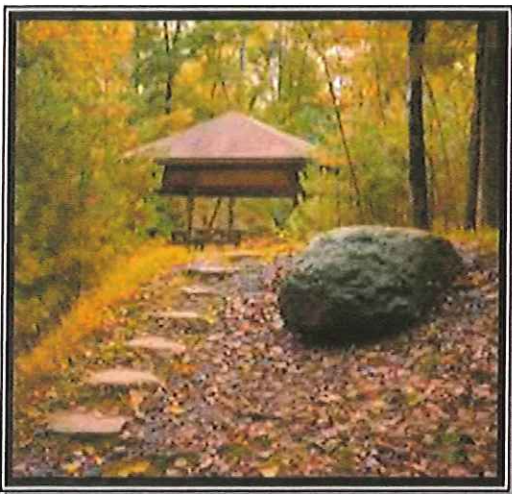




MONROE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

# 2022 Strategic Plan

Approved on May 19, 2022



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MONROE COUNTY  
CONSERVATION DISTRICT

*Conservation Through Education*



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## **Introduction**

A Conservation District is a legal subdivision of state government, responsible under state law for conservation work within its boundaries. Self-government is the guiding philosophy of Conservation Districts. Decisions about conservation issues are made at the local level by citizens who understand and want to protect and improve their local environment.

Pennsylvania has 66 Conservation Districts, one in each county except Philadelphia.

Each District is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors appointed by their local governing bodies, such as County Commissioners. Conservation Districts provide the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Pa. Dept. of Agriculture (PDA) and Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) a way to implement a wide variety of environmental programs that best serve the agricultural, suburban and urban interests of their counties.

The success of Conservation Districts is due in part to their ability to successfully work with local, state and federal agencies and private organizations.

Pennsylvania's Conservation Districts are a model of effective government and among the most diverse, capable and active in the nation.

The Monroe County Conservation District (MCCD or District) has historically adhered to the goals and objectives determined by our Board of Directors, partnering agencies, and the community at large. In 2020, it was decided that the District would establish a formal Strategic Planning Group in order to better support the citizens of Monroe County and continue to act as regional stewards for the county's natural resources.

## **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Robert Armstrong, Chairperson

Brian Winot, Vice-Chairperson

Chuck Gould, Secretary

Roger McFadden, Treasurer

Sharon Laverdure, Commissioner

Craig Todd

Donna Foulk

# Monroe County Conservation District Staff

## District Manager

**Kristina Heaney**

## Technical Services

**Lori Kerrigan**, *Head Resource Conservationist*

**Drew K. Wagner**, P.E., *Hydraulic Engineer*

**Michael J. Wilk**, P.E., *Hydraulic Engineer*

**John Motz**, *Resource Conservation Specialist*

**Steven Baade**, *Resource Conservation Specialist*

**David Hooker**, *Watershed Specialist*

**David Lucykanish**, *Resource Conservation Specialist*

## Education Services

**Roger Spotts**, *Environmental Education Coordinator*

**Brittney Coleman**, *Environmental Educator*

**Barrett Donna**, *Environmental Educator*

**Alesia Gallo**, *Environmental Educator*

**Matthew Giambra**, *Environmental Educator*

## Administrative

**Barbara Bistras**, *Finance Manager*

**Diana Flint**, *Office Assistant Sr.*

**Jenna Nalaschi**, *Office Assistant Sr.*

**Becky Hippler**, *Groundskeeper*

**Delaney Henasey**, *Office Assistant*



## 2021-2022 Planning Process

The Monroe County Conservation District engaged the services of Peter Wulfhorst, Extension Educator, Penn State Extension to facilitate the development of the Monroe County Conservation District Strategic Plan. The District in collaboration with Penn State Extension conducted several surveys to engage Board, staff and the stakeholders. A Board & Staff survey was conducted to gauge the relationship between the staff and the Board.

In addition, as part of the development of the Strategic Plan, stakeholders were surveyed to assist the MCCD in identifying the needs of the residents, the important natural resource issues that they are concerned about and the types of programs and activities that will enhance the District's ability to meet these needs and issues including the Kettle Creek Environmental Center (KCEE). The stakeholders included cooperating agencies, local government officials, environmental organizations, educational groups and the general public. The MCCD wanted to understand how the district can best serve the needs of our community and conserve our natural resources.

The survey resulted in a list of critical environmental issues to attempt to address through the Strategic Plan.

