. The hardest hit counties were Potter (30 sites), Lycoming (20), and Tioga (15). Others included Union (5), Snyder (3), Elk (3), Cameron (1), Clearfield (1), Huntingdon (1), and Susquehanna (1). Sponsors included seven Conservation Districts, one County Commissioners Office, and two local municipalities.

In FY25, 53 of the 80 sites were completed. The remaining will be completed in early FY26.

The total construction cost for this event is approximately \$7.2M.

2025 Events

There were two new storms in May and July 2025 that were approved for EWP in Somerset (1 site) and Sullivan County (5 sites). Site design and construction of these projects will take place in FY 2026.



Regraded auxiliary spillway and new sheetpile training wall at Thatcher Run PA-112, Conneautville Dam.

Dam Rehabilitation

Pennsylvania Dam Rehabilitation Program

In the 1960's through the 1980's, NRCS assisted with the design and construction of over 80 flood control dams across Pennsylvania. These dams currently protect the homes and public infrastructure below them. Since their construction, the dams have detained millions of gallons of runoff that would otherwise contribute to downstream flooding. While built to be state-of-the-art at the time, rainfall amounts and dam safety criteria have changed since the construction of the dams. Many of these structures are over 50 years old and have reached the end of their project life. Some were originally built as Significant Hazard Potential dams and have now been reclassified as High Hazard Potential.

Pennsylvania NRCS has been diligently working with eleven sponsors in the national effort to rehabilitate the dams, ensuring that flood control dams built under the PL83-566 program are safe and meet current dam design criteria. An initial funding in 2012 of over \$11 million helped start the process of doing initial dam assessments on all of the high-hazard potential sites, planning on 20 sites, design on nine sites, and construction on four sites.

One success story from FY 2025 was the completion of the construction of Thatcher Run PA-112 Conneautville Dam. We are just waiting on full establishment of grass before calling it 100

percent done! This dam has been working its way through the rehabilitation process since 2010.

The Conneautville Dam provides tremendous benefits to the community, including flood control, improved water quality through sediment and erosion control, and incidental wildlife habitat. Working with the project sponsor, the Borough of Conneautville, NRCS addressed surficial dispersive soils with a lime treatment, realigned and installed a sheet pile wall along the outer edge of the auxiliary spillway channel, constructed a filter diaphragm below the existing principal spillway outlet conduit, reconfigured the embankment drainpipes, and replaced the existing trash rack. These structural repairs increased the integrity of the dam and significantly lowered any risks to public safety and health.

In FY 2025, 20 site walks of the dams were completed. Three dams are ready for construction but are waiting for sponsor funding to become available. Design work is in progress on two rehabilitations, and three Supplemental Watershed Plans are in progress and to be completed within 2026.

**TABLE 4: WATERSHED ACCOMPLISHMENTS
FOR FY 2025**

Dam	Watershed	County	Sponsor	Milestone Achieved	Anticipated Construction
Conneautville Dam	Thatcher Run	Crawford	Borough of Conneautville	Construction Completed	2025
Kintz Creek Dam	Greene Dreher	Pike	Pike County	Construction Ready	2026
Beechwood Dam	Mill Creek	Tioga	PA Fish and Boat Commission	Construction Ready	2026
Hamilton Dam	Marsh Creek	Tioga	Wellsboro Borough Municipal Auth.	Construction Ready	2026
Jacobs Creek Flood Protection Project	Jacobs Creek	Westmoreland	Borough of Scottdale, Westmoreland Cons. District	Watershed Plan Underway	2026
Spent Mushroom Compost Land Treatment Project	Octoraro Creek, Little Elk Creek, Big Elk Creek, Red Clay Creek, White Clay Creek	Chester	Chester County Conservation District	Watershed Plan Under Review	2026
Chiques Creek Land Legacy Sediment Land Treatment Project	Chiques Creek	Lancaster	Lancaster County Conservation District	Watershed Plan Under Review	2026
Rainbow Dam	Mill Run	Crawford	City of Meadville	Design Underway	2028
Martins Creek Flood Protection Project	Martins Creek	Wyoming	Borough of Nicholson, Wyoming County Conservation District	Watershed Plan Underway	2029
Core Creek Dam	Neshaminy Creek	Bucks	Bucks County	Design Underway	2029
Leavitt Branch & Goose Pond Dams	Brodhead Tributaries	Monroe	Monroe County	Watershed Plan Under Review	2029+
Walker Lake Dam	Middle Creek	Snyder	PA Fish and Boat Commission	Watershed Plan Underway	2030+



