

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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Winter 2003

2002 Annual Report To The Community

The year 2002 saw many long-term Earth Conservancy projects come to completion, while many other new and exciting projects were begun to help improve the environmental and economic health of the Wyoming Valley.

As always, the reclamation of abandoned mine lands remains one of EC's key focal points, and last year, EC made great strides in reclaiming former mine lands. As a direct result of last year's efforts by EC and its partners, the total number of reclaimed mine-scarred lands is now over 800 acres of mine-scarred land, with another 1,200 acres in process.

These reclaimed sites will eventually host a variety of economic development, recreational, and residential uses.

EC completed several community recreational areas that will benefit area residents of all ages by providing easily accessible, public places for individuals and families to enjoy. Two of these efforts include the physically challenging Mocanaqua Loop in Conyngham Township and two athletic fields in Hanover Township that will eventually be part of a 63-acre recreational facility that is being built on reclaimed land.

And, in a landmark effort, EC secured the funding needed to begin a study on motorized, off-road recreation in the Wyoming Valley.

Sharing knowledge with local students and the community is another important goal for us, and this past year, we produced a comprehensive educational booklet on reclamation, in order to educate the public on the importance and necessity of reclaiming damaged land and waterways.

As always, our accomplishments over the past year would not have been possible were it not for the cooperation of local, state, federal and national entities,

as well as the many committed individuals who supported EC through their collaboration on these projects, including our 18-member Board of Directors.

As we begin 2003, we would like to extend our gratitude to EC's Board of Directors, elected officials, supporters, volunteers, staff, and all of the organizations/entities that provided funding, partnership, and/or professional expertise to EC. Following is Earth Conservancy's *Annual Report to the Community* for 2002.

2002 ANNUAL REPORT

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LAND RECLAMATION

◆ Received a \$534,000 Pennsylvania Growing Greener grant to reclaim the Sugar Notch, Preston and Huber Bank areas and continue reclamation and construction of a 53-acre recreational area in Hanover Township. This site is the continuation of a recreation project that was done last year, in which two multi-purpose athletic fields, basketball court, and parking area were completed.

◆ Completed reclamation on the 42-acre Preston Bank Area, which is in Hanover Township, adjacent to EC's recreation area. This project was funded primarily through a \$750,000 Pennsylvania Growing Greener grant. EC's Land Use Plan proposes that this area be used for residential/commercial purposes. It is now ready to be developed and is being marketed to prospective developers.

◆ Initiated several additional reclamation projects, bringing the total number of acres currently being reclaimed to about 1,200.

WATER RECLAMATION

Continuing its efforts to abate the rampant Acid Mine Drainage problem in the Wyoming Valley, EC continues to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), PA DEP, and other partners to determine how to stop unpolluted water from entering the mine pool and how to ameliorate AMD that presently pollutes local waterways.

AMD Remediation

◆ Teamed with U.S.G.S., Wilkes University and PA DEP to assess the Newport Creek and Nanticoke Creek watersheds for impacts from abandoned mine areas and discharges. Flow rates are being monitored to determine how much flow is being lost to sub-surface mine pools. Water quality is also being monitored.



In this photo, the area for a new baseball field is staked out in the Phase II area of the Sugar Notch Bank Reclamation project, which calls for the reclamation and conversion of a 63-acre site from mine-scarred lands to a full-size recreational facility.

Ecological Restoration Plan

As a follow-up to EC's watershed assessments, EC teamed with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to develop an Ecological Restoration Plan, with funding from The Water Resources Development Act. The goal is to ecologically restore the Nanticoke Creek watershed. The PA DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation has committed to supporting the project.

◆ In conjunction with the Army Corps, EC moved ahead with engineering work on alternatives to restore damaged creek beds and eliminate seepage of fresh water into underground mines.

◆ EC, the PA DEP and the Army Corps developed a re-alignment plan for Nanticoke Creek that would prevent future AMD pollution in this watershed and began engineering specifications for this re-alignment.

◆ Completed analytical testing of EC's constructed wetlands in Hanover Township, with funding from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining and Wilkes University.

