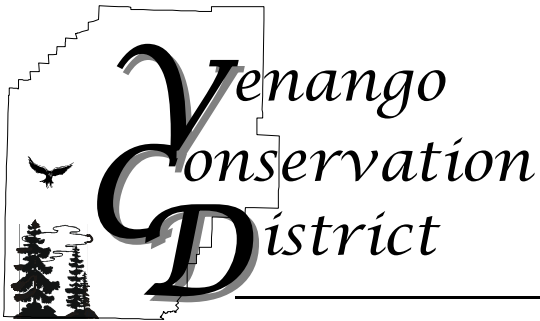




2007 ANNUAL REPORT



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*committed to quality and sustainable
natural resource management*

www.venangocd.org

The Venango Conservation District is a local agency, committed to serving the residents, businesses, and visitors of Venango County by providing educational, technical, and financial assistance for quality and sustainable natural resource management.

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NUTRIENT MANAGEMENT

In the spring of 1992, the Pennsylvania legislature passed and the governor signed the Nutrient Management Act into law. Before this legislation was passed, problems with nutrient pollution were administered under the Clean Streams Law, which dealt only with surface waters. The Nutrient Management Act is the first law in Pennsylvania that requires regulatory oversight of nutrient plans on certain farms. This Law was effective on October 1, 1997. The Act states that concentrated animal operations (CAO's) are required to develop and implement nutrient management plans. Concentrated Animal Operations are defined as operations where the animal density exceeds two animal equivalent units (AEUs) per acre on an annualized basis. An AEU is defined as 1,000 pounds of live weight. Five to ten percent of Pennsylvania's farms are estimated to fall into the CAO category. The other 90% are encouraged to develop and implement nutrient management plans voluntarily.

The Venango Conservation District can provide technical assistance and local program administration. We maintain a list of commercial nutrient management planners available to develop a plan and we can review and approve nutrient management plans.

POLK FIELD DAYS

Through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of General Services, the Venango Conservation District provides land management services for this valuable piece of agricultural property. The district, along with cooperator Sandy Valley Farms, has over the last 10 years transformed the property back into a working farm.

The Venango Conservation District once again held its Polk Field Days event on July 18th 2007. The field portion of the program emphasized demonstration and discussion on planter set-up, usage, and maintenance. This year our feature presenter was Ed Winkle of HyMark Consulting LLC in Martinsville, Ohio. According to Jeff McClellan, Coordinator of the PA No-Till Alliance, "Ed is a walking encyclopedia when it comes to understanding what makes no-till work, with practical ideas for solving tricky problems in all types of conditions." Ed is considered one of the most highly regarded no-till speakers in the U.S. and is the winner of the Outstanding Presentation Award at the 2005 National No-Till Conference.

In order to highlight the field portion of the program, time was set aside for "ask the experts." Agricultural agencies and vendors set up displays and demonstrations geared towards no-till production as well as other agricultural conservation practices.

Over 57 farmers from the tri-state area attended the event.

Financial and other support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



Soil Pit Demonstration at 2007 Polk Field Days

EROSION & SEDIMENT CONTROL PROGRAM

The Venango Conservation District manages Pennsylvania DEP's Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Control Program in Venango County. Sediment can cover macroinvertebrate habitat, clog fish gills, cloud the water and prevent plants from receiving sunlight, or can even carry heavy metals and excess nutrients. Erosion and Sediment Control Best Management Practices (BMPs) prevent sediment pollution from reaching streams.

The district's E&S Technicians, Marc Rickard and Mike Swatzler, review Erosion and Sediment Control Plans. These plans define the use of E&S BMPs to collect runoff and filter sediment before releasing the water from project sites that disturb the surface of the land.

The district also reviews DEP's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. These plans are needed for larger projects with earth disturbance. The permits add more structure to the plan to ensure pollution threats are eliminated. District technicians inspect permitted sites to assure compliance with the approved plans. Technical assistance is also provided to land-owners with site visits to address erosion concerns.

In 2007, 23 Erosion and Sediment Control plans were reviewed by the Venango Conservation District. 5 NPDES permits were issued in 2007 as well.

