

Addressing the Capacity for Ag Conservation in Pennsylvania

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A Glimpse Into Recent History

How we got here...



PennState Extension

A Glimpse Into History – PA in the Balance 2016

Embrace a Culture of Stewardship

Develop and Deploy Effective Targeting (place, practice, people)

Integrate Soil Health, Manure Management, and Riparian Ecosystem Stewardship into Water Quality Strategies

Support Community-Based Approaches

Recognize and Support a Three-Pronged Approach (education and outreach; technical assistance; and enforcement)

Revisit and Retool Conservation Incentive Programs

Collaboratively Seek New Funding Opportunities



A Glimpse Into History – PA in the Balance 2016

Initiative 1. Increase Technical Capacity through Enhancements in Conservation Training Opportunities

- **Complement** existing USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and state training programs
- **Build** the technical network of conservation professionals necessary to meet increased demand
- **Fill** identified gaps and streamline training for interested professionals and students

Recent History - 2022 Clean Streams Fund



Legislative addition to the PA state budget



\$154 million for ACAP to be administered by SCC through county conservation districts



Delegation to PSU to provide training and technical assistance center

A Glimpse Into History – PA in the Balance 2022

Momentum,
Risk Management,
and Mitigation

Recommendation: Invest in workforce development and training to position Pennsylvania as the nation's career and innovation hub for agricultural and natural resources conservation

Provide accelerated, comprehensive, and sustained TA training (agencies, private, nonprofit)

Develop intensive short courses to allow for priority skills certification

Deploy a comprehensive workforce recruitment strategy within secondary schools, trade schools, colleges, and universities





A New Center Forms

The Center for Ag Conservation Assistance Training
(CACAT)



PennState Extension

Plans for the Center – the Early Years

Establish and maintain a full-staffing complement for the new center

Create a virtual presence for the center

Provide training and education programs

Host an annual ag conservation conference

Provide ag conservation and ag outreach technical assistance

Provide program guidance and assistance

Miscellaneous, other tasks assigned and agreed upon



A Memorandum of Understanding

Partners in Ag Conservation Excellence

Strengthen the cooperation between the partners and establish a general framework and understanding of how the Partners will jointly support technical assistance needs for implementing State and Federal funding targeted toward conservation initiatives within Pennsylvania.



Home of the Center



Funding & Oversight



Quality Assurance &
Expertise



Provide Training and Education Programs

Full Portfolio of Educational Opportunities

- Workshops, webinars, and asynchronous training events
- Administration of the ACAP program, ag literacy, ag conservation practices and programs, and related topics
- On-demand learning and technical assistance - fact sheets, news articles, and videos
- Training manuals, publications, and training tools
- Exhibit at relevant expos and trade shows
- Targeted mailing campaigns, brochures, rack cards, and similar promotional materials

Provide Training and Education Programs

New certification program for conservation professionals

- Multi-day training that results in competence in designing certain basic conservation practices
- Intended to become required for all districts utilizing ACAP funding
- Offered multiple times across the state each year
- Non-admin versions of this training for farm operators/ag landowners, NGOs, and private consultants
- Advanced training for additional BMPs will also be developed

Host an Annual Ag Conservation Conference



FOR ALL DISTRICT
STAFF AND
PARTNERS
WORKING IN
AGRICULTURAL
CONSERVATION



MULTI-DAY
CONFERENCE



CLASSROOM
SESSIONS



FIELD ACTIVITIES



NETWORKING



RECOGNITION OF
INNOVATIVE AND
EXCELLENT
PROJECTS



PennState Extension

Provide Ag Conservation and Ag Outreach Technical Assistance

Ag Conservation Technical Assistance

Ag Outreach Assistance

Engineering Assistance

High-level
biosecurity
and
personal
safety
protocols



Workforce Development

Facilitate Ag
Conservation
Career Fairs

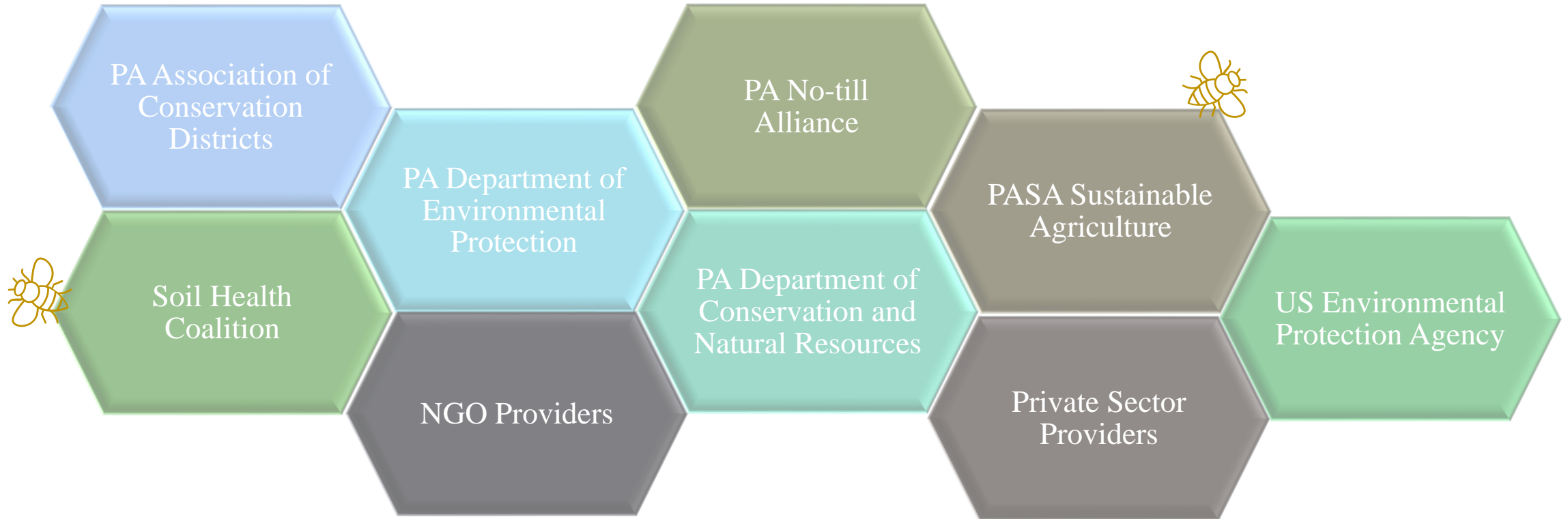
Add
undergraduate
coursework in
Ag
Conservation
Engineering