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

Luzerne County Recreational Area

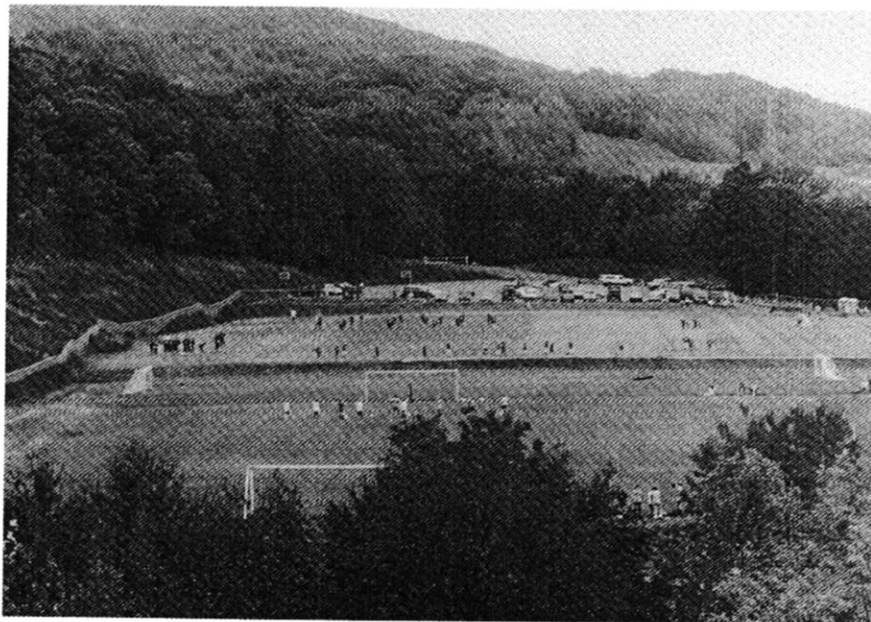
Proposed in EC's Open Space Plan, this community recreation area will eventually encompass 63 acres of what was once mine-scarred land and will offer a variety of recreational amenities. EC, Luzerne County, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services all provided funding for this project.

- ◆ Two local youth sports groups — the Hanover Area Youth Soccer and the Greater Hanover Area Mini-Hawks Football, used the two athletic fields completed at this site. Both organizations were experiencing problems due to lack of adequate playing/practice fields and had expressed a need for fields.
- ◆ Continued construction of additional multi-purpose athletic fields and associated parking as a second phase of the project.
- ◆ Applied for a \$434,000 grant from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources for amenities for this recreational area, including lighting, restroom facilities, paving, fencing and field irrigation.
- ◆ Continued work on a Peer-to-Peer Study with Hanover Township, Ashley, Sugar Notch and Warrior Run boroughs, the Hanover Area School District, and several local youth sports groups to help form a multi-municipal recreation board that will eventually own and operate this recreational site.

Trails

The Mocanaqua Loop

- ◆ Completed construction of the Mocanaqua Loop, and a trailhead facility. The Mocanaqua Loop Trail is a series of four, non-motorized looping trails that take users to the ridgetop area of Penobscot Mountain's northern reach. These trails comprise a total of 8 miles and offer users a



This summer and fall, the Hanover Area Mini Hawks Football and the Hanover Area Youth Soccer organization used the first two fields that were developed on a former mine-scarred site in Hanover Twp. This site will become a community recreational area and is the first phase of a two-phase, 63-acre land reclamation/revitalization project.

physically challenging hiking/mountain biking experience that offers views of the Susquehanna River, surrounding mountains and valley communities, and unique natural and historic features.

The Ashley Planes

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Ashley Planes were built in 1848 and remained in operation for over 100 years. They are a series of three steep, inclined planes located in Ashley, and Hanover and Fairview Townships that were used to haul anthracite over Wilkes-Barre Mountain to White Haven and onto larger markets.

EC is developing the Ashley Planes Heritage Park, which will encompass the entire 500-acre Ashley Planes rail area. This park will highlight the unique natural features on this site, transforming the old railroad beds into hiking and biking trails that will eventually link to EC's proposed Penobscot Ridge Trail and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor's trail system. Interpretive signage will provide information on the rich

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RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

The Ashley Planes (cont.)

mining history, on-site historic artifacts, and the environmental resources of the area, and a cultural/environmental center will provide other complementary amenities.

- ◆ Entered into an agreement with Luzerne County in which the county will take over operation and maintenance of the park when it is developed. EC met with County representatives to go over the progress of the Engineering and Design specifications done to date, and presented an in-depth, written report concerning those plans to the County Commissioners, County Engineer and County Planner, the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources officials, and the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor. Once their review is complete, EC will hold another Steering Committee to complete the plan, and prepare for park construction.