Mushroom compost in Chester County.

Watershed and Flood Prevention

Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations

The 1954 Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act (Public Law 83-566) authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to provide technical and financial assistance to local organizations for planning and carrying out watershed projects. This program provides for cooperation between the Federal government and the local government entities (states, counties, municipalities, etc.) to work together to prevent erosion, floodwater, and sediment damage among other purposes.

Through the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations (WFPO) Program, Pennsylvania NRCS is working through the planning process for four Watershed Projects and are scheduled for completion this year.

The Jacobs Creek Project, a flood prevention project in Westmoreland County, builds on the original flood control provided by the agency with the construction of three flood control dams and a channel. The project, sponsored by the Westmoreland Conservation District, Borough of Scottdale, and East Huntingdon Township, is working to reduce the amount of flooding seen by Scottdale, Pennsylvania.

Similar to Jacobs Creek, the Martins Creek project is working to provide flood prevention to Nicholson, Wyoming County. NRCS and the Wyoming County Conservation District and Borough of Nicholson are examining the use of floodwalls to provide flood reduction benefits to the community.

A watershed protection project has been completed for a sector of the mushroom industry in Chester County. NRCS and the Chester County Conservation District are working to address stormwater and nutrient runoff from mushroom composting operations. Implementation of the Plan will begin in 2026.

NRCS is partnering with the Lancaster County Conservation District on a watershed protection project to address legacy sediment in riparian areas within the Chiques Creek watershed. This WFPO project is working to remove and/or stabilize legacy sediment terrace streambanks, preventing the transport of the sediment downstream. This project has begun the review process and will be completed in 2026.



A Penn State University CIG project demonstrates rainwater harvesting for farm irrigation in urban areas. (Credit: Penn State University)

Conservation Innovation Grants

2025 Grants Concluded

No new grants or awards were entered into in FY 2025, however, the following Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) agreements that were funded in FY 2020-2022 concluded.

The Pennsylvania State University: Demonstrate rainwater harvesting for farm irrigation in urban areas. The objectives of this project were to demonstrate a system to collect rainwater from roofs and treat it to enhance its quality before it is used for irrigating crops. The awardee assessed gutter collection systems and installation techniques, rainwater collection systems, collection tank sizes based off crop needs and project location, and the various pumping and water irrigation systems. This grant studied and evaluated these various techniques and systems in a real-world scenario. The second goal of this project assessed food safety considerations while treating collected rainwater with chlorine tablets for use within the high rainwater collection system.

Water Science Institute: This project seeks to examine the opportunities and challenges that re-purposing legacy sediment may present with environmental communities as designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The primary goal of the project was to identify and promote legacy sediment (LS) repurposing opportunities. These opportunities include the identification

of commercial and retail product markets and the establishment of a Sediment Management System (SMS) framework to promote LS reuse, reduce costs, and promote water quality benefits for Commonwealth residents. The project pursued a multi-track approach to examine how LS from stream and wetland restoration projects can be utilized to reduce sediment transport costs and identify beneficial reuses, including abandoned mine land (AML) treatments, brownfield reclamation, and related uses for LS. The project was to identify and document incentives that encourage landowners to support LS restoration projects on their property. A focus was quantifying potential sediment volumes and restoration opportunities primarily in the Chiques/Donnegal Creek watershed of Lancaster County and select watersheds in the Pennsylvania counties of Lebanon, Dauphin, Northumberland, and Schuylkill. The project examined specific stream restoration sites based on their proximity to current or previously identified coal mining or related industrial activities as a metric for developing its prioritization methodology.