The first strategic planning meeting was conducted virtually on January 26, 2021. The meeting consisted of an organizational assessment, project activity assessment and review of organizational survey.

The second strategic planning meeting was conducted face to face on June 4, 2021, which consisted of a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, draft Mission Statement and a discussion of draft Goals.

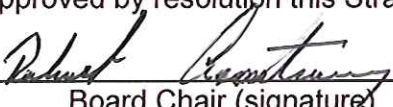
A targeted meeting called "Monroe in Focus": Community & Economic Leaders focus group was conducted face to face on July 15, 2021. The audience consisting of local municipal officials, professional engineers, developers and other members of the land development regulated community in Monroe County provided their input on the goals and objectives for the Monroe County Conservation District Strategic Plan.

The third strategic planning meeting conducted on September 13, 2021, resulted in the Mission Statement and a set of Goals & Objectives. Subsequent meetings conducted on October 14, 2021, and internal staff meetings on November 30, December 2 & December 9, 2021 resulted in Action Steps for the Goals & Objectives.

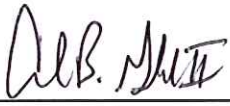
All strategic planning meetings other than the internal staff meetings were attended by MCCD Staff & Board members, cooperating agencies, environmental organizations, DEP, NRCS & Local Schools.

The MCCD obtained partial funding from the State Conservation Commission's (SCC) Leadership Development Program to help implement the strategic planning process and develop the 2022 Strategic Plan. The SCC funding was used to retain a facilitator to assist in the public planning session and to further the development of strategic plan goals and strategies as identified.

**Approval:** On this 19<sup>th</sup> day of May 2022, the Monroe County Conservation District Board of Directors hereby approved by resolution this Strategic Plan.

  
Board Chair (signature)

5-31-2022  
Date

  
District Secretary (signature)

6/2/2022  
Date



## **Critical Natural Resource Issues**

The Monroe County District Strategic Planning stakeholder survey revealed the most important critical natural resources issues. A total of 124 individuals completed the survey. The following items were identified:

- Water Quality/Protection
- Land Use
- Invasive Species
- Stormwater Management
- Forestry Management
- Climate Change

A second survey question asked "What should Monroe County Conservation District prioritize in order to manage the natural resources in the county?"

This question revealed the priorities the District should focus on and is reflected in the Goals & Objectives of the strategic plan.

- Protect Surface Water Quality such as streams, lakes, wetlands, etc.
- Provide Environmental Education to the community
- Control soil erosion and the resulting sediment pollution
- Provide education and outreach to government officials
- Assisting landowners with natural resource conservation
- Increase involvement with municipal stormwater ordinance

The critical natural resource issues and needs as identified through the public planning process were considered by the Board within the context of the District's Mission. Several guiding principles became evident through the issues/needs assessment. These guiding principles laid the framework for the District's Vision for the Future and for development of the five Long-Range Goals which will help the District implement our Programs and Mission and achieve our Vision.

## **Environmental Education Issues**

In addition, there was a question in the survey pertaining to the MCCD Environmental Education programming - What target audiences do you believe Kettle Creek Environmental Education Center should be focusing their programming?

The top 3 audiences were Young Adults Ages 13-19, Children Ages 7-12 and Adults.

A 2nd question concerning the MCCD Environmental Education programming asked What program updates would you like to see be made available at Kettle Creek?

The survey respondents felt that Online program registration and Virtual programming with Online gift shop/ bird supplies a distant third.

These survey questions and responses were reflected in the Strategic Plan Goals & Objectives.



## **Monroe County Conservation District Mission**

*The Monroe County Conservation District recognizes that our quality of life is directly related to the quality and integrity of our natural resources. Our mission is to maintain, protect, and restore the natural resources of Monroe County through science-based education, partnerships, and advocacy*

## **Priority Determination & Resource Review**

The planning group, containing members of the public and our partners, discussed current and developing issues the District is facing. Through multiple in-person and virtual interactions, the group was able to focus on determining the strengths the District needs to better capitalize on and possible improvements that can be made in the future to better serve the citizens of Monroe County.

The identification of the key issues affecting the District was derived through a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. The SWOT analysis also utilized the initial public survey as the framework for conversation, as they were all representatives of different stakeholder groups. This process allowed the planning group to outline what existing resources existed within the District and how to better prioritize these resources based off of community needs. The results of the SWOT analysis were used to determine the Strategic Plan goals.