Penobscot Ridge Mountain Biking Trail

Mountain biking is a sport that is growing in popularity in our region. With that in mind, another follow-on project to EC's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan is the development of mountain biking trails on a reclaimed site in Wanamie, Newport Township, behind the Regional Equipment Center, along Penobscot Ridge.



Trails of varying difficulty and terrain will be developed, along with access, trailhead and parking areas at two locations, with the possibility of additional trails through the wooded areas adjacent to this site being developed in the future.

- ◆ Retained Thomas J. McLane Associates to create a master plan of this biking trail, as well as complementary amenities, such as parking areas, signage, etc.

Motorized Recreation

ATV use is an increasingly popular form of recreation throughout Luzerne County. However, there are almost no places where ATV activity is allowed in

the Wyoming Valley, resulting in many instances of trespassing by ATV enthusiasts. As one of Luzerne



County's largest land owners, EC decided the issue should be studied, to determine if there is a workable solution to this issue that would protect private property while still providing an outlet for those who participate in various forms of motorized recreation.

- ◆ Obtained \$52,000 in funding — \$20,000 from Luzerne County and \$32,000 from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources — to conduct a feasibility study on motorized recreational possibilities in Luzerne County.

- ◆ Hired Pennoni Associates, Inc. as the consultant for EC's ATV Feasibility Study.

- ◆ Formed an ATV Study Steering Committee consisting of state and local recreation/environmental officials, ATV/motorized recreation enthusiasts, and trail groups to work with EC and its consultant in conducting the Feasibility Study.

- ◆ Once Luzerne County's Office of Community Development finalizes paperwork for EC's grant funding, EC, Pennoni and the Steering Committee will begin investigating the issues associated with motorized recreation and possible areas where this sport could be safely and constructively pursued.

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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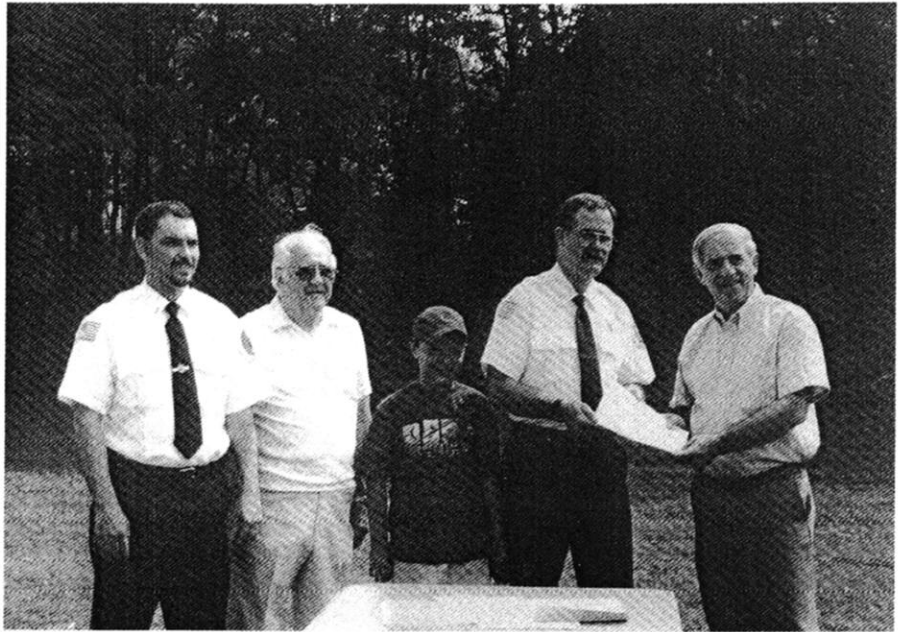
COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Land Donations

- ◆ Donated 8 acres to Ashley Rescue Hose Co. No. 1 for expansion of their present facilities.
- ◆ Donated 2.5 acres to the Plymouth Historical Society. This land is part of the Abijah Smith coal mine, believed to be the first anthracite mine in the Wyoming Valley. The Society plans to preserve it and put a historical marker at the site commemorating its significance to the region and its coal mining history.

Composting

EC operates a Yard and Leaf Waste Composting facility along Kirmar Parkway, in Newport Township that accepts yard waste from Luzerne



Mike Dziak, EC President and CEO hands over the deed to an 8-acre piece of land in Ashley, that EC donated to the Ashley Rescue Hose Company No. 1 this summer. The hose company will use the additional land for fire fighter training and motor vehicle rescue exercises, as well as for parking during its annual fundraisers.