Attendees of the 2025 Agricultural Conservation Technical Training Basic “Boot Camp.”

Partnership Highlights

In FY 2025, Pennsylvania NRCS administered eight different technical support agreements that provided staff to work on NRCS conservation activities in Pennsylvania. Through these eight agreements, over 65 affiliates contributed additional staffing valued at more than \$3 million. These agreements were with partner entities, including two Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&Ds), Pheasants Forever, the National Experienced Workforce Solutions, the American Bird Conservancy, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The affiliate employees conducted conservation planning practice and inspection, program support, and administrative support for Pennsylvania NRCS offices.

In addition to these five agreements, NRCS also has an agreement with the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD). Under the PACD umbrella agreement, there are a variety of ways staffing is funded. The first subagreement is the agreement with PACD, whereby DEP provides the matching funds. This agreement is for engineering technical services, known commonly as the PACD TAG agreement. These employees are PACD employees, but their services are paid by the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and NRCS. Their work focuses on Growing Greener, Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), EQIP, and RCPP. The employees are technically supervised by NRCS area engineers.

The second subagreement within the broader PACD agreement is the agreement between PACD and five conservation districts. NRCS pays for 75 percent of the salary and the conservation districts

provide the remaining 25 percent. These employees work on mutually beneficial programs like EQIP, ACAP, and Growing Greener. These employees are conservation district employees.

The third subagreement or line item of the PACD umbrella agreement is the agreement where six PACD employees' salaries are funded by the State Conservation Commission and NRCS. These six employees provide conservation planning assistance to help on jointly funded ACAP/EQIP applications.

The table below provides work products provided during FY 2025 through the PACS umbrella agreement.

TABLE 5: FY 2025 PACD AGREEMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Components	Number	Hours
Conservation Plans	45.5	4,334.75
Inventory and Evaluation	35	1,314.5
Surveys	65	477
Practice Design/Layout	132	3,588.25
Construction Quality Assurance	180.5	1,469.75
Practice Check-outs	79	283.25
Total:	537	11,467.5

PA NRCS Hosts Milton Hershey High School Student

For four weeks during the summer of 2025, PA NRCS hosted Corey Leas, a Milton Hershey School student, as part of their summer internship program. Corey began his senior year this fall and is studying agriculture and natural resources. He participated in the internship because he is interested in exploring career opportunities related to the environment.

During the first two weeks, Corey spent time with the Lancaster Field office staff, including Brian Burns and Brittany Moore, where he was “out in the field as much as possible to get to see conservation practices,” said Brian. “I also showed him the basic functions of Civil 3d and had him go over a few designs.”

Brittany added, “Corey arrived in Lancaster during a busy construction week with temperatures in the upper 90s. He got to see a lot of different conservation practices either at the beginning or end of construction. He helped us with different construction checks for waste storage facilities, roofed heavy use areas, and some field practices too. With Fall construction around the corner, Corey also helped with some design work in AutoCAD.”

His second two weeks were spent with state office employees where he participated in more field visits to learn about soils, EWP, archaeology, dams, forestry, livestock, and more. He even attended two trainings: one for soil health and the other for livestock.

At the conclusion of his internship, the state office held a luncheon where Denise Coleman, State Conservationist, presented him with a certificate for his visit.

When asked what his favorite part of the internship was, Corey replied “going to Lancaster to do field visits, and helping with a design package.” He also added, “I really enjoyed it and would like to do it again.”

Angie Bowman worked with the Milton Hershey internship coordinator to make it happen. She said, “Everyone [at NRCS] stepped up and was super cooperative. He got a good view of what we do.”

