

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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LAND USE PLAN NEARS COMPLETION

EC staff have presented the preferred development concept to municipal officials, business leaders, and others to elicit feedback on the plan.

The Land Use Planning Committee (LUPC) last met on June 20 at LCCC to review projects produced by students participating in EDAW's Summer Student Program. EDAW is Earth Conservancy's consultant for the development of a long-range land use plan. Eleven students from the top landscape architecture and planning programs throughout the country spent two weeks at Earth Conservancy (EC) taking part in the land use planning process.

At the June LUPC meeting, the students presented the products of

their intensive workshop: innovative site development and open space plans for key parcels along the Route 29 corridor in Hanover Township. The knowledge of our area that the students gained in a short time was well illustrated by their creative and insightful plans. While the student activity was an academic exercise and not part of a contractual arrangement with EC, the LUPC found their plans so exciting that many members commented that they look forward to the student plans being considered as options as those parcels are reclaimed and developed.

The consensus of the LUPC and the EC staff was that both the students and Earth Conservancy gained a lot from the experience of the Summer Student Program. Everyone here enjoyed their visit and appreciated their hard work, and the students, seeing

Northeastern Pennsylvania with fresh eyes, loved the area.

As reported in the last issue of "Earth Conservancy News", at the formal planning meeting on May 22, the LUPC met with the consulting team to review the preferred development concept proposed by EDAW. At that meeting, the committee and interested community residents heard how EC's land use plan would address industrial, residential, and commercial development on the 6,100 developable acres of EC land. EDAW also presented a comprehensive proposal for 10,200 acres of open space and green areas for the remainder of EC's land.

Since the May 22 meeting, EC staff, along with Ed Schechter,

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Eleven students from throughout the country spent two weeks at EC in an intensive land use planning workshop sponsored by EDAW, EC's consultant. The experience included classroom presentations as well as site visits to EC properties. Students participating in the Summer Student Program were selected from universities in Virginia, California, Colorado, Washington, Vermont and Toronto. The group included students from Japan, Bulgaria, and Taiwan.

Plan's implementation will be a community effort

Earth Conservancy's mission guides the organization to "serve as the steward in the reclamation and utilization of degraded land in partnership with government, business, and education..." For the past four years, EC has worked to develop strong relationships with representatives of these entities. These relationships will be important as EC begins to implement the long-range land use plan.

The Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry, with more than 40 years of experience in marketing industrial land, will work with EC to market the land designated for industrial use. The Chamber has a limited amount of land left to meet their anticipated future demand. The availability of approximately 2,200 acres proposed as industrial land will help the Chamber meet its own economic development goals for the region.

The significant environ-

mental problems associated with the EC properties have prompted other relationships. The analysis performed for the land use plan underscored the extent of the environmental damage on EC's land, as well as the costs associated with reclaiming it. EC has partnered with Wilkes University and King's College on projects aimed at ameliorating some of the negative environmental effects of the coal era.

The project known as REES, the Restoration of Environmentally Exploited Sites, is geared toward developing substitute topsoil that can be used in the reclamation of sites that cannot currently sustain plant life.

Earth Conservancy also established a large-scale yard and leaf waste composting operation in Newport Township. The compost material generated by the operation will be used to produce a soil amendment that will promote the growth of new vegetation

on reclaimed mine-spoiled land. Many municipalities in Luzerne County are bringing their yard and leaf waste to the composting site at no charge. This large-scale operation has the added environmental benefit of reducing the volume of natural waste going into area landfills.

EC and Wilkes University are working cooperatively to address the problem of acid mine water that drains to the Susquehanna River. Several approaches are being studied to improve water quality on EC land. One method is to construct artificial wetlands to passively treat acid mine seepage. The first manmade wetland in Luzerne County, an EC project funded by the Environmental Protection Agency, is currently under construction in Hanover Township. Another approach is to create new channels for streams that enter the Wyoming Valley relatively clean, but then become

contaminated by infiltrating mine voids on their way to the river. A third involves active treatment processes using limestone or other natural materials.

Earth Conservancy will spend many years treating acid mine water pollution, filling open strip mine pits, recycling or otherwise disposing of many tons of culm, draining and filling silt ponds, and reclaiming and planting mine-scarred lands. This work will not be accomplished without significant financial support from public and private groups.

As the land is reclaimed, Earth Conservancy will be able to make responsible decisions regarding its development. The comprehensive, 25-year land use plan for EC's 16,300 acres, developed with the input of many concerned and committed community residents, will serve as the road map for the effort to improve the environment, the economy, and the quality of life of our community. ♦

BOARD MEETINGS NOW OPEN TO PUBLIC

The Earth Conservancy Board of Directors, chaired by Dr. Christopher Breiseth, has announced that beginning with its next meeting in September, meetings of the Board and Members will be open to the public.

It is the intention of the Board that all Earth Conservancy activities be open to the public, except as they relate to personnel, contract negotiations, and other sensitive matters such as litigation. The Board's action makes the many activities that Earth Conservancy is managing more visible to the community.

By taking this step, the Board's objective is to develop better community understanding and support of Earth

Conservancy's activities and its mission.

