

NEW CASTLE CONSERVATION DISTRICT

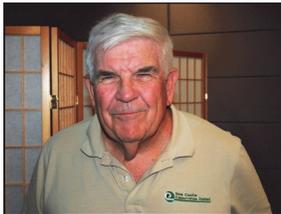
Conservation in Challenging Times



Manure storage structure and concrete pad at Coverdale Farm



Prescribed burning of a warm season grass meadow



Dariel Rakestraw



Richard Morris



Buttonwood Dike



Army Creek Dike

Daily Opportunities for Conservation—Robert L. Emerson, Chair

New Castle County farmers, business owners, landowners and communities begin every day with a long “to do” list of important tasks that need to get done.

For the farmer it might be planting cover crop to improve ground water, for the homeowner it might be buying local grown food or recycling yard waste. The business owner may find a new way to reduce the company’s energy costs while your local government may improve on how efficiently it provides critical services to taxpayers.

No matter what, it is clear that many times a day we all make choices on what we do as well as how we do it. Many factors such as finances, deadlines, experience and culture guide us on the “what”, the “how” and the “when”. I believe we all try to make the best decisions each and every day. What is most important is that we learn from our good decisions as well as from our bad decisions.

In 2013, the District Board celebrated three New Castle County “neighbors” for their notable conservation choices:

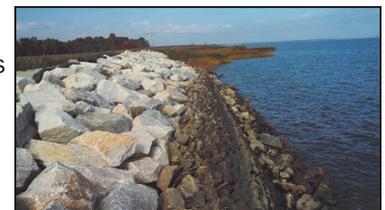
The Governor’s Conservation Awards were presented to Stewart Ramsey for his stewardship of the family farm and Merit Construction Engineers, Inc. for their emergency dike repairs before and after Hurricane Sandy (see photograph on page 4). The Board’s annual Cooperator of the Year Award went to the Delaware Nature Society for the diverse conservation practices on their Coverdale Farm, Ashland Nature Center and Red Clay Reservation properties.

Change is another constant in our lives. The Board bid farewell to longtime member Dariel Rakestraw who retired after serving 37years as treasurer. Dariel and his wife Jane hope to spend more time in their West Virginia cabin. We wish them good health and happy times. Richard Morris of Newark has replaced Dariel. Richard manages the University of Delaware’s dairy operation, coordinates a variety of dairy-related research projects, serves as an instructor in diary management and operation courses, and is active in a number of professional and community organizations. Richard represents the county area north of I-95.

Challenging Weather Batters Delaware Coastline Eroding Dikes

Hurricane Sandy exposed the weakened dike system that provides protection to long sections of the Delaware River’s shoreline from Delaware City to New Castle. Through funding from DNREC, the District was tasked to coordinate the before and after emergency work and subsequent planning and contractual work to rehabilitate five of the historic dikes along the Delaware River (Red Lion, Army Creek, Gambacorta Marsh, Buttonwood, and Broad Dike).

The project included challenges of ownership and maintenance responsibility, financial resources, and emergency response just before Hurricane Sandy hit. Work elements included field testing, engineering, and contracting which took many hours of staff time and energy. Red Lion Dike work has been completed and the other four are under construction.



New riprap at Red Lion Dike



Gully erosion repaired



Hoop house at Bayberry CSA

The three seed drills owned by the District were rented out by 22 landowners to plant 535.6 acres of pasture, hay, warm season grasses, oats, sorghum, orchard grass, soybeans, millet, switch grass cover crop, wildlife plantings, and wildflowers.

Agricultural Program Funding Meets Financial Challenges

United States Department of Agriculture funding is available through various conservation programs managed by the USDA—Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). This chart illustrates some of the major conservation projects funded in New Castle County under twenty-eight contracts in FY 2013:

Brush Management	4 acres	Nutrient Management	2001 acres
Conservation Cover	30 acres	Plant Tissue Testing and Analysis	55 acres
Conservation Cover Crop Rotation	757 acres	Prescribed Grazing	21 acres
Cover Crop	7010 acres	Pumps for wells	2 units
Critical Area Planting (fix erosion)	1 acre	Tillage Management	718 acres
Extending Existing Field Borders	6 acres	Roof Runoff Structure	1 unit
Fencing	7272 feet	Seasonal High Tunnels	3216 sq. ft.
Forage and Biomass Plantings	154 acres	Shallow Water Management	2 acres
Forest Harvest Management	39 acres	Structure for Water Control	1 unit
Grade Stabilization Structure	1 unit	Surface Drain, Field Ditch	445 feet
Heavy Use Protection Area	2 units	Tree/Shrub Establishment	3 acres
Herbaceous Weed Control	256 acres	Underground Outlet	215 feet
High Level Integrated Pest Mgt.	372 acres	Water Well	2 units
Integrated Pest Management	2383 acres	Watering Facility for Livestock	15 units
Irrigation Water pipe	50 feet	Wetland Restoration	20 acres
Livestock Pipeline	3062 feet	Wetland Wildlife Habitat Management	20 acres
Nitrogen Fertilizer Inhibitors	372 acres	Windbreak Establishment	272 feet

The key practices to protect soil and water quality are use of cover crops during the winter months, integrated pest management, and management of animal waste (nutrient management).