ORPHAN WELLS PROGRAM

Thanks once again to funding provided by Pennsylvania DEP, the Venango Conservation District was able to help support our cooperator, the Venango PaSEC in its work to find and report orphan wells. An orphan well is an abandoned oil or gas well that has no record of ownership. Orphan wells can be a danger to the environment and to the public. Members of the Venango PaSEC search public lands in Venango County to seek out orphan wells. Once found the group reports their findings to DEP for plugging. The members record the sites with photographs and GPS coordinates. This information is stored in the group's database.



Orphan Well Hunter at Work

In 2007 Orphan Well Hunters began their hunting season in April. They concentrated their search efforts at Oil Creek State Park. They were able to identify over 19 orphan wells, 4 depressions and were able to train one new group member.

Members were also able to meet with representatives from DEP to discuss their work and what is needed for future well hunting efforts. The representatives from DEP were able to commit to supplying maps of past well plugging efforts on Oil Creek State Park so that the Venango PaSEC group could better plan for well hunts in the spring of 2008.

VCD STRATEGIC PLAN

On March 24th 2007 district directors, cooperators and staff came together to update the district's Strategic Plan. Goals and objectives were organized and 12 month action steps were created. The plan includes projects such as stream bank stabilization, abandoned mine drainage, natural resources projects on the park, education, vector management, environmental best management practices and district outreach.

DIRT AND GRAVEL ROADS PROGRAM

The Venango County Dirt and Gravel Roads program, administered by the Venango Conservation District, provides education and funding to municipalities to improve dirt and gravel roads in the county. Trout Unlimited found that sediment from dirt roads can be a major contributor of pollution to streams in Pennsylvania. As a result the Commonwealth allocates four million dollars statewide annually to Conservation Districts for its Dirt and Gravel Roads program.

The Dirt and Gravel Roads program can provide funds to pay for the purchase of surface stabilizing fabric, aggregate, culverts, subsurface drainage, slope protection materials and vegetative stabilization materials. Funds can also be used to rent heavy equipment that may be needed to complete the projects. A double benefit of Dirt and Gravel Roads projects is that not only does area stream health improve, but also, the municipalities end up with a more stabilized roadway requiring less maintenance that eases costs to their budgets.

In 2007, five projects were funded to Venango County municipalities including:

- Cornplanter Township, Christie Hill Road project—\$3,750.00
- Cherrytree Township, Drake Well Road project—\$8,550.00
- Jackson Township, Sleepy Hollow Road project—\$7,000.00
- Mineral Township, Reeds Furnace Road project—\$16,000.00
- City of Oil City, Zemke Lane project—\$3,250.00

The Venango Conservation District, together with the Forest Conservation District, hosted an Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance Training program at the Arlington Hotel in Oil City PA on May 2nd & 3rd 2007. Targeting those responsible for maintenance of unpaved roads, the training provided basic knowledge & tools necessary to maintain roads in a more cost efficient & environmentally sensitive manner. 40 people participated.



DIRT & GRAVEL ROADS PROGRAM AND GROWING GREENER

In 2007 the Venango County Dirt & Gravel Roads program received a boost from Pennsylvania’s Growing Greener funding. This funding was received by the Venango Conservation District through the Growing Greener County Initiative program.

This year the district was able to fund a Dirt and Gravel Roads project in Clinton Township on Summit City Road. This project included 2500 feet of road improvement with drainage improvement and corrected severe road erosion problems. Construction was completed in October this year.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

In 2007 the Venango Conservation District was able to make use of Pennsylvania's Environmental Education Grant program to add a seasonal education staff member. Jessica Perryman began work at the district in May this year. She focused her efforts on public outreach, educational activity design and creation. She was even able to attend professional developmental workshops on fish habitat, sustainable agriculture, and watersheds in an effort to improve and expand upon current programming.

Jessica's educational programming reached children in grades first through sixth from five area schools, two summer camps and one Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, and one day care facility reaching 495 participants. She made use of the district's groundwater simulator, the stream demonstration table, Enviroscope, Macro Study supplies and the Back Pack Adventure program gear. She also spent the summer organizing weekly educational activities such as Nature Writing, Nature Photography, and a Nature Scavenger Hunt.