Board and Member meetings are held on the first Thursday of the month. Board meetings begin at 8:00 AM; Member meetings follow immediately afterward. The dates for upcoming Board and Member meetings are: September 5, 1996; October 3, 1996; November 7, 1996; December 5, 1996; January 2, 1997; February 6, 1997; March 6, 1997; April 3, 1997; May 1, 1997; June 5, 1997; July 3, 1997; August 7, 1997; September 4, 1997; October 2, 1997; November 6, 1997; December 4, 1997.

Changes to this schedule will be publicized.

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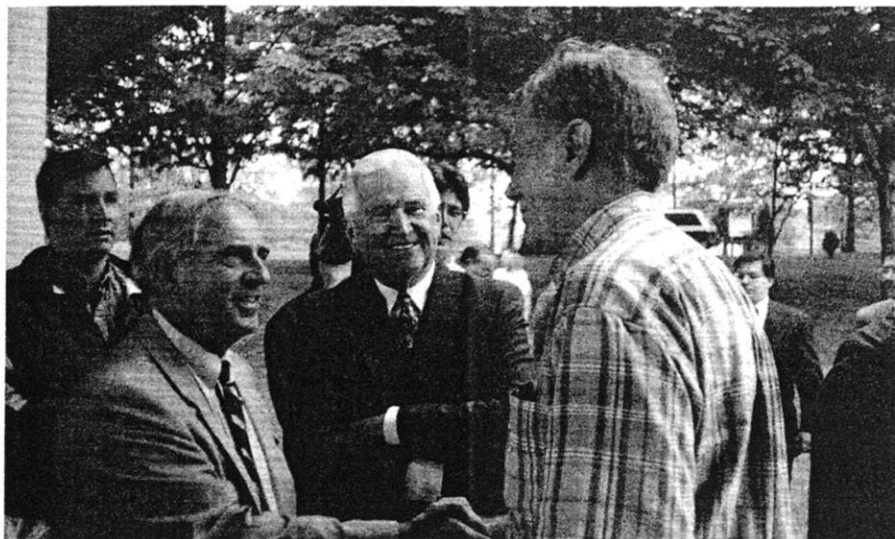
Land Use Plan Nears Completion

LUPC Chairman, have presented the preferred development concept to municipal officials, business leaders, and others to elicit feedback on the plan. The draft plan has been introduced to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, neighboring land owners, Newport Township, Hanover Township, Nanticoke, Conyngham Township, Pennsylvania American Water Company, and the Board of Directors of the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry.

Other municipalities have been invited to review the plan in detail to see how it might impact their communities.

Earth Conservancy has received constructive suggestions on the draft plan to date, with no major negative response. Several municipalities have expressed their strong support of the plan and have offered to gain widespread public acceptance of it. Special meetings with many groups will continue over the next few weeks in order to gather opinion and to achieve consensus on the plan that is aimed at creating jobs and improving the quality of life for residents of Luzerne County.

In the past several weeks, the consultants have been working on the financial aspects of the land use plan. Their analysis has stressed the vast expense of reclaiming Earth Conservancy's land; their detailed study indicates it will cost more than \$200 million to remediate the damage caused by a century of coal mining. Earth Conservancy must now face the reality that land sales alone will not pay for reclamation. EC will have to research innovative technologies and creative strategies for reclamation, and will need to seek financial support for the work from outside sources.



Earth Conservancy CEO Mike Dziak, left, had the opportunity to meet U.S. Department of the Interior Secretary Bruce Babbitt, right, when the secretary visited the Wyoming Valley in June. At center is Jay Delaney, a legislative aide to Senator Ray Musto, and a member of EC's Land Use Planning Committee. Babbitt's visit was part of a nationwide look at the state of the country's waterways.

Several Land Use Planning Committee meetings have been scheduled to bring the year-long work on the land use plan to an end. The Committee will meet with EDAW and their team on Tuesday, September 11 at 6:00 PM in the Earth Conservancy offices in Ashley to receive the final draft plan. This meeting will discuss the financial implications of, and strategies for, implementing the land use plan.

The LUPC will meet again on Thursday, October 3 at Luzerne County Community College for the members to present any final comments on the plan. This will be the last opportunity for committee or public comment on the land use plan. At this meeting, to be held at 7:30 PM in the Educational Conference Center, the LUPC will vote on whether to recommend the land use plan to the EC Board of Directors for approval.

EDAW will present the final land use plan to the LUPC and the public on Wednesday, October 30th at 6:00 PM at the EC offices. All three of these meetings are open and the public is encouraged to attend. ♦

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UPCOMING MEETINGS

(For details on the LUPC meetings, please see article on front page.)

SEPTEMBER 5

Board of Directors at EC offices, 8:00 AM

SEPTEMBER 11

LUPC at EC offices, 6:00 PM

OCTOBER 3

Board of Directors at EC offices, 8:00 AM
LUPC at LCCC, 7:30 PM

OCTOBER 30

LUPC at EC offices, 6:00 PM

These meetings are open to the public.

EC EXPLORES RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT



The expert panel of local real estate professionals and developers that addressed the LUPC in February highlighted the need in our area for affordable building lots. Earth Conservancy has begun to address that need.

EC is studying the feasibility of developing a ten-acre parcel of land, currently zoned residential, in Hanover Township. The development would include roads, sidewalks, sewers, and electric and other utilities. The next step is to prepare a detailed engineering study for presentation to the Hanover Township planning commission. If all goes as planned, work could begin next spring. ♦



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