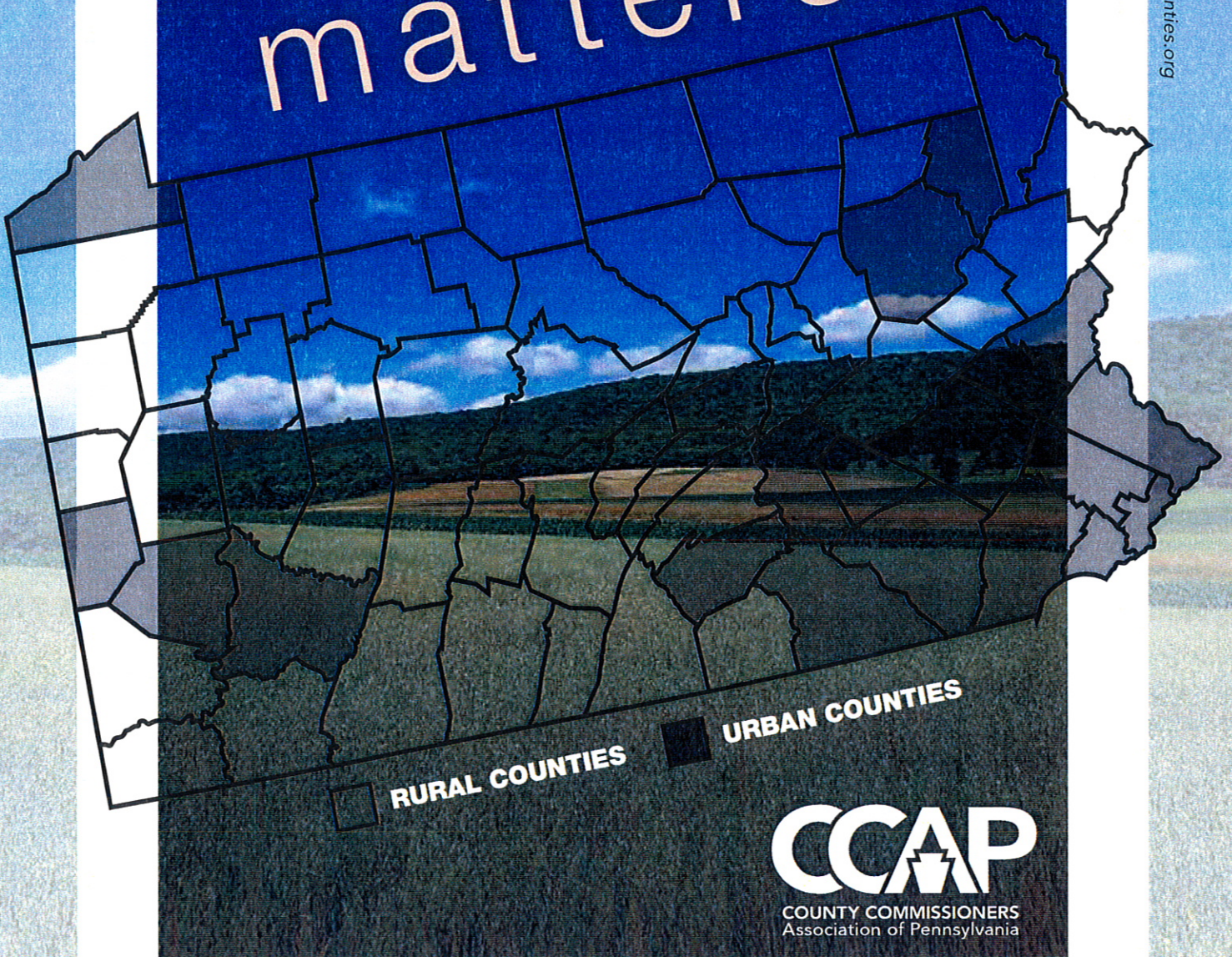


# PENNSYLVANIA county news

WINTER 2017 [www.pacounties.org](http://www.pacounties.org)

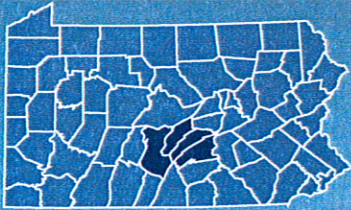
## RURAL matters



**CCAP**  
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
Association of Pennsylvania

THE VOICE OF PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES





COUNTY HIGHLIGHT:

