

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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2001 Annual Report To The Community

Earth Conservancy accomplished much in 2001, particularly in its efforts to reclaim mine-scarred lands and find new and better uses for them. EC also realized the completion of several projects which were begun last year, while expanding upon existing projects and initiatives.

As always, reclamation remains a key focus at EC, and after last year's efforts, EC and its partners have reclaimed almost 800 acres of mine-scarred land and expanded its abandoned mine drainage abatement projects within the Newport and Nanticoke Creek watersheds.

In addition to repairing the Wyoming Valley landscape, EC

is also involved in initiatives that will improve the quality of life in our region. With that in mind, EC concentrated its efforts on several recreational projects in 2001 including trails, a community recreational site, and a historic park.

And, in keeping with our mission to share knowledge with students, learning institutions, and interested community groups, EC expanded its educational and community outreach initiatives, getting more school and community groups involved in learning about the special environmental problems faced by Northeastern Pennsylvania and the need for land and water reclamation.

None of these projects could have happened 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.

As we begin 2002, we would like to take an opportunity to formally thank EC's Board of Directors, supporters, volunteers, staff, and all of the organizations/entities which provide funding, partnership, and/or professional expertise to EC. Following is Earth Conservancy's *Annual Report to the Community* for 2001.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Land Reclamation

◆ Received a \$973,000 Pennsylvania Growing Greener grant to cap the former Agnes Flood debris area in Hanover Township, which would make it ready for future development.

EC had already performed both Phase I and Phase II environmental assessments for this site several years ago, which revealed that no further remediation was needed. The assessments were funded in part through grants from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development and Luzerne County. Also, water sampling and geo-technical tests were performed to

determine the site's suitability for development. This area will be the gateway to the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry's Hanover Crossings Business Park.

◆ Completed 90% of the 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.

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ACCOMPLISHMENTS



This is a portion of the 42-acre, mine-scarred Preston site in Hanover Township when EC began reclamation.

Land Reclamation (cont.)

◆ Completed reclamation and grading of a portion of the second phase of EC's community recreational area in Hanover Township, adjacent to State Route 29. This phase will offer baseball/softball fields, basketball/tennis courts, parking, and an extended walking trail.

◆ Grass was planted on the two soccer fields in the Phase I section of EC's recreational area. It was recommended that at least two growing seasons be allowed before the field is open for use. EC expects the fields to be ready for use in Spring, 2002.

Water Reclamation

◆ Worked with Wilkes University to expand the 0.3-acre Phase I Constructed Wetland site in Hanover Township. This site had been treating abandoned mine drainage (AMD) in Espy Run since 1996 using a natural oxidation process to remove iron and other contaminants in the water. The expansion will increase the system's iron-removing efficiency and operating capacity. This project was funded by a \$41,600 grant from the U.S. Dept. of the Interior's Office of Surface Mining. Initial construction of the Phase I site was funded by a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency grant.

◆ Partnered with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), The U.S. Department of Energy and the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection to develop a proposal for identifying and remediating the areas where water flow is being lost in

the main branch of Nanticoke Creek. Remote sensing activities have been conducted and data collected.

◆ In May, 2001, EC partnered with the Army Corps and U.S. Dept. of Energy on a pilot project on the main branch of Nanticoke Creek near Warrior Gap, where fractures in the stream channel were grouted, in an effort to prevent seepage of freshwater into the mine pool. Initial monitoring of the stream flow indicates that the efforts have been somewhat successful and U.S.G.S. will continue to monitor the flow and record results.



With 90 percent of the reclamation at the Preston site complete, the site is markedly improved and ready for re-use.

LAND USE PLANNING/ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

◆ Researched the viability of establishing a windmill farm on Penobscot Mountain in Bear Creek Township in conjunction with Energy Unlimited, Inc. Windmills are part of an ongoing national effort to harness clean, non-polluting, renewable forms of energy for general consumer and business uses.

The Mixed-Use Plan

This plan proposes a creative integration of industrial, commercial, residential and recreational development, as well as green spaces, in a 2,000-acre area along the State Route 29 corridor in Hanover and Newport townships and the City of Nanticoke. The plan's main objective is to foster economic development and improve the region's quality of life by developing land in ways that create a vibrant living environment where residences, workplaces, and recreational spaces are close to one another, thereby decreasing

commute times and providing added convenience.

◆ Worked with residential developer Granor Price and Legg Mason Real Estate Services on a market analysis for residential housing demands for EC land in Hanover Township, which was funded in large part through The Fannie Mae Corporation.

