

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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LAND USE PLAN APPROVED

After nine months of preparation and twelve months of actual data gathering and analysis, public input and review, Earth Conservancy's Land Use Plan has been approved by the Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) and the Board of Directors.

At their meeting on October 30th, the LUPC recommended approval of the plan 35 to one, with one abstention. It was agreed that consensus had been reached, a requirement established in January, 1995 by the LUPC for approval of the Plan. The Committee's recommendation for approval was presented to the Board of Directors on November 7th by Ed Schechter, chairman of the LUPC and a member of the Board. The Directors unanimously agreed to accept the comprehensive, 25-year Land Use Plan.

At the October 30th LUPC meeting, the final meeting of the committee, the mood was upbeat and congratulatory. Richard Dorrier, project manager from the consulting firm EDAW, thanked the committee for their efforts over the past year. He noted that the plan may change in time, but the Land Use Plan represents a starting point for the future. "This region will move into the 21st century with this plan," Dorrier stated.

Dorrier noted that "everyone said we couldn't reach consensus on this plan," since EC's land lies in twenty different municipalities of Luzerne County. The fact that consensus was indeed reached illustrates the level of cooperation among the municipal representatives on the LUPC.

Among the accomplishments Dorrier said had been achieved by

the plan were a Geographic Information System for the entire study area; updated estimates of coal reserves; an estimate of costs to reclaim mine-damaged land; a marketing study; an inventory of existing infrastructure and estimates for building additional systems; a financial analysis that identifies funding gaps, sources of funding, and potential development partners; and two critical steps of PennDot's process for reviewing road improvements were completed as part of the transportation study.

"This plan is a blueprint for the future that combines environmental protection, jobs, and respect for current land use patterns. The hard work is still ahead, however: the job of implementing the plan," Dorrier concluded.

Several members of the committee commented on the plan and the planning process. John Jablowski, Mayor of Ashley Borough, said that to be implemented successfully, we need to continue to work as a team. "We need to foster a way for municipalities to work together," Jablowski stated.

John Klimuszka, representing Hanover Township on the committee, agreed. "The LUPC has been a cohesive group, but it's not very political," he said. "I'm proud to have been a part of this planning process, but this is not enough."

➡ *con't page 2*



◀ Some members of the LUPC posed for this photo last winter, midway through the planning process.

(con't from front page)

Land Use Plan Approved

We need a Council of Governments to help the municipalities work together."

Steve Barrouk, president of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry, congratulated EDAW, the entire consulting team, and the EC staff for producing such a comprehensive plan. He particularly acknowledged Ed Schechter for being "a part of the effort from the beginning to do something with the Blue Coal lands."

When Barrouk joined this planning effort, he said, the magnitude of the challenge was frightening. "But now we have a blueprint for our future as a community. This proves communities can work together and create something to build on," Barrouk said.



An early Land Use Planning Committee meeting

LAND USE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Richard Allan
Environmental Consultant

Robert Ambrose
Nuangola Borough

Margaret Bakker
Architect

Stephen Barrouk
*Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber,
EC Board*

Robert L. Betzler, P.E.
*Wyoming Valley
Sanitary Authority*

Dale Bruns, Ph.D.
Wilkes University

Anna Cervenak
Bell Atlantic

Thomas Chesnick, P.E.
Earth Conservancy

Edwin Correll
Laurel Run Borough

Stanley Davies
*Pennsylvania
Environmental Council*

Jay Delaney
Senator Musto's Office

Mark Dingman
UGI Utilities, EC Board

Howard Grossman
*Economic Development
Council of NEPA*

Joseph Hillan
*Newport Township,
EC Board*

John Jablowski
Mayor, Ashley Borough

Robert Jones
Plymouth Township

Richard Jumper
Nabisco Inc.

Calvin Kanyuck
Newport Township

Gene Klein
Luzerne County Courthouse

John Klimuszka
Hanover Township

Nancy Kostelega
*Luzerne County
Community College*

Joseph Kotroski
Conyngham Township

Charles Mattei, P.E.
*Pennsylvania Department
of Transportation*

John Matusek
*Luzerne County Office of
Community Development*

Patrick Mullin
Mayor, Sugar Notch Borough

Gerald O'Brien
Mayor, Warrior Run Borough

Daryl Pawlusch, P.E.
Conyngham Township

Joseph Perugino
Penna. Resources

Frank Revitt
Wilkes-Barre Township

Allen Sachse
*Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources*

Ed Schechter
*Chair, Land Use Planning
Committee, EC Board*

Frank Shaulis
City of Nanticoke

Rosemary Sigmond
Coon Industries

Sam Sorber
Hanover Township

Joseph Terrana, Esq.
Congressman Kanjorski's Office

John Varaly
City of Wilkes-Barre

Ronald Wasowski, CSC
King's College

Steve Yokimishyn
Department of Commerce

Earth Conservancy

He noted that the Chamber is looking closely at various aspects of the plan to try to make them happen.