Jessica focused a great deal on updates to the district's Back Pack Adventure program. She created trail notes better detailing accounts of the information provided in the program's lesson plans. She was able to use her trail notes to create a draft curriculum for the "self-guided" portion of the program. She also researched the possibility of the future purchase of GPS units. These units will be made available to the trail user. Educational stops on the Back Pack Adventure trail will be identified by latitude and longitude.



A YMCA Summer Camp Group participates in a Stream Study demonstration.

The district's Watershed Specialist, Lance Bowes was also busy attending to environmental education for the district. Lance made repairs to the district's stream table demonstration tool to prepare for spring elementary education programs. Several groups visited our home at Two Mile Run County Park including elementary school classrooms, the local YMCA camps and boy scout groups. 347 students participated in all. Lance was even able to provide a Wetlands ID workshop for Clarion University Students in September.

TROUT IN THE CLASSROOM

The Venango Conservation District was very pleased to offer the Trout in the Classroom program to local schools. With cooperation from the Oil Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the district was able to supply equipment and trout eggs to classrooms in an effort to hatch and raise trout for release in the spring of 2008. Students learn about the life cycle of native trout. In 2007, coordinator Lance Bowes, was able to set up trout tanks in five classrooms from four schools in Venango County. Lance will continue to monitor the program throughout the school year. He will then coordinate the release of the young trout into area streams in the spring of 2008.



An example of a Trout in the Classroom Tank

2007 ENVIROTHON EVENT



*2007 Envirothon winners
Southern Brew team from Oil City
High School*

The Venango Conservation District once again hosted the 2007 Envirothon event at our location on Two Mile Run County Park. The Envirothon is an academic event that tests the knowledge of local high school students in the categories of Wildlife, Aquatics, Forestry, Soil Conservation and a current issues topic. This year's current issues topic was Alternative and Renewable Energy. Eight teams from Oil City, Rocky Grove and Cranberry High Schools as well as the Venango Technology Center participated.

Winners of the 2007 Venango Envirothon event were: third place—Black Crown Night Herons from the Venango Technology Center, second place—Flying Sasquatches from Cranberry High School and first place—Southern Brew from Oil City High School.

ANNUAL SEEDLING SALE/BACKYARD CONSERVATION EVENT

The district's annual seedling sale was held again in the spring of 2007. We offered Norway Spruce, Colorado Blue Spruce, Fraser Fir, Douglas Fir, Eastern White Pine, Eastern Hemlock, Red Oak, White Oak, Sugar Maple, Silky Dogwood and Black Chokeberry seedlings. We also offered Pachysandra and Myrtle ground covers as well as wildflower seed mix. We were very pleased with the success of this year's seedling sale. A total of 3,096 seedlings were sold.

The district was also able to hold a Backyard Conservation event held the day of the seedling sale pickup. On April 20th, the Venango Conservation District offered a pickup day for the seedlings and opened the doors of the Nature Lodge at Two Mile Run County park to offer displays and information on Backyard Conservation. The Venango County Planning Commission and Pennsylvania DCNR also offered displays for the event. A Rain Barrel Workshop took place as well.

Thanks to financial and other support for this project is provided by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts through a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Venango Conservation District was able to host the Rain Barrel Workshop during the Backyard Conservation event. The workshop addressed non-point source pollution and how it can be reduced in the backyard with use of a rain barrel. Participants watched a PowerPoint presentation on non-point source pollution and then constructed a rain barrel to take home.

STREAM NAME SIGNAGE PROGRAM

Thanks to funding from the County of Venango, district staff were able to complete the stream name signage project in 2007. This project was designed to create awareness with Venango County residents and visitors of our local waterways. District staff contracted the fabrication of PennDOT approved signs and installed them at county bridges, identifying the waterway in which each bridge crosses.

GROWING GREENER AG BMPs

The Venango Conservation District was awarded a Growing Greener grant to implement Agricultural Best Management Practices (AG BMPs) throughout Venango County. 2007 was our second year into this project. 12 AG BMP projects were planned this year. They included practices such as drip draining, subsurface drainage, roof runoff, spring development, stream bank fencing, heavy use area and animal crossings.

