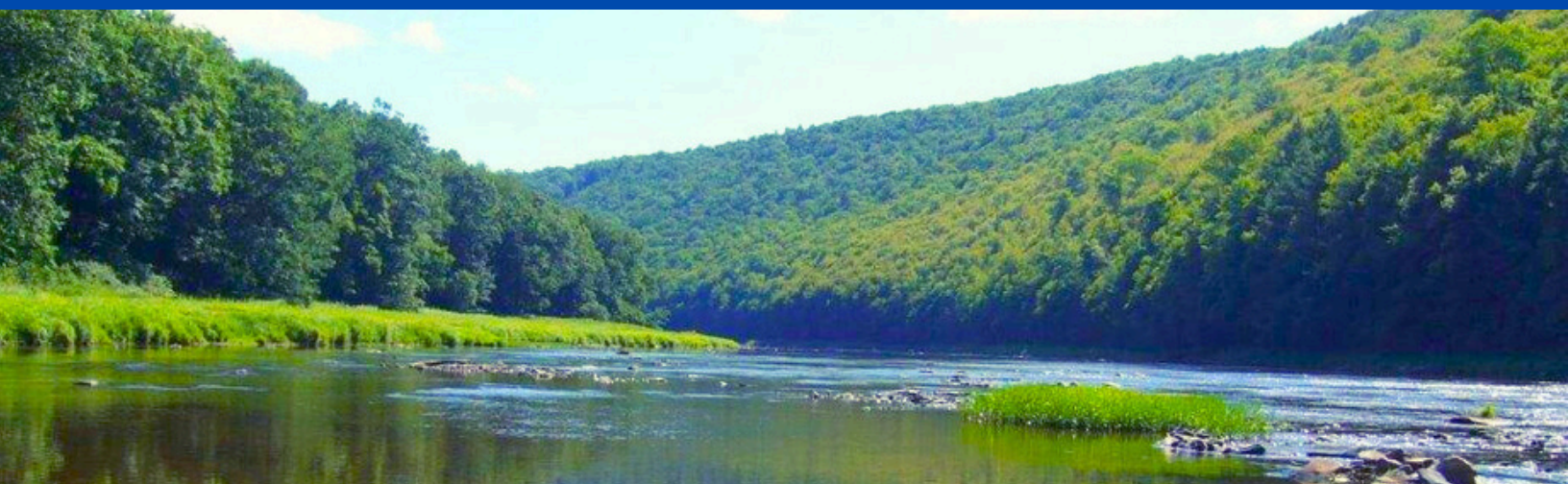


SPRING 2025 E-BLAST



CLARION CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Happy Spring!

by Hannah Bequeath
Education/Outreach Coordinator



Nature is beginning to wake up from it's winter slumber! Red Maple tree buds are beginning to turn into flowers (pictured above), migratory birds such as the Red-winged Black Bird and Eastern Phoebe (pictured above) are making their return, and Spotted Salamanders and Wood Frogs have begun their migration to vernal pools! What other signs of spring have you noticed so far?

The District filled the winter months with many school visits; events for farmers, forest landowners, and outdoor enthusiasts; a Great Backyard Bird Count hike; a library program; and planning for the upcoming spring season. Read on for full recaps!

Be sure to check out the last page for more information on community events we have planned this spring on topics such as Creek Critters, Amphibians & Reptiles, Fishing, and more!

Our main goal at the District is to protect Clarion County's natural resources. Thank you for your interest in our efforts!

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- Recap of Winter 2025 Events
- Watershed Updates
- Agriculture Updates & "Amazing Graze" Article
- DGLVR Updates
- E&S Updates
- Featured Species: Allegheny Crayfish (*Faxonius obscurus*)
- Poster Contest & PA Leopold Conservation Award
- Upcoming Events

RECAP OF WINTER 2025 EVENTS

by Hannah Bequeath, Education/Outreach Coordinator

January- The District provided programs on the topic of **water / water pollution** for students at the Clarion Christian School and Keystone High School. CCD also provided a **PA Native Species & Upcycled Birdfeeder program** for students at Union High School. The **4th Annual Farmer's Breakfast** was held in Clarion, PA for producers in Clarion County with about 40 people in attendance (see Ag page for more info).

