



Agriculture Newsletter Summer 2021



History of Conservation Districts



This year as we celebrate our 75th Anniversary, we reflect on the history of why and how Conservation Districts were formed, and the importance of conserving our natural resources.

The Dust Bowl

During the early 1930's a perfect storm evolved into what is known as the Dust Bowl following economic and ecological calamities.

In the 1910s through the 1920s, the southern Great Plains was profitable and enticing for farmers; federal policies provided incentives to move west, and the rich soil of the deep rooted grasslands provided the basis to grow an abundance of wheat that was in high demand during World War 1. However, after the war, wheat prices dropped significantly, and the Great Depression set in. Farmers cultivated even more land to make ends meet.

The extensive plowing of the great plains soil, the over-grazing of the grasslands, and the severe drought that lingered at the time deteriorated and eroded the soil to such an extent that it created large dust clouds as the wind swept it away. The dust storms swept across the nation, reaching as far as the East Coast. Over 100 million acres of farmland was impacted; farms and homes were left abandoned, leaving families homeless. Hundreds of lives were lost to dust pneumonia.

Black Sunday, April 14, 1935, was a turning point for the country as it saw the worst dust storm of its time. The storm evoked fear that it was the Armageddon as the dust clouds were so thick that it blackened the sky as it blocked out the sun. The pictures on the following page give you a glimpse of what it was like during the time.

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## The History of Conservation Districts : Pictures of the Dust Bowl Era



*Center photo:* A dust storm approaches fields and farm houses in Perryton, Texas, on Black Sunday, April 14, 1935. Photo credit: The Perry Studio, Perryton, Texas. Source: Deaf Smith County Museum, Hereford, Texas/ University of North Texas.

*On right:* A dust storm approaches a farm on Black Sunday, April 14, 1935, in Boise City, Oklahoma. Source: Norma Gene Young Collection.



*Above:* In Lakin, Kansas, three children prepare to leave for school wearing goggles and homemade dust masks to protect them from the dust in 1935. Source: Green Family Collection.

*On right:* A dust storm blows over the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC, March, 1935. Source: Carson County Square House Museum, Panhandle, Texas.



**All photos and captions are from the Public Broadcasting Service Website:**

**<https://wpsu.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/dust-storms-ken-burns-the-dust-bowl/ken-burns-the-dust-bowl/>**



## The History of Conservation Districts *continued*

Following Black Sunday, Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Soil Conservation Act on April 27, 1935 “To provide for the protection of land resources against soil erosion...” and led to the formation of The Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resources Conservation Service) across the nation. In 1937, the first County Conservation District was established in North Carolina by soil scientist Hugh Hammond Bennett to connect federal resources with local farmers.

The effects of the Dust Bowl subsided by the 1940s as the drought ended, over-cultivated land was abandoned, and farmers started adopting conservation practices to keep the soil intact.

The PA Conservation District Law was passed in 1945, allowing for the establishment of conservation districts in Pennsylvania to help farmers protect natural resources on a local level, and today there is a conservation district in every PA county except one.

The Jefferson County Conservation District was created on March 1, 1946 by the County Commissioners following the interest of local farmers in protecting their land. Jefferson County Conservation District’s first directors were appointed at the July 5, 1946 Commissioner’s Meeting, including Donald T. Smith, Silas A. Weaver, Merton E. Shields, Irvin J. Allhouse, and Arthur I. Eberhart. The District was organized on September 13, 1946.

The District is governed by a board of directors consisting of a representative of Jefferson County Government, 3 farmer members, and 3 public members. Associate directors assist the board in its mission. Individuals are recommended for board membership by nominating organizations having interests in natural resources conservation. County Commissioners appoint the directors who, in turn, appoint associate directors. All serve on a voluntary basis.

The District continues to coordinate local, state, and federal resources to provide technical assistance to individuals, volunteer organizations, and local governments to protect soil and water quality.

### *Resources:*

<https://www.history.com/topics/great-depression/dust-bowl>

The Dust Bowl: A Film By Kevin Burns

<https://www.jeffersonconservation.com/>



## Manure Management Webinar

Be sure to watch this short, free, recorded webinar on manure management if you haven’t already. The webinar provides an overview of the manure management regulations and shows you how to complete a manure management plan step-by-step. We have a limited supply of free soil test kits to those who submit responses to the 3 question survey at the end of the webinar by August 31, 2021 or contact us to get a manure management plan completed (note: we can also take the soil samples for you as a free service). To access the webinar, visit our facebook page or website at [www.jeffersonconservation.com](http://www.jeffersonconservation.com).



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## Ag Progress Days



## Jefferson County Fair

**July 18 - 24, 2021**

The daily pass is \$9.00 per person and includes the following: Parking, Gate Admission, Carnival Rides, and all Grandstand Events.

Gates open Mon-Fri at 2pm, Sat at 11am.  
Carnival Rides open Mon-Fri at 5pm; Sat at 1pm.

Family Day is held on Wednesday, July 21. On this day the admission is only \$5.00.

Food Vendors, The Bar-C-Ranch Petting Zoo, Scott's World of Magic Show, and Livestock & Horse Shows scheduled daily Mon-Sat.

Visit <https://jeffcofair.com> for more details.

Be sure to stop by the Conservation District's booth while you are there!

## Sykesville Ag & Youth Fair

**August 9 - 14, 2021**

Visit <https://sykesvillefair.org> for more details as they become available.



**August 10 - 12, 2021**

Tuesday (10th) 9:00am—5:00pm

Wednesday (11th) 9:00am—7:00pm

Thursday (12th) 9:00am-4:00pm

*At the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center, 2710 West Pine Grove Rd, Pennsylvania Furnace, PA. 9mi. SW of Penn State.*

*Admission & Parking are free. Visit <https://aqsci.psu.edu/apd> for more information.*

### **Ag Progress Days features may include:**

80+ acres for Crops and Machinery Demonstrations

55 acres for Indoor and Outdoor Exhibits

50+ Educational Presentations to Ask the Experts and On-Demand Video Resources

35 Active Demonstrations around the grounds on topics such as Healthy Lifestyle, Cooking, Ag Safety & Health, Farm & Business, Animals & Livestock, Equine, Agronomic Crops & Soils, and Forest & Wildlife

20 Equipment Demonstrations for Vegetable Gardening and Field Machinery

20 Meetings for Agricultural Associations and Governmental Agencies

15 Youth and 4H activities such as Corn Maze, Pollinators, Rabbits, Poultry, Wildlife, Plants, Insects, Story-times and Family Fun

10 Tours to highlight current research activities at the Research Center

6 Local Non-Profit Food Vendors

2 Locations for Antiques in the Pasto Agricultural Museum and the Tractor Display

2 Special Events - Penn State Ag Alumni Ice Cream Social and College of Ag, Dean's Luncheon by Invitation Only