

Bucks County Conservation District 2023 Annual Report

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Cover photo: Lake Towhee in the summer of 2023, during the 14th Annual Paddle with a purpose.

Bucks County Conservation District 2023 Board of Directors

David Wolfinger, Chairman Dwight L. Ely, Vice Chairman John Frederick, Secretary Jeffrey Vey, Treasurer Robert J. Harvie, Jr., Commissioner Director Joel Roney, Farmer Director Kellie McGowan, Esq. Public Director

Associate Directors: Brett Ely, PFK Mark III Broc Sandelin, Delaware Valley University Evan Stone, Bucks County Planning Commission Lisa Braud, Hollow House Farms Peter Stampfl, Stampfl Associates Robert Loughery, Nehemiah Development Company, Inc.

The BCCD is a legal subdivision of state government and is administered by a Board of Directors composed of four farmer members, two public members, and one county commissioner member, all of whom serve without pay. The Directors work with all individuals, organizations, and agencies interested in soil and water conservation, land use planning, watershed protection, and flood prevention in the broadest sense to secure their assistance and support in planning and carrying out District programs.

2023 Annual Report – Manager's Message

Welcome to the Bucks County Conservation District Annual Report for 2023. I hope that you enjoy reviewing this summary of our programs and projects from the past year.

I would like to highlight that we have been lucky to appoint additional Directors to the BCCD Board in 2023. Lisa Braud, and Brett Ely were newly appointed as Associate Directors, and Joel Roney was appointed to a four-year term as a Director. Lisa is co-owner of Hollow House Farms in Furlong. Joel became a member of the Trauger family. Which means that he manages their Kintnersville landmark farm along with his family. And Brett is an engineer for PKF Mark III. Brett is especially well versed in erosion and sedimentation control, as well as being from a Bucks County farming family. Each has served BCCD well in their first year. We look forward to benefiting from their continued guidance.

The BCCD staff includes some new faces for 2023. Carly Seldow has joined BCCD in the position of Agricultural Conservation Technician. Erik Gunstensen is our new NPDES Permit Coordinator. Kevin Mault joins the newly minted Environmental Protection Specialists (formerly the Erosion & Sedimentation Control Technicians), and Logan Freed is helping the BCCD develop a stronger grants program along with providing field assistance across the board.

Paired with welcoming many new faces in 2023, we also said a fond farewell to a long term, beloved member of the staff, Celeste Rene' Moyer. Rene has moved on to retirement and is enjoying the good life with her husband Dean and family. A more deserving person simply does not exist. We wish her all the joy in the world and miss her each day.

Sincerely, Gretchen Schatschneider District Manager



Pictured above is Gretchen Schatschneider with Commissioner Harvie receiving an award on behalf of the Conservation District, for Conservation District Week.

2023 BCCD Staff

Gretchen Schatschneider, District Manager Richard Krasselt, Environmental Protection Specialist II René Moyer, Chapter 102/NPDES Administrator René retired October 2023 after a wonderful career here, she is greatly missed. Susan Sekot, Chapter 102/NPDES Administrator Erik Gunstensen, Chapter 102/NPDES Permit Coordinator Naomi Fisher, Asst. Chapter 102/NPDES Administrator Naomi left BCCD in 2023 to pursue other opportunities. We thank her for her time with BCCD and wish her the best! Morgan Schuster, DGLVR Program Administrator Ryan Herstine, Agricultural Conservation Technician Carly Seldow, Agricultural Conservation Technician Jason Maurer, Environmental Protection Specialist and Education Specialist Tori Jones Long, Environmental Protection Specialist Chris Cook, Environmental Protection Specialist Amanda Sandor, Environmental Protection Specialist Karen Ogden, Watershed Specialist Marilyn Laurelli, Receptionist Pictured below is BCCD staff and board members. Please Logan Freed, BCCD Intern note, not all BCCD staff and board members are in this photo.