February- CCD provided an informational table at the annual **Clarion Forest Landowner's Conference** held at the Science & Technology Center at PennWest Clarion University in Clarion. The District hosted a program for the worldwide **Great Backyard Bird Count** initiative at the Riverfront Park in East Brady, PA in which participants recorded 30 birds (12 different species) and submitted data to eBird. CCD held an **Over & Under the Snow** program at the Clarion Free Library in Clarion, PA featuring a book reading and skins & skulls id activity. CCD provided an educational program regarding **National Invasive Species Awareness Week** for over 200 K-6 students from nonpublic schools in Clarion, Venango, & Jefferson Counties as part of IU6's Ag Lab Field Trip event.

March - The District provided a program on **green jobs** for the students at the Clarion Christian School. CCD participated in the **"Ready...Set...Go Outside" event** hosted by Meredith's Footwear in Lucinda, PA. The District assisted with the **27th Annual Western Pennsylvania Grazing Conference** held in Clarion with over 175 people in attendance (See Ag pg. for more info). The District attended the **IU6 STEELS Vendor Fair** and chatted with local teachers about the educational programs we can offer that fit in with the new school standards. CCD provided an educational table at the **Clarion Woodfest** held at the Clarion Mall in Clarion, PA. A **nature hike** was provided for Keystone Elementary School's Nature Journaling Club and an **Abandoned Mine Drainage presentation** was provided for Keystone High School students.

Below: Participants of the Great Backyard Bird Count program brave the cold on February 14th (Valentine's Day) at the Riverfront Park in East Brady, PA; all for the love of birds!



Below: A skins & skulls identification activity was provided at the Over & Under the Snow program at the Clarion Free Library in Clarion, PA.



Below: CCD celebrated National Invasive Species Awareness Week by educating over 200 K-6 students from local nonpublic schools.



Below: District Watershed Specialist, Shane Hofius, demonstrates an alkalinity titration during a presentation at Keystone HS on abandoned mine drainage and the work that he does in the county.



Watershed Updates

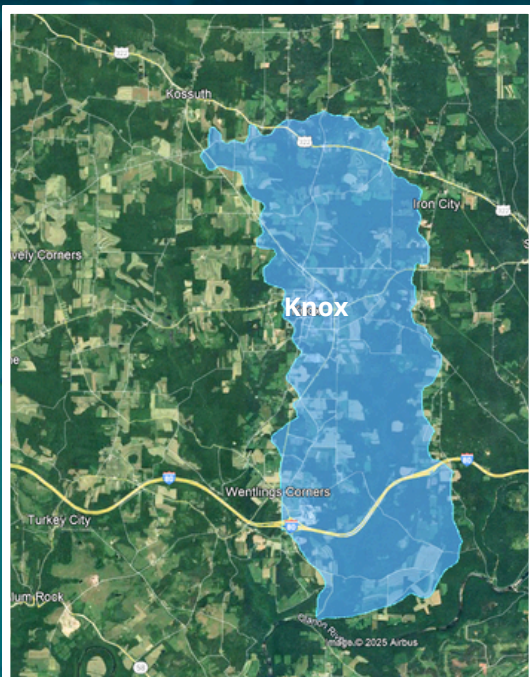
by: Shane Hofius, Resource Technician/Watershed Specialist



Above: Shane Hofius, CCD Watershed Specialist, partnered with Dana Hannibal, District Technician from the Jefferson County Conservation District, on a presentation titled, "Protecting Water Resources on Your Property", at the Clarion Forest Landowner's Conference held at PennWest Clarion University in Clarion, PA.

Project Updates:

Canoe Creek Watershed Assessment: A Coldwater Heritage Partnership (CHP) grant was received by the District to conduct an assessment on the Canoe Creek Watershed (shaded blue on the map below) in 2025!



LET'S ALL GO
Fishing!

FREE LUNCH & FISHING GEAR RAFFLE!