Transportation

Several years ago, EC initiated the conceptual design for a Sans Souci/LCCC Connector Highway linking the Sans Souci Parkway to Middle Road, near Prospect Street in Nanticoke and adding a new exit to Route 29 to access LCCC. In 1998, this new highway was funded for \$23.6 million and included in the State Transportation Commission's 12-year plan. EC's Mixed-Use Plan recommended changes in alignment and the termination point for this highway mentioned above.

◆ EC appeared before the State

Transportation Commission for additional funding for the LCCC/Sans Souci Connector and extension to Roberts Road.

◆ Engineering work was begun on the design/environmental work for this project.

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

◆ EC partnered with the U.S. Economic Development Administration and Luzerne County to obtain a grant to develop a Land Use Plan in the Exit 168 (formerly Exit 46) area. EC's goal is to develop a state-of-the-art mixed use development for over 1,030 non-contiguous acres of land surrounding the Exit 168/Route 115 connector highway.

RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

The Ashley Planes

The Ashley Planes are a series of three steep, inclined planes located in Ashley, Hanover Township and Fairview Township that were used to transport anthracite over Wilkes-Barre Mountain to White Haven, where it was then moved to larger markets.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Planes were built in 1848 and remained in operation for over 100 years. EC is developing the Ashley Planes Heritage Park, which will encompass the entire 500-acre Ashley Planes rail area. A key component of EC's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan, this park will take advantage of the unique natural features on this site, transforming the old railroad beds into hiking and biking

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

◆ Enlisted Pennoni Associates, Inc. to develop the detailed engineering and design plan for the Ashley Planes Heritage Park. This plan is expected to be complete in Summer, 2002. Once the detailed engineering and design plan is completed, EC can proceed to construction of this site, using the \$1 million grant received from the PA Department of Transportation's (PennDOT) Transportation

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RECREATIONAL AMENITIES

The Ashley Planes (cont.)

Enhancement Act (TEA-21) program grant.

- ◆ Formed an Interpretive Subcommittee comprised of local historians and recreation officials to work with EC's consultants on the interpretive/historical aspects of the Ashley Planes Heritage Park project. This group is helping to gather data, artifacts, pictures and other items which will help interpret key aspects of the Planes.

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 regulation-size athletic fields, basketball and tennis courts, parking areas, a walking trail, and a community center. EC, Luzerne County, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services all provided funding for this project.

- ◆ Received a \$25,000 grant through the PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development for the extension of electricity to the Phase I area and for construction of a basketball court.

- ◆ Seeded and maintained the two, regulation-size soccer fields at the site. EC also fenced these fields in to prevent vandalism and damage to the fields. EC expects the soccer fields to be ready for use in Spring, 2002.

- ◆ Began construction of a regulation-size baseball field, two basketball courts, and associated parking as a second phase of the project.

- ◆ Initiated a Peer-to-Peer Study with Hanover Township, Ashley, Sugar Notch and Warrior Run boroughs, and the Hanover Area School District. A \$7,500 grant was provided by the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to help officials from these entities form a multi-municipal recreation board that will eventually own and operate this recreational site.



In 2001, EC began reclamation of the second phase of its recreational site in Hanover Township, adjacent to State Route 29. Reclamation and grading have been completed on a portion of this area, which will eventually offer baseball/softball fields, basketball/tennis courts, parking, and a walking trail.

Trails

- ◆ Began construction of the Mocanaqua Loop, a three-mile looping trail that will make up the first third of the proposed 9-mile Escarpment Trail, and a trailhead facility. The Mocanaqua Loop will take users through a wooded mountainside to the ridgetop areas, where a series of scenic overlooks will provide panoramic views of the Susquehanna River and the Lower Wyoming Valley. A series of secondary,

trails will take users back to the trailhead, providing a variety of hiking experiences and challenges.

- ◆ Received a \$100,000 PA Recreational Trails grant from PA DCNR which will be used to complete construction of the Mocanaqua Loop and to begin Phase II of the Escarpment Trail.

- ◆ Received a \$10,000 grant from Luzerne County to create a Master Plan for the Penobscot Ridge Mountain Biking Area in Newport Township. This area is on a reclaimed site, south of Wanamie, off of the Kirmar Parkway. EC

will create two parallel biking paths, along with a parking area and other trail amenities for hiking and mountain biking. EC has also already obtained \$50,000 in funding from the PA Dept. of Transportation's Transportation Improvement Program to construct the mountain biking area.

