

## **McKean County Conservation District Establishes Water Monitoring Program**

With assistance from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Colcum Foundation, the McKean County Conservation District embarked on an arduous, yet critical task: monitor stream quality and flow before, during, and after Marcellus Shale natural gas drilling operations. Water quality data loggers will be deployed in streams where drilling operations are occurring and/or planned.

“The need for this type of monitoring is clear,” said Kerry Fetter, Chairman, McKean County Conservation District during a recent on-site tour with the McKean County Conservation District Board of Directors. “We must know how this new and expanding industry is impacting our county’s precious natural resources.”

Fetter continued, “Working cooperatively with state agencies and other organizations, we want to have the ability to provide our community, county and commonwealth with real-time data that will help prioritize restoration projects and protect our high quality watersheds.”

Funding for the Water Quality Monitoring Program was garnered through DEP and the Colcom Foundation whose primary mission is to foster a sustainable environment. The grants honor the humanitarian objectives, the foresight, dignity, and compassion of its benefactor, Cordelia S. May.

As a district with oil and gas exploration, development taking place, the District has been working with the local communities to discuss the value of the oil and gas industry in Pennsylvania.

“We believe that this industry can act responsibly and provide a much needed economic boost to our local communities throughout McKean County,” said Fetter. “We also believe that our district, as well as many other districts throughout the state, should be provided a stable stream of funding to allow the districts to provide increased technical assistance that is now needed with the increase in activity from the Marcellus Shale formation.”

This technical assistance includes employing numerous BMP’s like: riparian buffers, streambank stabilization, fencing projects, water quality monitoring, and stormwater management projects to minimize erosion and runoff.

Achieving a steady stream of funding would also enable districts to provide technical assistance to assist the farming community to develop and implement conservation and nutrient management plans, assist municipalities with floodplain ordinances and stormwater management; and provide environmental education opportunities to promote conservation and protection of natural resources.