JEFFERSON COUNTY
CONSERVATION DISTRICT



Join the Clarion & Jefferson Conservation Districts, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission, and partners for a **free** field day of learning hands-on fishing skills! Our goal is to make fishing more accessible and help new and returning anglers alike get into fishing our beautiful PA streams and lakes!

Topics Covered: Traditional & Fly Fishing, PA Fishes & Habitat, Stream Restoration, Fishing Gear, Why/How Lakes, Rivers, and Streams are Managed, and more!

DETAILS:

May 31st - 8:00am - 2:00pm (or later if you want to stay and fish longer)
at Clear Creek State Park, Sigel, PA -
Shelter 1 & 2 (adjacent to the swim beach just inside the park entrance).
Adults & children ages 10 & up may attend.
No experience needed.

Register by May 9th

Space is limited, early registration is advised.

To register, visit www.clarionconservation.com/events.

QUESTIONS? CONTACT SHANE HOFIUS AT 814-297-8036 OR SHOFIUSCCD@GMAIL.COM

Partners:



Agriculture Updates

by *Hannah Bequeath, Agriculture Conservation Technician (ACT)*

The **27th Annual Western PA Grazing Conference (pictured below)** was held on March 13, 2025 in Clarion, PA at Trinity Point Church with Dr. Matt Poore (pictured left) from North Carolina State University (NCSU)/Triple Creek Ranch in Virginia and Eli Mack (pictured right) from Mack Farms in Indiana, PA as the keynote speakers. Over 175 were in attendance. The Conference is organized by the Western PA Grazing Conference Committee. Members include NRCS, Clarion, Clearfield, and Jefferson Conservation Districts, Penn State Extension, NW & SW PA Project Grass, and local farmers. Grant support was provided by the PA Grazing Lands Coalition. Thank you to all that attended, including all of our vendors and sponsors that supported the conference!



On January 31st, about 40 people joined us for the **4th Annual Farmer's Breakfast (pictured above)**; an opportunity for Clarion County producers to network with each other over breakfast, gather info and updates from agencies that provide services to the ag community, and listen to a presentation on Ag Best Management Practices (BMPs) & associated funding opportunities provided by Dale Kriner, District Conservationist with USDA-NRCS and Hannah Bequeath, Ag Tech with CCD.

Thank you to the Limestone Firehall for allowing us to use their hall for the event, Zack's Farm to Table for catering the delicious breakfast, and our partners who spoke and provided information to the farmers. Partners included: Penn State Extension - Clarion County, USDA-NRCS, USDA-FSA, Clarion Venango Forest County Farm Bureau, Horizon Farm Credit, and SBDC-Ag Center of Excellence.



Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP) Time-line for Clarion County



Amazing Graze

by Hannah Bequeath, Agriculture Conservation Technician (ACT)

Grazing, in an agricultural context, means allowing livestock to feed on vegetation, such as grass, in a pasture or rangeland. The primary purpose is to utilize land that is unsuitable for traditional crops, converting otherwise indigestible plant matter into valuable, quality animal products such as food, fiber, and other products.

What are the benefits of grazing?

- **Nutrient Cycling:** Grazing contributes to the natural cycling of nutrients in the soil, improving soil health and fertility.
- **Soil Health:** Grazing, when managed properly, can help build healthy soils, improve water infiltration, and reduce erosion.
- **Forage Utilization:** Grazing allows for the efficient utilization of forage resources, reducing the need for supplemental feeding and associated costs.
- **Animal Welfare:** Grazing allows animals to behave naturally, roaming and foraging, which can contribute to their overall well-being.

Potential resource concerns if grazing is not properly managed:

- **Overgrazing:** If not managed properly, grazing can lead to overgrazing, causing soil degradation, reduced forage production, and environmental damage.
- **Soil Compaction:** Excessive grazing can compact the soil, reducing its ability to hold water and nutrients.
- **Erosion:** Overgrazing can lead to increased soil erosion, especially in areas with steep slopes or poor soil cover.