## **Plan Participants**

- Monroe County Conservation District invited the following parties to participate in our Strategic Planning efforts:
  - Staff
  - District Board of Directors
  - District Associate Directors
  - County Commissioners
  - Watershed Organizations i.e.: Aquashicola and Pohopoco Watershed Conservancy, the Brodhead Watershed Association, the Bushkill Watershed Conservancy and the Tobyhanna Creek and Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Association
  - Our Partners, such as: NRCS, DEP, DCNR, PACD, Kettle Creek Environmental Fund, Trout Unlimited, etc.
  - Local elementary/ high schools, colleges and universities: Northampton County Community College and East Stroudsburg University, etc.
  - Interested members of the public and volunteers

## **2022 Strategic Plan Goals**

### **DEVELOP & STRENGTHEN CURRENT AND FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS**

Establish, nurture and build partnerships and a communication network that provides opportunities for broadening/expanding our outreach and increasing the success of achieving our conservation mission

### **MANAGE THE SOIL & WATER RESOURCES IN THE COUNTY**

Provide advocacy for Monroe County's natural resource assets – protecting sensitive natural environments, conserving the quality and quantity of soil and groundwater resources and Monroe County's special protection surface water resources.

### **PROVIDE EDUCATION TO A BROAD AND DIVERSE CONSTITUENCY**

Expand conservation outreach and education integrating it as a component of all of the District's conservation programs to achieve more effective implementation of these programs and to improve communication of the District's important role in the conservation of Monroe County natural resources

### **PROVIDE GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**

Support the District's Mission through responsible governance and financial management and through provision of adequate staff/management capacity and infrastructure resources.

### **DISTRICT-WIDE TECHNOLOGY AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY**

Upgrade the District's technological infrastructure to better serve Monroe County and continue to diversify online offerings for an advancing community.

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#### **Goal: Develop & strengthen current and future partnerships**

*Objective #1: Provide input on local and statewide environmental issues.*

<b><u>Action Step(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Who?</u></b>	<b><u>When?</u></b>
1. Annual Legislative Breakfast (CD Stewardship Week)	MMCD Staff	Annually
2. Review and advise on agency regulatory changes	MMCD Tech	Ongoing
3. Participation in local and state advisory committees	MCCD Staff	Ongoing



*Objective #2: Relationship building with regulated community*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Provide technical assistance and training	MCCD Tech	Ongoing
2. Conduct Quarterly Regulatory Forum	MCCD Tech	Quarterly
3. Annual Awards Banquet	MCCD Staff	Annually
4. Attend Council of Government (regular agenda item)	MCCD Staff	Monthly
5. Identify target audience annually and provide Staff Educational opportunities	MCCD Staff	Annually

*Objective #3: Strengthen relationship with local, state, and federal leadership & staff*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Encourage relationship building and informal communications with partners	MCCD Staff	Bi-monthly
2. Explore partnership opportunities for projects	MCCD Tech	Ongoing

*Objective #4: Promote resource-based planning in cooperation with Monroe County Planning Commission and staff*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Act 167 Storm Water Management Planning	MMCD Tech/MCPC	Ongoing
2. Pursue resource-based planning initiative for zoning	MCCD Tech/MCPC	Ongoing
3. Develop environmental resource mapping	MMCD Tech/MCPC	Ongoing

*Objective #5: Promote effective communication with legislators*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Annual legislative action plan	MCCD District Manager	Ongoing
2. Send legislators board packets	MCCD office assistant/ District Manager	Monthly

*Objective #6: Increase participation in relevant boards and committees*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. Evaluate boards and committees, assign staff and evaluate effectiveness/value of relationship	MCCD Staff	Annually

**Goal: Manage the soil & water resources in the county**

*Objective #1: Maintain and evaluate opportunities for additional delegation agreements*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. Reevaluate need for Act 38 nutrient management	MCCD Ag Tech	Annually
2. Utilize PA DOT agility agreements	MCCD Staff	Annually
3. Coordinate Storm Water review agreement with municipalities	MCCD Tech	Ongoing
4. Institute post construction storm water management best management practices inspection program	MCCD Hydraulic Eng.	Ongoing

