

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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Earth Conservancy kicks off land use study

Earth Conservancy formally began its land use planning process on October 11th at a joint meeting of the organization's Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) and the Citizens' Advisory Committee. Nearly fifty people, including a number of interested community residents, attended the meeting to hear how a land use plan for Earth Conservancy's 17,000 acres will be developed during the next 12 months.

Dr. Christopher Breiseth, chairman of Earth Conservancy's Board of Directors, told the group he was very encouraged by the turn out. "If we continue to have community participation at this level," Breiseth said, "we should have little trouble involving all of the communities where Earth Conservancy's land lies."

Breiseth said the next year would be an exciting one for Earth Conservancy. "The plan we are beginning to work on will be a model for the rest of the state and for the entire nation," he said. "As we reclaim land environmentally damaged by decades of coal mining, and develop the land to meet the economic needs and desires of our region, others will be looking to us to learn how this process can work effectively. We want to set a good example for those who will follow."

Earth Conservancy (EC) has entered into an agreement with EDAW, Inc., of Alexandria, Virginia, to study the community and then develop a long-range land use plan. EDAW's and Earth Conservancy's goal is to develop a plan with the help of Earth Conservancy's neighbors, the municipalities where EC's land is located, and other individuals, so that the final product will reflect the knowledge and desires of a consensus of the community.

Serving on the EDAW team are Cales Givens, project principal; Richard Dorrier, project manager; Laura Wiberg, community coordinator; Malaina Bowker, assistant project manager; and other EDAW staff members. Local and regional firms that will assist EDAW with various elements of the plan are: Hammer, Siler, George Associates of Silver Spring, Maryland; Skelly and Loy, Harrisburg; Borton-Lawson Engineering, Wilkes-Barre; Reilly Associates, West Pittston; and Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, Wilkes-Barre.

Earth Conservancy's comprehensive land use plan is funded by federal, state, county and other resources. EC received \$350,000 from the Appalachian Regional Commission, \$150,000 from the Environmental Development Agency, and \$100,000 from Luzerne County.

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VISIONING MEETING IS RARE OPPORTUNITY

On November 14, the first of nine community workshops, all open to the public, will be held to gather community feedback regarding EC's planning program. This first workshop will seek community residents' hopes and expectations in an effort to develop a vision for EC's land holdings.

According to Michael Dziak, EC's President, "Earth Conservancy is offering the community a rare opportunity to participate throughout this land use planning effort. We are hoping that everyone with an interest in the future development of Earth Conservancy's 17,000 acres will attend this very important workshop." The November 14 meeting will be held in the Educational Conference Center at Luzerne County Community College in Nanticoke at 6:30 pm. ♦

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Members of the Board of Directors, the Land Use Planning Committee, and the Citizens' Advisory Committee attended the kick off of the land use plan on October 11th. ▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼▼



Seated at the table, clockwise from bottom left are Dr. Christopher Breiseth, chairman of EC's Board of Directors; Joe Hillan, Newport Township; Calvin Kanyuck, Newport Township; Rosemary Sigmond, Coon Industries; Robert Betzler, Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority; Sam Sorber, Hanover Township; Anna Cervenak, Bell Atlantic; Rich Jumper, Nabisco; Patrick Mullen, Sugar Notch; and Joe Terrana of Congressman Kanjorski's office.

Ed Schechter, chairman of EC's Land Use Planning Committee, has been involved with the preparation for the plan's kick off and implementation for more than a year. "The combined efforts of EDAW and community residents will produce a long-range plan for EC's land that will take us well into the 21st century," Schechter said. "Since EC's land holding encompass three percent of Luzerne County, the results of this effort are bound to have a significant impact on our county's employers, workers, and residents."

During the coming months, EDAW's representatives will analyze existing data on Earth Conservancy's land holdings; conduct interviews with municipal officials and surrounding land owners; and collect and analyze data on environmental characteristics, reclamation/mining potential, land use/physical development characteristics, utilities systems, market potential, and transportation possibilities.

