

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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Accomplishments to date:

- 938 acres reclaimed at a cost of \$13.4 million
- 1,215 acres in process or planning at an estimated cost of \$54.7 million
- Donated 166 acres valued at \$1.7 million to 21 local entities
- Paid off original mortgage on loan for purchase in 1994 of Blue Coal lands
- Sold 1,600 acres

2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS REVIEWED BANNER YEAR FOR RECLAMATION EFFORTS



Governor Edward Rendell presents a check to Earth Conservancy Board Chairperson Rhea Simms and President/CEO Mike Dziak. Looking on are Sen. Raphael Musto (l), Cong. Paul E. Kanjorski (c), and Luzerne County Commissioner Todd Vonderheid (r).

Earth Conservancy (EC) realized many important goals in 2005, bringing the non-profit organization closer to achieving its vision for a more environmentally and economically healthy Lower Wyoming Valley.

A number of reclamation projects were completed or moved significantly closer to completion, including the Huber I site, located adjacent to Exit 1 of Route 29, the Cleveland Landfill, a site of the Agnes Flood dump, and the Avondale Pit, which is a project of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) on EC property.

The Penobscot Ridge

Bike Trail was completed and is ready for bicycling and hiking enthusiasts. Phase II of the Greater Hanover Area Recreation Park was completed with the seeding of soccer and baseball fields.

In 2005, EC's work was supported by state and federal agencies through funding awards totaling nearly \$3.6 million dollars for reclamation activities. The awards show a commitment to the revitalization of mine scarred lands by these agencies.

The Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development awarded EC a total of \$2.4 million in funding to reclaim the Huber III site. Of those funds, \$1.3

million is in the form of a low-interest loan, and \$1.1 million is in grant funds. All the funds will be used to rehabilitate the site, which sits at the southern entrance to the Hanover Industrial Estates business park. Once reclamation work is completed, the site will be available for industrial/commercial uses.

The PA DEP awarded EC \$602,000 through its Energy Harvest grant program for the reclamation of Bliss Bank. EC will work in partnership with Northampton Fuel to reutilize the coal waste material located on the property for generation of electric power. The grant was the largest in the history of the program.

(Continued on page 4, ANNUAL)

PENOBSCOT RIDGE TRAIL COMPLETED

When the spring flowers begin to bloom and area residents feel like getting a little outdoor activity, the newly completed Penobscot Ridge Mountain Bike Trail will offer both an opportunity to get some exercise while enjoying the beautiful surroundings in the Lower Wyoming Valley.

Located in Wanamie, the trails offer an easy and a more challenging route for both hiking and bicycling. At either end of the trail are picnicking facilities, including tables, grills, waste receptacles and ample parking.

The Penobscot Ridge Mountain Bike Area en-

compasses the large reclaimed areas of land to the south of Wanamie and the conservation lands of Penobscot Ridge. The combination of existing trails on the site, interesting vegetation,

open fields, wooded areas and mine features make mountain biking an ideal low-impact use for the site.

One trailhead is located on West Kirmar Parkway adjacent to Regional Equipment Center. The second trailhead is located just off Kirmar Parkway on Brown Row.

Planning funds for the project were provided by the Luzerne County Office of Community Development. Construction funds were provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. McLane Associates performed the design work.



The Penobscot Ridge Mountain Bike Trail features two trailheads each with picnic and parking areas.

Vision Statement

EC 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.

LAND USE STUDY SET FOR EC'S PLYMOUTH LANDS

A new study to be conducted by EC will determine potential uses for some of its lands in Plymouth Township.

Funded by Luzerne County Office of Community Development, the study will develop a master plan for more than 350 acres EC owns in the township. The Plymouth Township Land Use Feasibility Study will explore options for making the best use of developable lands for

residential and recreational amenities.

The primary goal of the study is to create a high quality residential and recreational development plan that addresses both environmental and economic issues within the township.

As part of the study, a market plan will identify, assess and update residential markets in the area as well as

determining potential for recreational uses on the lands.

Borton Lawson, Inc. has been hired to conduct the study.

Preliminary work has begun on the study. Plymouth Township officials and other stakeholders have been contacted for inclusion on the steering committee. The study is expected to be com-

TWO BOARD MEMBERS COMPLETE SERVICE

EC recently said goodbye to Susan Shoval and Anne Glauber, two members of the Board of Directors whose terms ended December 31, 2005.

Susan Shoval was a member of Earth Conservancy's first board of directors in 1992 and served continuously through the end of her term. She is EC's longest serving board member.

Ms. Shoval played a pivotal role in the development of EC, its mission and accomplishments, guiding its efforts to reclaim and revitalize mine scarred lands in Luzerne County

with consistent commitment to hold fast to established goals and objectives.

She participated on the EC Land Use Plan steering committee, assisting in the formulation of a plan that would responsibly and effectively manage the lands EC acquired through the purchase of the former Blue Coal Mining Company.