To help mitigate these potential resource concerns, rotational or regenerative grazing is encouraged rather than continuous grazing. **Continuous grazing** allows animals to graze freely in a single pasture area, which can lead to overgrazing and soil degradation, whereas **rotational grazing** involves moving animals from one pasture area to another, allowing forages to recover and improve pasture health. **Regenerative grazing** is a form of rotational grazing focused on building soil health and ecosystem resilience through managed grazing practices.

Watering Facilities:

There are many other best management practices (BMPs) that can be incorporated into a grazing plan to help mitigate resource concerns. For example, a **watering facility** (tank, trough, or other watertight container) provides access to water for livestock at selected locations. This facility can protect and enhance vegetative cover through proper distribution of grazing, control erosion through better grassland management, and protect streams and ponds from livestock contamination. The water source may be a well, spring, stream, pond, municipal water supply, etc. (1) (2) (3) Some locations may benefit from a **solar powered pump** to gather water from the source. Solar power tends to require less maintenance, have lower operation costs, and can increase water availability to remote locations. When properly designed, solar powered watering systems can result in significant long-term cost savings and a smaller environmental footprint compared to systems that rely on conventional power. A unique benefit of using solar energy in livestock watering systems is that the increased water requirements for livestock tend to coincide with the seasonal availability of solar energy. (4)



To receive assistance with putting together a grazing plan or implementing one, contact your local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office. Ask NRCS or your local conservation district about cost-share funding programs that are available.

For more information on Clarion Conservation District's Agriculture Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP), please visit our website www.clarionconservation.com/argiculture or contact our ACAP Technician, Matt Kerr, at mkerrccd@gmail.com or call 814-393-6018 (office) or 814-221-1941 (cell).

Sources:

1. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). "Watering Facility: Small Scale Solutions for your farm". January 2009. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/stelprdb1167367-watering-facility.pdf>. Accessed 31 March 2025.
2. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). "Conservation Practice Overview: Watering Facility (Code 614)". August 2023. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2023-08/614_NHCP_PO_Water_Facility_2023.pdf. Accessed 31 March 2025.
3. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). "Prescribed Grazing and Associated Practices: Conservation Available Through EQIP". January 2020. <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/EQIP%20Prescribed%20Grazing.pdf>. Accessed 31 March 2025.
4. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). "Solar-Powered Water Pump Systems for Stockwater Design". July 2017. Technical Note No. 1. Bismark, North Dakota. https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/sites/default/files/2022-10/ND%20Technical%20Note%201%20-%20Solar-Powered%20Water%20Pump%20Systems%20for%20Stockwater%20Design_1.pdf. Accessed 31 March 2025.

DIRT, GRAVEL, & LOW VOLUME ROAD (DGLVR) UPDATES

by Alicia Ramsey, DGLVR Technician

2025 projects have been awarded to the following municipalities:

- **Dirt & Gravel:**
 - Breniman Road, Paint Township
 - Falls Road, Porter Township
 - Henry Road, Toby Township
 - Hodil Road, Licking Township
 - Laurel Road, Piney Township
 - Lawrence Road, Monroe Township
 - Millcreek Road, Highland Township
 - Sandy Road, Washington Township
 - Shadetree Drive, Farmington Township
- **Low Volume:**
 - Burns Road, Monroe Township
 - Frogtown Road, Limestone Township
 - Truittsburg Road, Redbank Township

Total 2025 Projects Awarded:
\$483,715

Upcoming Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance (ESM) Trainings:

- **April 15 & 16 (Fayette County)**
- **May 14 & 15 (Mercer County)**
- **May 28 & 29 (Huntingdon County)**
- **June 4 & 5 (Adams County)**
- **July 9 & 10 (Luzerne County)**
- **July 30 & 31 (Butler County)**
- **August 13 & 14 (Tioga County)**
- **August 27 & 28 (Erie County)**

To register, go to dirtandgravel.psu.edu/education-training/esm-course/in-person-esm-trainings/ OR Contact the Center with questions: DGregistration@psu.edu

Upcoming PA One Call / Pennsylvania 811 Trainings:

- **April 9th - Locator Program** - from 8:30am-12pm at the Allegheny Grille, Foxburg, PA. FREE to attend and will provide excellent information on obligations as a facility owner, locator, or municipality under PA Act 287, as amended. Lunch: 12:00 pm. To register, contact Dan Nemanic at djnemanic@pa1call.org or 412-509-7232.
- **April 16th - Project Planning Training** at the Armstrong Conservation District Office 11:30am-1pm.
- **May 15th - PA Safety Day** at the DoubleTree By Hilton Cranberry in Mars, PA from 7am -1:30pm.

