



June 7, 2019 FFNF Highlights

Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

Presenter:

Jenna Mitchell, Pennsylvania State Director, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay

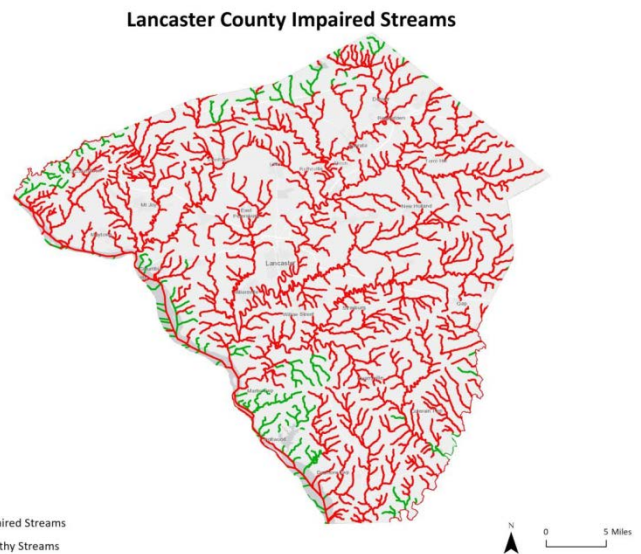
- Prior to Jenna Mitchell's start with the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, the State Office for the Alliance was located in Camp Hill. When she became the State Director, she moved their offices to the City of Lancaster because of the large impact Lancaster County has on the health of the Chesapeake Bay.
- One of the Alliance's projects is the Restoring the Environment and Developing Youth (READY) Program which creates green jobs for young adults and adults while improving watershed health through the reduction of stormwater runoff.
- The City of Lancaster hopes to hire a crew of READY workers to take care of the green infrastructure in the City.
- While most farmers in the County want to follow best management practices (BMPs) for the health of local waterways and the Chesapeake Bay, they are unable to afford to do so. Most farmers are acutely aware of the problems on their farm but cannot afford to fix them.
- The Alliance believes that hunters and anglers are the original environmentalists and conservators of natural resources and are therefore excellent partners in cleaning up our waterways.
- This presentation coincides with the activities during Water Week this week. There are numerous community partners who are participating in this year's events.
- The Susquehanna River provides 50% of the water that flows into the Chesapeake Bay.



- The Chesapeake Bay contains large dead zones. These are created when fertilizers, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, are washed into the bay and create algae blooms. When the algae die, they utilize high levels of oxygen, which chokes out the life in the Bay. Aquatic creatures that rely on the oxygen in the water suffocate and die.

- Stream health in Pennsylvania is also a major concern. A vast majority of Lancaster County's streams are impaired. Parts of streams that are located in nature reserves or conservation areas are the healthiest.

- PA has a Watershed Implementation Plan which is the State's roadmap for reducing nitrogen and other pollutants that enter the bay. This plan was submitted to the EPA. The PA Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP)



calculated that 21% of the total nitrogen reductions for the state need to come from Lancaster County.

- Since 1972, it has been a PA state requirement that all agriculture operations have a Conservation Plan. It is estimated that only 50% of farms in Lancaster County have a Conservation Plan.
- The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay has entered into an exciting new partnership with Turkey Hill Dairy and the Maryland and Virginia Milk Producers Cooperative Association (MDVA). A link to a video outlining the project can be found [here](#). MDVA farmers that provide milk to Turkey Hill are located in Lancaster, York, Adams, Cumberland, Lebanon, Luzerne, Franklin, Northumberland, and Berks Counties.
- Turkey Hill has asked MDVA to support all the farmers providing milk to Turkey Hill to develop a conservation plan and reach compliance with on-the-ground BMPs. Roughly 25% of the 136 MDVA farmers serving Turkey Hill Dairy did not have a Conservation Plan when this project started.
- Once all farmers have obtained a conservation plan, Turkey Hill will pay the farmers an incentive payment for the newly added "quality" of their milk.
- John Cox, the President of Turkey Hill Dairy, has been a driving force in this partnership. Turkey Hill is motivated to be a part of this project due to the company's commitment to clean water for their employees and residents of the area. The company also wants to eliminate the need for increased regulation of Lancaster County Farms. This clean water partnership is also a huge marketing tool for the company to demonstrate its commitment to clean water and environmentalism.

- The Alliance received a Conservation Innovation Grant (CIG) from the US Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as seed money to jumpstart the project. The goal of the grant is to prove that leadership within the private sector can accelerate the implementation of conservation practices.
- The project implementation is as follows:
 - MDVA Field staff assesses farmers' conservation level during their standard dairy inspection.
 - This data is used to build a database of producers
 - The Alliance visits with each farmer to explain the initiative and options for support.
 - The Alliance then connects the farmer to a NRCS office or a private consultant for assistance
 - Funding is secured to help farmers pay for upgrades to their farms. Some of these upgrades include manure storage improvements and riparian buffer expansion.
- This project has been a successful example of how private partnerships can address issues of clean water and the health of the Chesapeake Bay. This project has the potential to be replicated by other businesses that purchase milk.
- The Lancaster Clean Water Partners has created the Collaborative Watershed Mapping Tool which can be found [here](#). The mapping layers provide spatial information and landscape context to support planning efforts of restoration and conservation professionals in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Data in the tool has been summarized by a small hydrologic unit called a "catchment" to easily identify areas with the greatest opportunity for restoration.