Ms. Shoval invested herself in the workings of EC, demonstrating her commitment to its mission by remaining current on issues relative

to EC operation.

Anne Glauber was appointed to EC's board in 2001 and throughout her term provided invaluable guidance in the formulation of revised organizational vision and mission statements.

Ms. Glauber contributed her professional expertise in capturing the essence of the board's goals and objectives for the future of the organization by assisting in the re-examination of its important guiding principals.

EC WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

EC recently welcomed three new members to its board of directors. Diane Kopcha Katlic, Thomas L. Blaskiewicz and Daryl L. Pawlush were each recently appointed to the board, bringing the total number to 14.

Ms. Kopcha Katlic is an attorney in private practice in Shavertown. Her current professional associations include, vice chair of the Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority, Luzerne County Railway Authority, the PA Joint State Government Commission Advisory Committee on Adoption Law, the Luzerne County Law and Library Association and the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

Her community affiliations currently include the board of directors of the Luzerne County Community College Foundation, board of directors of the Wilkes-Barre-Scranton Penguins

Booster Club. She has also served on the President's Council of Wyoming Seminary.

Ms. Kopcha Katlic is currently a certified USA Level 3 ice hockey coach and has coached at the high school, JV and varsity levels.

Ms. Kopcha Katlic was the first woman to serve as Assistant County Solicitor for Luzerne County. Mr. Blaskiewicz is the Deputy Director of the Pennsylvania Lottery. He has worked for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for 18 years.

His civic associations include Scranton State School for the Deaf, Northeast Baseball (Red Barons) for which he

serves as vice president, Fidelity Bank Advisory Board and the Luzerne County Hospital & Education Authority.

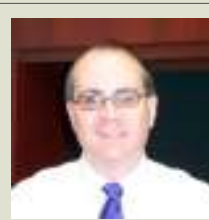
Mr. Pawlush serves as project manager for Michael J. Pasonick, Jr. Engineering Inc., where he has worked since 1983.

A dedicated community advocate, Mr. Pawlush served as a Conyngham Township supervisor from 1994—January 2006. During that time he participated as a member of the steering committee that created the EC Land Use Plan.

He is president of the Northwest Area Little League and the Moca-naqua Sporting Club and is a lifetime full member of the Harley Owner's Group.



Diane Kopcha Katlic



Thomas Blaskiewicz



Daryl Pawlush

SUGAR NOTCH TRAIL BEING PLANNED AS RECLAMATION WORK CONTINUES

EC recently completed plans for a recreational hiking and bicycling trail in Sugar Notch and Hanover Township. The trail is being planned for the 186-acre site where a 50-acre portion is being reclaimed for use a residential development.

Tucked in a wooded area south of Main Street, the Sugar Notch reclamation site has beautiful views of the valley, a stream meandering through and remnants of the old Wilkes-Barre and Hazelton rail line.

Unfortunately, a 50-acre portion of the site is scarred by past mining activities, which mars the site's attributes. EC has been working to reclaim those acres so that a residential development can be planned for the reclaimed portion of the site, leaving the

pristine parts for the enjoyment of residents and hikers.

The trail will travel through the Sugar Notch residential development and end in the Greater Hanover Area Recreation Park. A trailhead will be placed adjacent to the Holy Family Church Cemetery,



A portion of the Sugar Notch trail.

on the western end of Sugar Notch, with a planned connection through the Sugar Notch Playground, and a second trailhead in the recreation park. There will be ample parking at both trailheads, and the Sugar Notch trailhead will feature a picnic area with tables and grills.

Funding for the reclamation work has been provided through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener grant program, without which reclamation work would not be possible.

A planning grant for the trail was provided by Luzerne County Office of Community Development.

Both the reclamation work and trail construction are expected to be completed by the end of this year.

EC's Leaf and Yard Waste Compost Facility processes almost 8,000 tons of material annually.

AVONDALE PIT RECLAMATION CONTINUES

Work to reclaim the Avondale Pit continues to make steady progress on the site that has blighted the Lower Wyoming Valley landscape for decades.

Started in May 2004, the Curry Hill—Avondale Pit Mine Reclamation Project, which is funded through the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Abandoned Mine Reclamation Trust Fund, is expected to take three years to complete at a cost of nearly \$4 million. DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) Wilkes-Barre office designed the project.

Situated on top of Avondale Mountain, the 136-acre site has long been an eyesore and a public health and safety threat for area residents. The Plymouth Township site has also been plagued by illegal trash dumping and tire fires.

The project will use more than 5 million cubic yards of on-site material to fill a series of pits collectively measuring 4,700 feet long by 800 feet wide and between 150 and 200 feet deep. The reclamation work will include the excavation and grading of the site as well as construction of a U-channel, cleaning a concrete box culvert, installation of pipes, stream crossings and ditches to collect and channel runoff. The project will end with the seeding of the 136 acres.

