

# EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME IV

ISSUE 2

Summer 1998

## FANNIE MAE FOUNDATION SUPPORTS LAND USE PLAN WITH \$210,000 GRANT

*EC also receives \$50,000 from the EDA*

John McIlwain, president of the Fannie Mae Foundation, visited the Wyoming Valley May 29, bringing good news not only for Earth Conservancy, but also for the Northeastern Pennsylvania region.

Mr. McIlwain and Peter Beard came to Luzerne County to present Earth Conservancy with a \$210,000 grant from the Fannie Mae Foundation for its Mixed-Use Land Development Project for approximately 1,200 acres in Nanticoke, Hanover and Newport townships. This project calls for a development incorporating industrial, residential, and recreational uses in one area.

The Fannie Mae Foundation is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to increasing affordable housing opportunities in underserved communities across the country. The foundation chose to support this project because officials realized that Luzerne County needed economic and recreational opportunities in order to spur housing growth.

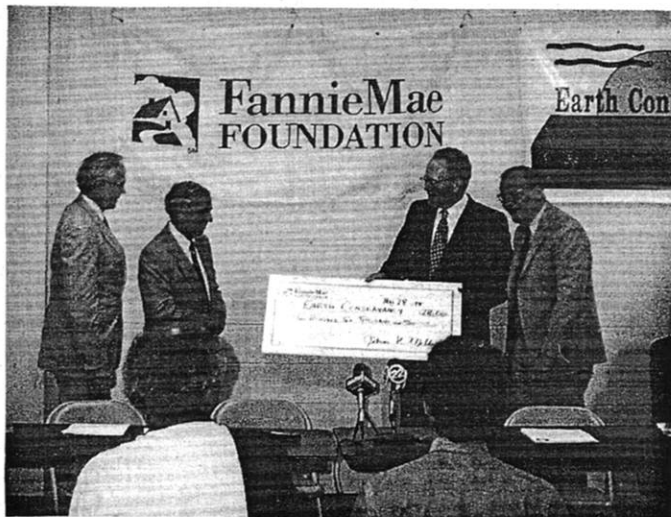
The money, combined with another \$50,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration, will provide the funding needed for market analysis, development of the project's master plan, and engineering design.

The Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry is interested in purchasing EC land to develop its new industrial park. It will seek to attract high-tech, environmentally-friendly companies offering high-skill, high-paying jobs that will encourage the region's young people to stay in the area, while also attracting other professionals here. The future industrial park is intended to house attractive, corporate-office type, industries and will be more progressive than the past industrial parks.

The idea of also having affordable housing and recreational opportunities nearby, which are a big factor in many companies' decisions when choosing a particular area to move to, will make the Wyoming Valley more attractive to companies considering relocation.

"This is being done so we can provide these industries with the quality of life they are now getting in California, Texas, Northern Virginia, or any other area we will have to compete with for the talent we need," Congressman Paul Kanjorski said during the May press conference held at EC offices to announce the grants.

The provisions of the Mixed-Use Land Development Project, which is unique to our region, will offer both current and future residents a higher quality of life, making our area more economically competitive and a more desirable place in which to live. By incorporating green and open spaces, the master plan will also be aesthetically pleasing and beneficial to the environment.



Fannie Mae Foundation President John McIlwain, second from right, presents EC Board Chairman Dr. Christopher Breiseth, far left and Michael A. Dziak, EC president and CEO, with a check for \$210,000 during the May 28 press conference, held at EC offices. At far right is Congressman Paul Kanjorski.

The Mixed-Use project is only one component of EC's ongoing land use activities. An Open Space Plan is currently being developed and efforts continue on the development of a 19-mile, \$188 million transportation network in the southern Wyoming Valley that will connect Interstate 81 and Route 11 at Shickshinny by means of new, four-lane highways.

The first segment of the transportation project will connect the Sans Souci Parkway to Middle Road, near Prospect Street, in Nanticoke and add a new exit on Route 29 that will relieve current traffic problems, improve safety and efficiency, and provide better access to Luzerne County Community College. It will also improve access to EC's future reclamation projects in Newport and Conyngham townships.

Congressman Kanjorski has already earmarked \$10.5 million for this first segment in the new federal transportation bill.

The Open Space Plan, which is now being developed, aims to establish a series of recreational green and open spaces on more than 10,000 of EC's 16,300 acres.

**E**arth Conservancy is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization that was formed: "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 in our community."

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

Board meetings are open to the public and held the first Thursday of each month at 8 a.m. at EC offices, 101 S. Main St., Ashley. The next three board meetings will be Aug. 6; Sept. 3 and Oct. 1.

\*Please check published notices in the *Times Leader* and *Citizens Voice* for any changes in meeting schedules.

# EC Kicks Off Open Space Plan

New and improved recreational areas and sites are just around the corner for residents and visitors of the Wyoming Valley.

