

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME IV

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March 1998

Earth Conservancy (EC) is a non-profit organization whose mission is... "To serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land in partnership with government, business, and education; and, to develop environmentally related technologies that improve the economic competitiveness and the quality of life of our community."

With primary funding by a grant from the U.S. Department of Defense's Advanced Research Projects Agency in 1994, Earth Conservancy purchased the bankrupt Blue Coal Corporation properties, more than 16,300 acres in 20 municipalities. Since the land was purchased, Earth Conservancy has been involved in projects and activities aimed at returning the land to the best use of the community, bringing new jobs to Luzerne County, and improving the quality of life for area residents by creating new recreational opportunities.

Officers of the corporation are Christopher N. Breiseth, Chairman; Mark Dingman, Vice Chairman; Susan W. Shoval, Secretary; Harold C. Snowdon, Jr., Treasurer; and Michael A. Dziak, President and Chief Executive Officer.

Other members of the Board are Margaret Bakker, Stephen Barrouk, Joseph Hillan, A. Peter Kanjorski, Fr. James Lackenmier, C.S.C., James Manley, Robert Mericle, Edward Schechter and Rhea Simms.

Earth Conservancy's accomplishments over the past year reflects the efforts of the staff, the Board of Directors, and many community participants. EC would like to thank everyone who has played a part in the development of this organization. Here are some highlights of EC's achievements:

1997 Annual Report to the Community

1997 Major Accomplishments

Planning

- Met with local, state and federal political leaders and state cabinet members to present the Land Use Plan and begin the education/implementation recommendations of the Plan. The Land Use Plan was developed by a 38-member volunteer committee with direction from EDAW, Inc., an internationally-recognized landscape architecture and environmental planning firm located in Alexandria, Virginia. Serving on the volunteer committee were representatives of the municipalities in which EC's land is located, County representatives, environmental groups, business people, educators, engineers and architects. The results of the Land Use Plan identified uses for EC's land as follows: approximately 10,200 acres to remain as open space/recreation areas, 2,750 acres to be used for residential development, 2,300 acres to be used for business and industries that would create new jobs and 1,000 acres for resort/recreational. The majority of the lands acquired by EC (67% of the total acreage) have been designated for open space and recreational use.
- An Open Space Steering Committee was formed in anticipation of the creation of the Open Space Implementation Plan for the 10,200 acres of EC lands designated as Open Space or Recreation Use in the Land Use Plan. After a process of mailing Requests for Proposals to eleven firms and receipt of three Proposals, the Open Space Selection Committee proceeded to evaluate the three consultant/teams bidding on the Plan.

The Committee chose EDAW to perform EC's Open Space Master Plan.

Environmental Projects

- Completed approximately \$400,000 in land reclamation projects on approximately 106 acres in Newport Township (45 acres), Hanover Township (58 acres) and Nanticoke (3 acres).
- Assisted Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), Bureau of Abandoned Mineland Reclamation, to complete the reclamation of approximately 370 acres of EC land in Newport Township (330 acres), Sugar Notch Borough (35 acres) and Ashley Borough (5 acres). Environmental projects on EC lands also included other work done to reclaim property, such as culm and silt removal.
- Evaluated and prioritized short and long range reclamation and development projects on EC land.
- Worked with PA DEP to set priorities for DEP-sponsored projects on EC land. Identified parcels of land in Hanover and Plains Townships as priorities during 1998 and 1999.
- Received funding for and conducted Phase I and II Environmental Assessments of the Cleveland Site, a 40-acre flood debris disposal area in Hanover Township. Funding for the assessment work performed at the site was provided by the Luzerne County Office of Community Development and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (PA DCED) under the Industrial Sites Reuse Program (ISRP). The

1997 Annual Report to the Community

completion of the assessments paves the way for the adjacent land to be developed for the first phase of a multi-use industrial/business park.

- Completed the design of Phase II of the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Wetland Grant Project which consists of construction of an acid mine drainage (AMD) treatment wetland at the Askam Borehole/Dundee Outfall site along Dundee Road in Hanover Township. Phase I of the grant, construction of the AMD-Treatment wetland near Loomis Park (Hanover Township), was completed in 1996.
- Worked cooperatively with the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to develop a proposal for watershed assessments on EC lands for submission to various funding agencies. EC also worked with the Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mineland Reclamation (EPCAMR) toward watershed assessment/improvement activities. Once assessments of the watersheds encompassed by EC's lands are completed, implementation plans followed by remedial efforts, if required, can be started. This approach would allow EC to effectively address mining-related problems in the watersheds in a methodical manner.
- Cooperated with various groups and municipalities in the application of the Upper Susquehanna-Lackawanna Watershed to become an American Heritage River.
- Through a partnership with Ashley Borough, EC prepared, submitted and was awarded a grant from PA DEP through the Public/Private Partnership Recycling Grant Program in the amount of \$295,000 to purchase equipment for use at EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Compost Facility
- Expanded participation of local communities in the composting program to eleven (11). John Bergold, Director of Recycling for the City of Wilkes-Barre, nominated EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Compost Facility for a Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC) 1997 Business for a Green America (BGA) Award.
- Met with a paper and pulp mill operation in Pennsylvania to discuss a potential composting project using paper pulp to produce a substitute topsoil mixture.

