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PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

# news release

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Wharton Township Wins Top Award in Statewide Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest**

Wharton Township in Fayette County was named the bridge winner of the 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest this morning during the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors' Excellence Awards ceremony.

The event, which recognizes the significant achievements of townships and their officials from across the state, was held as part of PSATS' 97<sup>th</sup> Annual Educational Conference and Exhibit Show in Hershey. Today is the opening day of the conference, which has attracted attendees from every county in Pennsylvania except Philadelphia, which has no townships.

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PSATS sponsors the statewide Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest each year in partnership with the Pennsylvania Highway Information Association (PHIA) and the state Department of Transportation (PennDOT) to recognize townships for their extensive contributions of time and effort in making roads and bridges safer.

Wharton Township was honored for replacing a deteriorating culvert that carried Big Sandy Creek beneath Fayette Springs Road. The old culvert was undersized and caused flooding of the roadway during heavy rains, which resulted in a five-mile detour. The culvert also prevented native brook trout from migrating upstream to the creek's headwaters to spawn.

"We were always repairing the culvert," Wharton Township Chairman Jim Means says. "Every time we got a hard rain, it washed out."

After researching various options for repairing or replacing the culvert, the township supervisors settled on a proposal from McMillen Engineering to use a Contech aluminum arch culvert with an open bottom that would allow fish passage. The township public works crew completed most of the work themselves, including diverting the stream, removing the old culvert, and assembling and installing the new culvert. A hired contractor did the excavation.

The project was the first in Pennsylvania to incorporate Contech's Express Foundation system, which features prefabricated steel forms that support the assembled culvert. Concrete poured inside the forms locks everything together.

McMillen Engineering helped the township secure a grant from the state's Dirt, Gravel, and Low-Volume Road Program to cover about 77 percent of the cost. The completed project has performed better than the township could have hoped, Means says.

"It's beautiful," he says. "We have had several hard rains since it was installed, and we've had no problems. The flood issues are gone, and the detours are gone. We are planning to do at least three more like this in the township."

The culvert project also received the Outstanding Partner in Conservation Award from the Chestnut Ridge Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

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The Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors represents Pennsylvania's 1,454 townships of the second class and is committed to preserving and strengthening township government and securing greater visibility and involvement for townships in the state and federal political arenas. Townships of the second class cover 95 percent of Pennsylvania's land mass and represent more residents — 5.5 million — than any other type of political subdivision in the commonwealth.

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