

# EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

## Special points of interest:

- EC, in partnership with other environmental organizations, has reclaimed more than 885 acres of mine scarred lands at a cost of \$13.1 million
- Developed plans for reclamation of an additional 1,095 acres at an estimated cost of \$53.5 million
- Sold 1,354 acres valued at \$7.9 million, which financed reclamation initiatives
- Donated 166 acres valued at \$1.5 million to 21 beneficiary entities
- Developed in-depth land use plans unprecedented in the Wyoming Valley which resulted in Rt. 29 South Valley Parkway Project and the I-81 Exit 168/Rt. 115 Connector Road Project

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## EC AWARDED GROWING GREENER GRANT

EC's Sugar Notch project received much needed support from Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in November when it was awarded a Growing Greener grant to continue reclamation work on the project.

Kathleen McGinty, secretary of the DEP, came to Ashley to present EC with a \$100 thousand grant from the State's Growing Greener Fund for Phase III of the Sugar Notch, Huber and Preston Bank Reclamation Project. The award was part of a \$5.5 million campaign to assist conservation groups in cleaning up watersheds, enhancing environmental protection and revitalizing communities.

The funds will be used to reclaim a portion of the



Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty gives Growing Greener grant award to Earth Conservancy for reclamation work in Sugar Notch. Pictured l to r: Rhea Simms, EC Board of Directors Chairwoman; Rep. John Yudichak (D-119); Mike Dziak, President/CEO of EC; Mayor Patrick Mullin, Sugar Notch; Secy. McGinty.

189-acre site that will result in a 50-acre residential development.

While here, Secy. McGinty praised EC for reclamation efforts it has already undertaken and for

working to change the landscape of Luzerne County.

This award is the second Growing Greener

(Continued on page 5, GREENER)

## EC BOARD HOLDS VISIONING SESSION CREATES NEW VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

As EC approached its 10-year anniversary, members of the board of directors participated in a visioning session in September 2004 designed to evaluate the accomplishments of

the first 10 years, objectives that guided its work and establish strategic directives for the future.

During the day-long session, members participated in working group

sessions, led by a professional facilitator, where they reviewed EC's work to date, evaluated the progress of the non-profit organization, identified chal-

(Continued on page 4, VISION)

# SOLOMON'S CREEK CLEANED UP

EC was a recipient of a 2004 Streamside Cleanup grant that provided all resources and volunteers necessary to clean a portion of Solomon's Creek. The program was sponsored by the Wyoming Valley Watershed Coalition, which is a pro-

gram of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

The event brought out more than 50 volunteers of all ages to the lower section of Solomon's Creek, which runs through the Ashley Planes, to rid the area of all

evidence of litter, trash and illegal dumping.

As part of a larger statewide event, the Great PA Cleanup, the Streamside Cleanup focused on raising awareness of environmental issues and of the effects of litter, trash and illegal dumping on Pennsylvania's streams, trails and sidewalks. Portions of three other area streams were also cleaned up as part of the daylong event including, Toby's Creek, Nanticoke Creek and Abraham's Creek. From the four sites, more

*(Continued on page 4, CLEANUP)*



More than 300 tires were removed from sites as part of the stream cleanup.

*EC operates a leaf and yard waste compost facility that is open to the public. Call 736-6609 for details.*

## EC WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

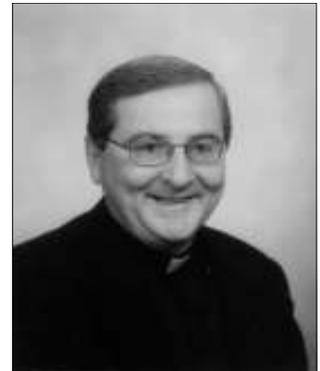
EC is happy to welcome two new members of the board of directors, the Rev. John Ryan, C.S.C., Ph.D., and Patricia C. Donohue, Ph.D.

Rev. Ryan comes to EC from Kings College, where he serves as Director of the William G. McGowan School of Business. Prior to his appointment as director of the business school, Rev. Ryan was a tenured Associate Professor of Business at the college, where he taught business since 1994. Also since then, Rev. Ryan has served as Catholic Priest/Parish Assistance for the Diocese of Scranton.

Rev. Ryan received his Bachelor's degree in accounting from Wilkes University. He received a Master of Business Administration from St. Joseph's University in Phila-

delphia and a Master of Divinity from the University of Toronto, in Ontario. Rev. Ryan earned his Ph.D. in Business Administration from Temple University, in Philadelphia.