Natural Resources

- Finalized contracts for the purchase of silt at the Loomis Silt Basin. Removal of the silt has begun. The contract is for two years at a minimum.
- Completed silt removal from an EC parcel located at the corner of Prospect Street and Middle Road in Nanticoke.
- Evaluated the potential for remining on parcels in Wilkes-Barre and Newport Townships.
- Pursued contracts for sale of mine refuse material for use on the Wyoming Valley Levee Raising Project with potential bidders.
- Selective timbering took place on approximately 330 acres of land located primarily in Conyngham and Hanover Townships. These activities were overseen by a consulting forester.

General Operations

- Authorized the expansion of the Board of Directors from 12 to 15 members.
- Completed refinancing of EC's debt with a \$1,600,000 loan agreement with eight banks participating. This allowed for repayment of bank and other loans that were made to EC for the purchase of the land.
- Completed the production feasibility running of the WaterJet Munitions Washout System at Crane Naval Base in Crane, Indiana. The system is being modified to handle a new shell configuration and modified water handling system. A contract is being negotiated to start production runs of the system. Potential income from commercializing the system is being looked at to help fund EC's land reclamation efforts.
- EC was successful in identifying non-traditional financing opportunities to fund the recommendations of the Land Use Plan. Met with representatives of Fannie Mae in Washington, D.C. to pursue funding for both industrial and residential land development on EC land.
- Received support for the Sans Souci Parkway to Luzerne County Community College (LCCC) connector from the Luzerne County Planning Commission, the Luzerne County Office of Community Development, the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry

(GWBCBI) Transportation Committee and Northampton Fuel Supply Company. The project is fourth on the County's priority list. This project will solve major traffic concerns along Middle Road, improve access to LCCC and create access to a prime 375-acre industrial parcel owned by EC in Hanover Township.

- Identified a need and requested PennDOT to consider a design change for Exit 46 off I-81 to improve access to Route 81 South from Route 115 and accommodate access to EC's parcels on the east side of Route 81. The potential to do initial work to expand the exit has been discussed and tentatively agreed to by PennDOT. The ultimate goal is to have a connector road from Exit 46 to Route 115 at the East Mountain Corporate Park entrance in lieu of the fly-over ramp that has been proposed in the past.
- Received \$100,000 in funding for the Open Space Master Plan (\$50,000 from the Luzerne County Office of Community Development and \$50,000 from a Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund Program grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (PA DCNR). A grant application has been made to PA DCED under the Community Revitalization Program to secure additional funding to complete the plan per consultant's cost estimates.
- The focus of the Archiving Project was redirected from simply archiving the original surface and sub-surface coal mining maps to digitizing the maps. This would enable EC and state and federal mining agencies to utilize the information on the maps for surveying purposes, identification of mining hazards, etc. Several interviews with service groups were held in 1997 to determine the best way to digitize the maps.
- Received an operating grant from The Arcadia Foundation and a grant from The Air Products Foundation in support of operations at EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Compost facility.

1997 Annual Report to the Community

Land Disposition Activities

- Major land parcels identified in Phase I of the Land Use Plan have been appraised, some surveyed and offered for sale.
- Land sales TOTALS compiled from the start of EC to 12/31/97: Number of Parcels Sold - 197; Acres Sold - 251; Dollar Volume - \$1,972,100; Local Taxes - \$8,500; School Taxes - \$57,600; County Taxes: \$22,000; Taxes Total - \$88,100. The majority of this land will be used for residential purposes. Over a dozen new homes have already been constructed on parcels which have been sold and we anticipate that many more will be built in the future.
- Cherry Lane Residential Development, a nine-acre 23-lot subdivision located in Hanover Township, has been approved and bid packages are out for infrastructure development.
- Most sales to adjacent land owners have been completed and closed.
- Several parcels were committed for donation to communities, including parcels in Sugar Notch, Warrior Run, Conyngham and Newport Townships. EC donated this land for recreation/municipal use.

Community Relations

- EC brochure has been updated.
- A "white paper" on the year-long community planning process which resulted in EC's Land Use Plan was completed and submitted to Pennsylvania's Environment.
- Two (2) issues of Earth Conservancy News were produced and mailed to those individuals and groups on our mailing list.
- Held a kick-off meeting for the receipt of the PA DCED Industrial Sites Reuse Program grant to be used toward the Phase I and II Environmental Assessments of the Cleveland Site in Hanover Township. The meeting was attended by many state and local dignitaries.
 - Gave presentations about EC and our mission to

various groups, including: The Abandoned Mineland Reclamation and AMD Conference at Penn State's Schuylkill Campus; Pennsylvania 21st Century Environmental Commission Regional Roundtable; Architectural and Sociology Class at LCCC; Scranton Rotary; NEPA Builder's Association; Regional Economic Summit Conference; Grade School students at Wyoming Valley West Third Avenue Elementary; Wyoming Women's Club; and the Myers Junior High Assembly. Represented EC at the NEPA Environmental Partnership Awards and Dinner, Luzerne Foundation's Tri-Funathon and at the Fourth Annual Pennsylvania Environmental Congress.