HUNTINGDON  
JUNIATA  
MIFFLIN  
PERRY

# Tire WAR

in Central Pennsylvania

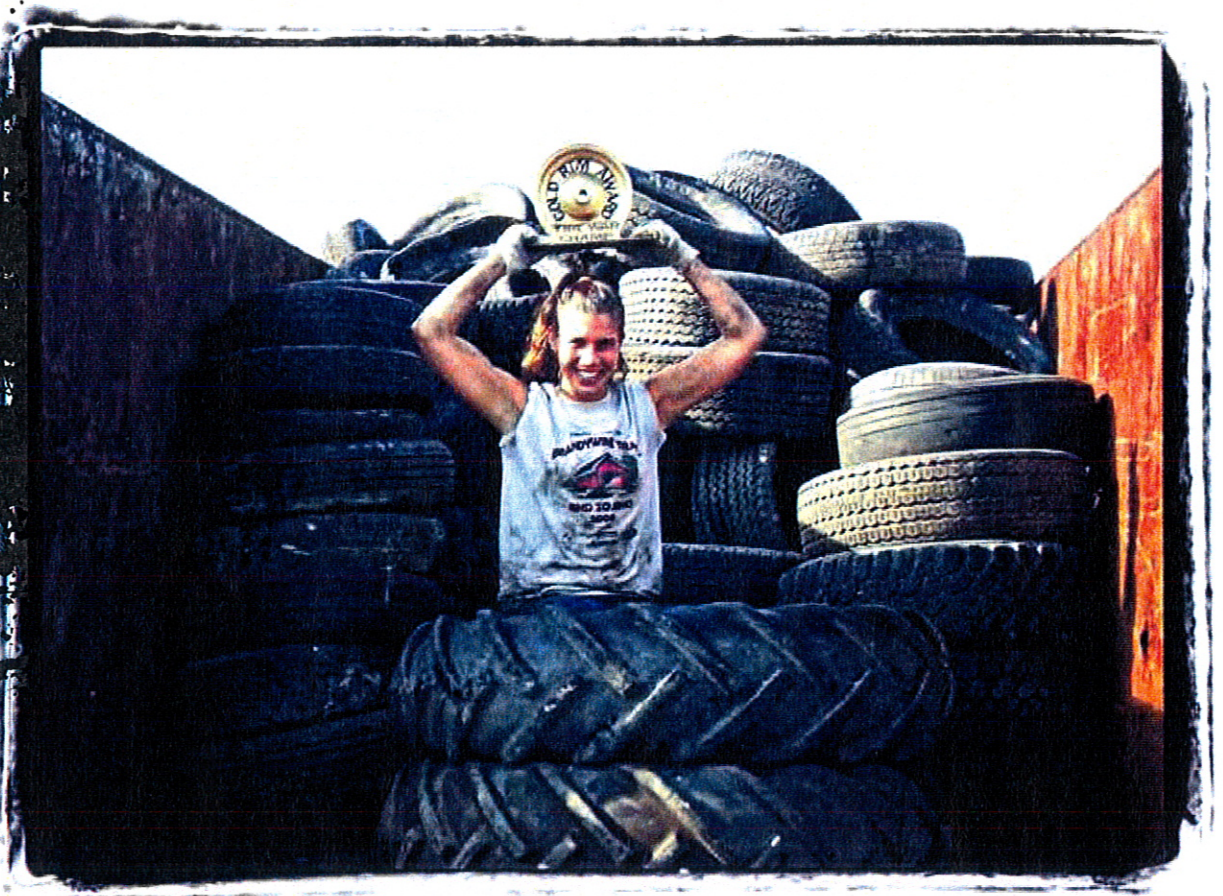
## Rages On Since 2006

**T**ires. Everyone uses them, most of us daily. They help get us to and from work, school, and the grocery store. They pound the pavement for us, traveling tens of thousands of miles, over potholes and snow, uphill and down. But who really thinks about tires daily? And how often do we really consider what happens after they've lived their useful life? Beyond replacing them, and perhaps grimacing at the bill to fit our cars and trucks with a new set, we typically forget about our old tires as soon as we're done with them.

That is, unless we see old tires cluttering our landscapes. Discarded tires are often found collecting stagnant water and breeding mosquitoes, becoming eyesores on roadsides and in rivers, and interrupting our enjoyment of the great outdoors. Once tires have lived out their lives on the wheels of our cars, they become a nuisance. Hard to dispose of, the bulky hunks of rubber can be a major contributor to blight.

To help citizens fight the blight, four Pennsylvania counties have teamed up and declared a war on tires. Each year Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin and Perry counties join forces to collect old tires by the thousands from local residents for a low cost in order to keep them off of the landscape and to ensure the tires are properly recycled.





*Keep Huntingdon County Beautiful Volunteer Tracy Garthe hoists the Gold Rim Award after their winning event in 2007.*

## GOLD RIMS AND FLAT TIRES

The "Tire War" program began in 2006. Mifflin and Huntingdon counties each had an annual tire collection, hosted through their local Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful affiliates, and decided to turn the otherwise unglamorous events into a friendly competition to see who could collect the most tires from their county's residents. At the end of each event, after volunteers loaded all of the tires into trailers, counting each and every one, the totals were tallied from both counties. Whichever county had collected the most tires that year proudly took home the Gold Rim Award, an actual gold painted tire rim to proudly display, and the bragging rights that went along with the trophy for the year.

