Kent Conservation District
2017
Annual Report

The Kent Conservation District's mission is to put each acre of land to the use for which it is best suited and to economically develop and improve our environment to its highest potential according to sound planning and conservation practices.

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Sediment & Stormwater

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Tax Ditch/Drainage Assistance

Gene Vanderwende
Field Coordinator

USDA
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Brooke Jones
District Conservationist

What is the District? What does the District do?

Kent Conservation District (KCD) is a governmental subdivision of the State of Delaware authorized by state legislation in Title 7 of the Delaware Code, Chapter 39 and responsible for conservation work within Kent County. There is a conservation district in each county in Delaware. KCD functions to focus attention on land, water and related resource problems; to develop programs to solve the problems; to enlist and coordinate help from public and private sources to accomplish the District goals; and to increase awareness of the relationship between human activities and the natural environment around us. It is the Board of Supervisors' responsibility to plan and direct the District programs, to coordinate the help of other governmental agencies, to assign priority to requests for conservation technical assistance from private landowners, and to serve as a community clearinghouse for information services. The KCD Board meets monthly and all meetings are open to the public.

Much of the Districts' effectiveness is due to their ability to work with local, state, and federal agencies to solve local environmental problems. KCD enters into agreements (memorandums of understanding) with cooperating agencies and organizations that outline the obligations of each party and the assistance available. KCD operations are supported by federal, state and local governments and private individuals. The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Delaware's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) both provide technical leadership to KCD. Additional cooperating agencies include: the University of Delaware's Cooperative Extension Service, the USDA Farm Service Agency, the Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA), and the First State Resource Conservation and Development Council (RC&D).

KCD receives an annual allocation from the State of Delaware administered through DNREC, which is used to cost-share with landowners for environmentally sound improvements of their land. This funding also provides a portion for personnel and administrative costs to run the program. KCD also receives funding from the State of Delaware and Kent County to address the needs of the tax ditch systems within Kent County. Additional funding is received through special conservation grants and equipment rental.

Employees within KCD provide technical, administrative, and clerical support to district programs. At times, Earth Team Volunteers assist with carrying out the District's conservation programs. KCD works directly with farmers, landowners, and municipalities on the following types of challenges: water quality protection; stormwater management; aquifer protection; land use planning; erosion and sediment control on land undergoing development, farmland, critical areas and public lands; flooding problems; wetlands protection; soil survey information; and sustainable agriculture.

State and National Associations

Delaware's conservation district supervisors have a statewide organization known as the Delaware Association of Conservation Districts (DACD). DACD, a voluntary, non-profit alliance, provides a forum for discussion and coordination among the districts as they work to ensure the wise use and treatment of our State's natural resources. The 3,000 conservation districts across the nation belong to NACD, the National Association of Conservation Districts. NACD's primary goal is the conservation, orderly development, and judicious use of the nation's resources.

Both of these organizations make the effort of conservation districts more effective by providing a vehicle through which conservation districts can band together to promote their causes at the state and national levels. Each year District board members, the District Coordinator and the Administrative Coordinator attend the NACD annual meeting and the NACD Northeast regional meeting to partake in educational sessions, hear updates from national partners, and to network with other district professionals from across the nation.

The 2017 annual meeting, themed *Conservation: Our Water, Our Land, Our People,* was held in Denver, Colorado; while the Northeast regional meeting was held in Burlington, Vermont. General and breakout sessions featured topics such as water quality, climate change, energy issues, Farm Bill updates and more.

Equipment Program

Heavy Equipment

Use of the District's equipment enables the equipment crew to work with our cooperating landowners to establish new conservation practices and/or enhance existing practices on their lands. During 2017, the equipment was utilized for a total of 2,787 hours. The District owns the following heavy equipment: two hydraulic track excavators; two bulldozers; a farm tractor with loader; three pickup trucks; one low-boy tractor trailer; one backhoe; one ten-wheel truck with a dump body which pulls a trailer used to move equipment and one ATV for seeding.

The District's Cat 329 excavator being used on ditching project.

No-Till Equipment

The District currently owns one Great Plains no-till drill. The drill is rented to our cooperators on a first-come-first-served basis. It is delivered to the farm, and our technician works with the cooperator to ensure that the equipment is functioning properly and to the satisfaction of the cooperator. During 2017, 18 different landowners planted 320 acres of cool season grasses and legumes.

