

# *Implementing Precision Conservation in the Susquehanna River Watershed*

## meeting notes

Friday, September 23, 2016

Clinton County Conservation District Learning Center

### Summary

The purpose of this meeting was to introduce local partners to the Implementing Precision Conservation in the Susquehanna River Watershed project, and to start a discussion on data needs and challenges facing practitioners working in agricultural restoration. A 45-minute presentation by Chesapeake Conservancy's staff was followed by one hour of discussion.

### Attendees

#### **Centre County Conservation District**

Daina Beckstrand, Nutrient  
Management Technician

[dbeckstrand@centrecountypa.gov](mailto:dbeckstrand@centrecountypa.gov)

#### **Chesapeake Bay Foundation**

Clair Ryan, Watershed Restoration  
Program Manager

[cryan@cbf.org](mailto:cryan@cbf.org)

#### **Clinton County Conservation District**

Lisa Blazure, Agricultural Resource  
Conservationist

[lblazure@clintoncountypa.com](mailto:lblazure@clintoncountypa.com)

#### **Chesapeake Conservancy**

Carly Dean, Envision the Susquehanna  
Project Manager

[cdean@chesapeakeconservancy.org](mailto:cdean@chesapeakeconservancy.org)

#### **PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of Forestry**

Elinor (Lin) Greenaway, Service  
Forester, Clinton County

[egreenaway@pa.gov](mailto:egreenaway@pa.gov)

Cass Pallai, Geospatial Project Manager

[cpallai@chesapeakeconservancy.org](mailto:cpallai@chesapeakeconservancy.org)

David Saavedra, Geospatial Analyst

[dsaavedra@chesapeakeconservancy.org](mailto:dsaavedra@chesapeakeconservancy.org)

Kathryn Wesson, Geospatial Analyst

[kwesson@chesapeakeconservancy.org](mailto:kwesson@chesapeakeconservancy.org)

### Discussion Notes

Meeting attendees identified two main areas where they face the greatest challenges to getting the most effective agricultural BMPs in the ground: 1) Appealing to landowners (the most willing landowners have already been working with restoration professionals to implement BMPs; new projects will likely have to come from landowners who have previously declined participation in restoration efforts or have not yet been reached); and 2) using data in project prioritization and design.

## Appealing to landowners

### Landowner outreach

- Challenges:
  - Landowner outreach takes a lot of time; in the past, relied on volunteer walk-ins
  - Over the past 20 years, Conservation Districts have been able to reach most landowners who are willing to work with them—shift is now to new audiences
  - Challenges working with traditional farming communities (Amish and Mennonite)
  - Ag industries are restrictive with how you can use their landowner information and data
  - Many are absentee landowners
- Strategies:
  - Penn State forestry stewards could possibly help with outreach
  - Clear and plain language: what's in it for me? Focus on local benefits
  - Learn from local ambassadors (other farmers)
  - Farmers may be excited about the pre- and post-monitoring: local water quality and local fish populations are of key importance; landowners want real, local information about their streams
  - Share successes working with traditional farming communities (Turtle Creek Watershed Association, Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy)
- Data approaches:
  - Identify and map parcels with absentee landowners (compare site address vs. mailing addresses—Clinton Co. is currently updating 911 roads layer)
  - Develop parcel-scale outreach materials specific to landowners' interests

### Identifying co-benefits and additional partners

- Success reaching landowners by talking about wildlife benefits, in particular, Golden Winged and Cerulean Warbler outreach; Wild Turkey Federation, Bureau of Forestry, Pheasants Forever
- NRCS Prioritizes: Golden Winged Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Bog Turtle, Massasauga Rattlesnake
- Brook Trout are important locally

## Using data in prioritization and design

### Prioritizing nutrient and sediment outcomes

- Prioritizing landowner outreach: Identifying at the parcel-scale the greatest opportunities to achieve water quality benefits
- NRCS Priorities:

- High local yield
- high leaching or high soils
- 319; high ag impaired
- DEP violations
- CC Data:
  - Concentrated Flow Paths
    - Important to represent flow paths differently than NHD stream channels because Ag regulations are different
    - Drainage area through a potential project footprint
  - Land cover data:
    - Land cover acreage within the drainage area through a potential project footprint

### Prepping for farm visits

- Delivering parcel-scale data to on-the-ground restoration professionals
  - Hillshade tool can be very helpful
- Need to identify the potential suite of BMPs that the new data may apply to
  - Identification of sink holes or wet spots within a farm field could be very helpful
  - Concentrated flow paths could help identify where manure spreading can and cannot go (cannot be within 100 ft of unbuffered concentrated flow path; but can be spread right up to the edge of a vegetated 35ft buffer around the flow path)