

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME III

ISSUE 2

August 1997

Earth Conservancy News

is published by
Earth Conservancy
101 South Main Street
Ashley, PA 18706.

Inquiries and comments may be addressed to Newsletter Editor, at the preceding address, or by calling 717-823-3445.

Earth Conservancy is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) corporation.

A copy of the official registration and financial information of Earth Conservancy may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Upcoming Meetings

SEPTEMBER 4, 1997
Board of Directors and Members at EC Offices

OCTOBER 2, 1997
Board of Directors and Members at EC Offices
8:00 AM

NOVEMBER 6, 1997
Board of Directors and Members at EC Offices
8:00 AM

EC Receives Funding for Open Space Plan

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) recently notified Earth Conservancy and Luzerne County of a \$50,000 grant to fund an open space master plan for approximately 10,000 acres of EC land. The Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund grant was sponsored by Luzerne County, which also provided \$50,000 in matching funds for the project.

Earth Conservancy (EC) purchased 16,300 acres of abandoned mining land from the bankrupt Blue Coal Corporation in 1994 with the mission to reclaim the damaged land and return it to the best use of the community. A year long land use planning effort determined that two-thirds of EC's total acreage should remain as open space, parks, greenways, or other recreational areas.

In December, EC partnered with Luzerne County to apply for the DCNR Keystone grant funding. Final word on the approval was received May 29.

The open space master plan will develop master plans and implementation recommendations for the use, stewardship, and conceptual design of Earth Conservancy's open space parcels. The plan will determine the feasibility of trail opportunities in the study area that would connect to currently planned trails. Also to be accomplished by the plan will be final designs for an eight mile trail from Nanticoke to Mocanqua along the ridge of the Penobscot Mountain, overlooking the river. This trail will link to the

Susquehanna Warrior Trail that is planned for the north side of the river between Larksville and Berwick, creating a 26-mile loop for hikers to enjoy.

Earth Conservancy will request proposals from consulting firms this summer, with the goal of beginning work on the plan by the fall. This project has received wide community support from such organizations as Anthracite Scenic Trails Association, Back Mountain Regional Land Trust, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Riverfront Parks, National Park Service of the U.S. Department of the Interior, and the Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry.

A broad-based volunteer planning committee will be organized to work with the chosen consulting firm during the course of the planning process. Several individuals are already serving as the core group of this committee; they are working on a Request for Proposal and will select a consultant to create the plan. These individuals are Judy Rimple, president of Anthracite Scenic Trails Association; Margaret Bakker, partner, Bakker and Lewis Architects; Jerry Bastoni, executive director, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor; Mark Carmon, community relations director, Pa. Department of Environmental Protection's Northeast Region; and Ken Klemow, Ph.D., associate professor of biology, Wilkes University. ♦

Reclamation is Focus of EC Mission

EC's mission is to "to serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land in partnership with government, business, and education..." The Land Use Plan, completed in October 1996, identified approximately 2,300 acres of EC's holdings as damaged by coal mining activity, and estimated the costs to reclaim this land at \$200 million. This figure does not include the costs to remediate acid mine drainage problems or mine fires. As it now implements the recommendations of the Land Use Plan, EC is focusing on land reclamation, the foundation of its mission. Its first reclamation project, located in Nanticoke at Prospect Street and Middle Road, was completed in 1996 at a cost of \$225,000. This 43-acre parcel that was previously blighted by the remnants of mining activity is now attractive, free of safety hazards, and ready to be returned to the community.

EC's second reclamation project was a 42-acre parcel in Newport Township along Alden Mountain Road known as Hanover 13A. Twenty-five acres of this parcel were reclaimed, which included leveling spoil piles, filling pits, and reseeded the area. The work was performed by EC's own labor, with equipment rented from the Regional Equipment Center. Workers estimated more than 200,000 cubic yards of earth were moved in the process. This parcel is currently zoned residential and EC has no immediate plans for its development.

Reclamation design plans are complete for the next project, a 54-acre site in Hanover Township known as Hanover 12. EC has submitted applications to the Luzerne County Conservation District for the necessary permits,



A truck hauls some of the 200,000 cubic yards of material that were moved during the reclamation of 25 acres on the Hanover 13A parcel.

and expects to begin work in August. This parcel is located between Back Road and Middle Road, adjacent to Dundee Apartments.