Projects completed included a drip drainage project in Venus PA and a subsurface drainage project in Utica PA. Other completed projects were a subsurface drainage and structure for water control and diversion near Franklin PA and a spring development, pipeline and watering facility near Franklin PA.



Manure Storage Construction

GROWING GREENER LOWER TWO MILE RUN STABILIZATION

This project addressed storm water damage to the stream bank along Lower Two Mile Run near the Oil City Izaak Walton League park. The project called for the stabilization of 250 feet of bank with the addition of riparian buffer to reduce erosion and stop sediment loading to the stream.

Thanks to Growing Greener funding, the district was able to cooperate with the Oil City Izaak Walton League to repair the stream bank. Construction took place in October this year. The bank was reshaped. Pipe, woven matting, and native stone rip rap was installed. Planting of stabilizing shrubs and trees was completed in November. Any follow up plantings will take place in 2008.

GROWING GREENER SUGAR CREEK STABILIZATION PHASES I & II

The Venango Conservation District received Growing Greener funding for stabilization of the banks of Sugar Creek. This project, broken into two phases, began work in 2007. It will stabilize 500 feet of stream bank, will include 100 feet of riparian area and install habitat improvement.

District staff spent the spring of 2007 surveying the stream to establish cross sections. This information was used by the US Fish and Wildlife to create a design for construction. Staff also spent the spring coordinating with cooperators and working through the DEP permitting process.

US Fish and Wildlife created the design and construction is expected to begin in summer of 2008.

GROWING GREENER SCRUBGRASS WELL PLUGGING PHASES I & II

Growing Greener funding was also secured for this two phase project. Scrubgrass Creek and its tributaries suffer great pollution by orphan well discharges. The district and its cooperators will find and plug as many as ten or more wells in phase I and as many as four wells in phase II. Co-operators include the Oil Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Venango County Commissioners, Venango PaSEC, and the Scrubgrass Creek Watershed Association.

In 2007 a contractor was hired to perform the plugging. Permission by land owners to perform the work was secured as well. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2008.

DEP SECTION 319 GRANT—SOUTH SANDY CREEK WATERSHED ASSESSMENT

Through DEP's Section 319 Grant program, the Venango Conservation District was able to secure funding to create a watershed assessment for South Sandy Creek in Venango and Mercer counties. Conservation District staff and volunteers will walk all of the streams along the South Sandy Creek



Acid Mine Drainage leaves a red hue to South Sandy Creek

Watershed in Venango and Mercer Counties. They will identify the sources of non-point source pollution effecting the streams.

A consultant has been hired to assess the area and create an implementation plan. All the data collected, along with historical data, will be used as the basis for creating the restoration/implementation plan for the watershed. The plan will not only address the sources of non-point source pollution but will also contain recommendations for protecting the watershed's positive attributes for future use and planning.

NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AT TWO MILE RUN COUNTY PARK

The offices of the Venango Conservation District are located on Two Mile Run County Park. This provides us with an excellent opportunity to offer natural resource management guidance to park management. It also provides the district with opportunities for environmental education and improvement projects relating to water quality, forestry, agriculture, mineral extraction and wildlife.

PARK MANAGEMENT REORGANIZATION—Two Mile Run County Park endured a reorganization of management in 2007. As a part of the reorganization, the Venango Conservation District was relocated from our location at Beach Road to the "Pritchard House" at 1793 Cherrytree Road, also on the park. Future proposed gas wells and timber management work were put on hold throughout the reorganization process which will continue into 2008.

JUSTUS LAKE DAM—The Venango Conservation District was kept busy through this transitional period for the park in finalizing the Emergency Action Plan for the Dam. In the spring of 2007, comments on the plan were received by the district from DEP and PEMA for minor modifications to the plans and narratives. District staff went to work to update the plans and resubmit them to the organizations. DEP and PEMA approved them in June this year. District staff compiled copies for all emergency agencies involved in the plan and distributed them.

The Dam also underwent a safety inspection as a result of needed repairs from previous inspections. The Dam was again inspected in June of 2007 and no deficiencies were noted on the report.

OTHER WORK ON THE PARK—On a monthly basis, district staff visit the Dam and read the piezometers for a DEP report.

