



# CAPITAL RC&D e-NEWS

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Congratulations to Mark Kimmel, York County Conservation District Manager, for his successful and productive career improving soil and water conservation in York County. He is retiring this spring after working with the conservation district for 36 years, 34 of which as manager. During this time, he guided the program from a handful of employees to a compliment of over 20 staff members capable of managing regulatory requirements, implementing new opportunities, and improving conservation efforts throughout the county. These efforts alone should be celebrated, but it is important to share that not only has Mark served several terms as a Capital RC&D council member, but he played a key role in its founding prior to 2004.

When asked about his role, Mark said “It took a couple of years to get things started. York was one of the last counties to give the thumbs up and it was because we were really balking at putting money toward developing a council with a focus on economic development. We were getting hammered by economic growth, what we needed was more natural resource conservation and protection. Once we signed on, [along with] Franklin County, we put our minds to making sure there was a strong focus on ag, natural resources and conservation. I don’t know how many years we’ve been the beneficiary of the RC&D employees, but they have been great and the fruition of our hopes in the beginning when we wanted more bodies to support conservation planning and technical assistance.”

Capital RC&D is very grateful for Mark’s work on behalf of the council and conservation throughout the region and would like to extend congratulations and best wishes in his retirement.

## What’s Happening at Capital RC&D?



About twenty-five years ago, farmers in South Central Pennsylvania started sharing success stories of converting to managed grazing in their livestock operations and ever since, the number of farmers in the region implementing managed grazing practices (also known as rotational grazing) increases each year. There is considerably more information and research available now than 25 years ago, but it can be difficult to know what methods, infrastructure, and livestock options will work best in any one farm operation, or to trouble-shoot issues that come up while implementing new practices. Capital RC&D’s Grazing Advisor program offers a team of experienced livestock graziers to support farmers at all levels of experience - novice graziers and those looking to improve their current grazing system.



Titus Martin ( r ), working with a grazier to conduct a pasture assessment.



“Grazing really is not a new thing, but back in the 1950’s its use dropped in the United States and didn’t come back until the late 1980’s when a few fellows started doing it.” said Duane Hertzler, Capital RC&D Grazing Advisor (pictured above) in a recent conversation about converting to grazing from confinement dairy. “When we [transitioned] in ’94, we didn’t go into it blindly. We sought out people not only in our area, but throughout the United States who were grazing and had been successful with it.”

Recognizing the need for individualized support from fellow farmers, Capital RC&D started the Grazing Advisor Program in 2008. In 2020, the advisor program was expanded to include four advisors: Ann Basehore, Donna Foulk, Duane Hertzler, and Titus Martin. Together, they have over 90 years of hands-on, practical experience in pasture management and the grazing of dairy and beef herds, small ruminants, and equine. The advisors are available to work with graziers, one-to-one, throughout the Susquehanna river watershed and can help with questions related to livestock, pasture and soil health, as well as infrastructure and record keeping. They can provide support to farms transitioning from confinement or those refining their grazing systems.

An important benefit of the grazing adviser program was stated by advisor, Ann Basehore. “The internet is beneficial in so many ways, but it’s not the same as finding that one-on-one advisement with someone who has been there and done that, made some mistakes, learned from other components, and can apply it literally from the ground up.”

Another consideration was shared by Donna Foulk, an equine expert and farmer who was also an educator with Penn State Extension prior to working as an advisor with Capital RC&D, “I’ve seen a great number of changes in pastures over the past 20 years, just because of climate change, more diseases in grasses than I’ve ever seen before, and changes in density of species in pastures. There’s a lot of research going on, new forage species that are better than what we’ve had in the past. So, everybody can always learn something new.”

The latest information about the grazing support program and advisors is available on the Capital RC&D website. It is also featured in a recent Capital RC&D Conservation Podcast episode, *Capital RC&D Grazing Advisors, An Introduction to the Advisors Supporting Grazing in the Region* and will be highlighted as part of two upcoming webinars. The webinars will provide an overview of best practices, available resources, and balancing nutritional needs with pasture capacity. Both webinars will be presented by Capital RC&D Grazing Advisors with the first webinar, *Grazing & Pasture Management in Pennsylvania* taking place on Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 12:00 PM and the second, *Pasture – The Balancing Act*, will follow on Tuesday, March 9, 2021 at 12:00 PM.



Anne Basehore,  
Capital RC&D Grazing Advisor

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Visit [www.capitalrcd.org/grazingsupport](http://www.capitalrcd.org/grazingsupport) to access all program details including access to the podcast, grazing advisor bios, and to register for upcoming webinars.



Donna Foulk, Capital RC&D Grazing Advisor

## Conservation Districts in Action

Capital RC&D's March 2020 e-News promoted the annual fundraising tree sales held by conservation districts in the region and throughout the state. As with everything else in spring 2020, many organizations and businesses were forced to cancel in-person activities due to COVID-19 restrictions. This included tree sales except for the Lancaster and Lebanon County Conservation Districts who were passed their order deadline and quickly arranged for contactless pick up.

Nearly a year later and many people have adjusted to online meetings, webinars, and the physical distancing standards that allow organizations to continue conservation efforts including educational events and tree sales. Tree sale pick-ups for most counties will be managed using a drive-thru or contactless pick-up option and in addition to the tree sale, the Lebanon County Conservation District is hosting a virtual rain barrel workshop. Participants will receive a fully assembled rain barrel and have access to an exclusive online presentation and demonstration.

Contact your county conservation district office for tree sale details and deadlines.

## Upcoming Dates



March 2, 2021	Grazing & Pasture Management in Pennsylvania, Available Resources for Good Practices webinar
March 9, 2021	Pasture - The Balancing Act webinar
March 11, 2021	Capital RC&D Council Meeting (via Zoom)
March 26, 2021	Deadline to submit events and notices for April 2021 eNews

*For additional details about these and other Capital RC&D and partner events, visit the Events page at [capitalrcd.org](http://capitalrcd.org)*