Engage K-12
students in ag
literacy and
conservation
activities

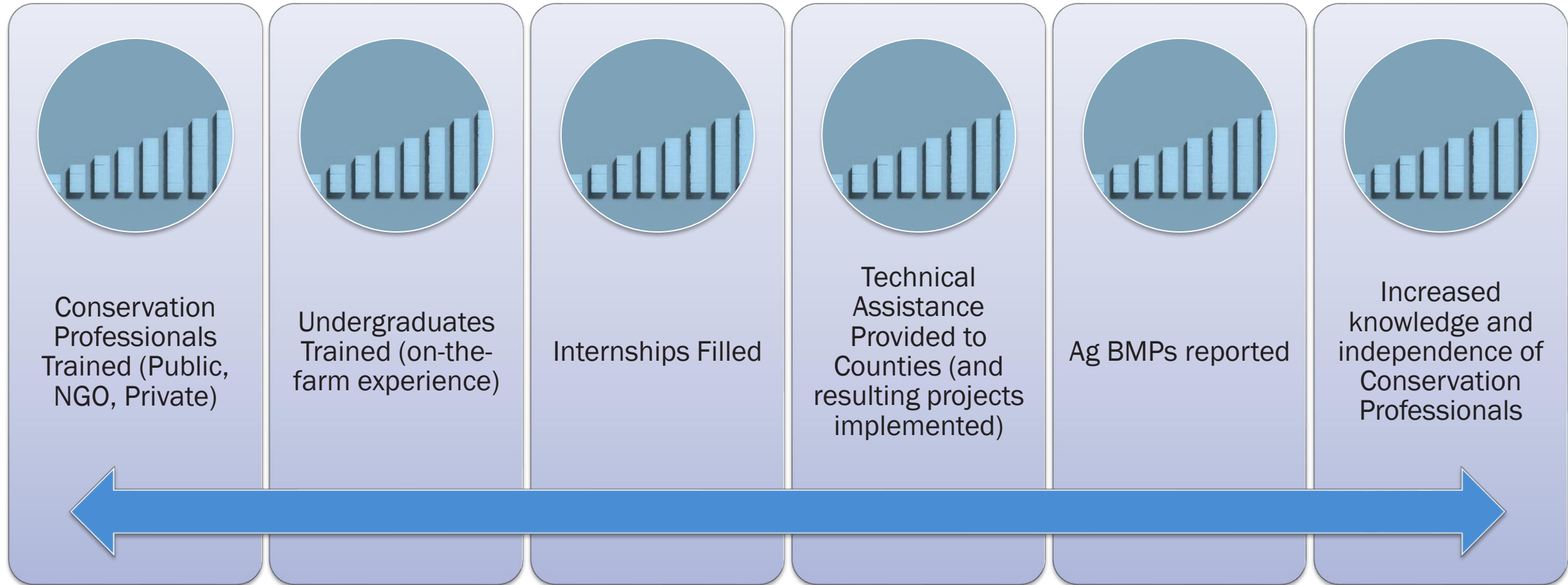
Develop ag
practitioner
network for
undergraduate
job-shadowing,
hands-on
learning, and
internships



A Network of Partners



Potential Impacts in the First Three Years



Where We Are So Far

Center Staff and Presence

- Team forming
- Website created:
<https://extension.psu.edu/CACAT>
- Ag Conservation Currents monthly eNews distributed
- County visits and stakeholder input collected
- Engineering firm contracted
- Supporting workgroups established

Education and Opportunities

- GIS tools developed/developing
- ACAP Administrative Trainings held
- Conservation Boot Camp expanded
- Annual Ag Conservation Career Fair established
- Ag Literacy online courses, field days, webinars, and more being held
- New Job Approval Authority program in development

A Long Vision for the Center – Sustaining Capacity



Beyond the Conservation Professional

- DIY Ag Conservation and Direct to Farmer Content

Certification Programs

- Proficiency, Recognition, CEUs

Ag Conservation Career Tracking

- Professional Development Pathways
- Growth and Advancement Opportunities
- National recruitment and retention

Extended Funding