Earth Conservancy's Open Space Plan is now being drafted by EDAW, Inc., of Virginia, and should be completed in October. When finished, there will be a blueprint for the use of more than 10,000 acres of green and open spaces in the Wyoming Valley, including a variety of new and expanded parks and trails.

Representatives of EDAW, its subcontractors, Greenways Inc., of North Carolina, Borton Lawson Engineering, Reilly Associates, Bohlin Cywinski Jackson, and EC held a kick-off meeting May 5, for members of the plan's steering committee. The meeting's purpose was to determine what activities and types of recreational areas were most needed and sought after in Luzerne County. An important point stressed at that meeting was the importance of ensuring that all types of activities -- from walking to biking to ATV riding -- and opportunities for people of all physical abilities were included.

In general, the plan will determine the feasibility of trail opportunities in the Wyoming Valley that would connect to currently planned trails and will also design an eight-mile trail from Nanticoke to Mocanaqua along the northern reach of the Penobscot Mountain on the south side of the Susquehanna River. This escarpment recreation trail will link to the planned Susquehanna Warrior Trail at the Mocanaqua-Shickshinny Bridge, creating a 26-mile loop for people to enjoy.

On May 18 and 19, steering committee members toured lands included in the Open Space Plan with EDAW, Greenways and EC representatives in order to get an idea of the topography of the different areas, the best recreational uses for them, and any interesting or unique features they contain.

EC also held a public visioning session on May 19 to solicit input, ideas, and concerns from community members about the plan and document their recreational goals and objectives.

While public turnout was not as much as we had hoped for, the meeting was successful in terms of the amount of information exchanged and collected.

Through questionnaires distributed at

that meeting, the project team found that the outdoor recreational activities most important to area residents are: bicycling/hiking; camping/walking; fishing; hunting; and ATV riding, canoeing, and cross-country skiing. The most desired types of open spaces are: hiking trails; walking trails; conservation parks, natural parks, and mountain bike trails; campgrounds; and multi-use trails.

A focus group met June 30 to discuss in detail the amount and types of land required for special activities, such as mountain biking, ATV use, soccer and rock climbing. EDAW will use attendees' input and suggestions as it begins the first draft of the plan, which is expected toward the end of July.

## EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

is published by  
**Earth Conservancy**  
101 South Main Street  
Ashley, PA 18706

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Earth Conservancy is a private, non-profit, 501 (c)(3) corporation.

## Wetlands Phase II Project in Full Swing

*Project will treat water contaminated by AMD*

Construction of an artificial wetland off of Dundee Road in Hanover Twp. began in April and should be completed by August.

The "new" 2.2-acre wetland is being constructed to treat acid mine drainage from the Askam Borehole, which flows into Nanticoke Creek and, eventually, the Susquehanna River. When finished, it will treat 500 gallons of acid mine drainage per minute, pumping the water uphill, to an aeration device that adds oxygen to the water. The water will then go to into a basin, where the iron particulate will settle to the bottom. This cleaner water will go to a second basin, designed to remove any remaining iron, before flowing back into Nanticoke Creek.

"What this project does is accelerate the natural (iron) removal process by using aeration in combination with the passive wetland

treatment process," said Engineering Projects Manager Tom Chesnick.

This is the second artificial wetlands EC has constructed. The first, our Phase I Wetland, is a 0.4 acre wetland along Espy Run in Hanover Twp., that treats an acid mine drainage seep of approximately 100 to 150 gallons per minute. Water improvements have already been noted there, as well as an enhanced wildlife habitat.

The Phase II Wetlands Project was technically supported by Wilkes University's Wetlands Technical Team, headed by Dr. Ken Klemow, and was funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Approvals and permits for the project were acquired through the state Department of Environmental Protection's Northeast Regional Office and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



# COMMUNITY OUTREACH EFFORTS

Over the past few months, Earth Conservancy has been expanding its activities within the community and hopes to continue to do even more.

In April, EC celebrated Earth Day with a group of seventh graders from Wyoming Valley West Middle School. Phil Pack's honors science students planted 300 spruce saplings on reclaimed EC land in Newport Twp., near EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Composting Facility. The school's student council purchased the saplings and EC provided the land, extra tools and mulch for the newly-planted trees.

The new trees will help re-vegetate the recently reclaimed site and the students' efforts helped showcase how important helping the environment is, not only on Earth Day, but every day.

Ivor Smith, WWV middle school principal, said the school is interested in working with EC on other environmentally-related projects.

EC President Mike Dziak said a variety of EC/WWV projects are possible, and could range from additional tree plantings, to EC personnel visiting classes to talk about our reclamation efforts, to tours of EC sites that would be interesting to students, such as our artificial wetlands projects. EC will talk with WWV over the summer about possible activities that could take place during the fall and spring of the



*In only three hours, this group of volunteers, organized by Michael Miscavage, owner of Top of the Slope Ski Shop Inc., and Marty Molitoris, director of the Alpine Endeavors Climbing School, filled a dumpster, numerous bags and collected a pile of discarded tires at a wooded site between Conyngham Twp. and Mocanaqua. Earth Conservancy worked with the group in its clean-up efforts.*

1998-99 school year.