**Goal: Provide education to a broad and diverse constituency.**

*Objective #1: Develop a marketing plan to address program content, delivery & diversity*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. Conduct market research survey and review previously successful programs	Consultant/MCCD EE Staff	2022
2. Diversity and Inclusion Focus Group & Trainings	MCCD Staff/Partners	Nov. 2022
3. Increase social media presence	MCCD EE Staff	July 2022



*Objective #2: Maintain, review, and expand contracts with Monroe County School Districts and other partners*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Establish new content/curriculum to reach additional classes/grades	MCCD EE Staff	2023
2. Consider partnerships with local organizations such as: PEEC, Pocono Wildlife, BWA, etc. Environmental Education	MCCD Staff	2022
3. Evaluate Higher Education contrast opportunities	MCCD Staff	2022

*Objective #3: Enhance and create new program offerings*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Consider funding sources and expansion of grant application opportunities	MCCD EE Staff	2022
2. Expand off-site program offerings and scheduling availability	MCCD EE Staff	2022
3. Increase volunteer engagement	MCCD EE Staff	2022

*Objective #4: Increase Environmental Education Displays and Hands-on Activities*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Upgrade building exhibits	Consultant	Spring, 2024
2. Research outdoor engagement opportunities	MCCD EE Staff	2022
3. Consider additional signage and better visual displays	MCCD EE Staff	2023

*Objective #5: Evaluate long term strategy for Conservation Camp location*

<b>Action Step(s)</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
1. Evaluate changing dates and using another facility	MCCD Staff/BOD	2022
2. Evaluate building our own camp on property	MCCD Staff/BOD	2023

**Goal: Provide Governance, Management and Fiscal Responsibility (EE Staff)**

*Objective #1: Address climate change across all programs*

<b><u>Action Step(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Who?</u></b>	<b><u>When?</u></b>
1. Evaluate building and automotive alternatives that align with our mission	MCCD Staff/BOD	2023
2. Increase partnerships and community engagement regarding climate change	MCCD Staff	2023
3. Integrate technical and environmental education staff program opportunities	MCCD Staff	2023

**Goal: District-wide Technology and Improvement Strategy**

*Objective #1: Improvements to technology for Kettle Creek*

<b><u>Action Step(s)</u></b>	<b><u>Who?</u></b>	<b><u>When?</u></b>
1. Improvements to bandwidth for programming	District Manager/Finance Manager	2022
2. Online registration for programs	MCCD Staff	2022
3. Install credit card readers in the gift shop	District Manager/Finance Manager	2022
4. Bring interesting natural areas to those who cannot make it out to see them in person through You tube, Google Maps/Earth 3D, etc.	MCCD EE Staff	2023
5. Better AV equipment for the art gallery	MCCD Staff	2023
6. Training from ERSI for our ArcGIS online account	District Manager	2023



*Objective #2: Improvements for office form and function*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. Reliable and more modern email server	District Manager/Finance Manager	2023
2. Updated printers	District Manager/Finance Manager	2023
3. Have everyone running the same OS and MS Office versions to ensure compatibility	Monroe County IT Services	2023
4. Cell reception/Telephone improvements	District Manager/Finance Manager	2023
5. Large format scanner/copier/printer	MCCD Staff	2023
6. Continue increasing cloud-based computing	District Manager	Ongoing

*Objective #3: Building and Facility Upgrades*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. More effective and efficient parking lot lighting	District Manager/Board	2022
2. Upgrading light bulbs in building from fluorescent/incandescent bulbs to LED bulbs	Maintenance	2022
3. Install Back-Up-Generator	District Manager/Board	2023
4. Blue Beam or Adobe Acrobat Writer-all staff	District Manager	2022
5. Zoned heating and cooling for building	District Manager/Board	2024

*Objective #4: Improve District Program Offerings*

<u>Action Step(s)</u>	<u>Who?</u>	<u>When?</u>
1. Drone and drone operator license	MCCD Staff	2024

## **Plan Distribution**

The Monroe County Conservation District's Strategic Plan will be provided to the Monroe County Commissioners, Cooperating Agencies, and Nominating Organizations. It will remain viewable on our County website and a Constant Contact link detailing the plan will be sent to all members on our mailing list.

## **Continued Evaluation and Monitoring**

The Strategic Plan will be implemented and evaluated annually at a Committee on Objectives meeting and discussed quarterly at Budget and Finance Committee meetings. The District will communicate all progress made on their goals and objectives to their partners and the public at monthly Board of Director meetings. Strategic Planning will occur, district-wide, every 5 years or as needed.