- ◆ Worked with the PA Game Commission, Rep. John Yudichak and ATV enthusiasts to determine the possibility of incorporating ATV trails into local trail systems. EC also applied to the PA DCNR for a grant to fund an ATV feasibility study for the Wyoming Valley.

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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Inquiries and comments may be addressed to Amy Gruzesky, editor, at the preceding address, or by calling 570-823-3445.

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

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Composting

EC operates a Yard and Leaf Waste Composting facility along Kirmar Parkway, in Newport Township that accepts yard waste from Luzerne County municipalities and residents free of charge. The material produced at this facility is used on reclamation projects, as well as for community projects.

- ◆ Awarded a \$319,000 Recycling Development and Implementation grant from the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection grant, through Newport Township, to purchase equipment for the Compost Facility.

- ◆ Managed and funded the continuing operation of EC's composting facility, which processes over 7,500 tons 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.



A worker turns over a windrow of compost at EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Composting facility in Newport township. Yard and leaf waste is accepted free of charge at the facility from Luzerne County municipalities and residents. Material produced at the facility is then used on EC's reclamation projects.

Environmental Education

- ◆ EC visited numerous schools and community groups to give presentations on land reclamation and revitalization, watershed reclamation and restoration, acid mine drainage, illegal dumping, responsible land use and development, and recreational initiatives.

- ◆ 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.

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION

The Huber Breaker

- ◆ Partnered with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in helping the re-organized Huber Breaker Preservation Society in its efforts to revitalize the Huber Breaker site into an historical tourist attraction.

- ◆ 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.

- ◆ Assisted the Huber Breaker Preservation

Society during several clean-ups at the site of the Huber Breaker, which is located adjacent to EC's offices.

Records Preservation

- ◆ Applied to the Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission for a grant to archive Blue Coal records, maps, and drawings. If funding is received, this archiving project would ensure the preservation of significant historical documents and records, providing a glimpse into one of the largest and most successful coal companies in the U.S.

- ◆ Distributed educational materials, including AMD brochures and videotapes, newsletters, and informational brochures to interested community and school groups.

Volunteer Activities

EC's Volunteer Tree Planting Initiative reached record numbers in 2001, with more than 500 local school students, teachers and parents planting 5,000 seedlings on reclaimed land. 2001 was the third year of the project, which has grown steadily each year.

- ◆ Worked with several community groups and college students to conduct litter clean-ups at project sites, including a section of the future Ashley Planes Heritage Park Project and near a rock climbing area in Mocanaqua.

- ◆ Expanded EC's board from 15 directors to 18. The individuals serving on EC's board do so on a *volunteer* basis.



These students from Wyoming Valley West Middle School in Kingston are all smiles as they take part in EC's Volunteer Tree Planting Initiative, which EC has organized for three consecutive years. Here, these students plant spruce seedlings on a reclaimed area in Newport Township. Other participating schools were Fairview Twp. Elementary School and Nanticoke High School.

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 for personal vegetable and flower gardening from May through November.

- ◆ EC's Community Gardens project realized another successful year, with over 30 participants signing up for garden plots. Pennsylvania American Water Company also got involved, providing water to the gardeners free of charge.

OTHER

ROW – Recycling Operation with Waterjet

- ◆ EC and Crane Army Ammunition Activity concluded that EC's prototype production unit using high-pressure waterjet technology to remove conventional explosive materials from military munitions had proven that waterjet technology can be used for demilitarization in a safe, effective, and environmentally-friendly manner. Ownership of the system has been transferred to the federal government.

Earth Conservancy Staff

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Real Estate Sales Coordinator

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Steve Draus, Jr.
Field Manager

Keith Scortichini
Compost Foreman

Nicholas Kratz
Compost Site Foreman

Vince Mitchell
Field Personnel

Michael Thomas
Field Personnel



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 bases, help create new and better jobs, and develop and apply new environmental technologies.

EC is a private, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. Officers of the corporation are: Mark Dingman, Chairman; Rhea Simms, Vice Chairman; Susan Shoval, Secretary; John McCarthy, Jr., Treasurer; Michael Dziak, President and CEO. Other board members are: Margaret Bakker, Stephen Barrouk, Joseph Frank, Dr. Joseph Gilmour, Anne Glauber, Joseph Hillan, A. Peter Kanjorski, Gary Lamont, James Manley, Robert Mericle, Lawrence Newman, Fr. Thomas O'Hara, Edward Schechter, and Harold C. Snowden, Jr.

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.*

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www.earthconservancy.org

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