

EASTERN LANCASTER COUNTY SOURCE WATER COLLABORATIVE

Scope: Local

Location: Pennsylvania

SCOPE:

- » Eastern Lancaster County, Pennsylvania
- » Led by Lancaster County Planning Commission
- » Alliance of water suppliers, local government and civic leaders, state and federal agencies, private environmental partners and non-profit organizations

COLLABORATIVE FORMATION:

- » Collaborative members first gathered to develop an implementation plan for the Lancaster County Comprehensive Plan water resources element, "Blueprints: An Integrated Water Resources Plan for Lancaster County," which was adopted in October 2012
- » The group was selected as a 2013 Source Water Collaborative Pilot
- » Mission: Working together on issues of mutual interest, the ELANCo Source Water Collaborative's diverse membership promotes practices that protect and improve water quality for current and future generations while maintaining and supporting Eastern Lancaster County's economy and unique culture

MEMBERS:

- » East Earl Township
- » Terre Hill and New Holland Boroughs
- » Susquehanna River Basin Commission
- » Water Resources Education Network (League of Women Voters)
- » PA Department of Environmental Protection
- » PA Rural Water Association
- » Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- » Lancaster County Planning Commission
- » Lancaster County Conservation District
- » Lancaster County Conservancy
- » Lancaster County Farmland Trust
- » Lancaster County Zoning & Building Permit Officials Association
- » Lancaster County Agricultural Council
- » Penn State Cooperative Extension
- » Mennonite community leaders
- » USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- » Eastern Lancaster County School District

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- » Western Heights Water Authority
- » Blue Ball Water Authority
- » Environmental Protection Agency
- » SSM Group
- » Future Farmers of America

WATER CONCERNS:

- » Nitrates in groundwater from a multitude of land uses and pollution sources.

STRATEGIES:

- » Protect and improve water quality for current and future generations through a cooperative, proactive approach.
- » Promote SWP by facilitating partnerships and sharing information, resources, and technical assistance to implement conservation practices.
- » Using the shared interests of public water suppliers, citizens, businesses, private, non-profit, and governmental partners, promote education and use of best management practices that will preserve and support Eastern Lancaster County's unique culture and strong economy.
- » Integrate Clean Water Act priorities, programs, and activities with those of the Safe Drinking Water Act to protect drinking water sources.

RESULTS:

- » Held farmer education workshops in 2013 and 2014.
 - In December of 2013, the ELANCo Source Water Collaborative held an inaugural public outreach event, a workshop focused on agricultural best management practices to protect drinking water resources. The well-attended event (over 400 participants) drew mostly Plain Sect farmers from the ELANCO region and featured a keynote presentation from USDA NRCS soil scientist Ray Archuleta on soil health. The event garnered significant attention from the farming community and led to the establishment of the Agricultural Subcommittee.
 - In October 2014, the Collaborative partnered with Stroud Research Center, USDA NRCS, and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts to host a similar soil and stream health workshop reaching another 225+ farmers in the local and surrounding counties.
- » The Collaborative's Agricultural Subcommittee continued to engage the farming community through innovative farmer-to-farmer outreach and education throughout 2014 and 2015.
 - The Agricultural Subcommittee held farmer-to-farmer focus groups reaching over 70 farmers to discuss best management practices, such as no-till farming, manure management, and pesticide application for source water protection. A number of workshop participants signed up for assistance to develop conservation plans and manure management plans. Due to the overwhelming request for plans, the Lancaster County Conservation District reported that they had reached capacity for plan development in 2015.
- » Following the successes of the agricultural subcommittee, ELANCo SWC sought to expand outreach efforts to a wider audience in 2015. The Collaborative held a forum for small water systems to discuss the importance of source water protection and the Collaborative's initiatives to reduce nitrate levels in groundwater.
- » In fall of 2015, the Collaborative launched the residential subcommittee to educate residents on actions they can take to protect their source waters. The Collaborative will host a family-friendly public outreach event in March 2016 to engage residents in high nitrate groundwater areas.