After the analysis phase of the land use study, EDAW will develop alternative plans related to each of the study areas for presentation to the community. A preferred plan will be developed and then refined according to community input. Public participation will be invited throughout the study. ♦

Now that the planning process has started at Earth Conservancy, it has become apparent that some changes are necessary in the way the established committees will work. It is important to involve as many people from the community as possible in our planning effort, but likewise important to streamline the process so that everyone's time is used as effectively as possible.

Until now, EC's committee structure consisted of the LUPC, with its various working groups, and the Citizens' Advisory Committee. These two committees usually met separately to accomplish their respective tasks.

The Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC) will now be incorporated into the LUPC to eliminate the need for separate and frequently redundant meetings. The individuals who made up the CAC will become members of the Community Liaison Working Group of the LUPC. Originally organized as a distinct committee to discuss and advise on matters other than planning issues, it is now clear that the members of the CAC, all municipal representatives, also need the opportunity to participate directly in this year-long planning process. Municipal involvement in the process is vital to its success; including

these individuals on the LUPC will encourage that participation.

According to Ed Schechter, chairman of the LUPC, "unless this change is made now, duplicate meetings would be required to keep the CAC informed of the LUPC decisions, divergent opinions would take much longer to reconcile, and there would be substantially greater demand on each of us, on EDAW, and on the EC staff for meetings and communication."

Schechter explained that the regular business meetings of the LUPC will be conducted prior to the start of each of the workshops scheduled by EDAW.

An additional responsibility has been given to the Consultant Working Group of the LUPC, which will now assume the responsibility of monitoring EDAW's work to ensure that the requirements outlined in the Request for Proposal are achieved and that the schedule is maintained. As the plan takes shape over the course of the next year, this working group will, if necessary, develop changes or additions to the EDAW work program so that the final plan meets the desires of the expanded Land Use Planning Committee. ♦

PROJECT UPDATE



At the plan's kickoff were seated at the table from the left are Tom Chesnick, EC's engineering projects manager; John Matusek, Luzerne County Office of Community Development; Daryl Pawlusch, Conyngham Township; and Margaret Bakker, Bakker and Lewis Architects.



Meanwhile...

One of Earth Conservancy's goals has been to return its land as quickly as possible to its best possible use. Final decisions on the disposition of the land must wait until the LUPC completes the long-range land use plan. But in the meantime, while planning is underway, Earth Conservancy has implemented two plans of action which brought immediate benefits to our local communities.

Nearly 13,000 acres of EC land were turned over to the Penna. Game Commission as part of the Forest-Game Cooperators Program. Under this program, EC retains ownership of the land, but the public has immediate access to the property for recreation.

The land can be returned to Earth Conservancy at any time with sixty days notice to the Game Commission.

Also, between one and two percent of Earth Conservancy's land holdings have, or will be, sold as buildable parcels to the general public. Because of their size and location, the best use for these parcels is to offer them to the community for private use. ♦

The development of a long-range, comprehensive land use plan by the LUPC is just one of many projects keeping Earth Conservancy busy. EC has received a number of grants to carry out other environmentally related projects aimed at improving our region's economic competitiveness and quality of life. Here is an update on these projects:

LAND RECLAMATION

Earth Conservancy has designated three sites on its land that will be the focus of EC's initial land reclamation efforts. Work on the first of these, located on a 47-acre parcel in Nanticoke, could begin this fall. The work will include leveling hills of mine spoil, filling in pits, grading, and ultimately seeding the area. The reclamation projects are coordinated by scientists from Wilkes University's School of Science and Engineering, under the direction of Dr. Brian Redmond. On some future reclamation projects, EC plans to use substitute topsoil to facilitate the growth of new vegetation. Various topsoil mixes are now being tested by Wilkes University.

COMPUTERIZED SYSTEM FOR SURVEY AND LAND USE

Through contracts with Wilkes University and King's College, EC is developing a computer model which provides a large scale environmental and geographical inventory. The Geographic Information System (GIS), which also delineates information on demographics, population, municipal boundaries, topography, utilities, and roads, will be used in EC's land use planning process, and for future applications requiring large scale mapping. This project is being developed under the direction of Dr. Dale Bruns from Wilkes University and Rev. Ronald Wasowski from King's College.

WATERJET TECHNOLOGY

EC's waterjet project involves the development of technology that uses high-pressured water to clean explosive materials from obsolete munitions. This technology, which could save the US millions of dollars, will not be implemented on EC land. EC has signed an agreement with Crane Naval Base in Indiana to set up our washout demonstration at their facility.

