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PENNSYLVANIA STATE ASSOCIATION OF TOWNSHIP SUPERVISORS

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Polk Township Wins Top Award in Statewide Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Contest

Polk Township in Monroe County was named the bridge winner of the 36th Annual Road and Bridge Safety Improvement Awards, presented at the 96th Annual Educational Conference of the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS) in Hershey April 22-25, 2018. The conference attracted attendees from every county in Pennsylvania except Philadelphia, which has no townships. Polk Township won the award for a culvert replacement project on Hell Hollow Road.

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.

Polk Township was honored for replacing a 30-year-old 8-foot metal culvert on Hell Hollow Road that often caused flooding of Dotters Creek due to the culvert's inadequate size. On at

least three occasions, flooding destroyed large portions of the road and guide rail, posing significant danger to motorists. In addition to road damage, repeated flooding also caused environmental impacts to the high-quality coldwater fishing stream and led to bank erosion, stream channel changes, and sediment deposits downstream.

The culvert was the final and most difficult of three bridge replacements that the township had been planning since 2007. Aside from seeking grants to help offset the estimated \$400,000 cost, the township also needed to get permits to work in the stream from the state Department of Environmental Protection, construction easements from neighboring property owners, and help from utilities to move electric, cable, and phone lines and a utility pole.

“It was almost a miracle that it all came together to get the project done before winter,” Polk Township Chairman Brian Ahner says.

After several delays and construction hiccups, the failing culvert was finally replaced with a 22-foot arched concrete culvert, and the road was reconstructed with new guide rail and 4-foot paved shoulders. Environmental impacts will be minimized by the placement of rock rip-rap on each side of the bridge for scour protection, improved drainage along the roadsides, and restoration and revegetation of adjacent slopes and banks.

“We are extremely grateful to so many people who came together and made this project their priority on behalf of our township and its residents,” Ahner says. “We always try to do what we can with our limited resources. It’s nice to be recognized for our efforts with this award.”

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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.