The removal of silt deposits is another form of land reclamation that EC is currently involved in. EC's Nanticoke 1 site, at the corner of Prospect and Middle Roads, included a 2.4 acre area of silt. EC received from the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) a Removal of Coal Incidental to Construction Permit in April to remove the 15,000 tons of coal silt that was found during reclamation of the site last year. Coal silt is a product used as fuel in cogeneration plants. EC is currently negotiating with several companies to purchase the silt. This project will be completed by the end of July.

A number of reclamation projects on EC land are being managed by DEP through their Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation. Projects in Wanamie, Sugar Notch, and Ashley totalling more than 400 acres were recently completed, and a 90-acre project is underway at Curry Hill in Plymouth Township. EC plans to work closely with DEP in coming years to ensure the greatest return on the state's reclamation investment.

EC reclamation projects have been identified and scheduled through the end of 1998, and EC is completing a long-range, priority-based reclamation plan for all of its holdings. EC will need to partner with federal, state, and private organizations to achieve its reclamation goals. These efforts will continue well into the 21st century. ♦

Earth Conservancy

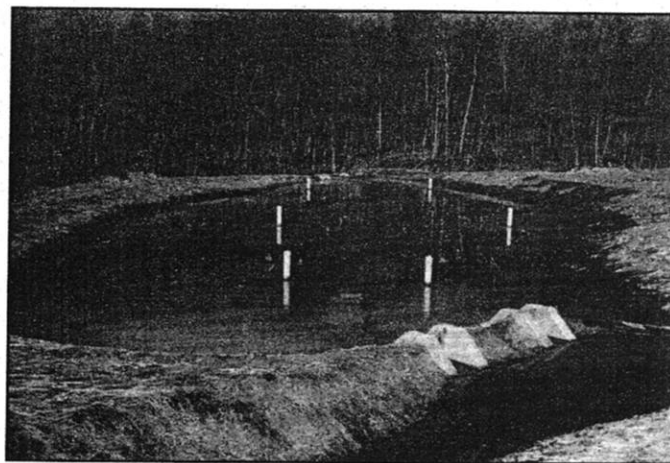
Zoning Changes Can Mean Economic Prosperity

After a year of study and community input, EC's Land Use Plan identified EC parcels that would be ideal for industrial, residential, or commercial development, or for open space/recreation areas. The intention of the Land Use Plan was to further the economic vitality and quality of life of Luzerne County, where all of EC's land is located, through thoughtful development and new recreational opportunities.

As EC implements the recommendations of the Land Use Plan, it is necessary to seek approval for changes in zoning classifications where the current zoning is not in line with the planned uses for the land.

In June the Hanover Township Commissioners approved a zoning change from residential to light industrial for a 230-acre parcel located near the Hanover Industrial Park. Known as the Cleveland parcel, or Hanover 7A, the land was the site of a flood debris dump after the Agnes flood of 1972 (see related story on page 4). Once environmental testing is complete on the parcel, the extent of remediation will be understood, and the land's potential as an industrial site will be more clear. According to Mike Dziak, EC's CEO, the land is ideally situated for light industrial development because of its proximity to the Hanover Industrial Estates. "What the area really needs are more quality jobs," Dziak stated. "Making large parcels available and attractive for potential employers will help Luzerne County rebuild its economy."

In early July, the Hanover Township Planning Commission approved a zoning change from residential to light industrial for a 120-acre parcel, Hanover 10, also in



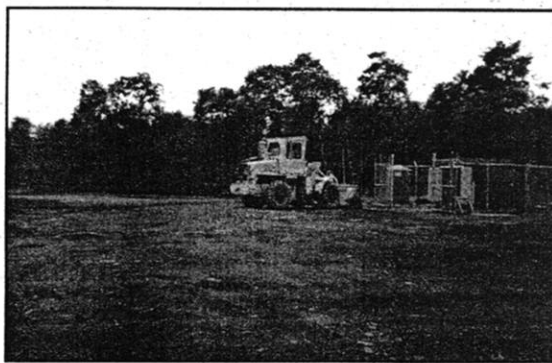
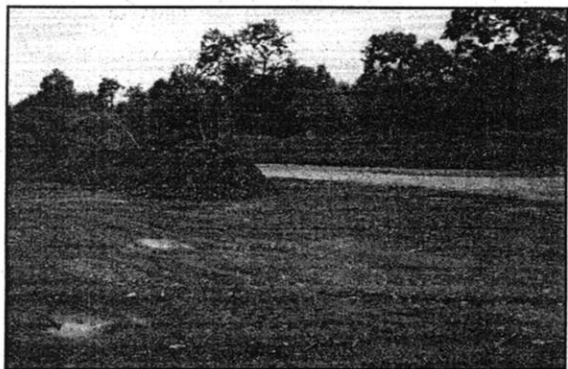
EC's manmade wetland in Hanover Township, as shown in late winter, before the spring's vegetation filled the area.

the vicinity of the Hanover Industrial Estates. A decision by the Board of Commissioners was tabled for further study after a public meeting held July 14 yielded public comment opposed to development of the parcel.

