

The Greene County's Reinvestment in Agriculture: Cost-share Enhancement (GRACE) Program is a conservation-based program directly funded by the Greene County Conservation District (GCCD) that was designed to enhance soil health and water quality within the agriculture community. This year, the program approved contracts with the highest participation rate in a single year compared to previous years.

The GCCD Board of Directors approved contracts for the 2020-2021 program year at their September 22, 2020 Board meeting. Additionally, the GCCD Board approved to extend unfinished practices from the contracts approved for the GRACE 2019-2020 program year. This decision grants those forty participants who were previously approved for the 2019-2020 program year the opportunity to complete unfinished practices. The stress from this past year with COVID-19 had introduced new obstacles for participants making the effort to complete their approved practices. Lime quarries faced shutdowns along with the inability to reach out to contractors during this time.

The contracts approved at the September Board meeting include 3,248.37 tons of lime for 1,608.95 acres, 1,056.56 acres of fertilizer, 38,800 feet of interior pasture division or streambank fencing, 2 stabilized stream crossings, 74 watering systems and 2 forestry projects. These Best Management Practices promote soil and water conservation practices that will improve soil health in pastures and woodlands. These practices can lead to improved animal production as well as, healthier soils and forest stands. When these practices are implemented correctly, value and profit can be added to the land.

The District has had great success and participation within the GRACE Program. This would not be possible without the financial assistance received by PA Act 13 Unconventional Gas Impact Fee that are allocated through the Public Utility Commission and State Conservation. The district would like to recognize Greene County Government and their support of our organization that cover many of the district's overhead costs and administrative assistance. The support of county government allows the district to utilize "Impact Fee Funds" on the ground within the community that has been impacted by gas development over the past years. The money and support received from all of these funding sources could be utilized to cover other District expenses; however, support from county government frees up funds allocated to the district allowing the ability to spend money on projects that are put back into Greene County. Through this cost share assistance for landowners the implementation of BMPs within their agricultural operations will enhance soil health, water quality and create more productive farms within the County.