Dr. Donohue is President of Luzerne County Community College (LCCC), where she is the sixth individual to hold



**Rev. John Ryan C.S.C., Ph.D.**

that position.

Prior to her presidency at LCCC, Dr. Donohue served as vice-chancellor for education at St. Louis Community College and as acting president of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley.

In her distinguished education career, Dr. Donohue has served in a

*(Continued on page 5, NEW)*



**Patricia C. Donohue, Ph.D.**

## FIVE RETIRE FROM EC BOARD

The New Year brought noticeable changes to EC's Board of Directors, with five members retiring from dedicated service to the non-profit organization. The retiring members, whose contributions helped to carry forward EC's mission include: Margaret Bakker, A. Peter Kanjorski, Robert Matley, Lawrence Newman, and Rev. Thomas O'Hara.

Each of the retiring board members served for varying periods, but all made positive impacts,

with each putting his or her personal stamp on EC's work.

A. Peter Kanjorski was a member of the original group of concerned citizens that formed to address mine-scarred lands, which would become Earth Conservancy. From 1992 until the end of 2004, he offered sound advice and direction to a fledgling organization.

Margaret Bakker first became involved with EC as a committee member for



A. Peter Kanjorski, Esq. accepts a commemorative plaque from Mike Dziak.

the *Land Use Plan*. She joined the board in January 1997, and during the next six-plus years provided invaluable input on all of

*(Continued on page 4, RETIREES)*

## COUNTY SUPPORTS ASHLEY PLANES PROJECT

Plans to create the Ashley Planes Heritage Park took a step closer to becoming a reality recently when Luzerne County Commissioners showed their support for the project by agreeing to provide financial assistance to complete the project.

Covering a 500-acre

area, the Ashley Planes Heritage Park when completed will be one of the Wyoming Valley's most significant historic sites. The park, currently in the planning stages, will provide visitors with a glimpse of what was once a state-of-the-art transport system for moving coal from the

valley floor up and over the Wilkes-Barre Mountain and on to markets up and down the east coast.

The Ashley Planes are important because of their significance to America's engineering and transportation history and their important role in Pennsyl-

*(Continued on page 5, ASHLEY)*

*EC's Phase II wetlands treats up to 500 gallons of Acid Mine Drainage per minute and removes about 95% of iron deposits.*

## EC COMPLETES ATV FEASIBILITY STUDY

There are potential alternatives for legal All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) riding in the Lower Wyoming Valley. That is the conclusion of the long anticipated ATV Feasibility Study conducted by EC.

Funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Luzerne

County and EC, the final report details findings of the steering committee and project consultant Pennoni Associates.

The steering committee explored ATV-related issues including: the increase of illegal ATV riding on EC land, Pennsylvania State Game lands and other private property near residen-

tial areas and on public streets; the desire of the Luzerne County ATV community to find legal riding areas; potential ATV facility ownership and operational alternatives in Lower Wyoming Valley; and, potential areas for ATV facility development in the Lower Wyoming Valley.

*(Continued on page 6, ATV)*

(VISION, Continued from page 1)  
lenges facing EC and reviewed board and staff roles within the organization.

Board members also reviewed the organizational vision and mission statements, which were created 10 years ago during a visioning session, to ensure that their focus remains current, relevant and dedicated to preserving the environment and revitalizing the economy of the Lower Wyoming Valley. The new vision and mission statements reflect the experience of a decade of work by Earth Conservancy to reclaim and reutilize mine scarred lands in Luzerne County.

The recently adopted revised Vision Statement reads:

“Earth Conservancy will lead our communities in the reclamation of mine-scarred lands and streams, returning strong economic, environmental and social value by creating a well planned vibrant valley, protected by green ridge tops.”

The new vision state-



Facilitator Lilia Nice discusses EC initiatives with Board Chairwoman Rhea Simms and President/CEO Mike Dziak.

ment reflects a streamlined focus achieved after 10-plus years of experience by board members and staff through environmental reclamation work that fostered partnerships with organizations, government agencies, businesses and civic groups all sharing similar goals.

The new vision statement succinctly states the

vision of the non-profit organization while the mission statement details the operational objectives that guide daily work.

