

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME II

ISSUE 5

June, 1996

USES FOR EC'S LAND PROPOSED

Employment centers, parks, residential areas, and a resort community are some of the proposed uses for Earth Conservancy's (EC) approximately 17,000 acres of abandoned coal lands. EC's Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) and community residents heard these development proposals and others at a meeting May 22 at EC's office in Ashley.

EC's planning consultant, EDAW, Inc. of Alexandria, Virginia, based their recommendations on input from the many public meetings EC has held during the past six months, as well as EDAW's own analysis of natural resources, cultural features, mining features, transportation and utility systems, and the local economy.

In his introductory remarks, LUPC Committee chairman Ed Schechter addressed the members of the LUPC, "We are now in the most important phase of the planning process that was begun last fall by EDAW. Now is the time for you to comment on the plan as it has been developed so that your thoughts, suggestions, disagreements, and comments can be reviewed,

"The strategies we decide on for the land must be able to support themselves. We have to have the right mix of uses to make it feasible."

Mike Dziak, EC President

answered, reconciled, or incorporated in the final planning stages."

EC president Mike Dziak stressed that because of the vast amount of reclamation work required on the environmentally damaged land, the plan needs to be able to support itself. "The strategies we decide on for the land must be able to support themselves," Dziak said. "We have to have the right mix of uses to make it feasible. Revenue for reclamation needs to be generated by the land use plan."

continued on back page

EC WILL BE "LAB" FOR SUMMER STUDENT PROGRAM

Twelve students from landscape architecture and planning programs at universities throughout the country will spend two weeks with Earth Conservancy this month honing their planning skills. The students will be taking part in the 17th annual Summer Student Program organized by EDAW, an international landscape architecture, environmental planning and urban design firm. EDAW's Alexandria office is currently working on EC's long-range land use plan.

EDAW's Summer Student Program is an intensive two-week workshop that will challenge these talented students to design innovative site development and open space plans for key parcels along the Route 29 corridor in the Wyoming Valley. At the workshop's conclusion, the students will present their visions and plans at a public meeting on June 20th.

EDAW sponsors the program to provide undergraduate and graduate students with a hands-on learning opportunity that strengthens their skills and broadens their perspectives. The two-week workshop is followed by an eight-week paid internship in one of EDAW's offices across the country.

Students participating in this year's Summer Student Program were selected from universities in Virginia, California, Colorado, Washington, and Toronto. The group includes students from Japan, Bulgaria, and Taiwan. ♦



Mike Dziak, right, addresses the Land Use Planning Committee and other community members at the May 22 meeting.

Land Sales Will Help Fund Reclamation

When Earth Conservancy's land use plan is completed in late summer or early fall of this year, the nonprofit organization will have a twenty-five year plan for the reclamation and reuse of its nearly 17,000 acres of old mining land. The planning process will have taken more than a year, during which time EC postponed decisions affecting large tracts of land that will be addressed by the land use plan. Throughout the plan's development, community residents have expressed their opinions and hopes for the eventual use of the land, and the planners have listened. Earth Conservancy's land use plan will truly be one based on community input and consensus.

EC's land use plan will help the organization toward one of its goals: to restore and develop its land for the best use of the community. The land needs to be returned to the tax rolls as quickly as possible so that many municipalities can reap those benefits. One of the ways in which EC has been returning land to the community while the land use plan is being developed is through the sale of small parcels to adjacent property owners and to the general public.

After EC bought the Blue Coal lands, a review of real estate and lease records showed that there were many requests from community residents to purchase parcels of land formerly owned by Blue Coal. Some of these requests had been on file throughout the bankruptcy proceedings - nearly 17 years. To address these requests for land, EC reviewed its land holdings maps and found that quite a few small pieces of land could be returned to the community without impacting the future land use plan. The plan is going to deal with large-scale industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational development. With the approval of the EC Board of Directors, and the support of the Land

Use Planning Committee, procedures for selling land were developed that would ensure a fair process.

There are three categories of land that Earth Conservancy is selling. Category One consists of small parcels, generally under one acre, that are first offered to adjacent land owners.

These properties are advertised as legal notices in local papers, and have a published time limit for responding. All respondents are provided a minimum price, sales agreement, a copy of proposed deed language, parcel description when available, and a map.

Earth Conservancy's mission is:

.. "To serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land... and to develop environmentally related technologies that improve the economic competitiveness and quality of life of our community."

Individuals are notified if more than one party is interested in the parcel, and they are requested to make their best offer. If adjacent land owners are not interested, these parcels are then offered to the general public.

Category Two land sales are parcels offered to the general public. They are advertised in the classified section under "Land for Sale," and are posted with "For Sale" signs. Category Three land sales include small developable parcels. These also are advertised in the classified section under "Land for Sale."