To register, go to pa1call.org.

Upcoming LTAP Classes:

- **April 10th - Posting & Bonding of Local Roads** - Clarion Township Building from 8am-12pm.
- **May 1st - Bridge & Culvert Inspection for Municipalities** at the Clarion Township Building from 8am-3pm, lunch provided.

To register, contact Aaron Ritsig at aaronr@northwestpa.org or 814-677-4800 ext. 123.

EROSION AND SEDIMENT (E&S) UPDATES

by Matt Kerr, E&S Technician

- **National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)**
 - Received 5 general permit submissions.
 - 3 general permits approved.
- **E&S Control Plans:**
 - Received 3 new plan submissions.
 - 3 plans approved.
- **Inspections:**
 - 3 inspections conducted.
- **Chapter 102 Complaints:**
 - 0 received and under investigation
- **Chapter 102 Technical Assistance:**
 - 20 contacts regarding various projects

For more information on erosion & sediment permits and plans, please visit our website www.clarionconservation.com/e-s or contact our E&S Technician, Matt Kerr, at mkerrccd@gmail.com or call 814-393-6018 (office) or 814-221-1941 (cell).



FEATURED SPECIES: ALLEGHENY CRAYFISH (FAXONIUS OBSCURUS)

by Hannah Bequeath, Education/Outreach Coordinator

General Description:

The Allegheny Crayfish is also known as the obscure crayfish; perhaps due to its tendency to hide under rocks. (1). Crayfish are crustaceans and are related to crabs, shrimp, lobsters, and even zooplankton. Crayfish have five pairs of jointed legs (the first pair are pincers) and can move in any direction— forward, sideways or backwards. When startled, a crayfish quickly moves backwards by rapidly flicking its fan-shaped tail. Chelae (pincers) are used to catch, crush and cut food and also to dig and defend. (3). Crayfish have many smaller “legs,” called swimmerets, under the abdomen. Swimmerets help with swimming and balance. Female crayfish use swimmerets to carry eggs and babies. Crayfish have two pairs of antennae. The short pair are called antennules. Antennules are used to taste the water and food. The long antennae are used for the sense of touch and helps the crayfish find food and feel vibrations of predators swimming nearby. Crayfish can grow new body parts such as legs, pincers, or swimmerets. (3)

Allegheny crayfish are light brown to olive green, with a dark brown wedge on the dorsal (upper side/back) surface of the abdomen. Its rostrum (nose-like structure) is concave and lacks a keel (ridge) running down the middle. The claw tips of the Allegheny crayfish are usually tipped with orangish-brown, followed by a **dark green-blackish band**, and then a pale-yellow band. The largest carapace (hard upper shell) length was a crayfish from Allegheny County, Pennsylvania measuring at a total length of 3.6 inches (about the length of a business card or width of a smartphone)! (1)(2)

Look-a-likes:

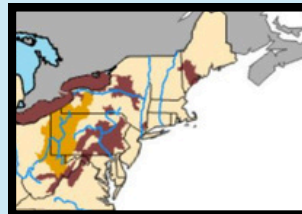
The Allegheny Crayfish looks similar to the Northern Clearwater Crayfish (*Faxonius propinquus*) and they commonly occur together. The Northern Clearwater Crayfish differs in that their claw tips lack the dark green-blackish band of color and they have a small bump on their rostrum (nose) that the Allegheny crayfish lack. (1)

The Allegheny crayfish can also be mistaken for an invasive species, the Rusty Crayfish (pictured below), which usually has red patches that appears on either side of its carapace, just before the tail. These two species also have the potential to hybridize. (1) See below for more information on the Rusty Crayfish.