In May staff was able to plant live stakes along a buffer zone at the shore line of the lake.

Staff was also able to perform maintenance on the education trail at the park in August of 2007.

Staff installed housing for Purple Martins on the park. A dawn song recording was played each morning beginning in May. No purple martins set up house in 2007, but efforts will continue in 2008.

WATERSHED PROGRAM

The Venango Conservation District's Watershed Specialist, Lance Bowes, kept very busy in 2007. Several Growing Greener grant awards demanded attention. Lance headed up the Scrubgrass Well Plugging projects, both phases I & II. He also coordinated the Sugar Creek Stabilization projects and the South Sandy Creek Watershed Assessment project. Lance spent the early spring of 2007 gearing up for implementation of these projects. He gathered landowner permission signatures and prepared DEP general permit applications.

By springtime, Lance and new education staff member Jessica Perryman were busy organizing elementary education programs. Lance made repairs to the stream table demonstration station and groups of elementary school students visited the district for a day of environmental education activities.

Lance and Jessica also spent time updating the Back Pack Adventure Program. New Wetlands ID guides were purchased for the program and trail maintenance was performed in the fall. Lance also organized the 2007 Venango Envirothon event in May this year.

Lance organized interested high school classrooms for participation in the Trout in the Classroom project. He made arrangements with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission for supplies of trout eggs for five classrooms. He also obtained funding from the Oil Creek Chapter of Trout Unlimited to set up the program in a new classroom.

Much of Lances time was also dedicated to organizing the 2007 Northwest Regional Watershed Conference held in Venango County in 2007. Lance was able to secure funding from PACD, Headwaters RC&D and Penn Soil RC&D to help put on this event.

The conference was held on June 23rd, 2007 at the Venango Campus of Clarion University. There were 52 attendees from watershed organizations, municipalities, and local and state agencies. The conference ran very smoothly and on schedule meeting our goal of providing information to watershed problems. Joint session presentations were given on Act 167 and storm water management as well as Low Impact Development (LIDs). The second joint session included information on what municipalities and watershed organizations could do together to accomplish common goals. An address was given to the attendees by David Hess the keynote speaker on the importance of working together and how much work has been done so far. The afternoon breakout sessions included information on education/public relations/outreach, stream bank stabilization, watershed assessment, abandoned mine drainage, water monitoring and finance.

Lance also participated in several events in the area in which he was able to provide educational displays and presentations to the public. He participated in the Federation of Sportsman's Banquet which was held March 24th in 2007. He also participated in the Polk Field Day event on April 19th and the district's Agricultural Field Day event on July 18th.



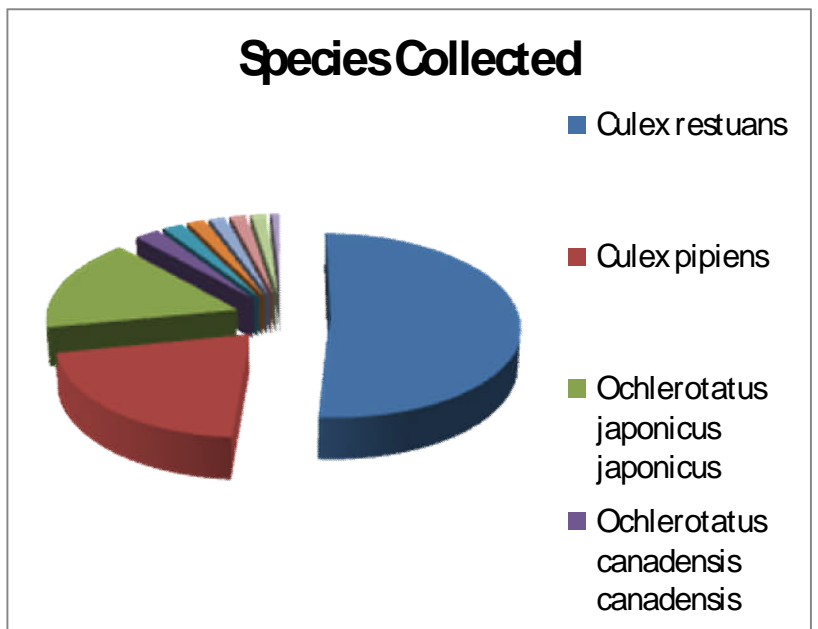
David Hess, Keynote Speaker at the 2007 Northwest Regional Water-

WEST NILE VIRUS PROGRAM—Mike Swatzler, Coordinator

Instead of putting in tables, graphs, and bulleted lists to summarize the year, I'll try to give a brief summation with just words. Our seasonal help came on a little late but he was worth the wait. Jim (the new guy) has brought both enthusiasm and a fresh point of view to the job.