A list of all parcels for sale is always available at the Earth Conservancy office, 101 South Main Street in Ashley. Maps of properties for sale are also available. The parcels are offered for sale for a minimum of sixty days, to ensure all interested parties have enough time to learn about the land sales. During that time, ads appear in the paper for each parcel to be sold. The price for each lot is indicated in all ads and on all lists.

At the end of the offering period, Earth Conservancy reviews all offers and each respondent is notified in writing as to the disposition of their offer. After the receipt of an escrow deposit of no less than ten percent and a signed sales agreement,

the parcel is taken off the market and the closing process is started.

To determine the price for each parcel, Earth Conservancy hires independent appraisers to establish the price for "highest and best use." If a parcel is buildable, the appraisal is higher. Added to the appraised price are the costs for surveying, subdivision, and closing.

Thus far, Earth Conservancy has sold 96 parcels, returning to the tax rolls a total of 34.14 acres in twelve communities. The communities are Ashley Borough, Edwardsville Borough, Hanover Township, Larksville Borough, Newport Township, Plains Township, Plymouth Borough, Plymouth Township, Warrior Run Borough, West Nanticoke, and Wilkes-Barre Township. The sale of these parcels has helped EC work toward its goal to return the old Blue Coal lands to their best possible use as quickly as possible.

Earth Conservancy's mission is "to serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land... and to develop environmentally related technologies that improve the economic competitiveness and quality of life of our community."

Reclamation of mine-scarred land is extremely costly. The government cannot be counted on to fund these projects. Income from the sale of small parcels to individuals, and from the eventual sale of larger parcels to industrial, commercial, residential, and recreational developers, will be used to fund the Earth Conservancy operation and to reclaim mine-scarred lands. ♦

Earth Conservancy News

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

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

MICHAEL A. DZIAK
President and
Chief Executive Officer

JOHN RENFER
Executive Administrator

THOMAS R. CHESNICK
Engineering Projects Manager

ELIZABETH H. ORTEGA
Director of Public Affairs
and Development



**FOR
SALE**



Earth Conservancy

Area organizations fight acid mine drainage

Several Northeastern Pennsylvania organizations have joined forces to test an innovative method for treating large-scale acid mine drainage (AMD) problems. AMD is one of the legacies remaining from the anthracite coal mining industry, and in some areas is so pervasive that no plant or animal life exists in the waterways of the Susquehanna River Basin. Representatives from Earth Conservancy, National Institute for Environmental Renewal (NIER), Hazleton Environmental, Wilkes University, and UGI Corporation demonstrated a combination of active and passive methods for treating AMD at a recent news conference hosted by EC.

In a joint statement issued by Earth Conservancy, NIER and Hazleton Environmental, officials said, "This cooperative effort demonstrates the value of combining public and private resources to correct existing environmental problems and possibly forestall future ones. The philosophy of developing promising environmental technology, testing it in real-life situations and then encouraging market development has already benefited both the environment and the economy."

The collective effort on the part of these organizations is an outgrowth of an EPA-funded project begun by Earth Conservancy last year. Phase I of that project involves the construction of a demonstration artificial wetland to treat AMD along Espy Creek in Hanover Township near Dundee Road. Phase II addresses problems caused by a large AMD outfall on Dundee Road adjacent to the wetland area. At its peak, more than 7,000 gallons of iron-polluted water flow from this outfall into Nanticoke Creek every minute.

Current technology provides for several methods of treating AMD. Two of these methods are

passive treatment in the form of wetlands and active treatment through the addition of lime. Wetlands require large land areas, while lime treatment entails high costs for operation and maintenance, including labor, lime, and disposal of residual material. Earth Conservancy does not own enough land near the Dundee Road outfall to treat the heavy flow from the outfall with wetlands alone. Nor does the non-profit organization have the funds to operate an active treatment plant of the size required by the flow capacity. Earth Conservancy, with the help of scientists from Wilkes University, is therefore attempting to marry the two technologies using an active treatment process to help the wetland operate at its maximum efficiency with the limited land available.

This combination of active treatment using lime and wetland technology has not been used before. That is why Earth Conservancy wants to test the combination to determine optimal lime dosage and wetland size before constructing a full-scale unit at the Dundee Road site.

The system demonstrated at the news conference was manufactured by Hazleton Environmental. Known as the Maxi-Strip, the unit uses aeration and the controlled addition of lime to oxidize iron so that it quickly precipitates out of the acid mine water and can be more easily captured and removed. Development of the unit was funded by the National Institute for Environmental Renewal of Mayfield, Lackawanna County. NIER lent the unit to Earth Conservancy for its AMD test. Hazleton Environmental assisted Earth Conservancy in setting up the unit at the outfall site and managing its operation.

Scientists Tom Walski,



Tom Walski, Ph.D., associate professor of GeoEnvironmental Sciences and Engineering at Wilkes University, is pictured next to his simulated wetlands being tested in conjunction with the water treatment unit shown in the background.