The Milton Hershey School is private school in Hershey, Pennsylvania, founded by Milton and Catherine Hershey to provide a home and education for children from low-income families. It offers a no-cost comprehensive educational experience, including housing, meals, clothing, extracurricular activities, and medical care, for students from pre-K through 12th grade. As part of their summer internship program, students apply for opportunities, are interviewed, and have to be selected to participate. Those selected are paid by the school.

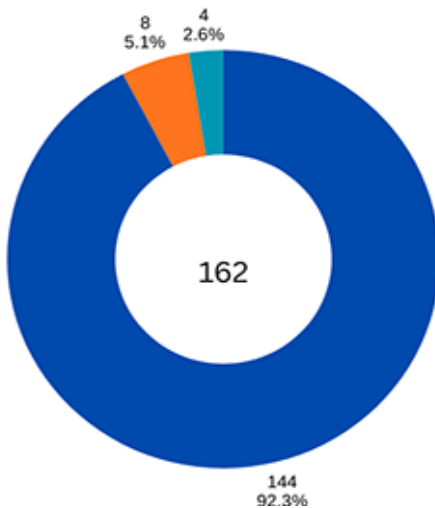


Corey Leas visits a construction site during his internship at PA NRCS in the summer of 2025.

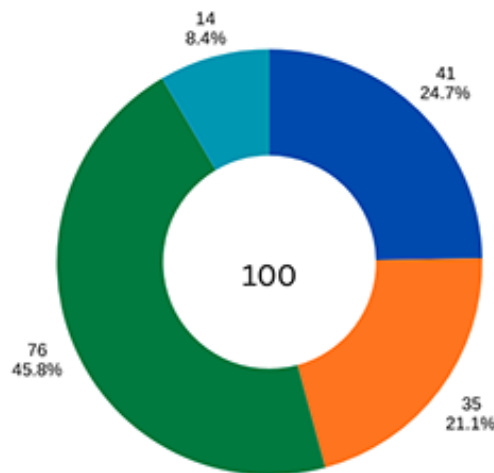
Training

PA NRCS continues to place a large emphasis on training its own employees as well as those of the conservation partnership. In FY 2025, PA NRCS hosted 37 trainings in partnership with State Conservation Commission, PACD, and Penn State Extension. The charts below provide a breakdown of those in attendance.

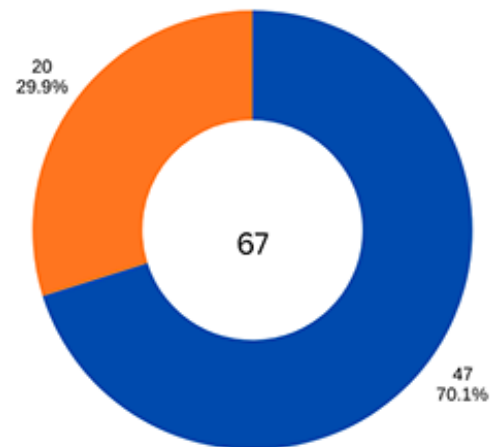
CONSERVATION PLANNING (4 TRAININGS)



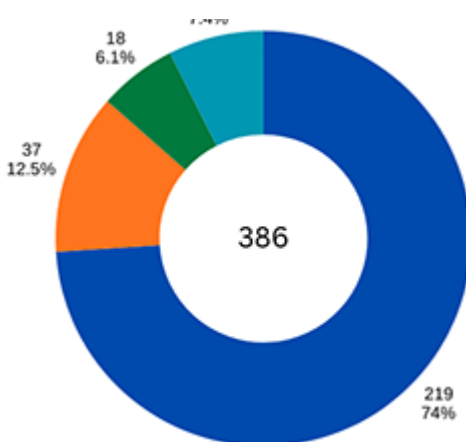
SOIL HEALTH & WETLANDS (5 TRAININGS)



GRAZING (8 TRAININGS)



ENGINEERING (14 TRAININGS)



BOOT CAMPS (3 TRAININGS)