2023 Financial Statement

Revenue:	
Fees for Services	\$ 959,450
Grants	2,423,859
Contributions	1,400
Interest	69,699
Miscellaneous	1,031
Total Revenue	\$ 3,455,438
Expenses:	
Building Maintenance	\$ 27,577
Capital Purchases	99,925
Computer	26,623
Dues and Subscriptions	5,758
Education Projects	2,121
Grants and Programs	1,134,649
Insurance	47,970
Interest Expense - New Bldg	3,887
Meetings and Seminars	3,142
Miscellaneous	5,908
Office Supplies	9,057
Payroll and Benefits	788,347
Payroll Taxes	53,861
Postage	9,021
Professional Fees	21,619
Publicity and Promotion	2,122
Taxes - Other	-
Travel	925
Utilities	26,794
Vehicles	18,927
Total Expenses	\$ 2,288,234
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$ 1,167,204

Unaudited

Chapter 102/NPDES Program

Below is a summary table of BCCD's activities administering the Chapter 102/NPDES Program in 2022. It was a busy year for BCCD, with almost 1000 plan reviews and more than 1300 general inspections conducted.

Program Activity	Activity Tallies
Outreach events	7
Event participants	51
Technical assistance contacts	8707
News releases	35
Technical plan reviews	962
Total project acres submitted	13,474
Total disturbed acres submitted	2,179
General NPDES permits issued	93
Notices of Termination acknowledged	36
Complaints received and inspected	76
New project sites inspected	284
Total inspections conducted	1,368

Chapter 102—Erosion and Sediment Control

In 2023, BCCD technicians continued enforcing PA Code Title 25, Chapter 102 regulations relating to erosion and sediment pollution control and administering Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection programs in that field.

As summarized on the previous page, BCCD staff review new permit applications and conduct site inspections to ensure projects are in compliance and not negatively impacting local resources. These efforts protect local water resources for the benefit of all.

2023 was as always a challenging year in the field of erosion and sediment control. A couple selected photographs below illustrate the issues BCCD's staff worked hard to resolve.



At left, an extensive area of trees and vegetation was cleared and a drainage pipe was installed. Without proper planning or site controls, this type of activity could discharge sediment pollution to the nearest waterway. In this situation, the creek was only a few feet beyond the rear of this photo. BCCD worked with the responsible party to implement appropriate site management controls to protect the creek.

The photo at right shows a discharge pipe into a sediment control basin. Though basins are designed to handle sediment discharge from standard rainfalls, the sediment delta deposition at the discharge of this pipe indicates that there are site issues "upstream." BCCD worked with the site developer to address conditions so that excessive amounts of sediment were not discharged into the basin and ultimately off site.



Dirt, Gravel & Low Volume Roads Program 2022-2023

Cleaner Streams, Better Roads

Pennsylvania's Dirt Gravel and Low Volume Roads (DGLVR) Program provides grant funding to local road-owning entities for road and environmental improvements on unpaved and low-volume paved roads. This year, Bucks County received:

- \$100,000.00 for Dirt & Gravel roads
- \$196,804.00 for Low Volume roads

Dirt & Gravel Road Projects:

Tankhannen Road, Tinicum Township Contract amount \$146,065.40

Tankhannen Road was an excellent dirt & gravel project that was both contracted and completed in 2023. In conjunction with the Dirt & Gravel/Low Volume Road program at Penn State University, this couple mile long road was completely transformed. Numerous new cross pipes were added, with several existing being replaced. The road was also completely regraded so that the

water drainage flowed the correct way (inverted or normal crown) at certain areas to help the water flow away from the road surface. New inlets and outlets were constructed on all pipes and a completely new surface of DSA (driving surface aggregate) was installed along the entire length of the road. Overall, the impact is huge and the end result is very successful – especially being in (and directly out letting to) an exceptional value watershed!