Legislature Keeps Cost-Share Program a Funding Priority

Despite the challenging economic times, the Delaware Legislature continues to fund the Conservation Cost-Share program every year. It is funded because it helps private landowners afford the cost of project installation and helps to resolve many conservation-related issues and concerns dealing with water quality, erosion, water management, wildlife habitat, dead animal disposal, wildlife ponds, tax ditch assistance, and special projects.



Two of the District's planters



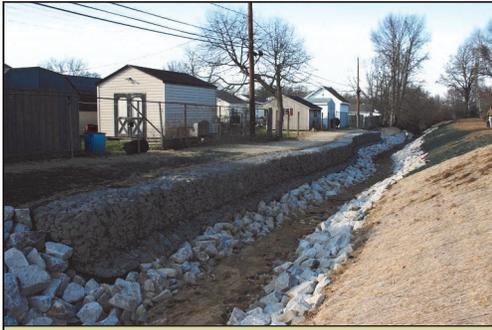
Winter cover crops protect soil

Cost Share Applications Funded	96
Cover Crop	54
Water Quality Projects	14
Water Management Projects	6
Dead Farm Animal Disposal	5
Special Projects	5
Wildlife Habitat	2
Erosion Control (Ag and Urban)	5
Tax Ditch Assistance	3
Wildlife Ponds	2



Reconstructed farm pond

Water Management Projects Need a Variety of Funding Sources



Erosion control in Chelsea Estates

The District constantly works to obtain adequate funding to implement and install water management and erosion control projects. Funds are obtained through various sources including the Community Transportation Fund (CTF), the 21st Century Fund, through the state legislature (state bond bill) and county government. In many cases, funds are passed through the District to plan and administer projects for various partners including DNREC, New Castle County, and local municipalities. For more expensive projects, it

may take several years to obtain the necessary funds to do a project. The District cooperates with DNREC, New Castle County, DeIDOT, and other entities to coordinate and administer contracts and project engineering and construction.



Erosion control in Wilton



Dixon Tax Ditch Reconstruction



Coventry—Tyne Drive backyard drainage system

During FY 2013, District work began on 31 projects, semi-final inspections were held for 34 projects, and final inspections were made on 20 projects. Many additional projects were in the planning and design phase.

Technical Assistance a Free Service to Landowners



Survey crew checks grades for drainage project

A large part of District services is providing technical assistance to private landowners and cooperating agencies. During fiscal year 2013, the District completed 122 drainage calls and the survey team gathered data on 55 projects. The District assists ten cities and towns with implementation of the Sediment and Stormwater Program regulations. The District tracked nine active projects and closed out five projects.



Reviewing plans with contractor

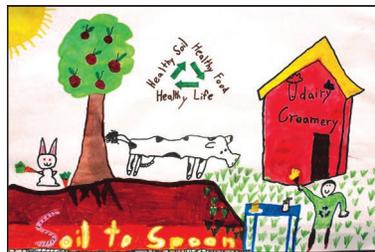
“The District is an equal opportunity provider
and employer.”

Address Service Requested

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Annual Poster Contest Theme - “Soil to Spoon”



Governor's Conservation Award recipients' Ron Dills; Matt Ballantyne; and Vince Dills from Merit Construction Engineers; Stewart Ramsey from Ramsey Farm with Wendy Baker (DACD President); and David Small, Deputy Secretary—DNREC (far right)

Several New Castle County teams competed in the 2013 Delaware Envirothon. Those competing were from A.I. DuPont High School, the Charter School of Wilmington, Glasgow High School, Hodgson Vo-Tech High School, and McKean High School. The Charter School of Wilmington Team A won the competition and placed 7th in the North American Envirothon.

Information and Education Outreach



Educational outreach remained an important part of the District's workload during the past year. Outreach is conducted through public events such as Ag Day at the University of Delaware, the Blackbird Creek Fall Festival, various Earth Day events, the

Delaware Association for Environmental Education's annual conference, and school programs. A poster contest was held in fall 2012. The District is a strong supporter of the Delaware Envirothon program which offered “Challenging Environmental Education” to 100 high school students.