1998 Goals

Planning

- Secure additional funding for and complete Open Space Master Plan for 10,000 acres of EC land.
- Complete an agreement with the GWBCBI, secure funding and complete the first phase of a Master Plan for the 1,200 acre Route 29 Corridor Multi-Use Business Park.

Environmental Projects

- Gain approval from PA DEP to conduct a Pilot Scale Composting Program using paper pulp generated by a paper and pulp mill operation located in Pennsylvania. Pursue research on additional demonstration projects to compost material other than yard and leaf waste.
- Complete construction of Phase II of our AMD-Wetland Treatment Project at the Askam Borehole/Dundee Outfall site along Dundee Road in Hanover Township.
- Solicit funding and complete capping of the 40-acre flood debris disposal area at the Cleveland Site in Hanover Township.
- Assist PA DEP, Bureau of Abandoned Mineland Reclamation, in completing approximately 100 acres of reclamation in Plymouth, Newport and Hanover Townships.
- Solicit funding for watershed assessments and management plans for the watersheds within EC's land holdings.

1998 Goals

Continue work with EPCAMR and local groups toward improvement of environmental conditions in the watershed.

- Finalize grant agreement and purchase \$295,000 in equipment for the EC Yard and Leaf Waste Compost Facility to improve operations and offer an increased capacity to compost material from participating municipalities.

Natural Resources

- Test and evaluate culm banks in Warrior Run for possible use in cogeneration plants and work to secure a market and pursue leases for the culm material.
- Continue to research and field identify large parcel areas for possible selective timber harvesting.
- Continue to market coal refuse material for use in the levee raising project.
- Investigate the potential for mixing topsoil and compost material to produce a higher quality substitute soil mix.

UPCOMING BOARD OF DIRECTORS AND MEMBERS MEETINGS AT EC OFFICES 8:00 AM

for next 6 months

April 2, 1998 • May 7, 1998

June 4, 1998 • July 2, 1998

August 6, 1998 • September 3, 1998

(Please refer to monthly notices in the Citizens' Voice and The Times Leader for possible changes)

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General Operations

- Pursue priority ranking and funding from the State Transportation Committee for Segment #1 of EC's Preferred Transportation Plan linking the Sans Souci Parkway with Middle Road near LCCC.
- Work with the GWBCBI and Luzerne County to conceptually plan and seek priority ranking for the proposed Exit 46 off I-81 to Route 115 connector road.
- Continue to secure firm commitment for use of the WaterJet munitions washout system.
- Continue to identify non-traditional financing opportunities to fund the recommendations of the Land Use Plan.
- Work cooperatively with the United States Office of Surface Mining (OSM) in Wilkes-Barre to complete EC's Archiving Project.
- Lease space in EC's building.

Land Disposition Activities

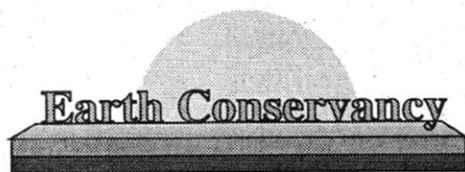
- Secure financing arrangements and complete construction of Cherry Lane Residential Development and market for sale the residential building lots at Cherry Lane.
- Make available, through sub-division, residential building lots in various communities to provide growth and increased tax revenues to these communities.
- Complete negotiations with the GWBCBI on a 190 acre industrial site in Hanover Township. The plan will include long range development plans for adjacent properties.
- Continue to locate and identify various original land grant and coal company

boundary monuments on EC lands for Global Positioning System (GPS) and survey control.

- Continue to provide, as appropriate, EC parcels at no cost or below market price for community and not-for-profit use.
- Review all unsold parcels previously offered to adjacent landowners to determine best use.
- Continue to liquidate small parcels and execute Phase I of the Land Use Plan.

Community Relations

- Update EC's brochure to reflect changes in the Board of Directors.
- Complete EC's Internet homepage and investigate the feasibility of placing the Land Use Plan on the Internet.
- Publish Earth Conservancy News upon completion of milestone accomplishments and mail to those individuals and groups on our mailing list.
- Organize media events as required. Continue news releases (for publication) to the Citizens Voice and Times Leader concerning date and time of Board Meetings in order to notify the general public of same.
- Continue EC's work and association with the Luzerne County Greenways and Open Space Alliance, the Delaware and Lehigh Canal National Heritage Corridor Association's Wyoming Valley Reach task force and other such Luzerne County committees and organizations to ensure continuity of EC's Open Space Master Plan with other activities in the area and to support these local efforts to improve the quality of life of our region.



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