Pictured is Tinicum Township Roadmaster, Doug Skelton and Penn State DGLVR field technician, Shaun McAdams performing an initial assessment of

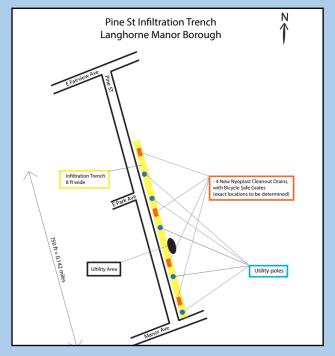
Springhouse Lane (\$9,975.00) & Martins Lane (\$9,855.00) Springfield Township:

Both of these Dirt & Gravel proposed projects are for maintenance of past D&G projects with Bucks County, and very similar. They propose new cross pipes, inlets and outlets, and drainage/ditch work to improve a few problem areas along the roads. Overall, these dirt & gravel roads hold up very nicly and have low environmental impact, but they need some easy work every now and then to meet the goal of cleaner streams and better roads.

Low Volume Road Projects:

Pine Street, Langhorne Manor Borough Contract amount \$185,000

This is the first project that BCCD and Langhorne Manor Borough have worked on together. The proposed construction will add storm sewer and other stormwater improvements along Pine Street where there is a wide spread drainage and flooding issue. A large pond is directly adjacent to this road and the storm sewer runs into Mill Creek. This project is being completed in coordination with other grant sources and is projected to be finished by Summer 2024.



Pictured is Pine Street Construction Plan

Oaklynn Drive, Milford Township Contract amount \$15,241.01

The Oaklynn Drive project is a fairly simple construction project with a large environmental benefit. In the fall of 2023, Milford Townships roadcrew completed this project by installing 48 feet of trench drain at the opening of Oaklynn Drive. They also constructed a new inlet and outlet to the drain with new erosion control measures to prevent the ditches and road from washing away. This roadway is only a couple hundred feet from Unami Creek, which is a high quality waterway in Bucks County.

Three Mile Run Rd, East Rockhill Township Contract amount \$20,614.60

Three Mile Run Road is a popular location for many adventure seekers in Bucks County because it runs directly next to Lake Nockamixon. In conjunction with DCNR, East Rockhill Township has signed a contract to fix major drainage issues right next to the Lake. The sharp dead end corner of Three Mile run Rd has a steep hill, many old and failing pipes and lots and lots of drainage.

Please see attached pictures for two of the main problem areas. This LVR project will install new cross pipes, drop boxes, inlets and outlets, a new wide and shallow swale leading to the lake, and overall new stabilization in all the ditches and outflow areas. This project is something that the Township and DCNR have been planning for years and has a great environmental benefit. Construction is planned to start in Spring of 2024.



Spring Hill Road, Durham Township Contract amount \$13,077.75

Spring Hill Road is a popular intersection road with Route 611 in Durham Township with a large existing (but failing) cross pipe. This project proposed to replace existing cross pipes and add new head walls and end walls. It also drains right into a farmer's field – so ditch work and stabilization will also take place. This construction is proposed to be completed in Spring 2024.

Bucks County Conservation District is always looking for more applicants and eligible projects within the County to work towards the DGLVR program's goal of better roads and cleaner streams. To be eligible for DGLVR program funding, a representative from the local entity applying must attend an environmentally sensitive management training (ESM) once every five years. For more information on the DGLVR program, possible sites to be funded in the future, or the required ESM training, please contact Bucks County Conservation District's Dirt & Gravel/ Low Volume Road Administrator Morgan Schuster at mschuster@bucksccd.org.

Agricultural Conservation

The Bucks County Conservation District's (BCCD's) agricultural program has had another busy year! Many manure management plans, conservation plans, designs, and construction checks for addressing various manure and erosion resource concerns on agricultural lands were completed over the past year! These many projects have assisted our farmers improve sustainability on their operations, while also helping to protect our county's many natural resources.



Pictured: Carly Seldow and Ryan Herstine presenting at the PA Bucks County Farm Bureau.

Act 38 Nutrient Management:

BCCD administers Pennsylvania's Act 38 Nutrient Management program. Farms with an annualized animal density of 2,000lbs per acre or more are classified as Concentrated Animal Operations (CAOs) and are required to have a current nutrient management plan. Bucks County has 8 CAOs and 2 VAOs (Volunteer animal operations); most are equine farms.