Father Ron Wasowski of King's College said that the cooperation among different groups as they planned for the development of the EC land has been great at the idea level. "Now we have to move to reality - the implementation process - and that is the more difficult arena."

Dr. Christopher Breiseth, chairman of the EC Board of Directors, said this planning effort "will help all of Luzerne County take stock of its assets and liabilities. This plan can be a model on many fronts, but it needs public support. If we can get through Phase 1 successfully, we can take on the more difficult and costly Phase 2."

EC president Mike Dziak described the next steps for Earth Conservancy and the Land Use Plan. Since widespread support of the plan's recommendations are vital to their implementation, he said EC will spend the next few months spreading the word as much as possible. EC staff will meet with state and federal officials to educate them about the plan, and has begun looking for funds to help

implement the first phase of the plan. Committees of the Board have been or will be established to work on transportation, and residential and industrial development. EC will be investigating options for the 10,000 acres of open space recommended by the plan. Partnerships will be developed in all of these areas.

"Reclaiming the land is what EC is all about," Dziak stated. "We want to return the land to the community. Funding for reclamation work is our highest priority right now."

Chairman Ed Schechter concluded the meeting by saying that "we are very fortunate to have achieved all we have. Now it's time to convert ideas to reality. We need to be open to new ideas, remain optimistic, and defy the status quo."

The work of the Land Use Planning Committee is now complete; the implementation of the plan will be the responsibility of the Board of Directors. Earth Conservancy greatly appreciates the time and effort devoted to the planning process by every member of the LUPC. In an effort to recognize their work, the members of the LUPC are listed at left. ♦

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The Land Use Planning Committee included representatives of municipalities, business, educational institutions, environmental organizations, and others.

Phase One is Priority One

Implementation of the Land Use Plan is proposed to occur generally over 25 years with development in some of the more isolated areas beyond that time frame. The following factors potentially affect the timing of development of the EC parcels:

- market demand for a particular use at a specific point in time;
- pre-existing leases on selected parcels that render them unavailable until some future time;
- the extent of mining-related reclamation required on a parcel;
- proximity of adequate utilities; and
- roadway access.

Each of these factors is associated with costs that similarly influence the appropriate phasing of the Land Use Plan.

The three phases of implementation are:

- Phase 1: 1996-2001
- Phase 2: 2002-2011
- Phase 3: 2012-2021

The parcels proposed for the earlier phases are those parcels with the least amount of reclamation required and are near available utilities and roadways that would minimize associated development costs. The parcels scheduled for later phases will require substantial investments and infrastructure improvements that are predicted to occur within the designated time periods but may take longer depending on the market demand generated for these planned uses. It is EC's intent that parcels requiring extensive reclamation would be sold only after reclamation was complete or after receipt of a commitment that the purchaser would perform the necessary reclamation.

Development on some of these areas, such as the parcels designated for the second and third phases in Newport Township, is also dependent on significant access improvements. Phasing of a proposed new transportation alignment would be similar to the Land Use Plan, with the first phase being a proposed road connecting Sans Souci Parkway in Hanover Township to Middle Road near Luzerne County Community College in the City of Nanticoke. Later phases would include corridors to the south of Sugar Notch and Warrior Run and further southwest towards Glen Lyon in Newport Township. The Sans Souci/Middle Road connection would also include a new half-diamond interchange on Route 29 between Exits 2 and 3. The proposed linkage between San Souci Parkway and Middle Road is EC's highest priority transportation project.

Since these roadway improvements would be sponsored by PennDot, the timing is dependent on approval by the Luzerne County Planning Commission and the Luzerne-Lackawanna Transportation Study acting as the local Metropolitan Planning Organization. The timing of

WHILE EC INVESTIGATES POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS FOR THE VARIOUS PROJECTS IN PHASE 1, THEY WILL ALSO BE ACTIVELY PURSUING FUNDS FOR RECLAMATION PROJECTS.

these approvals will affect the timing of industrial development proposed for EC parcels located along the new transportation corridor.

The proposed first phase of land development includes three parcels in Hanover Township adjacent to the Route 29 corridor that are proposed for new industrial development. These parcels, totaling approximately 600 acres of developable land area, are key parcels envisioned to initiate the development process on EC land holdings.

As part of phase 1 development activities, improved utility services would be required to service industrial development on two of these parcels. The costs of these improvements would be borne by the development entity.

Several other significant development proposals in the first phase of development include: two parcels proposed for residential development in Hanover Township, potential expansion of the Community College across Prospect Street on a 42-acre parcel recently reclaimed, and residential development on EC land within Nuangola Borough. These parcels are readily developable and important as initial revenue-generating opportunities for EC in the short-term.

The phasing plan recommends that several of the outlying EC parcels proposed for residential use be sold in Phase 1 since they are not integral components of the plan and are outside the core development areas in Hanover, Newport, and Conyngham Townships.