While EC's contract is with the Navy, the demonstration project will actually be located at the Army facility at Crane. This growing relationship with the Army is significant for Earth Conservancy; it is the Army that has the ultimate responsibility for our country's demilitarization program. In addition, the Army has the greatest need for deactivating munitions.

To develop the waterjet, Earth Conservancy is working with Dr. David Summers at the University of Missouri at Rolla, Dr. Khalim Perwez at Wilkes University, and Dr. William Shergalis at King's College.

USING WETLANDS TO TREAT AMD

Earth Conservancy broke ground on October 23rd for a man-made wetland that is the first of its kind in our area. Funded by the US Environmental Protection Agency, the wetland is intended to demonstrate that part of the acid mine drainage problem in Luzerne County can be alleviated through the use of natural water treatment. The wetland will be constructed along Espy Creek in Hanover Township.

According to Mike Dziak, "the wetland in Hanover Township is a major first step toward cleaning up the results of more than a century of coal mining in N.E. Pennsylvania."

The groundbreaking event was attended by Congressman Paul Kanjorski, and representatives from Hanover Township, Luzerne County, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Wilkes University, King's College, and other interested people.

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Pictured at the groundbreaking on October 23 are, from left, Dr. Ken Klemow, Wilkes University; Dr. William Shergalis, King's College; Dr. Umid Nejib, Wilkes; Congressman Paul Kanjorski; Mike Dziak, EC's president; Tom Chesnick, engineering projects manager for EC; and Dr. Tom Walski, Wilkes University.

PROJECT UPDATE

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Congressman Paul Kanjorski remarked that Earth Conservancy is following through with its promise to clean up the pollution left by the coal industry on its 17,000 acres of land. "This wetland project is the result of cooperation between the federal government, academic institutions, and local government officials who recognized that academic research can produce positive benefits for the community," the Congressman said. "The value of Earth Conservancy is its ability to bring together all these different entities in the best interest of N.E. Pennsylvania."

The scientists in charge of the wetland project are Drs. Ken Klemow and Tom Walski from Wilkes University, and Dr. William Shergalis from King's College.

COMPOSTING PROJECT

Now that the leaves have begun to fall in earnest, Earth Conservancy's new leaf and yard waste facility in Newport Township is fully operational. The facility will turn the leaves, brought by the City of Wilkes-Barre and Newport Township, into a rich compost material that may be used to promote the growth of new vegetation on EC's reclamation projects.

Wilkes-Barre Mayor Lee Namey said the new composting facility will save the city approximately \$17,000 this year in labor costs associated with the removal and storage of the city's leaves. The design and startup of the \$162,000 project was made possible by a Northeast Tier Ben Franklin Technology grant of \$100,000. The design of the site was performed by Smith Environmental Technologies, Pocono Summit, Pa., under the direction of Dr. Bryce Payne of Wilkes University. ♦

Earth Conservancy speaks to local conservation group



Michael Dziak, president of Earth Conservancy, recently made a presentation to the Nanticoke Conservation Club. Pictured from left are **Joe Novak**, **Jerry Bavitz**, club secretary, **Dziak**, **Mark Makara**, club president, and **Bob Kutra**, treasurer. Arrangements for similar presentations may be made by calling 823-3445.

Attend our Visioning Workshop

Earth Conservancy invites all those with an interest in the responsible development of EC's 17,000 acres to attend a visioning workshop.

DATE: November 14th

LOCATION: The Educational Conference Center at LCCC

TIME: 6:30 pm

QUESTIONS? Call Elizabeth Ortega at 823-3445

Topics for discussion at the visioning workshop might include the creation of parks and other recreation areas; the building of a new transportation corridor; the development of residential areas; the formation of commercial centers; and the establishment of business and industrial complexes.



If you would like your name added to our mailing list, please write or call Elizabeth Ortega, Earth Conservancy News editor, at 101 South Main Street, Ashley, PA 18706. Our number is 717-823-3445, or you can fax us at 717-823-8270.

Earth Conservancy

101 South Main Street
Ashley, PA 18706

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