Outreach/Education:

BCCD's Agricultural Conservation Technicians (ACTs) have attended several trainings and workshops over the last year to better serve the farmers of Bucks County. In summer they attended a PA Bucks County Farm Bureau dinner to educate farmers on cost saving programs and grants to apply for with the help of the conservation district. They spent time with our Watershed Specialist speaking to Boy Scouts about soil erosion and water quality, the local Bucks County Grange Fair to chat with the community, they helped community members of a local watershed group survey a wetland spot for an equipment crossing at the Blooming Glen Mennonite church, and Ryan attended a joint training with Montgomery County to discuss Manure Management Plans.

The ACTs had many opportunities to engage with other conservation professionals. They attended DEP Summer Round Tables and attended multiple Farm Forward events to help support local agriculture and conservation efforts.

Agricultural Programs:

BCCD continued its efforts in conservation planning and implementation. BCCD implemented a grant from DEP's Growing Greener program for BMP implementation on two CAO equine farms. This grant was fully implemented by the end of 2023.



BCCD was granted funding for a Section 319 grant, administered by the US EPA, to implement best management practices relating to manure management on a local dairy farm. With the rapidly decreasing number of dairy farms left in Bucks County, it is important to the BCCD to support & assist our remaining dairy farmers through our conservation efforts. This grant will begin implementation in summer or fall of 2024.

In addition, BCCD's ACT continued its partnership with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist farmers with technical and financial assistance to plan, design, and implement BMPs on their farms through their programs. Currently, BCCD is assisting about 20 different farms who are voluntarily seeking assistance on planning and implementing BMPs, both structural (a few examples include grass waterways, terraces, animal heavy use area protection, and manure storages) or non-structural (no-till, cover crops, prescribed grazing, and nutrient management).



Pictured Above: Herstine Farm—ACAP Funding: Tile drains, gravel additions, downspouts on the barn.

Pictured Below: Frank's Stables—A Growing Greener Grant: Pictured Multiple Tile Drains, Diversions, and Heavy Use Areas for horses.







Agricultural Programs Continued:

Some other programs the BCCD has assisted farmers with is the PA REAP tax credit program, which offers farmers tax credits to get agricultural plans updated, best management practices implemented, and conservation equipment (such as no-till planters & precision nutrient application equipment) purchased. BCCD has also assisted farmers with the Agri-Link program, which provides farmers with low interest loans to implement practices contained in one of their agricultural plans as well.

This year BCCD was also allocated to invest \$2.3 million in agricultural conservation in the county through the brand-new Agricultural Conservation Assistance Program (ACAP). This program provides the funding and resources necessary to the agricultural community, so we as a District can further our mission in protecting the county's natural resources. This

program is expected to make it much more affordable for farmers to be able to implement conservation on their farms. All money must be allocated by a deadline of December 31st 2024, and all money for projects must be distributed to project recipients by a deadline of December 31st 2026. We currently have 9 contracts and we've reimbursed \$393,098.93 to farmers for completed projects.





Pictured above is an ACAP finished project. A Narrow Way, with a grassed waterway and tile drains.

BCCD Watershed Programs

Lake Luxembourg: Continuation and completion of construction activities surround the restoration of the Lake Luxembourg Conservation Pool. Over 35,000 emergent wetland plant plugs were installed and protected with goose fencing. BCCD staff jumped in to help push carp out of the fenced areas to improve establishment success.

Pictured to the right, are the plugs that were planted in the Conservation Pool. Along with BCCD Staff: Amanda Sandor, Gretchen Schatschnieder, Logan Freed, and Carly Seldow corralling carp.





Monitoring: With assistance from Penn State Master Watershed Stewards, BCCD successfully deployed and operated 3 continuous monitoring devices in Core Creek. The data will help determine if water quality goals for the watershed have been met. BCCD continued quarterly data collection at the inflow and outflow of a newly naturalized retention basin at a Lower

Southampton industrial complex.

Pictured to the right BCCD Staff Chris Cook and Logan Freed, along with volunteers collecting data at two locations, one in Lower Southampton and the other in Core Creek.