The program was busy with the routine trapping and approximately 30 pesticide applications. It was a very dry season and the trap numbers were different because of it. Usually we catch a pretty homogenous distribution of mosquitoes. If we are catching high numbers in the south, then we're catching high numbers in the north. This year however our high population number traps were always isolated instances. Just one or two traps somewhere in the county with very high numbers, all of the other traps giving us low numbers. We collected a pool of mosquitoes that tested positive for the virus late in the season from Sugarcreek Borough. Subsequent trapping showed no further positives and all of the numbers were so low we couldn't even manage a treatment in relation to the positive. Several evenings of very cool weather really depressed the trap numbers about the same time. We have not had any positive equine, avian or human cases in the county this year.

Ok, just one chart to illustrate a point. You may not be aware of the fact that Pennsylvania has at least 60 species of mosquito routinely collected inside its borders. The local area has a narrower range of about 22 species. The point that I'm getting around to is that according to the chart, more than half of the mosquitoes collected, this year and most previous years, were *Culex restuans*. The interesting thing about *C. restuans* is that they don't bite people. They do vector the disease, in that they spread the disease from bird to bird, so we are concerned about them, but not as much as the next guys on the list, *Culex pipiens*. *Culex pipiens* need some very organic water to thrive properly, so we generally just find them around Wastewater treatment plants. Also known as the "Northern house mosquito" *pipiens* do bite people so we really pay attention to their numbers. I won't bore you with all of the other species names because as you can see they make up a pretty small piece of the total pie.



Just a few notes on this coming season. Look for an updated stormwater catch basin program and maybe the purchase of a new sprayer enabling more precision delivery of any pesticides we may have to apply.



PENNSYLVANIA DCMR, BUREAU OF FORESTRY

Ty Ryen, Service Forester

The Pennsylvania DCMR Bureau of Forestry promotes healthy and sustainable forestry on both state and private forestlands. The Bureau offers a wide assortment of forestry information and technical assistance to increase the awareness and knowledge of woodland owners. In cooperation with the Conservation District and other natural resource organizations and groups, the Bureau initiates and conducts programs and activities, which encourage sound forestland management and wise land use policies. Furthermore, the Bureau conducts environmental education programs with schools, youth organizations, community groups, and service clubs to promote the sustainable forest stewardship ethic throughout Pennsylvania.

The Franklin Satellite Office is part of the Cornplanter Forest District, which includes the counties of Crawford, Erie, Forest, Venango, and Warren. Ty Ryen serves as the Service Forester for both Forest and Venango Counties. Two of the programs that are currently active in the county are the Forest Stewardship Program and the Tree Farm Program. Both of these programs provide private forest landowners with written and technical advice on how best to manage their woods in a sustainable, healthy manner. Some of the activities recommended to landowners include: wild grapevine control, tree planting, invasive species control, timber stand improvement, and wildlife habitat improvement. Currently, there are a total of 33 active Tree Farms that encompass over 7400 acres in Venango County. In 2007, there were a total of 71 Stewardship Forests in Venango County that cover over 8,880 acres.

In addition to working with private forest landowners, the Bureau of Forestry is committed to promoting the forest stewardship ethic to the general public. In Venango County this is accomplished through information and education programs, such as, school programs and displays, Arbor Day programs, landowner workshops, scout programs, and the distribution of sound forest management information. Education efforts focus on increasing public awareness of issues and factors affecting Pennsylvania's forests. Conservation Education works to connect people to the land by providing them with the tools they need to make informed actions related to sustaining natural and cultural resources.



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