As time passed, Huntingdon County usually prevailed as the Gold Rim Award winner, so the Flat Tire Award was introduced as a trophy for the "losing" county, as a way to recognize the importance of their efforts as well, even if they collected a few hundred less tires on that particular occasion.

## TREADING ALONG

The competition grew over the years, first adding Perry County in 2011. In 2012, Juniata County was invited into the competition after Keep Juniata County Beautiful was formed. Over the years, the trophies have been passed between all four of the counties now participating.

Pam Sechrist, of PA Cleanways of Mifflin County, was one of the founders of the Tire War. "It was a way to put some fun into an otherwise

tiring, dirty event. Volunteers get incredibly dirty loading the tires every year, ending up covered in whatever dirt and muck has gathered on the old tires over time. But it's all worth it in the end, we have had less tire dumping throughout Mifflin County since we started," Sechrist noted.

Through the past 11 years of the Tire War between these four midstate counties, more than 35,000 tires have been gathered and recycled. Celina Seftas of Huntingdon County states, "Each year we get participants who ask about the Gold Rim Award as they're dropping off their tires. This year, we even had two groups go out and get rogue tires from the river and a roadside to bring to our event with the hopes of helping Huntingdon County win the trophy. We've had people explain that they come every year





*Volunteers in Perry County rest up before some heavy lifting.*



*Participants drop off old tires at the 2016 Tire War event in Mifflin County.*



*Volunteers in Juniata County work together to load a large tire onto the trailer so it can be recycled.*

with tires that wash in on their river side property, or many people have mentioned that they've just purchased a property and are cleaning up the old dumps that they've found. The Tire War is a good act of prevention for our organization to help keep old tires from being dumped over our hillsides or into our streams," continued Seftas.

## NEVER TIRED OF TEAMWORK

Every county runs their event a little differently, but all of the Tire War events are typically held on the same day in September, usually on the third Saturday of the month. Some of the events move throughout their county from year to year, while others are held in the same place annually. County conservation districts, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful affiliates, county planning departments, and county recycling coordinators are all involved with the collection events, along with volunteers. Tires are shipped off in large trailers to

Mahantango Enterprises, Inc. in Liverpool, Pennsylvania where they are turned into useful products like rubber mulch, play and athletic turf, and even crumb rubber for road surfaces.

Costs to residents who bring out tires to be recycled are kept low through Household Hazardous Waste Grants, provided to each county by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful helps each county apply for these grants each year. "By utilizing these grant funds yearly, we're able to keep the events affordable to local residents," says Teddi Stark with Juniata County. "Costs for participants range from just a dollar for your typical car tires, up to ten or fifteen dollars at the most for the largest tractor tires we get." Stark noted they've collected everything from bicycle and airplane tires to tires from large equipment and tractors that are take multiple volunteers to lift up and load into the trucks.

## NATIONAL RECOGNITION ROLLS IN

In 2015, the tenth annual Tire War received national recognition from Keep America Beautiful, winning first place in the America Recycles Day Program award category. Then, in 2016 alone, more than 5,200 tires were collected between the four events on September 17th. Huntingdon County took home the Gold Rim Award for collecting a total of 2079 tires, the most of all the counties in the 2016 event. "These collections provide a convenient, low cost alternative to the community. The tires that are collected at these events won't end up over the hill where they would be difficult and costly to remove," said Shannon Reiter, President of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. "I really commend our affiliates for providing this service and for generating excitement and camaraderie within our network."



## TRACTION FOR THE FUTURE

Hopefully, the Tire War will continue well into the future. Sally Tengeres of Perry County notes, "Each year we receive positive feedback from residents and Townships, and we will continue to compete in the Tire War as long as there are tires to be collected that would otherwise stay on the landscape." The more the word gets out about programs like these, the less tires we'll see collecting in our rivers and in illegal dumpsites along otherwise scenic county roads. "Healthy land makes healthy water," adds Kristie Smith of Perry County. "By holding these events, we are looking after the health of the public and the surrounding wildlife which gives everyone the opportunity to have a much better quality of life." Collecting old tires isn't an easy job, but someone has to do it. And while these counties are at it, they're going to have some fun.

If you are interested in finding out whether your local Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful affiliate hosts a tire collection or other cleanup event, please visit [www.keppabeautiful.org](http://www.keppabeautiful.org). You also can find more information on the Tire War on the website. 🍷

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Photos and information provided by PA Cleanways of Mifflin County's Pam Sechrist, Keep Huntingdon County Beautiful's Celina Seftas and Stacia-Fe Gillen, Keep Perry County Beautiful's Sally Tengeres and Kristie Smith, Keep Juniata County Beautiful's Teddi Stark, and Stephanie Larson from Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. Article by Teddi Stark, Juniata County Conservation District.



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