Harmful Algal Blooms (HABs):

2023 was BCCD's third year of monitoring harmful algal blooms (HABs). Each year, Pennsylvania has increased reports of HABS. To respond and monitor the increase of HABs, Pennsylvania State Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) established a HABs standard operating procedure in the summer of 2021. In the 2023 summer season, BCCD intern Logan Freed, along with Watershed Specialist Karen Odgen, and Environmental Protection Specialist Chris Cook partnered with DEP and the County Health Department to monitor using a similar protocol to DEP's standard operating procedure.



Above is an example of a potential HABs. This location at Lake Towhee was sampled by BCCD in June 23.

Below shows Logan Freed holding a handheld monitor to record water data.



BCCD staff monitored three of the previous years four lakes; Lake Galena, Lake Towhee, and Lake Luxembourg. These lakes were sampled twice a month, and the samples were sent to a DEP laboratory in Harrisburg for analysis. During these monitoring sessions, both physical and observational samples were taken. Composite transect water samples were collected, photos were documented, and observations were noted. Additionally, a handheld water monitor was used to record quantitative data regarding pH, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and specific conductivity.

Over the course of the summer, potential HABs were found in Lakes Galena, Towhee, and Luxembourg. While all three lakes are not permitted for swimming, they are secondary contact lakes where the public can boat and fish. Each location was posted with advisory signs and warnings to educate the public on the water conditions. BCCD also fielded calls from concerned citizens and provided guidance.

Educational Outreach and Events

Stormwater Management Workshop:

A workshop was hosted in lower Bucks County, with a similar target of educating local business owners, public works, and municipal officials on basin function and maintenance of a naturalized basin. This mini-workshop was following up on a Growing Greener Grant that funded the implementation of the naturalization of a stormwater basin. This workshop was not funded by PACD, but was in partnership of the Friends of Poquessing Watershed, Penn State Master Watershed Stewards, Pennsylvania Environmental Council.



Pollinator Garden:

In fall of 2023 BCCD partnered with the Friends of the Poquessing Watershed to design and install a pollinator garden at School Lane Charter School in Bensalem. In December, students began a natural method to prepare the site by layering cardboard, leaf mulch and arborist chips (pictured). The garden will be installed with features to support outdoor environmental education.

Keystone Ten Million Trees:

Working with the Penn State Master Watershed Stewards, BCCD brought in and distributed nearly 9,000 native trees for 2023 planting projects across the county. Volunteers planted trees in municipal open space, county parks, and backyard riparian buffers. The conservation community is grateful for the grant support of the Keystone Ten Million Trees partnership, a program of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

> Pictured to the right are volunteers planting Keystone Ten Million Trees.



Paddle with a Purpose:

The 14th annual event was held in July, drawing forty volunteers over the two day event. The changes in the lake are clear as participants paddled more and pulled less. Invasive water chestnut (*Trapa natans*), after over a decade of mechanical and chemical treatment, is being pushed to the shallowest, least accessible areas.

This year, there was a total of 50 volunteers over 2 days, a combined 272 volunteer and staff hours worked, and 103 bags of Water Chestnut pulled. It was a successful year, and we look forward to continuing our invasive removal in 2024.



Pictured above: BCCD Staff and volunteers discussing and collecting Invasive Water Chestnut. The aerial map shows a 3 year difference of invasive Water Chestnut growing in Lake Towhee.

PACD Mini-Grant Educational Workshops

Non-Point Source Pollution Mitigation through Stormwater Management; for Municipal Staff/Public Works & Residential Property Owners in Urbanized Communities.

In March of 2023 Environmental Protection Specialist Chris Cook was awarded grant funding on behalf of the Bucks County Conservation District (BCCD) through a Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, Inc. (PACD) education mini-grant program for county conservation districts. In collaboration with the Watershed Specialist Karen Ogden, the pair set a goal to specifically utilize the funds awarded on (1) Educate municipal staff to identify stormwater/ water quality issues that could be corrected with green stormwater infrastructure (GSI) and best management practices (BMPs) to support



Chris Cook of BCCD, is shown in photo discussing the use of downspout interceptors as an effective stormwater management practice for residential property owners in urbanized areas.

Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) NPDES Permits AND (2) Educate residents on cost-efficient, do-it-yourself (DIY) stormwater management BMPs, good housekeeping practices, and the negative impacts of increased impervious coverage in a landscape.



