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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Lower cover photo courtesy of Tom Barthelmeh
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) 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 Manager 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 2010 annual meeting, themed Committed to Conservation, was held in Orlando, Florida; while the Northeast regional meeting, themed The Changing Climate of Conservation, was held in Portland, Maine. General and breakout sessions featured topics such as water quality, climate change, energy issues, Farm Bill updates and more.
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 2010, the equipment was utilized for 2,377 hours. The District owns the following heavy equipment: two hydraulic track excavators; two bulldozers; a farm tractor with loader; four pickup trucks; one low-boy tractor trailer; one backhoe; one six-wheel truck with a dump body which pulls a trailer used to move equipment; one ten-wheel dump truck; and one ATV for seeding.

No-Till Equipment

The District currently owns three Great Plains no-till drills, one of which can be used to plant native grasses. The drills are rented to our cooperators on a first-come-first-served basis. They are 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 2010, 37 different landowners planted 792 acres of small grains and three other landowners planted 26 acres of native grasses.

Tax Ditch and Drainage Assistance

The District employs a survey technician 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 700 miles of channel. The District's survey technician responded to 156 requests for assistance on the tax ditches. The requests for assistance concerned mowing (334 miles), pipe sizing (51 pipes installed on 15 ditches), flooding, ditch bank erosion, weed wiping (66.8 miles on 10 ditches), seeding, tax ditch maintenance, tax ditch construction, beaver control, and requests to stake, grade and survey ditches (56,305 feet were staked and graded on 12 ditches), etc. The District’s survey technician attended the annual meetings of 33 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 $350,000 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 surveying technician before any matching funds were released. During 2010, the 3921 funds were used as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tax Ditch Dipout (56,305 feet)</td>
<td>$ 44,350</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Ditch Pipe Installation (51 pipes)</td>
<td>$ 18,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tax Ditch Mowing (334 miles)</td>
<td>$ 66,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weed Wiper Bar (66.8 miles)</td>
<td>$ 20,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical &amp; Administrative Assistance</td>
<td>$ 64,610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brought Forward to FY-09</td>
<td>$ 83,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$297,593</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 concerned flooding problems, ditches that need cleaning out, erosion problems, etc. The District’s survey technician handled 152 requests for drainage assistance during 2010.
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 $400,000 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:

- Poultry Heavy Use Area Protection: 8 Pads
- Poultry Manure Structures: 1 Each
- Dead Bird Composters: 0 Each
- Manure Spreaders: 0 Each
- Front-end Loaders: 0 Each
- Cover Crops: 12,058 Acres
- Rentar Fuel Catalysts: 0 Each
- Roof Runoff System: 0 Each
- Dairy Ag Waste Roof System: 0 Each

Conservationists completed a total of 505 annual inspections of installed practices to ensure the practices are continuing to work properly and do not need any maintenance.

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. A total of eight contracts were signed on five farms.

CREP cost-share funds in the amount of $15,000 were obligated to cover the estimated costs for establishing the practices. The practices cover 52.4 acres and are broken down as follows:

- Hardwood Tree Planting: 4.6 Acres
- Wildlife Upland Habitat: 18.6 Acres
- Shallow Water Area for Wildlife: 6.0 Acres
- Filter Strips: 23.2 Acres

Also completed under EQIP as part of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Initiative were the following practices:

- Dead Bird Composters: 4 Each
- Fencing: 15,337 Feet
- Poultry Heavy Use Area Protection: 59 Each
- Irrigation Sprinkler Systems: 798 Acres
- Irrigation Water Management: 1,902 Acres
- Nutrient Management: 1,206 Acres
- Pasteurization (Waste) Treatment: 9 Houses
- Pasture and Hay Planting: 19 Acres
- Pest Management: 1,364 Acres
- Waste Storage Facilities: 4 Each
- Windbreak: 1,600 Feet

The picture to the right shows a recently sprayed, mowed, disked, and seeded 120’ wide grass filter strip that was funded by the CREP 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, four engineering inspectors, a part-time engineer, and urban conservationist. During the year the staff performed the following:

- reviewed 54 plans for the City of Dover Development Advisory Committee (DAC);
- reviewed 2 plans for the City of Milford Development Advisory Committee (DAC);
- reviewed 22 plans for the Kent County Development Advisory Committee (DAC);
- reviewed 82 detailed sediment and stormwater plans, of which 61 were approved;
- reviewed 56 plans for minor subdivisions;
- issued 581 general permits; 103 temporary general permits; 6 commercial general permits, and 5 utility general permits; and
- completed 827 project inspections; 625 certificate of occupancy inspections; 126 temporary occupancy inspections; and 189 annual maintenance inspections.

Outreach and Education

The urban conservationist gave presentations to homeowner’s and civic associations during 2010 to educate property owners on the purpose of stormwater ponds and proper maintenance procedures.

During the Delaware Aerospace Education Foundation’s 2010 Spring Family Day event, the urban conservationist spoke to participants about the stormwater pond located at the Environmental Outpost, its purpose, and how it functions.

The Freddy the Fish activity, which is designed to teach participants about stormwater and the effects of pollution, was presented by KCD staff at the Delaware Make-a-Splash Water Festival and at the Cub Scout Fun Day at Silver Lake Park.

Stormwater staff assisted DNREC by participating in a mock pre-construction meeting as part of the Certified Construction Reviewer training.

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 182 samples were tested covering 7,820 acres. The District’s conservationists also worked with cooperators in testing manure as well. Last year, three dairy and 29 poultry manure samples were tested.

The conservationists also completed 8 nutrient management plans and 10 comprehensive nutrient management plans covering 1,750 acres.
Governors Conservation Awards
On April 21, 2010 Governor Jack Markell presented the 15th Annual Governor’s Conservation Awards to winners from Delaware’s three counties during a ceremony proclaiming April 25 through May 2 as Soil & Water Stewardship Week in Delaware. The award for agricultural conservation in Kent County was presented to Fifer Orchards, Inc. of Wyoming. They were recognized for their efforts to conserve water, improve irrigation efficiency, prevent runoff and protect surface and subsurface water supplies, as well as their public outreach efforts.

Michael Setz of Volunteers of America National Services (Alexandria, VA) was selected as the urban award winner for Kent County for addressing stormwater runoff and their efforts to improve water quality, water quantity and groundwater recharge while improving site aesthetics at their residential apartment complex, Brightway Commons II, in Milford.

Conservation Poster Contest
The District sponsored the annual Conservation Poster Contest again and provided awards to winners from Kent County. The theme was “Conservation Habits = Healthy Habitats.” A total of 71 posters were submitted. First, second and third place winners received a prize valued at $50, $25, and $15 respectively. Kent County winners included the following: Maci Carter of Lake Forest South Elementary School—1st place for Grades 2-3; and Krysta Lynn Shugars of Polytech High School—2nd place for Grades 10-12.
13th Annual Barn Dance Fundraiser

On Friday, September 17, 2010, over 300 guests filled the Dover Building at the Delaware State Fairgrounds for the Kent Conservation District’s (KCD) 13th Annual Barn Dance. Participants raised a little over $6,500 in net proceeds to support the Delaware Envirothon. An additional amount of $3,000 was granted to the Barn Dance by the Mid-Del Charitable Foundation.

The traditional Barn Dance meal of barbecue pork and chicken was again cooked by KCD Equipment Operator Ron Argo, his wife Kaye, and a few assistants. Other supporters of the Barn Dance prepared the delicious side dishes and desserts to round out the meal. Other events of the evening included a silent auction, a live auction by Herb Kenton and Bruce Betts, and dancing to Just Kidding Around Entertainment. 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 sincerely appreciates the many volunteers, those who provided financial support, and those who donated auction items, food or other items to the event.

The Delaware Envirothon is a competitive problem-solving, natural resource challenge for high school students. Funds raised 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 (2011—New Brunswick, Canada).