

Berks County Conservation District Partners with Stroud Water Research Center to Host Walk and Talk



On August 7th, 2014 the Stroud Water Research Center and Berks County Conservation District held a Best Management Practice Walk and Talk Session at Spring Creek Farms in Heidelberg Township as part of the District's new FARM program (Farmers Achieving Resource Management). The Field Day took place at an organic dairy farm owned by Forrest and Greg Stricker who graze their cows and chickens year around. The District chose this farm because of the diversity of Best Management Practices (BMPs) located on the Stricker's farm. The BMPs that were presented on Spring Creek Farms were Stream Bank Fencing, Windrow Composting, an Animal Heavy Use Area, a Travelling Irrigation System, and Mob Grazing. One of the stops was along a tributary to Spring Creek located near a Waste Water Treatment Plant. Lamonte Garber, a Watershed Restoration Coordinator from Stroud, talked to the audience about why it is so important for farmers to increase their streams' buffer.



Lamonte told the group that there are three ways that farmers can manage their streams. First, they can let their livestock have free access to a stream without a buffer. Second, fence the livestock out of the stream with a grassed buffer that is not being grazed. Lamonte said that when a stream has only a grassed buffer it will cause the stream to be fast, deep and narrow.

Lastly, the last and most beneficial, option is to manage the stream by growing a forested stream buffer, which will broaden the stream, making it shallower and slowing it down. This will give the macroinvertebrates in the stream more surface area to clean the water of excess nutrients. Lamonte then compared the forested stream with the nearby wastewater treatment system. Both systems take advantage of the increased surface area so that the organisms in the system can increase their efficiency by utilizing the oxygen and food from the water.

The participants at this Field Day represented a varied mix of agencies and individuals. Some of the attendants were farmers, agency workers, and several travelled long distances (Maryland and State College). The evaluations gave positive feedback and useful



suggestions of what future workshops should be based around. The speakers were knowledgeable and the group as a whole had several discussions on all of the topics that were presented. Both Forrest and Greg Stricker did an excellent job showcasing their farm's BMPs. It was especially interesting to hear Greg's point of view since he works part time with the Natural Resource Conservation Service. All in all, the FARM program is growing its membership numbers and the District looks forward to holding a lot more workshops like this in the future.