Ph.D. and Ken Klemow, Ph.D. from Wilkes University are in charge of the design of Earth Conservancy's Dundee Road project. The data they collect during this field test will indicate the effectiveness of combining water treatment technologies to clean up acid mine drainage. Anticipated outcomes from this test include producing an acceptable pH in acid mine-polluted water, removing some iron from the water, and maximizing the efficiency of a limited-space wetland.

The Dundee Road outfall is situated on land owned by UGI Corporation. Water from the outfall flows into Nanticoke Creek, which lies on Earth Conservancy land. UGI granted Earth Conservancy a right of way to cross their land and to work in the outfall area.

NIER is a joining of the U.S. Department of Energy, Lockheed Martin Energy Systems Center for Environmental Technology, the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs, and the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority through a Cooperative Research and Development Agreement. NIER's

mission is to restore the environmental and economic viability of communities and industrial sites throughout the United States and the world.

Earth Conservancy was organized to serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land, and to develop environmentally related technologies that improve the economic competitiveness and the quality of life of our community.

Hazleton Environmental serves the needs of the growing water treatment industry. Their patented products and processes represent many years of development in the treatment of water for the coal, steel, and power industries. The company provides full engineering design, construction, and start-up support for their systems.

"A cleaner environment and the creation of new jobs fosters a better quality of life for Northeastern Pennsylvania," the officials stated. "Our effort today may serve as a model for subsequent undertakings to address environmental challenges, not only regionally, but throughout the country, and, indeed, even worldwide." ♦

USES FOR EC'S LAND PROPOSED

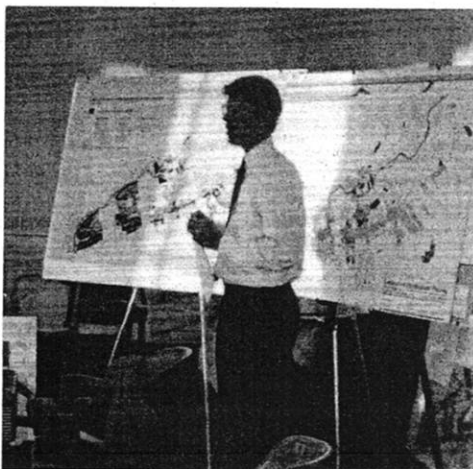
Representatives of EDAW and their sub-consultant team reviewed the environmental, reclamation, transportation and utilities issues and constraints that will impact a final land use plan. The subconsultants working with EDAW are Hammer Siler George of Silver Spring, Maryland, Borton Lawson Engineering of Wilkes-Barre, Reilly Associates of West Pittston, and Skelly and Loy, Harrisburg.

The plan for EC's land aims to increase employment in Luzerne County through the development of four clustered employment centers: a corporate office center and light industry center along Route 29, a business and technology center adjacent to Luzerne County Community College, a distribution center near Askam, and an industrial technology center in Newport.

In response to community input, the plan preserves mountain ridges and other scenic natural features in several parkland and conservation areas: a Penobscot Mountain park, an escarpment recreation district, and expanded State Forests and State Game Lands.

A resort residential community is proposed for Conyngham Township, with a mix of primary and secondary homes with golf and other recreational amenities. In Hanover Township, a training center that will link business with local colleges is proposed.

The draft plan was developed after a thorough process of interviews and research performed by the EDAW team,



Richard Dorrier, project manager with EDAW, Inc., EC's planning consultant, discusses maps illustrating proposed uses for EC's land.

and after several public workshops held to gather community comment. Over the past several months, EDAW interviewed members of the Land Use Planning Committee, EC's Board of Directors, municipal officials, neighboring land owners, and others, and then synthesized these various inputs to develop a draft plan reflecting as closely as possible a community consensus.

Comments on the proposed plan will be evaluated and incorporated, as appropriate, into the final version of the land use plan. That plan will be prepared this summer. ♦

LUPC meeting scheduled

The next meeting of the Land Use Planning Committee will be Thursday, June 20, 1996 at the Educational Conference Center of Luzerne County Community College. The meeting will begin at 6:00 p.m. and the public is welcome to attend.

The purpose of the meeting will be to review the projects produced by students participating in EDAW's Summer Student Program (described on the front page of this newsletter). People interested in attending the presentation should be aware that it is an academic exercise and not a formal planning session. The students' projects pertain to specific aspects of EC's land use plan, but the ideas will not necessarily be incorporated into the plan.

The session is intended to give the students first hand experience in making formal presentations, something they will have to do regularly in their future careers as landscape architects and planners.

Those individuals who have been closely involved in the development of the land use plan, as well as educators and planners, may find the Summer Student Program presentations interesting and informative. ♦

Earth Conservancy

101 South Main Street
Ashley, PA 18706

Phone: (717) 823-3445
Fax: (717) 823-8270

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