Tax Ditch and Drainage Assistance

The District employs a field coordinator whose main responsibility is to assist with the tax ditch program in Kent County. DNREC's Division of Watershed Stewardship provides assistance in tax ditch planning and organization. There are 75 tax ditch systems in the county, totaling 708 miles of channel. The District's field coordinator responded to 202 requests for assistance on the tax ditches. The requests for assistance concerned mowing (390 miles), pipe sizing (59 pipes installed on 27 ditches), flooding, ditch bank erosion, weed wiping (62 miles on 8 ditches), seeding, tax ditch maintenance, tax ditch construction, beaver control, and requests to stake, grade and survey ditches (69,100 feet were staked and graded on 16 ditches), etc. The District's field coordinator attended the annual meetings of 37 tax ditch associations.

Matching Funds for Drainage Projects

To maximize the efforts of providing a beneficial drainage system for county residents, the Kent County Levy Court and the State of Delaware provided the District with a total of $150,000 to be used for the construction of new tax and public ditches and the maintenance of existing tax ditches. These funds were used in conjunction with tax ditch funds to perform the necessary work. After the work was completed, the projects were inspected by the District's field coordinator before any matching funds were released. During 2017, the 3921 funds were used as follows:

Tax Ditch Dipout (69,100 feet)	$ 57,765
Tax Ditch Pipe Installation (59 pipes)	$ 13,965
Tax Ditch Mowing (390 miles)	$ 39,180
Weed Wiper Bar (62 miles)	$ 12,400
Technical & Administrative Assistance	$ 87,454
Brought Forward to FY-17	$ 76,249
Total	$226,249

Drainage project.

At times the District is called upon to assist landowners with their drainage concerns that do not fall under the Sediment & Stormwater or Tax Ditch programs. These requests for assistance concern flooding problems, ditches that need cleaning out, erosion problems, etc. The District's field coordinator handled 112 requests for drainage assistance (tile drainage—4,750 ft.; open drainage—10,410 ft.) during 2017.

Financial Assistance

The State of Delaware, and USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Farm Service Agencies provided technical and financial assistance through cost-sharing programs to cooperating landowners for the installation of conservation practices. Cost-sharing through the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) enabled the District to continue work toward the reduction of non-point source pollution (NPS). Additional funding from the State of Delaware and Kent County Levy Court also allowed the district to continue a community drainage and resource development program.

Conservation Cost Share Program

The General Assembly provided $450,000 in cost share funds, which were utilized by different cooperating landowners. Projects implemented emphasized water quality, water management, and erosion/sediment control. Funds were allocated for the practices below:

Cover Crops	18,996 Acres
Open Ditching	17,000 Feet
Field Drainage Tiling	1,835 Feet
Poultry Heavy Use Area Protection	82 Each
Poultry Dead Bird Composter	1 Each
Large Animal Mortaility	$56,075 Dollars

The District's Conservationists completed a total of 181 annual inspections of previously installed practices to ensure the practices are continuing to work properly and do not need any maintenance. This number does not include drainage projects.

Cover Crop Project.

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

The Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) provides cost-share funding for the installation of conservation practices on marginal cropland to improve water quality and enhance wildlife habitat.

During 2017, a total of 21 conservation plans were completed on 281 acres of CREP lands. Contract renewals were approved for 10 applicants for 281 acres. State funds paid on CREP contract acres totaled $72,271. USDA funds obligated were $466,190.

Twenty two field spot checks for contract compliance were completed on 159 acres.

CREP project.

Environmental Quality Incentive Program

Funding provided through the Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) is used for implementing water quality practices. The following practices were implemented during 2017:

Dead Bird Composters	10	Each
Fencing	4,717	Feet
Poultry Heavy Use Area Protection	138	Each
Irrigation Sprinkler Systems	0	Acres
Irrigation Water Management	5	Systems
Nutrient Management	391	Acres
Pest Management	0	Acres
Waste Storage Facilities	18	Each
Windbreak/Hedgerow	15,890	Feet

Sediment & Stormwater Program

The Kent Conservation District has been the delegated agency in Kent County for the Delaware Sediment and Stormwater (S&S) Program since its inception in July 1991. The District is responsible for plan review and approval, construction inspection, and maintenance inspection for all construction projects within the County. The Stormwater staff included the program manager, one plan reviewer, two engineering inspectors, a part-time engineer, and urban conservationist. During the year the staff performed the following:

- Preformed 154 detailed sediment and stormwater plans
- Approved 118 projects
- Reviewed 71 minor subdivisions plans
- Reviewed 79 plans for the City of Dover, City of Milford, and Kent County Development Advisory Committees (DAC)
- Issued 947 Residential Standard Plans; 29 Non-residential Standard Plans, 2 Utility Standard Plans
- Completed 1,316 project inspections, 947 residential inspections and 40 temporary approvals

Outreach and Education

Program staff gave presentations to home owner's and civic associations during 2017 to educate property owners on the purpose of stormwater ponds and proper maintenance procedures.

