

# PA Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program

## 2014 Annual Summary Report

April, 2015



### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Pennsylvania's Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Maintenance Program provides grant funding to local municipalities to reduce environmental impacts and long-term maintenance costs associated with public roads. The program was enacted into law in April 1997 as Section 9106 of the PA Vehicle Code, with \$4 million in annual funding for "environmentally sensitive road maintenance." Each year, the State Conservation Commission allocates this funding based on identified need to county conservation districts. Townships and other road-owning entities then apply to their local district to address identified pollution problems using environmentally sound road maintenance practices. Grant applicants must complete a two-day "Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance" training course focusing on lowering maintenance costs and reducing stream pollution.

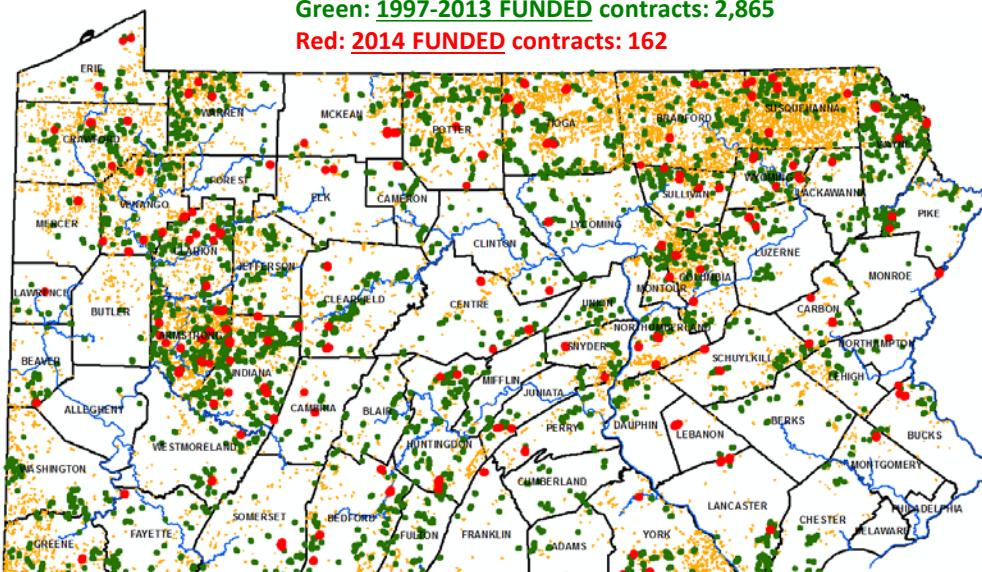
Program funding was increased to \$28 million for FY 2014-15, with \$8 million of that dedicated to paved low-volume roads with less than 500 vehicles per day. Due to the many changes in the program in 2014, Fiscal Year 2014-15 funding was not received by districts until January 2015, so it is not included in this summary.

This is the last summary report to be completed at "historic" program funding levels. Future reports will include projects completed with increased funding and work done on paved low volume roads.

Yellow: Unfunded identified worksites: 14,160

Green: 1997-2013 FUNDED contracts: 2,865

Red: 2014 FUNDED contracts: 162

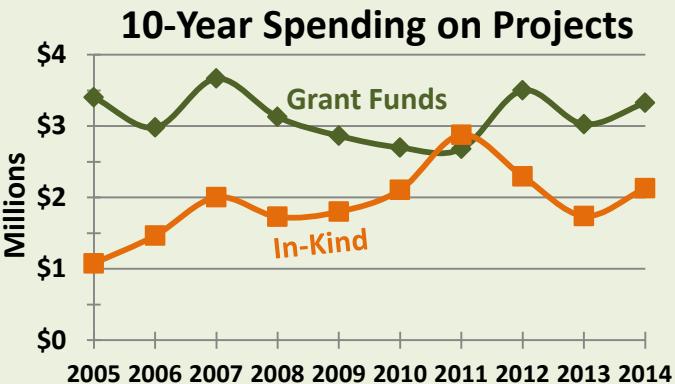


### 2014 Project Work

A total of 162 contracts were completed by 51 conservation districts in 145 separate municipalities in 2014. A total of 3,027 contracts have been completed in 729 municipalities since the program began in 1997. Program spending and deliverables were in line with long term averages in 2014. Notably, in-kind contributions from local participants remained steady in 2014 at \$0.64 per \$1 of program funds. In addition to this data on completed projects, 170 projects are currently under contract for future work totaling \$4.5 million.