The Mission Statement reads:

“EC is a non-profit organization committed to the reclamation and return of 16,000 acres of former coal company-owned land to the region. It collaborates with local communities, government agencies, educational institutions, and the private sector to spearhead the creation and implementation of plans that restore the land’s economic, recreational, residential and ecological value.

To achieve these objectives, Earth Conservancy:

1. Develops sustainable land-use plans
2. Commits to provide 10,000 acres for recreation and open space
3. Leads reclamation efforts of mine scarred lands and water resources and

(Continued on page 5, VISION)

EC Executive Administrator John Renfer presents a report to board members during the session.



*EC is committed to providing 10,000 acres of recreation and open space.*

(RETIREES, Cont. from page 3)  
EC’s projects.

Rev. Thomas O’Hara joined the board in July 1999 and since that date has enthusiastically provided leadership and advice on EC’s projects.

Lawrence Newman became a board member in May 2001. His keen business sense made his contributions to EC sound

and resolute.

Robert Matley joined EC’s board in December 2002. During his time on the board, Mr. Matley made important contributions to the board’s work in guiding the organization.

The retiring board members sincerely supported the work of Earth Conservancy. Their dedicated service will be missed.

(CLEANUP, Cont. from page 2)  
than 300 tires were removed, along with 2,200 pounds of scrap metal and four tons of debris.

Another cleanup is planned for this year

*Visit [www.wmwc.org](http://www.wmwc.org) for details on this year’s stream cleanup*

(ASHLEY, Continued from page 3)  
vania's anthracite industry. For that reason, the Planes were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

Built in 1848, they were the primary means of transporting millions of tons of anthracite from the floor of the Wyoming Valley over Wilkes-Barre Mountain and to White Haven.

For nearly 50 years, the 500-acre area sat dormant. In 1998, Earth Conservancy's *Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan*, proposed the creation

of the Ashley Planes Heritage Park, which would open the site for hiking, biking and educational opportunities.

The plans call for construction of a parking area, restroom building, informational kiosk area and a mile-long trail with interpretive signage telling of the historic ruins. The total park area

would be approximately 500 acres.

For the project, EC is partnering with Luzerne County, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Penn DOT and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor to complete the project. Ashley Planes will become a Luzerne county park when completed, with the County assuming ownership and operation.



Visitors relax along Solomon's Creek in the Ashley Planes.

(VISION, Continued from page 4)  
guides their reutilization

4. Funds its work through the sale of Conservancy land and other resources and through public and private sector partners
5. Partners with local communities to achieve our mission

6. Educates the community-at-large on environmental issues, the benefits of reclamation and effective land-use planning."

The revised mission statement conveys how EC will achieve its mission. Although the new vision and mission statements retain the original intent of EC's founders,

they reflect the insight gained by experience and working knowledge.

A task force comprised of board members lead by Anne Glauber crafted the new statements after preliminary work was completed at the visioning retreat. Board members who donated time to this important revision work included: EC President/CEO Mike Dziak, Bernie

(NEW, Continued from page 2)  
variety of leadership positions in educational institutions and has received many awards for meritorious service, including the Central Penn Technology Council's Outstanding Service Award.

Dr. Donohue received an A.B. in Mathematics from Duke University. She received an M.A. in

Mathematics and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Missouri—Kansas City.

EC welcomes both Rev. Ryan and Dr. Donohue.

*See a complete list of EC's Board of Directors on page 8*

(GREENER, Cont. from page 1)  
Grant EC has been awarded for this project. In 2003, EC was awarded \$500 thousand of a requested \$958,000 for the entire project.

While in Ashley Secy. McGinty toured several of EC's project sites with EC President/CEO Mike Dziak.

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## I-81 EXIT 168/RT. 115 CONNECTOR ROAD PROJECT MOVES FORWARD WITH CAUTION

More than a year after a master plan for the I-81 Exit 168/Rt. 115 Connector Road Project was completed, progress toward implementation is happening slowly, with key zoning changes occurring in two of the municipalities involved in the project.

To accommodate Penn DOT's requirements for the proposed project, Wilkes-Barre Township officials in January 2005 approved a necessary zoning change of 120 acres from Conservation to Busi-

ness (B-2). Laurel Run Borough also approved a zoning change from Conservation to Residential (R-2).

Several public meetings were held as part of the planning process. The master plan details strategies for improving access to I-81 from SR 115 via a connector road running between Exit 168 of I-81 and SR 115 along the southern side of the Interstate. The proposed connector road would make accessing the Interstate safer and easier

than the current travel route. The original access road was closed more than 10 years ago after a number of vehicle accidents occurred on the ramp.

