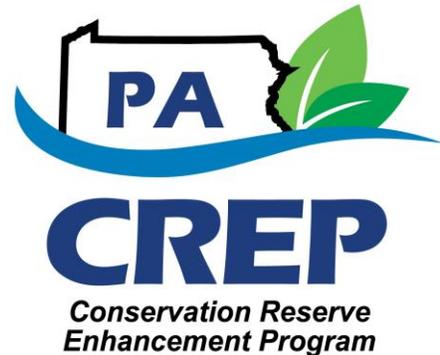### CREP & Stream Buffer Field Event Held in Snyder County

You may have heard about the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, also known as CREP for several years. You may have also heard about an increased push to install stream buffers.

However, do you really know the facts about this conservation program offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)? Do you know how stream buffers help local water quality and the Chesapeake Bay, as well as wildlife and potentially livestock health?

A Stream Buffer & CREP Field Day event was held on July 28, 2016, in which thirty-five (35) visiting and host farmers, landowners, a legislative aide, state government officials, interested persons and conservation staff members participated and havd the above questions answered.

Attendees arrived at the Snyder County Conservation District/Middlecreek Valley Antique Association (SCCD/MVAA) Grounds outside of Selinsgrove in order to travel together to visit three CREP and buffer sites within the eastern part of the county. At each site, partners from the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), Pheasants Forever (PF) and PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry, offered their expertise regarding the establishment and maintenance of successful riparian (forested and non-forested) buffers as well as warm and cool season grasses for wildlife habitat. The guest presenters also relayed information about the control of noxious weeds and invasive plants.

Above: A group stands near an established forested riparian buffer planted along Susquehecka Creek 10 years ago while speakers and visitors discuss establishment and maintenance.

Above: Frank Rohrer, CBF Restoration Specialist (fourth from right, white shirt, wearing blue hat), points toward a grassed riparian buffer along Susquehecka Creek for the group while Ryan Davis, PF Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist (far right, wearing red and white hat) watches on. Below: A recently planted CREP warm season grass planting shown during the tour on an eastern Snyder County farm.

The presenters gave benefits of riparian buffers and streambank fencing such as improved aquatic habitat, reduced nutrient and sediment stream loads, lowered bacteria counts and a decrease in other health and hoof problems in livestock.

Above Left: Joe Kantz, Snyder Co. Commissioner & SCCD Board Director (far right), shows off his father's farm's non-CREP forested riparian buffer (shown above right) along an unnamed tributary of Penns Creek planted in 2009.

After visiting the three sites, the group returned to the SCCD/MVAA Grounds to hear a presentation on CREP enrollment procedures, contract obligations and financial incentives from the USDA-Farm Service Agency (FSA). An official from DCNR announced that the agency will be offering a pilot riparian forest buffer grant program (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/yourwoods/streambuffers/riparianbuffergrant/index.htm). A lunch was offered to those who attended.

CREP pays farmers and other landowners to conserve their land and prevent pollution in our local streams, lakes and rivers. Over 12,500 landowners in Pennsylvania have participated in CREP since the program began in 2000.

For more information about CREP, please contact your nearest USDA-FSA (Farm Service Agency) office, which administers the program. In Snyder and Union Counties, the FSA office is located at 405 West Market Street, Middleburg, PA, 17842. The phone number is 570-837-0007, extension 2.

You can also check out the PA CREP website (www.creppa.org) maintained by the PA Association of Conservation Districts, Inc., (PACD).

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Note #1: Financial and other support for the CREP Outreach Program Office Mini-grant Program is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. through a Growing Greener Watershed Protection grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and with additional support from USDA-NRCS.

Note #2: USDA-NRCS: Helping People Help the Land, An Equal Opportunity Provider & Employer (www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/pa/home/)

Note #3: USDA-FSA: An Equal Opportunity, Provider, Employer and Lender. (www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=pa&area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing/)

Note #4: Pheasants Forever (PF) "is dedicated to the conservation of pheasants, quail and other wildlife through habitat improvements, public awareness, education and land management policies and programs." (From Central PA PF website, www.centralpapheasants.org)

Note #5: Founded in 1967, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) is the largest independent conservation organization dedicated solely to saving the Bay. Motto: Save the Bay. (From CBF Website, www.cbf.org)

Note #6: DCNR's Bureau of Forestry's Mission "is to ensure the long-term health, viability and productivity of the Commonwealth's forests and to conserve native wild plants." *(From the Bureau's Website, www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/index.aspx) More details can be found on the website.*

Note #7: A special thanks goes to those who helped out and gave presentations during this event:

- *Shane Eia, NRCS Civil Engineering Technician, Middleburg Field Office*
- *Frank Rohrer, CBF Restoration Specialist*
- *Ryan David, PF Farm Bill Wildlife Biologist*
- *Kelly DeLucy, FSA County Executive Director, Snyder/Union Counties Office*
- *Gerald Hoy, DCNR Service Forester, Bald Eagle Forest, Laurelton*
- *Joe Kantz, Snyder Co. Commissioner and SCCD Board Director*
- *Lauren Maguire, Snyder County SWAT and SCCD Intern*
- *Matt Keefer, DCNR Assistant State Forester, Office of Community & Private Forest Stewardship*

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