Additional data available upon request

Program Statistics	2014	Program to Date
Contracts Complete	162	3,027
Avg. Contract Cost	\$20,532	\$16,734
Project Spending	\$3.3 million	\$50.7 million
In-Kind Contributions	\$2.1 million	\$26.3 million
In-Kind (Match per Program Dollar)	64%	52%
Crosspipes Installed	317	7,713
Driving Surface Aggregate	30 miles	560 miles
Est. Road Base Added	6,600 tandem axel dump trucks	90,800 tandem axel dump trucks



Conservation district spending on projects has averaged about \$3 million annually. In-kind spending from applicants has steadily increased over the years as participants try to stretch program dollars. (Note 2011 in-kind spike was due to ARRA stimulus funds)

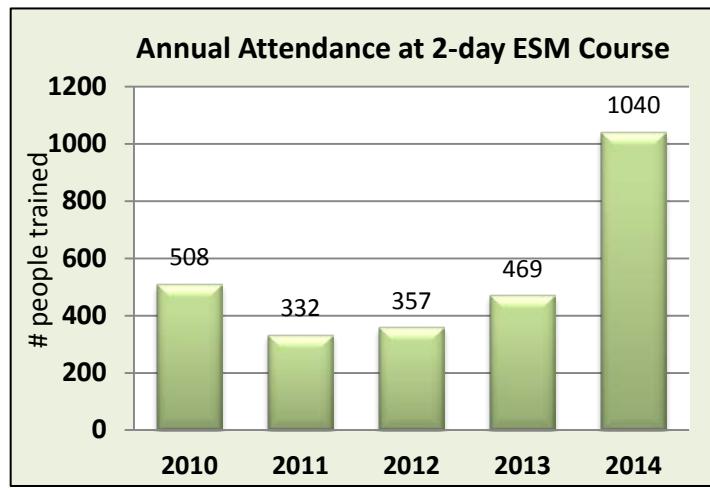
A few project summary items are highlighted above for 2014 and program to date. Note the installation of nearly 8,000 drainage culverts or crosspipes, the program's most basic tool to break up concentrated flow, prevent erosion and encourage infiltration.

## **2014: Preparing for Increased Funding and Paved Low Volume Roads**

Conservation districts began receiving their increased FY 2014-15 allocations in January of 2015. Aside from the usual volume of project work, 2014 was dedicated to planning and preparation for the upcoming program changes.

### **Two-Day ESM Training:**

The cornerstone of the program's success has been education and training, largely in the form of a two-day course entitled "Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance" (ESM). This intensive ESM course, delivered by the PSU Center for Dirt and Gravel Roads, is aimed at road-owning municipalities and covers the principles and practices that are to be employed on the road by program funded projects. Municipalities must attend this training in order to be eligible to apply for funding. In anticipation of a surge in training demand with the funding increase, larger-scale regional trainings were held in 2014 that could accommodate up to 200 people. As shown in the graph to the right, over 1,000 people attended an ESM training in 2014, more than double any of the last five years.



Attendance at two-day "Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance" training course per year.

### **Advisory Workgroups:**

The program has always relied on advisory workgroups consisting largely of conservation district members to provide direction, feedback and guidance about the program. Three main advisory workgroups, *Education and Outreach, Policy and Planning, and Low Volume Roads*, were very active in 2014 holding a total of 18 separate advisory meetings. The groups were responsible for recommending strategies and policies for: conservation district allocations; LVR paving policies; traffic count policies; new administrative manual; regional ESM trainings; workshops; new stream crossing replacement policy; and more.

*"The program has definitely changed the way we maintain our roads. We use Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance practices on many of our roads not funded by the program"*

- Township Supervisor, Union County

### **New Administrative Manual:**

Program and center staff worked with the advisory groups above to re-write the program's Administrative Guidance Manual. The comprehensive manual, approved in November of 2014, not only clarifies existing D&G policy, but includes guidance on low volume roads and a host of newly adopted policies. Administrative trainings for conservation district staff also began in late 2014 using the new manual as a guide.

### **Conservation District Input**

Feedback and input from conservation districts was a priority for program and center staff in adapting the program to the recent changes. Aside from the advisory workgroup meetings described above, these interactions also included: two general roundtables; five regional "low-volume road roundtables"; two general and three topic specific webinars; several other listening sessions; and the center's Annual Workshop that attracted over 200 attendees in September.



### **First Paved Low Volume Road Project**

The first paved LVR project was completed in August 2014 as a demonstration project for the center's annual workshop. Miller Road in Northern Huntingdon County suffered annual failures due to a saturated road base. The work included drainage and base improvements in the form of several "French Mattresses" to support and drain the road. After the project was complete, the township applied a new coat of "tar and chip" to the road surface.

### **Welcome Back Allegheny:**

The Allegheny County Conservation District participated in the program from 1997 until 2003. After a decade-long absence, the program has re-established a home in Pittsburgh! Even before the prospect of paved LVRs, new management at the district was planning to rejoin the program in 2013. We look forward to continuing to work with the district to implement projects on both unpaved and paved roads.