

Daryl Miller – Bradford County Commissioner

Testimony as presented at the House Majority Policy Committee's hearing: "Maintaining our Creeks and Streams to Prevent Flooding"

With so many miles of streams in Bradford County, most landowners face some type of stormwater challenge on their property. Issues range from flooding to property loss and everything in between. We've come to recognize the extreme costs associated with stream damage and although we can't assist in every situation, we have committed funds to watershed work in three areas: Stream Stabilization, Emergency Response, and Stream Maintenance.

Bradford County has for a number of years committed financial resources to the Bradford county Conservation District to support educational and technical assistance in stream restoration related projects.

Since 2006 we have worked with the Conservation District to offer a competitive streambank protection program we call County Initiative. This is primarily a DEP Growing Greener grant funded program with periodic contributions from the DEP Stream Improvement Program. The program allows farmers, landowners, and business owners the opportunity to apply for funding to stabilize streambanks in order to protect their property from erosion. This is a competitive process and sites are ranked against one another based on distance from the stream bank to a home, business, or utility and it also accounts for the amount of sediment that is being washed into the stream. The funding amount varies, but it has become a very successful annual program that protects approximately 10 sites per year. To date over 100 projects have been completed through this collaborative effort.

In 2021 we also developed the Bradford County Watershed Program. Our office has committed \$200,000 (from our Act 13 funding source) to complete two to three routine bank stabilization projects, respond to emergency stream issues during a storm event, and educate and provide demonstrations related to the BC Pilot program. Again, working directly with the Conservation District, this funding covers technical time spent on project design as well as project construction. Not only with this funding assist with the projects directly tied to this program, it will provide a great source of match to leverage additional state and federal grants. We have committed a similar budget for 2022.

Although we currently have success receiving funds through the Growing Greener Program and we have additional funding at the local level, we know these funding sources are temporary and competitive. In my role as Commissioner, I've been appointed to sit on the Conservation District Board of Directors and chair the Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program Quality Assurance Board (QAB) for BCCD. This is a statewide program that provides dedicated funding for local municipalities to upgrade roads. Through administration by the Conservation District, roads are substantially upgraded to reduce annual maintenance and associated costs. A similar program developed for streams would go a long way to help assist local governments in addressing stream maintenance issues and watershed stability. It is much easier to plan and accomplish work with a known budget than working grant to grant with unknown funding. I believe a similar tool could be developed statewide for streams and a dedicated source of funding could be maintained based on miles of stream, water quality, and other factors.