Range & Habitat:

The Allegheny crayfish prefers slow-moving waterways and pools with rocky substrates, where it can hide beneath rocks and burrow into the sediment. They are native to parts of Maryland, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. In Pennsylvania, this species is native in the western portions of the state; however recent studies have revealed that they were introduced into the Susquehanna River drainage and portions of the Delaware River drainage. Allegheny Crayfish threaten native crayfish species by directly competing for food, habitat, and resources, and through hybridization with native species. (1)

Allegheny crayfish were most likely introduced outside of their native range through **bait bucket releases** (2). Crayfish make great bait for bass and trout fishing (3). Once introduced, its high reproductive capacity allows it to quickly establish and spread to new areas. **In Pennsylvania it is illegal to possess, import, or transport any crayfish species unless they are used as bait in the water they were taken from, or unless the head is immediately removed above the eyes before transport.** (2)



Pictured left: The orange on the map indicates the Allegheny Crayfish's native range, whereas the red is where it has been introduced. (2)

Life History / Ecology:

Allegheny Crayfish mate during August / September, and their eggs hatch the next spring between April / May. During their first summer, immature individuals molt several times, increasing their carapace length by about 1-2 mm each time. Their growth and activity ceases during the winter months and continues as temperatures rise during the spring. Their maximum life expectancy is believed to be roughly 2 years. (2). Crayfish eat plants and animals that are both dead and alive. By eating dead matter, crayfish help improve water quality. Scientists have found that over 240 species of wild animals in North America eat crayfish, including trout, bass, herons, owls, raccoons, otters, water snakes, etc. (3)

Population Threats:

Crayfish are one of the most endangered groups of animals in North America. Habitat loss and pollution are a threat to crayfish, but the biggest concern may be the introduction of invasive crayfish in our waterways. (3) The Allegheny Crayfish has been displaced from parts of its native range by the Rusty Crayfish (*Faxonius rusticus*) (pictured left). (2). While it gets its name from the rusty colored spots on its carapace, these spots aren't always present due to hybridization with other crayfish species, therefore it can be difficult to identify. (7). The most serious impact of the Rusty Crayfish is its ability to eat massive amounts of aquatic vegetation, which reduces food, shelter, and spawning sites for other organisms. In Pennsylvania, the Rusty Crayfish was first discovered in 1976 in the lower Susquehanna River. It has since spread, establishing populations in the eastern and western regions of the state. The best way to prevent further ecological problems caused by the Rusty Crayfish is to prevent or slow their spread into new waters.

Never release live bait into any water body and never transport any crayfish from one water body to another. (2)



Sources:

1. Pennsylvania Sea Grant. "Allegheny Crayfish". <https://seagrant.psu.edu/aquatic-invasive-species-fact-sheets/allegheny-crayfish/>. Accessed 25 March 2025.
2. Procopio, J. "Faxonius obscurus (Hagen, 1870)". U.S. Geological Survey, Nonindigenous Aquatic Species Database, Gainesville, FL. <https://nas.er.usgs.gov/queries/factsheet.aspx?SpeciesID=2243>, Revision Date: 5/10/2019, Accessed 25 March 2025.
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6. Koch, Sophie. "Invasive Rusty Crayfish". St. Croix River Association, 2017. National Park Service. <https://www.nps.gov/articles/invasive-rusty-crayfish.htm>. Accessed 31 March 2025.
7. Pennsylvania Sea Grant. "Rusty Crayfish (Faxonius rusticus)". <https://seagrant.psu.edu/resources/resource-item/rusty-crayfish-ais-fact-sheet/>. Accessed 31 March 2025.

Poster Contest & 2025 PA Leopold Conservation Award

by: Hannah Bequeath, Education/Outreach Coordinator



The submission deadline for the
2025 National Association of Conservation
Districts (NACD) Poster Contest
is June 20th, 2025. (see theme above).