A zoning use variance was sought from Hanover Township in June for nearly eight acres of EC property adjacent to Dundee Road. The variance will allow the construction, operation and maintenance of a wetland system to treat acid mine drainage (AMD) flowing out of the Askam Borehole, under Dundee Road and into Nanticoke Creek. The 7.94 acres are part of parcel Hanover 7B which is currently zoned residential.

The wetland project is funded by a grant received from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Two years ago, EC sought and received a use variance on the Hanover 9 parcel for Phase I of the wetland project, which consisted of the construction of a wetland system to treat an AMD seep of approximately 100 gallons per minute flowing into Espy Run, and eventually into Nanticoke Creek. That phase of the project was completed last summer.

continued on pg. 4



At EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Composting Facility in Wanamie, Newport Township, long windrows of recyclable waste, (left) are turned regularly by the front end loader (right). The Composting Facility is a free service provided by EC to any municipality in Luzerne County. For more information, contact Tom Chesnick at 823-3445.

Zoning Changes Can Mean Economic Prosperity

continued from pg. 3

The second phase seeks to treat between 500 and 1,000 gallons per minute of AMD flowing from the Askam Borehole, which has a peak flow of approximately 7,000 gallons per minute.

A technical team led by Dr. Ken Klemow, associate professor of biology at Wilkes University, designed the system under the guidance of the EPA. The system involves the installation of a pumping station to pump water from the borehole, a maxi-strip-per aeration device manufactured by Hazleton Environmental to add oxygen to the AMD, and approximately 2.2 acres of wet-land basin through which the oxygenated AMD will flow before outletting into the existing culvert that crosses under Dundee Road. The design also provides the flexibility to expand the treatment capacity of the system if and when additional funding becomes available.

While the problems of acid mine drainage in the Susquehanna River Basin were not addressed in detail in the Land Use Plan, they remain a priority for Earth Conservancy. Improving the quality of the river and its tributaries will have a positive affect on the recreational and economic characteristics of the region. ♦

EC to Perform Assessment of Agnes Flood Debris Site

Earth Conservancy held a press conference for local media in late April to announce the receipt of two grants. The Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) and Luzerne County provided funds to perform an environmental assessment on a flood debris landfill located on land owned by EC in Hanover Township.

Approximately 41 acres of this 230 acre parcel were used as an emergency flood debris landfill following the Hurricane Agnes flooding. The landfill was used between 1972 and 1982.

This parcel, known as the Cleveland parcel or Hanover 7A, was identified as prime industrial land by Earth Conservancy's Land Use Plan. The infrastructure is well developed surrounding the site, and Hanover Industrial Estates is located across the street.

EC applied for \$183,585 from the Department of Community and Economic Development's Industrial Sites Reuse Program to fund a Phase I and II Environmental Assessment. Luzerne County made this grant application possible by pledging matching funds in the amount of

\$60,000. EC solicited proposals from six environmental consulting firms and, based on the content of the proposal and the firm's experience, selected Roy F. Weston, Inc., West Chester, Pa.

The Pa. Department of Environmental Protection approved Weston's proposed scope of work.

DCED awarded the grant on April 17, 1997. In May, the Hanover Township Planning Commission approved a zoning change for the parcel from residential to light industrial, and that approval was reiterated by the Hanover Township Commissioners in June.

Weston completed a history of the site in late May. Geophysical testing, including electromagnetic and radar tests to determine the limits of the flood debris, were conducted in late June and early July. Physical testing - pits, borings, and monitor wells - will be conducted in late July. A final report is expected in late September.

Based on the findings of the assessment, a decision about the type of remediation necessary will be made and funding for that work will be pursued. ♦



101 South Main Street • Ashley, PA 18706
Phone: (717) 823-3445 • Fax: (717) 823-8270

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wilkes-Barre, PA
Permit No. 474