John Renfer, second from left, EC Executive Administrator, accepts this year's PA Waste Watcher's Association Award on behalf of EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Composting Facility in Newport Twp. for its successful efforts to reduce landfill waste stream. From left to right: PA DEP Secretary David Hess, Mr. Renfer, John Frederick and Harry Smith.

County municipalities and residents free of charge. The material produced at this facility is used on reclamation projects, as well as for community projects.

- ◆ Acquired two new pay loaders for use at the compost facility. This purchase was made possible through a \$288,000 Recycling Development and Implementation grant from the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection grant, through Newport Township.
- ◆ Instituted a new policy for drop-offs in which municipalities and individuals must use either biodegradable bags or no bag at all for materials accepted at the facility. This practice is a more environmentally friendly way to

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COMMUNITY OUTREACH

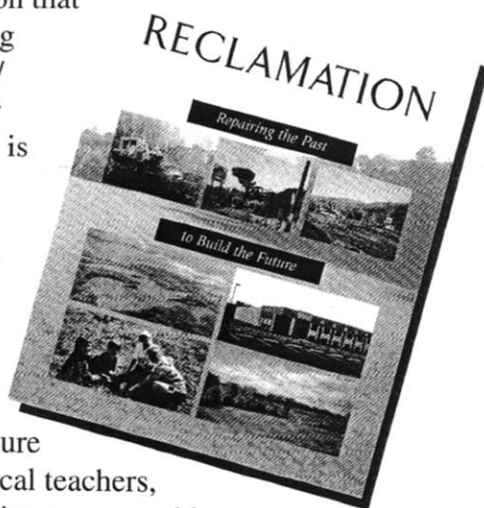
Composting (cont.)

handle the compostable material, and also is easier and more efficient on equipment

- ◆ Managed and funded the continuing operation of EC's composting facility, which processed over 18,000 cubic yards of material annually.
- ◆ Used material generated at the compost facility on several reclamation projects, including the soccer fields of EC's future recreational site in Hanover Township and the Phase I Constructed Wetland expansion.

Environmental Education

◆ Developed a brochure on land reclamation that details how mining damaged the land/environment, how mine-scarred land is reclaimed, why reclamation is necessary, and the benefits of reclaiming land, with a focus on the Wyoming Valley. This brochure is distributed to local teachers, students, community groups and is available at EC to any interested individuals.



- ◆ Participated in a local media blitz on the Acid Mine Drainage problem in the Wyoming Valley with PA DEP, the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and local elected officials.
- ◆ Gave presentations on land reclamation and revitalization, watershed reclamation and restoration, acid mine drainage, illegal dumping, responsible land use and development, and recreational initiatives to numerous schools and special interest and community groups.

- ◆ Conducted educational site tours of EC projects, including reclamation sites, the Yard and Leaf Waste Composting Facility, and the Phase I and Phase II Constructed Wetland sites.
- ◆ Distributed educational materials, including AMD brochures and videotapes, newsletters, and informational brochures to interested community and school groups.

Volunteer Activities

EC's 2002 Volunteer Tree Planting Initiative exceeded the success of past years with over 700 local school students, teachers and parents planting 5,000 seedlings on reclaimed land. 2002 was the fourth year of the project, which has grown steadily each year.

- ◆ Received a \$500 Community Environment grant from Sam's Club for the purchase of trees for the 2003 Volunteer Tree Planting Initiative.

Community Gardens

Each Spring, EC reserves two acres of land in Plymouth Township for its Community Gardens project. Interested Luzerne County residents are given a plot of land to use at no charge for personal vegetable and flower gardening from May through November.

EC's Community Gardens project realized another successful year, with over 40 participants signing up for garden plots. Pennsylvania American Water Company continued its involvement, providing water to the gardeners free of charge for the second year in a row.



HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

The Huber Breaker

- ◆ Supported the Huber Breaker Preservation Society in its efforts to revitalize the Huber Breaker Colliery by allowing the Society to use EC's offices for meetings.