On June 7, EC participated in a litter pick-up organized by Michael Miscavage, owner of Top of the Slope Ski Shop, Inc., and Marty Molitoris, director of the Alpine Endeavors Climbing School.

At 9 a.m. on the clean-up date, a group of about 15 volunteers gathered at a rock-climbing site in Conyngham Twp. between Lee and Mocanaqua. EC owns the site, but has loaned it to the

Pennsylvania Game Commission as part of its Game Cooperators Program, which allows public access to the land for recreational purposes.

Using orange safety vests supplied by PennDOT and tools and gloves provided by Mr. Miscavage and Mr. Molitoris, the group filled a dumpster and numerous garbage bags with a variety of debris -- including the usual roadside litter as well as roofing shingles, glass windshields, rotting carpets, tires, and a refrigerator. PennDOT arranged for pick-up of the bags of litter.

Conyngham Twp. supervisor Daryl Pawlusch also took part, bringing a front end loader to help collect larger piles of debris and brush. The group also trimmed overgrowth from nearby walking paths and drainage ditches.

When the hard work was finished, the group took to some nearby rocks for a few hours of rock climbing, an activity that, surprisingly, is becoming quite popular here in Northeastern Pennsylvania. While the group was picking up litter, it encountered several individuals coming to the site for rock climbing, including a group that had driven up from Selingsgrove.



*Josh Frank, left, and Peter Fulton, right, both seventh grade students at Wyoming Valley West when this picture was taken, plant a spruce sapling on recently reclaimed EC land in Newport Twp.*

## Earth Conservancy Staff

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**Thomas Chesnick**  
*Engineering Projects Manager*

**Mark E. Packard, Jr.**  
*GIS Analyst/Database Manager*

**Amy Gruzesky**  
*Director of Public Affairs and Development*

**Robert Eilar**  
*Operations Engineer - ROW*

**Jenny Centrella**  
*Coordinator of Real Estate Sales*

**Rick Ruggiero**  
*Property Documentation Specialist  
Survey Coordinator*

**Tommy Thomas**  
*Document Researcher*

**Mark Taney**  
*Field Supervisor*

**Steve Draus, Jr.**  
*Compost Site Foreman*

**Nicholas Kratz**  
*Field Personnel*

**Keith Scortichini**  
*Field Personnel*

**Michael Thomas**  
*Field Personnel*

**Terrence Walton**  
*Field Personnel*

**Anna May Hirko**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Pat Filipowich**  
*Secretary-Courier*



## Compost Facility Wins State Award

Earth Conservancy's Yard and Leaf Waste Compost Facility in Newport Twp. won a 1998 Waste Watchers Recognition Award for composting.

The award is sponsored by the Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association (PWIA), the Public Recycling Officials of Pennsylvania (PROP), and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

EC's compost facility encompasses five acres and has been in operation since 1995, accepting yard and leaf waste free of charge, from Luzerne County municipalities and private individuals. The facility also accepts drop-offs from landscaping and other related businesses, however, a mandatory donation is required.

EC uses the compost material in its

land reclamation projects. The compost promotes the growth of vegetation on otherwise barren land, while also decreasing the amount of waste going to area landfills.

Currently, 11 municipalities use EC's composting facility. Figures from August, 1997, show that approximately 5,549 tons of yard and leaf waste was delivered to the facility, including 1,500 tons being brought by private individuals.

We encourage everyone to help the environment and do their part to reduce the waste going to area landfills by using our facility for their yard and leaf waste as often as possible. The facility is located on the West Kirmar Parkway, in Newport Twp. Summer drop-off hours are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

## EC Archiving Maps for OSM

Earth Conservancy will be working with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining on a year-long project to archive data related to Luzerne County's 11 former collieries.

OSM needs maps not only of the surface areas of the former anthracite mines, but also of the geological underground layers, and maps of the earth's cross-sections, explained Mark Packard, EC's GIS Analyst and Database Manager. All totaled, that amounts to approximately 1,200 individual maps.

OSM needs to have quick access to accurate maps of these areas in the event of a subsidence or similar event, Mr. Packard said. This project will also help to preserve some of Earth Conservancy's older maps, which were printed on linens and are deteriorating.

All of the maps needed for this project are part of EC's archives, having been conveyed to the non-profit when it purchased the bankrupt Blue Coal Corporation's holdings in 1994.

The maps will be scanned into the Conservancy's Geographical Information System (GIS) computer system using a new, state-of-the-art scanner, and then transferred and saved to compact discs. In this format, the maps can be recorded and coded for easier and quicker access by both OSM and EC.



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