As part of its educational outreach, the Stormwater Program presented the Freddie the Fish program to school aged children at the Make A Splash event to educate them on how their daily routine activities can affect a watershed.

Stormwater Maintenance District Community

Stormwater Maintenance District Community

Nutrient Management Program

The District, in cooperation with the University of Delaware Cooperative Extension Service, again offered pre-sidedress soil nitrate tests (PSNT) to all interested corn growers in Kent County. Use of this test can result in economic savings and reduce the chance of groundwater contamination by nitrates. A total of 31 samples were tested covering 1,519 acres. The District's conservationists also worked with cooperators in testing manure as well. Last year, 8 poultry manure samples were tested. The conservationists also completed 9 nutrient management plans and 16 comprehensive nutrient management plans covering 1,546 acres.

KCD provided cost-share for producers to plant cover crop. A total of 12,481.07 acres were planted and inspected by the Conservationists. The Conservationists worked in conjunction with NRCS to provide poultry producers with cost-share for 26 manure storage structures, 18 mortality structures and 93 concrete pads (HUAPs) for manure handling. Also signed up and inspected were 2,589.3 acres in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed for the RCPP Program.

Education Initiatives & Awards

Outreach Efforts

District staff participated in the following outreach activities in our continuing effort to promote environmental awareness: staffed the Delaware Conservation Partnership display at the Delaware State Fair and Smyrna High School Career Day; sponsored a conservation poster contest; provided presenters and guides for DNREC's Make-a-Splash Water Festival and volunteered in various roles at the Delaware Envirothon.

Delaware Envirothon

The District again supported the Envirothon, a problem-solving, natural resource education program for high school students. The competitive nature of the program motivates students to expand their knowledge of natural resources and realize their responsibility as stewards of our natural resources. The students answer written questions and conduct hands-on investigations of environmental issues in six categories: air quality, aquatic ecology, forestry, soils/ land use, wildlife, and the current issue that changes each year. The 2017 current issue was Agriculture Conservation/Stewardship. Students must also give an oral presentation solving an environmental problem. Twenty-one teams competed. Representing Kent County were teams from Polytech High School, Calvary Christian Academy, Smyrna High School and Peach Blossom 4-H.

Students competing in the Delaware Envirothon program.

Governors Conservation Awards

On May 3, 2017 Governor John Carney presented the Annual Governor's Conservation Awards to winners from Delaware's three counties.

The award for agricultural conservation in Kent County was presented to Robbins Farms of Milford. Robbins Farms was recognized for implementing practices such as installation of a dairy manure storage structure and a cattle walkway, single channel composter and heavy use area protection pads.

DE Turf was selected as the urban award winner for Kent County. The Kent County Regional Sports Complex, managed by DE Turf, was recognized for its innovative stormwater runoff program utilizing synthetic turf that promotes groundwater recharge, protects water quality and eliminates fertilizer and pesticide runoff.

Conservation Poster Contest

The District sponsored the annual Conservation Poster Contest again and provided awards to winners from Kent County for the "Healthy Soils Are Full Of Life" themed contest. First, second and third place winners each received a prize valued at $50, $25, and $15, respectively.

The winning students for this year's poster contest were from Capital School District, Dover High School.

KCD Annual Barn Dance Fundraiser—Delaware Envirothon

On Friday, October 13, 2017, guests filled the Harrington Fire Hall for the Kent Conservation District's (KCD) 18th Annual Barn Dance. Participants raised a little over $9,000.00 in net proceeds to support the Delaware Envirothon.

The new Barn Dance meal of beef and dumplings and fried chicken was well received by all who attended. Other supporters of the Barn Dance prepared the delicious desserts to round out the meal. Events of the evening included a silent auction, a live auction and dancing to a local DJ. Many volunteers helped to serve the meal and beverages, and assisted with photography, the auctions and cleanup. Without the support of the volunteers and community in making the event such a success, KCD would not be able to make such a generous donation to the Delaware Envirothon. The District greatly appreciates those who volunteered, those who provided financial support, and those who donated auction items, food or other items to the event.

The Delaware Envirothon, run solely on donations solicited each year, is a competitive problem-solving, natural resource challenge for high school age students. Funds raised through the Barn Dance will be used to provide training opportunities throughout the year, to host the state competition held in April, and to send the state winning team to the North American competition (2018—Idaho).

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
The next Barn Dance will be held at the
Harrington Fire Hall on Friday, October 12, 2018.

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All District programs are available on a nondiscriminatory basis.