In addition to improving access, the master plan calls for economic enhancements including commercial and corporate space, residential development and recreational outlets.

The plan also proposes a visitors' center be located at the western end of

*(Continued on page 7, EXIT)*

*The ATV Feasibility Study Final Report will soon be available on EC's website.*

*(ATV, Continued from page 3)*

ATV facility ownership alternatives that were explored, included EC ownership, DCNR ownership, Luzerne County ownership, private individual or group ownership, and non-profit organization ownership.

The steering committee found: EC ownership is not within the mission of the non-profit mine-land reclamation organization; DCNR ownership is unlikely. However, county, private, or non-profit organization ownership were discovered to be potential alternatives for ownership and operation.

The group also looked at several areas within the Lower Wyoming Valley for ATV facility placement. An area in Plymouth Township was determined to have too many obstacles for ATV facility placement due to smaller, disjointed

parcels of available land, poor opportunities for connection between parcels, and an absence of local government support.

An area in Newport Township was determined to be a potential location for the placement of an ATV facility because of larger, more open tracts of land and tentative local government interest.

The steering committee made the following conclusions:

- Establishing an ATV trail facility could help to reduce illegal ATV riding, and could contribute to the local economy.
- Steering committee members preferred a trail facility that would be a system of trails linking "challenge" areas.
- One recommended ownership alternative is that of a governmental entity or agency that would pur-

chase land and develop the trail facility, which could allow local ATV clubs or a consortium of clubs to participate in the planning, development and operation of the system.

- A second ownership alternative is the purchase of land by a government entity or agency, which would then lease the land to a club or consortium of clubs for the development, operation and maintenance
- Tower City Trail Riders, Inc., serves as a leading model demonstrating the potential success that a trail/riding facility can achieve.

EC would like to thank all members of the steering committee for the ATV study who generously donated their time and talent to the comple-

## SOUTH VALLEY PARKWAY PROJECT SEEKING ADDITIONAL FUNDING SOURCES

Plans to relieve congestion along the roads of the Lower Wyoming Valley with the South Valley Parkway Project (SVP) are moving forward, but participants in the project are searching for additional monies to fund the work.

The SVP project would create a much-needed new highway connecting State Route 29 in the north to Kirmar Parkway in Newport Township. The planned road would alleviate congestion around Luzerne County Commu-

nity College, improve safety along Middle Road and enhance access to Sans Souci Parkway.

Equally important, the project would provide economic development opportunities for the Lower Wyoming Valley that do not currently exist. The new highway would open the area for positive growth.

Project participants include Penn DOT, Luzerne County, residents and elected officials from Nanticoke, Newport and Hanover townships, our state and

federal legislators, the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry and EC.

Plans for the project are nearing the final stages, with project participants working together to determine the best design for the project.

A final decision will be made this year regarding which plan will be implemented. Initially, six alternatives were considered for the highway. Each of plans were presented at public meetings.

## PENOBSCOT RIDGE BIKE TRAIL PLANS COMPLETED

Cyclists will soon be able to meander along a leisurely trail or toil away at more challenging terrain when EC completes the Penobscot Ridge Bike Trail Project.

Plans were recently completed for the project by McLane Associates, which call for the creation

of two parking areas in Newport Township, picnicking areas adjacent to both parking lots and directional signage for the two trails.

The project was first suggested in *EC's Lower Wyoming Open Space Master Plan* but moved forward after Luzerne County

funded planning for the bike trail. Penn DOT will fund the construction phase of the project.

The two proposed trails will meet the needs of riders at all levels of experience. The primary trail will be easy to moderate, suitable for families, and the secondary trail is more difficult, catering to experienced trail riders.

Construction is expected to begin later this year.

*(EXIT, Continued from page 6)*  
the site, which would house county-wide resource information.

The inclusion of access to recreational amenities is an important part of the plan. The site is located in the vicinity of both the Seven Tubs Nature Area, and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor (D&L) Trail System Backtrack Trail.

The comprehensive

design of the project, including retail, commercial, residential and recreational amenities and will help to create economic development opportunities and a more livable community.

Funding was provided by Luzerne County, the United States Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA) and EC.

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*Find a complete list of land available for sale on EC's website  
www.earthconservancy.org*



Local cyclists will soon have a designated trail area in Wanamie for easy and challenging riding.

*Visit us on the Web!*  
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