MONTGOMERY COUNTY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Winter 2018
Issue 4

"The Dirt"

A Resource for Local Conservation

MCCD Welcomes New Staff

Watershed Specialist, Brian Vadino. Brian holds a B.S. from Penn State University in Wildlife and Fisheries Science. Previous positions include Watershed Specialist with Delaware County Conservation District, Director of Rivers Program with Wildlands Conservancy, and Habitat Management Assistant with Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. Brian resides in Newtown Square with wife Renee and daughters, Samantha and Bella. Brian's hobbies include angling, fly-tying, skiing, camping, gardening, and spending time with family and friends.

Part-Time Administrative Assistant, Ruth Heil. Ruth's career began in the world of advertising. As production manager, she served as a liaison between the agency's clients and its creative department. When the company closed its doors, she opened her own consulting business, Streamline Organizational Services, to help small-business owners improve the efficiency of their offices. Consulting turned to communicating when her service became The Write Beat. As a freelance writer, Ruth focuses on using plain English to convey complicated material to the layperson, preferring to write about her lifelong interest in nature, the environment, and simple living. Her favorite hobbies are camping, hiking, outdoor music festivals, and learning new tunes to play on her acoustic piano.

Pest Spotlight: Spotted Lanternfly

The Spotted Lanternfly, native to Asia, is an invasive pest of significant concern due to its potential to greatly impact the viticulture (grape), tree fruit, plant nursery, and timber industries. The Spotted Lanternfly feeds on the sap of many tree species, leaving weeping wounds.

First confirmed in Pennsylvania in September of 2014, the Spotted Lanternfly's known range is increasing and is now confirmed in much of southeast PA. A quarantine is in place to minimize the spread of and destruction caused by the Spotted Lanternfly. This includes restricted transport of many plant, stone, and wood products. The U.S. Department of Agriculture is promoting early detection and compliance within quarantine areas.

The Spotted Lanternfly prefers Tree of Heaven, *Ailanthus altissima*, another invasive species. However, it also chooses host plants such as apples, plums, cherries, grapes, and most other tree species. Damage is caused to the host plant when the Spotted Lanternfly feeds, sucking sap, which can ultimately kill the tree. In the fall, the Spotted Lanternfly lays eggs in brown, mud-like masses of 30-50 eggs on trees or any other outdoor surface. These egg masses over-winter and hatch in the spring.

On February 8th, 2018, the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture announced $17.5 million in emergency

funding to stop the spread of the Spotted Lanternfly.

Jessica Buck - Agricultural Conservation Specialist

Click here:
What to do if you find the Spotted Lanternfly on your property

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Urban Agriculture Conservation Project

MCCD launched their 1st outreach program to farms and gardens in urban communities in 2017, supported in part by funding through the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts' *Urban Ag Conservation* grant program. This opportunity helped to establish long lasting partnerships among community organizations and yielded meaningful outcomes to assist two target locations of this project: Norristown and Pottstown. These municipalities represent two of the most urban areas in the county, in terms of density and population, and were selected based on their classification as low income and low access.

A highlight of this project was the distribution of composting bins and rain barrels to urban gardens. These two conservation measures served also as educational tools to teach the garden users about soil and water conservation and stormwater management. In addition to these on-the-ground conservation efforts, a large piece of grant funding was used in partnership with GreenTreks Network, to create an electronic Urban Ag Conservation Resource Guide. The digital guide includes interactive garden models and resources, as well as video documentary, and is intended for use by any organization interested in organizing an urban garden. For more information about this project, contact the Project Coordinator, Jessica Buck

Digital Urban Ag Conservation Guide

2017 Tree Vitalize Watershed

Grant Program Summary

2017 Montgomery County Program Totals:

- More than **$63,391.87** of grant funding invested
- **1,820** native trees and shrubs planted
- **13.69** acres restored
- More than **$69,328.74** of matching funds from local partners committed
- **2,449.45** volunteer hours reported

For more information, contact Watershed Specialist, Brian Vadino, or visit the TreeVitalize Watersheds website

No-Till Seed Drill Available for Planting

A no-till drill seeder is available through MCCD for free use. This program has been made possible through a partnership between the Montgomery County Conservation District and Penn State Extension, with funding through a Natural Resources Conservation Service *Conservation Innovation* grant. The equipment- a 5.5' Esch no-till drill with attached sprayer- has the potential to improve conservation practices on farms, improve soil and water quality, and be of use to municipalities for establishment of no-mow and naturalized areas.

No-till farming is the planting seeds without turning over the soil, which reduces soil erosion and is beneficial for water quality. It also provides numerous other soil and water quality benefits such as reduced soil compaction, increased moisture retention, increased soil organic matter, increased soil microbial life, and reduced time and cost associated with plowing prior to planting.

Contact Jessica Buck with questions or to reserve the drill.

Designers' Corner: Slow Release Concept BMP

Recently, the PA DEP developed the Slow Release Concept (SRC) Best Management Practice (BMP) for use as a stormwater management practice. Guidance for the SRC has been provided by DEP in the form of an "Interim Final" technical guidance document, last revised on 12/6/2016. The SRC is essentially a combination of a detention basin with an engineered slow release under-drain system

and a rain garden. In most cases, the SRC is designed much like a traditional rain garden but with at least two feet of engineered soil mix above an underdrain system. The soil mix provides filtering of the runoff before it reaches the underdrain and can be discharged from the basin. The underdrain is often provided with an orifice cap to drain the stored runoff slowly, between 24-72 hours after the end of the 24-hour storm. MCCD has seen several of these BMPs installed in recent months, mostly with good success after some construction issues were repaired by the contractors. This narrative provides a summary of what MCCD staff have observed so far with this new BMP.

Eric Konzelmann - Assistant District Manager

Species Spotlight: Snowy Owls

The Snowy Owl, *Bubo scandiacus*, is known for its significant white color, acting as natural camouflage in their native region of the Canadian tundra. In recent years however, the Snowy Owl has been making its way into the northern region and Midwest United States in a phenomenon known as an irruption, which means a rapid influx into a new geographic area. This migration tends to be cyclical, on average every four to five years. The last sightings of the Snowy Owl in this region were in 2013, and before that, the late 1920s.

Unlike other owl species, the Snowy Owl is diurnal – it hunts during the day. It is believed that the Snowy Owl travels to new territory when food is abundant during the breeding season. Lemmings, one main food source for the Snowy Owl, have been increasing in population, causing the Snowy Owl to expand its range to hunt. It is believed that an *overabundance* of food causes the migration, not starvation, and it has been documented that most of these Arctic migrants are perfectly healthy and tend to be heavier than those in non-flight years.

Project Snowstorm has been studying Snowy Owls since the last major irruption in 2013. They have begun tracking the owls with GPS/GSM transmitters in an effort to gather more information about their new travel patterns. This work is providing critical information about the Snowy Owls and the importance they play in the ecosystem.

Shannon Healey - Resource Conservationist

Upcoming Event:
Manure & Pasture Management Workshop

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.
Margaret Mead

Visit our website