The amount of material needed to fill the pits is equivalent to a pile of material as high as the Empire State Building (1,453 feet) in a 312 square-foot area.

The reclaimed property will offer views of the Susquehanna River and Wyoming Valley. The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2007.

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EC also received a Growing Greener grant from the PA DEP for reclamation of the Sugar Notch site. The \$248,000 will be used to continue reclamation of a 50-acre portion of the 189-acre site that will result in a residential development. The remaining acres will be preserved as green space.

EC has also planned a recreational trail beginning on the Sugar Notch acreage for which it received a planning grant from the Luzerne County Office of Community Development. The trail will begin on the west side of Sugar Notch and travel through the residential green space ending in the Greater Hanover Area Recreation Park, with an additional access point in the Sugar Notch Playground.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded EC \$200,000 through its nationally competi-

tive Brownfields Cleanup grant program. With the funds, EC will reclaim Franklin Bank, located in Hanover Township in the vicinity of Newtown. The reclaimed site will be available for residential development.

The Luzerne County Office of Community Development also awarded EC grant funds to conduct a land use feasibility study for one of its properties in Plymouth Township. The \$42,000 grant will allow EC to partner with local officials and area stakeholders to determine potential optimal uses for the lands in the township. EC will work with Borton Lawson to conduct the study.

In 2005, EC completed its All Terrain Vehicle Feasibility Study, with the help of a steering committee representing riding clubs, residents, elected officials, businesses and government agencies. Working with Pennoni Associates, the study was completed and presented to Luzerne County Commissioners. It is available to download via EC's website.

Finally, EC's land sales and prospective sales in the valley indicate a growing interest on the part of local and regional businesses to make an investment in and commitment to this area. As a result

of EC's land sales and fiscal responsibility, the non-profit group was able to pay off debt incurred when the initial land purchases were made in 1994. This will allow EC to direct a greater amount of funding to new and ongoing reclamation efforts.

To receive the newsletter electronically, write us at earthcon@intergrafix.net



Past and present board members gather for the presentation of the Business in Our Sites program check from Gov. Rendell. Pictured left to right: board member Tim Gilmour, Director Emeritus Harold Snowdon Sr., President/CEO Mike Dziak, Board Chair Rhea Simms and board member Diane Kopcha Katlic.

PLANNING FOR SOUTH VALLEY PARKWAY PROJECT NEARING COMPLETION

After several years of planning, public meetings and conceptual design adjustments, the design of the proposed South Valley Parkway (SVP) is about to begin.

The SVP will be a new highway connecting State Route 29 to the Kirmar Parkway in Newport Township. The planned road will alleviate congestion around Luzerne County Community College and improve safety along Middle Road.

Equally important to safety enhancements are the improved economic development opportunities that will be created as a result of the highway. Construction of the

highway will open the Lower Wyoming Valley to positive economic development with unimpeded access to Interstate 81.

Initially six designs were presented at public meetings during which comments and suggestions could be made. Those comments were incorporated into the design and the preferred alignment has been chosen.

The preferred alignment will be revealed at a public meeting to be set for some time in February at which time additional public comments will be accepted. Based on comments made at the public

meeting, final adjustments will be made to the chosen concept plan and design of the project will begin.

Once the design is completed, the project will move into the construction phase.

Participants in the project include: Penn DOT, Luzerne County, residents and elected officials from Nanticoke, Newport and Hanover townships, area state and federal legislators, the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry and EC.

Borton-Lawson, Inc. is serving as the prime engineering consultant for the project.

INVOLVEMENT IS KEY TO INTEREST IN CONSERVATION

EC is committed to providing outdoor and recreational space for Luzerne County residents. Nothing helps to get people more invested in saving green spaces than getting their fingers into the soil and planting trees on reclaimed lands.

EC works with schools, civic groups and other environmental organizations to promote responsible stewardship of our lands.

Each year, these groups venture onto the reclaimed

lands to plant trees and visit EC's Phases I and II Wetlands to learn and become part of a positive movement.

Approximately 2,000 trees were planted in 2005.

Additionally, EC makes available lands along the Plymouth Flats for community gardening. The approximately one-acre site is tilled each

spring and gardening plots are laid out. Luzerne County residents can sign up to use the plots on a gratis basis.

In existence for eight years, the program has become popular among area residents looking for a little extra space to grow flowers and vegetables and share the gardening experience with others. The plots are available

from May through October. Interested Luzerne County residents can sign up by calling 823-3445.



Students and teachers from the Children Service Center finish an eve-

*To participate in the
EC Community
Garden Project call
823-3445 or email
earthcon@intergrafix.net*

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Earth Conservancy is a non-profit, 501 (c) (3) corporation. Board meetings are open to the public and are generally held on a quarterly basis at 8 a.m. at the Earth Conservancy office, 101 S. Main St., Ashley, PA 18706. Check the Citizens Voice and/or the Times Leader newspapers for meeting notices and changes, or call the office at 570-823-3445 for more information.

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