This photo displays BCCD staff working in partnership with Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards and Pennsylvania Environmental Council, to finalize rain garden plantings. This rain garden was constructed at Bensalem Township Public Works Building, in support of the educational workshop targeting municipal officials.

To achieve this goal, BCCD hosted two separate workshops in October of 2023, reaching 40+ participants. Both workshops were held in the more populus and urbanized southern third of Bucks County. Each targeted audiences of either municipal representatives or residents. The workshop for municipal representatives, and included presentations on the utility and efficiency of GSI that local engineers and public works teams could implement in their own municipalities. Meanwhile the



Pictured above is Karen Ogden and Logan Freed introducing stormwater management practices to the municipal officers of lower Bucks County, Bensalem PA.

workshop targeting residents focused on benefits and DIY options regarding SLOW –SOAK –STORE stormwater best management practices.

Through completing this education and outreach mini-grant project, these workshops represented a joint effort by Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Penn State Extension Master Watershed Stewards, Friends of Poquessing Watershed, Bensalem Township, Lower Southampton Township, and BCCD.



Pictured above is Karen Ogden and Logan Freed introducing stormwater management practices to the residents of lower Bucks County, Bensalem PA.

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



2023 Envirothon Competition

The annual Envirothon event continued in 2023, with Delaware Valley University again providing a fantastic venue for the competition.

Students from Bucks County High Schools competed in the fields of forestry, aquatic ecology, wildlife, and soils and land use. The special Current Issue in 2023 was "Adapting to a Changing Climate". Congratulations to the winning team from Central Bucks South who went on to place an impressive 23rd in the state competition with schools from all across Pennsylvania!





Pictured is Erik Gunstensen and Amanda Sandor of BCCD, along with several volunteers from the PA Fish and Boat Commission, help administer the Aquatic Ecology section of the competition.

Thanks again to PA Envirothon for their effort in putting together the Envirothon event. BCCD thanks all our volunteers, agency partners, and partners at Delaware Valley University for their participation in an event focusing on environmental science topics.

<u>Social Media Highlights</u>

What is our social media presence?

In an effort to provide the Bucks County community with the latest environmental information related the area, the BCCD strives to maintain an active social media presence on Facebook, Instagram, and Youtube. Content posted on these platforms include regionally specific environmental current events, volunteer opportunities with BCCD and our partner agencies, educational material, and more. On average BCCD shares around 10 or more posts a week on Facebook, Instagram or both. In 2023, no new Youtube videos were posted. With recent staff onboarding and a growing interest in social media among staff members, it is anticipated that the current posting frequency will increase across all platforms. Visit us on Instagram and Facebook @bucksced, and YouTube @buckscountyconservationdis8859.

Who is our Social Media Manager?

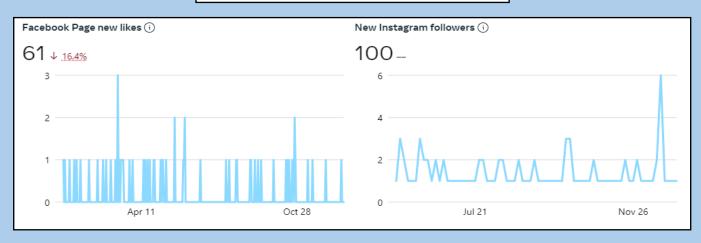
With a tight-knit office dynamic at BCCD, many staff member perform a variety of duties. Since 2020, Environmental Protection Specialist Chris Cook has been a leader in maintaining BCCD's consistent social media presence while balancing their main assignments based in erosion and sediment control regulation throughout portions of Bucks County. Often complementing this effort, support from Karen Ogden, Logan Freed, and many other BCCD staff continue to keep BCCD's social media presence growing!

How successful are we on social media?