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) poster contest, open to students in grades K-12, offers young people an opportunity to express their views on natural resource issues through the medium of art. Students' submissions are judged in five age categories according to the conservation message, visual effectiveness, originality, and universal appeal.

Entries cannot be accepted directly from individuals for the state contest. They MUST go through the county conservation district first.

Please mail or email a photo of your poster and a completed Poster Contest Entry Form

(https://pacd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Poster-Contest-Entry-Form_Local-Competition.pdf) to your local conservation district **by June 20th** so that we have enough time to process it all and submit them by the state deadline of June 30th. Cash prize for top winner in each grade category at state level. Winners will be entered into the NACD national competition.

For more info please contact the District's Educator, Hannah Bequeath, at 814-393-6147 or email hbequeathccd@gmail.com.



**Nominations are now being accepted for the
2025 Pennsylvania Leopold Conservation
Award®**

The award honors farmers and forestland owners who go above and beyond in their management of soil health, water quality, and wildlife habitat on working land.

Sand County Foundation and national sponsor American Farmland Trust present Leopold Conservation Awards to private landowners in 28 states. In Pennsylvania, the \$10,000 award is presented with The Heinz Endowments, Horizon Farm Credit, and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau.

Award nominations may be submitted on behalf of a landowner, or landowners may nominate themselves. The nomination form can be found at www.sandcountyfoundation.org/ApplyLCA.

The nomination deadline date is August 1, 2025.

Nominations must be emailed to PennsylvaniaLCA@sandcountyfoundation.org.

For more information on the award, visit www.leopoldconservationaward.org.

UPCOMING EVENTS

****To register for any of the following free events, go to clarionconservation.com/events or use the contact info below.****

April

- **8th - Creek Critters (Foxburg Free Library, Foxburg, PA)** - Join the Clarion Conservation District from 5-6:30pm for an interactive program on local aquatic species. Bring rain boots or closed-toe water shoes & expect to get wet if you would like to participate in the in-river critter hunt! Best for kids over age 7. [Register by April 4th.](#)
- **22nd - Earth Day Litter Clean-Up (State Game Lands 72, Clarion, PA)** - Join the Clarion Conservation District in making a difference this Earth Day from 5-6:30pm! Meet at the State Game Lands 72 parking lot at the corner of Miola Road & McCleary Road in Clarion, PA. Safety vests, gloves, & bags provided. [Register by April 17th.](#)

May

- **16th - Leaping into Herpetology (Beaver Creek Nature Area, Knox, PA)** - Join naturalist April Claus and the Clarion Conservation District from 7-9pm and meet LIVE reptiles and amphibians native to PA, learn to identify frogs and toads by their call, examine touchable models/shells, and discover how to identify the venomous snakes in our area! Wear your "frog catching" boots and bring your net & flashlight as we explore nearby wetlands. Best for kids over age 7. [Register by May 9th.](#)
- **31st- Let's All Go Fishing (Clear Creek State Park, Shelter 1&2, Sigel, PA)** - See Watershed Updates page for more info! [Register by May 9th.](#)

For more information on our upcoming events please view our [Facebook](#) or [Instagram](#) page, our website, or contact us at hbequeathccd@gmail.com or 814-393-6147.



Clarion County residents, please take a moment to participate in our Clarion County Environmental Education Program Survey:
clarionconservation.com/education

Visit our native rain gardens this spring/summer to see what's blooming!



Pictured above: Virginia Bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*); a native spring ephemeral wildflower, blooming in the Clarion Conservation District Office public rain garden during mid-April 2023.

Open to the public. Located at the CCD Office (249 S. 2nd Ave. Clarion, PA).

For more info on CCD's rain gardens and/or to volunteer to help maintain them, go to clarionconservation.com/rain-barrels-and-gardens

Do you know someone that is interested in receiving the Clarion Conservation District newsletters?
 To subscribe or unsubscribe, please contact us at hbequeathccd@gmail.com or call 814-393-6147.



@conserveclarion
www.clarionconservation.com
 CCD Office: 249 S. 2nd Ave. Clarion, PA