In addition, there are numerous parcels less than 5 acres in size that are also recommended for sale in accordance with their zoning in the first phase. These initial sales are intended to generate revenues for EC that can contribute to the land reclamation costs associated with other Phase 1 parcels, as well as to the organization's general operating budget over the next two years.

While EC investigates potential development partners for the various projects in Phase 1, they will also be actively pursuing funds for reclamation projects. The Land Use Plan estimates that the reclamation costs for the 3,000 mine-damaged acres of EC land will be \$189,000,000, not including the costs to extinguish mine fires or ameliorate acid mine drainage problems. Costs of this magnitude will require significant assistance from state and federal sources. ♦

Here's to Conservancy's forward-looking plan

The following editorial is reprinted with permission of *The Times Leader*. It appeared in that publication on November 3, 1996.

Just below West Nanticoke, the Susquehanna River rolls down a 6-mile-long straightaway before reaching the great bend by Shickshinny. The straightaway is a second Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. With Shickshinny Mountain to the north, an arm of Penobscot Mountain to the south and little development in between, the canyon is a gem. Its mountain slopes look as thickly forested as when agents of the Susquehanna Company of Connecticut first saw them in 1755.

Drivers on Route 11 can't help but dream of walking along the Penobscot ridgetops on well-maintained trails.

They're in luck.

Under the Earth Conservancy's new land-use plan, the mountain-sides are protected as Escarpment Conservation Districts, destined to remain forever green.

Trails in the proposed Conyngham Regional Park should provide all the overlooks a hiker would need.

And the careful attention to parkland is just one sign the conservancy's land use planning committee did a bang-up job.

The committee approved the plan last week and will forward it to the conservancy's board. The board should approve the plan as well. The document is a model of community planning, and proves that a product produced by committee can be creative and exciting after all.

The committee's plan charts a 25-year-long course for the non-profit conservancy's 16,300 acres. Highlights include the retention of nearly two-thirds of that acreage as parkland or open space; corporate office/business and technology centers near Luzerne County Community College; new residential and/or resort communities scattered

throughout the properties; and an industrial technology center in Newport Township.

The natural edges of the conservancy's holdings include the Susquehanna River and its escarpments to the north, and Penobscot and Wilkes-Barre mountains to the south.

The plan tries to preserve these edge areas as places for people to hike, bike and play, while providing high-quality residential and business development in the center, the document reports.

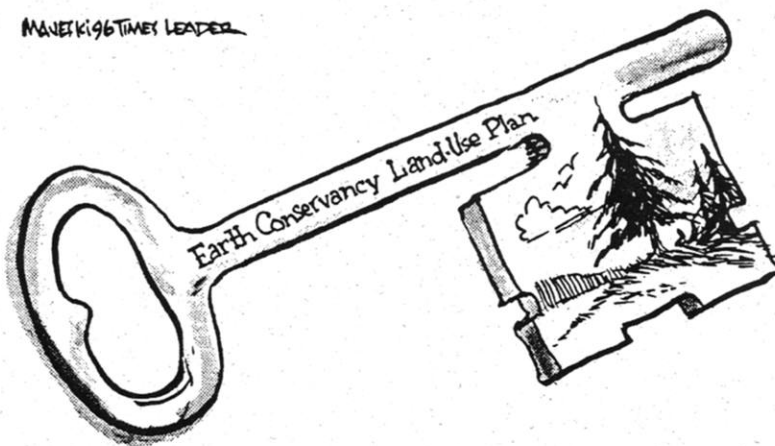
We're impressed with the level of community input that went into the plan. The list of local contributors is two single-spaced pages long. It includes mayors, professors, engineers, architects, environmentalists and business executives, most of whom seem quite satisfied with the finished plan.

We're also impressed with the professionalism of the consulting firm that produced the plan, EDAW Inc. of Alexandria, Va. The conservancy's land use committee, chaired by the indomitable Ed Schechter, oversaw EDAW's efforts and should be proud of the result.

The plan is just a start. Clearing all the culm banks and filling all the mine pits on the Earth Conservancy's land would cost a staggering \$189 million. That's like building four Luzerne County arenas.

But a start in this case was what was needed most. Earth Conservancy officials could have done any of a thousand different things with their land. They chose to control it through a professional master plan, and we think the officials chose well. ♦

MANE KIG6TIMES LEADER



Key to a green future

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Earth Conservancy

UPCOMING MEETINGS

DECEMBER 5, 1996

Board of Directors

at EC offices

8:00 AM

FEBRUARY 6, 1997

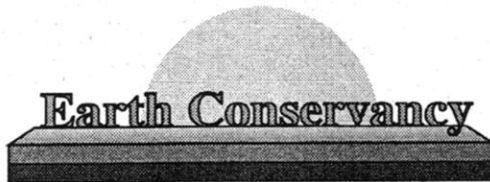
Board of Directors

at EC offices

8:00 AM



Happy Thanksgiving!



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