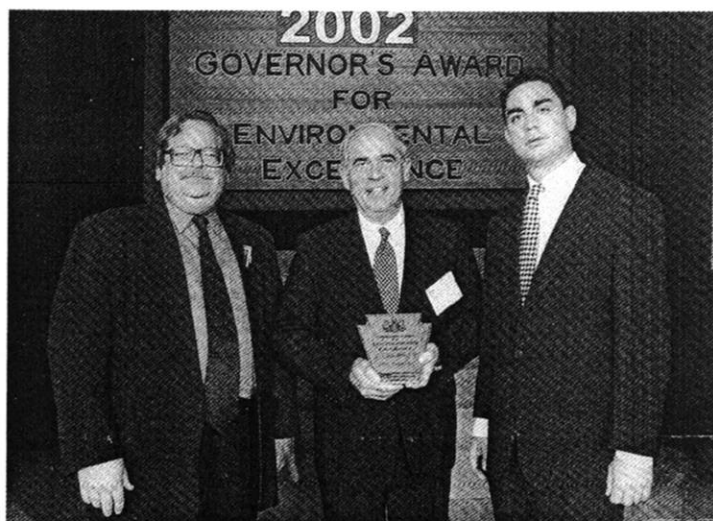
Records Preservation

- ◆ Received an \$18,500 Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program grant to begin the preliminary archiving of the Blue Coal Corporation records. When Blue Coal declared bankruptcy in 1974, much of its records were left in EC's office building. EC is interested in archiving these records to determine if they have any historic value.

AWARDS

- ◆ **Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence** in the Land Use Category for the creation of two athletic fields on a former mine-scarred site, currently known as the Luzerne County Recreational Area in Hanover Township. EC was one of only 41 organizations to receive this prestigious award and one of only 3 qualifiers in the Land Use category. (EC also received a Governor's Award in 1998 for its Land Use Plan)

- ◆ A **PA Waste Watchers Award** from the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection, Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania and the Waste Industries Association for its Yard and Leaf Waste Compost Facility in Newport Township. The award was for EC's waste material processing activities at the site. (This was EC's third Waste Watchers Award).



Mike Dziak, center, accepts EC's second Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence at this year's awards ceremony in Harrisburg from PA DEP Secretary David Hess, at left. EC garnered the award for the conversion of a mine-scarred site in Hanover Twp. into community athletic fields. EC was one of only 3 qualifiers statewide in the Award's Land Use category.

LAND USE PLANNING/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Transportation

EC participated in the development of plans for a connector road between the new Exit 168 (formerly Exit 46), off of Interstate 81 and Route 115. Engineering funding for this new connector road has already been secured and when built, this road will alleviate existing transportation problems and open up land for reclamation and development.

- ◆ In conjunction with Luzerne County, EC developed a Request for Proposals for a land use plan for the property adjacent to the Route 115 Connector Road. Sasaki Inc., Boston, MA was selected and will work with a Steering Committee comprised of municipal and county representatives to develop a land use plan for the lands adjacent to the proposed connector road. Funding for this project was provided by the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Luzerne County and EC.

E C of Directors

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Joseph Hillan

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EC is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Officers of the corporation are:

Board meetings are open to the public and usually held the first Thursday of each month at 8 a.m. at Earth Conservancy's offices, 101 S. Main St., Ashley.

* Check the Times Leader and Citizens Voice newspapers for notices of upcoming meetings/scheduling changes, or EC's website at www.earthconservancy.org. Go to the EC Info link.

Our Mission

Earth Conservancy, a non-profit organization committed to the revitalization of 16,300 acres of former coal company-owned land, will plan for its most productive use and manage that land for the next 20 years.

Over 10,000 acres of Earth Conservancy land will be committed for open spaces and recreational purposes.

Working cooperatively with local, state and federal agencies, governments, educational institutions, and local residents, Earth Conservancy will return these abandoned lands into productive assets for the communities in which they lie.

Reclamation, conservation, responsible development and recycling will be employed for this purpose.

Innovative environmental technologies will be used to improve the quality of the land and water. Knowledge will be shared with students, learning institutions, and interested community groups.

Earth Conservancy's actions will improve local tax base, help create new and better jobs, and develop and apply new environmental technologies.

Earth Conservancy Staff

Michael A. Dziak, President and CEO; **John Renfer**, Executive Administrator; **Amy Gruzsky**, Director of Public Affairs and Development; **Rick Ruggiero**, Property Documentation Specialist and Survey Coordinator; **Shirley Santine**, Real Estate Sales Coordinator; **Anna May Hirko**, Administrative Assistant; **Reda Griffiths**, Secretary / Courier; **Steve Draus, Jr.**, Field Manager; **Keith Scortichini**, Compost Foreman; **Nicholas Kratz**, Compost Site Foreman; **Vince Mitchell**, Field Personnel; **Michael Thomas**, Field Personnel

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