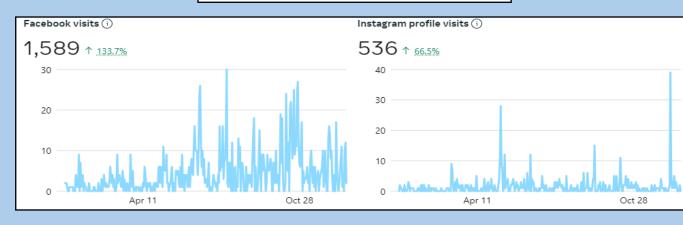
The graphs on the following page highlight the percent average increase or decrease in likes/follows (the amount of engagement the post/page receives), page/ profile visit (the amount of individuals that navigate through the page), and reach (the amount of people that see a post), for the Bucks County Conservation Districts Facebook and Instagram pages in 2023. Overall increases in these metrics are noted for most categories. However, with the known population size of Bucks County residents (target audience), BCCD's ambition to grow a larger social media presence is strong.

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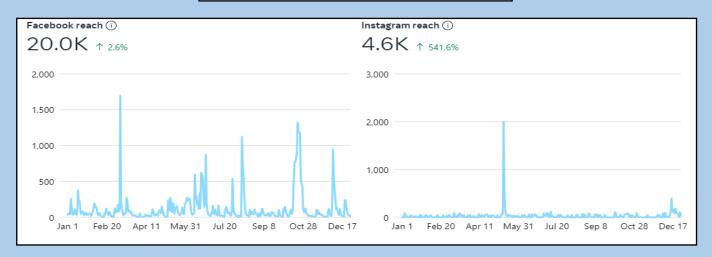
New Likes and Follows



Page and Profile Visits

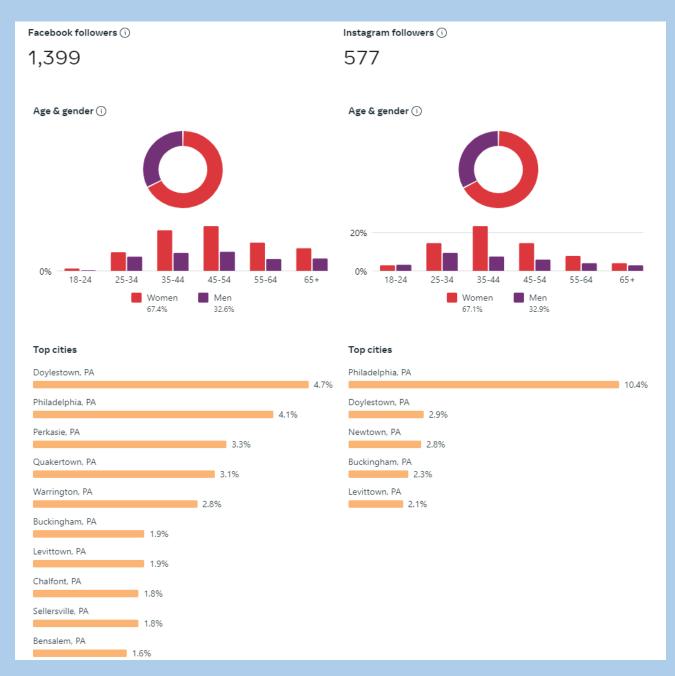


Reach



Who are we reaching?

The graphs below display characteristics of the BCCD's Facebook and Instagram audiences. These graphs suggest that there are a greater amount of women following both pages then men, and that there is a younger audience following the BCCD Instagram page compared to the Facebook page. In comparison to the previous top cities in 2022, Bensalem has been now added to list of the top cities of our audience! This is thought to be explained by the two educational workshops hosted by BCCD in Bensalem Township which required considerable amounts of promotional efforts to ensure the event attendees were part of the lower Bucks County target audience.



Winter Charity Drive



Each year during the holiday season, BCCD Staff coordinates a charitable donation to spread kindness within our community. In 2023, staff donated towards an animal rescue—Last Chance Ranch.



Pictured are some of the donations received along with a friendly office dog, Jax. In addition, are Amanda Sandor and Logan Freed holding a recipient of the donations who has since been adopted.

Our Mission

TO PROVIDE FOR THE WISE USE, MANAGEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTY'S NATURAL RESOURCES

Bucks County Conservation District 1456 Ferry Road, Suite 704 Doylestown, PA 18901-5550

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Youtube (@buckscountyconservationdis8859)