

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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EC Reclamation Project Now Home to Youth Sports

Recently completed project wins 2002 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence

Drivers along State Route 29 have probably already seen scores of kids kicking soccer balls and tossing footballs across a site once dotted by culm banks.

EC's most recent reclamation success is a 15-acre area that has been reclaimed and converted into community athletic fields. Part of a 63-acre former mined site, the two new fields are part of a multi-phase recreation project that will eventually offer numerous recreational amenities including additional athletic fields, a walking trail, basketball courts and parking areas.

The project was funded in part by Luzerne County, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Services, a state Dept. of Community and Economic Development grant and EC.

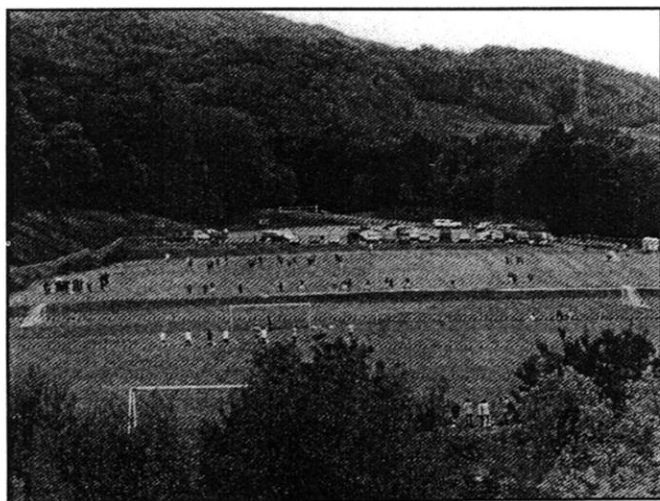
Currently, the Hanover Area Mini-Hawks and Hanover Area Youth Soccer are using the fields until a multi-municipal recreational group is formed to take

over maintenance and operation of the facility.

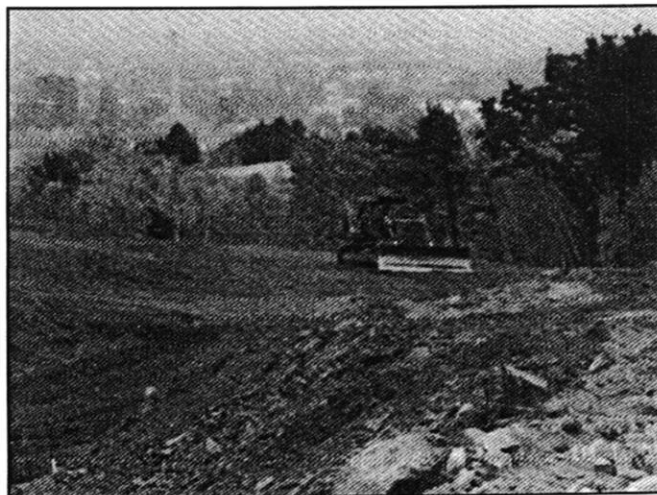
EC is working with the boroughs of Ashley, Sugar Notch, Warrior Run, Hanover Township, and the Hanover Area School District, local youth sports organizations and PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to form this future entity.

On Sept. 25, PA Dept. of Environmental Protection Secretary Dave Hess presented EC President Mike Dziak with a 2002 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence in Land Use for transforming this once barren, mine-scarred site into a community recreational facility that will benefit local residents by providing much-needed recreational amenities. (See related story on p. 5)

Meanwhile, EC has begun work on Phase II of this recreational project, which will consist of baseball/soccer fields, basketball courts, additional parking and an enlarged walking area.



*This summer, the Hanover Area Youth Soccer and Hanover Area Mini-Hawks football team used the athletic fields EC built on reclaimed land in Hanover Township. These fields are the **first phase** of a multi-phased reclamation project, in which EC is turning 63 acres of mine-scarred land into a community recreational facility.*



With Phase I completed, EC has started reclamation and development of Phase II. A \$534,000 Growing Greener grant is helping to fund this project, which will produce six more athletic fields. Here, a portion of the site is being leveled and graded.

EC to Study Motorized Recreation

One of the Wyoming Valley's fastest growing recreational trends is all-terrain vehicle (ATV) use to cruise trails, open areas and even mine-scarred sites. This occurs despite the fact that users are often trespassing on lands where motorized uses are not permitted.

The lack of local, sanctioned places for ATV use has been a topic of discussion during past public meetings EC has held to discuss other recreational projects.

Currently, ATVs are not allowed on EC land, much of which is in the PA Game Commission's Game Cooperators Program. This program lets the public use these areas for recreation, but users must follow Commission rules, which bans motorized use.

However, many ATV owners regularly ride their vehicles on EC property (*without permission*), as well as on other privately-owned lands and state gamelands, where this use is also prohibited.

This issue is a challenge because it involves a recognized and widely popular form of recreation that poses a safety, liability, and environmental problem for landowners and residents who live near areas where ATV use is popular.

As one of the largest landowners in Luzerne County, EC chose to take the lead in examining this issue to determine if and where ATV use could be allowed without causing environmental harm or major problems for private landowners.

This past year, EC obtained two grants — \$20,000 from Luzerne County and \$32,000 from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources — to conduct a Feasibility Study for ATV use in Luzerne County, more particularly, the Lower Wyoming Valley.

The DCNR Grant is from the PA Snowmobile/ATV Fund Program. This program was established after legislation passed earlier this year in the State House of Representatives requiring all ATV's to be registered with DCNR, except for those used solely for farming or business. The legislation became law on Oct. 23.

It amends Pennsylvania's current all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and snowmobile law and is designed to reduce riding in unauthorized areas by increasing fines, requiring license plates on ATVs, and providing incentives for enforcement by local authorities.

These changes will actually help expand ATV riding opportunities by enabling DCNR to award grants to municipalities and profit/nonprofit organizations for ATV trail development and facilities on private lands.

EC has formed a Steering Committee for this project that includes ATV enthusiasts, local and state representatives, and representatives from recreational and environmental groups.

Project proposals were received in September and a consultant will be chosen in October. The Steering Committee will work with the chosen consultant in examining all pertinent issues associated with ATV use in the Wyoming Valley.

This study will examine all facets of motorized recreation and related issues including: environmental concerns and possible solutions to any negative impacts; the benefits and detriments to communities in which ATV use takes place and their economies; the financial and liability concerns pertaining to the development of motorized recreational sites, including their upkeep and maintenance; and conflict management methods for the different types of trail users and outdoor enthusiasts.

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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corporation.

Route 29 Corridor Will be "Growing Greener"

One of Earth Conservancy's top reclamation priorities is the Huber, Preston and Sugar Notch Bank areas along the State Route 29 Corridor in Hanover Township. This area consists of approximately 300 degraded acres surrounding Exit 1.

Recently, EC received a \$534,000 Pennsylvania Growing Greener Grant for the continuation of reclamation efforts that were begun several years ago. In 2000, EC had received a \$750,000 Growing Greener Grant to reclaim the 42-acre Preston Bank area. That project has been completed and the site is now being marketed for industrial/commercial uses.

This latest grant will be used to reclaim the Sugar Notch Bank and convert the area to a community recreation area featuring baseball, football and soccer fields and parking areas. (Please see related story on p. 1)

In addition to improving the landscape and the site's appearance, this project will also dramatically reduce the acid mine runoff into the Warrior and Solomon Creek watersheds.

"This project is especially important for our region because when completed it will provide numerous benefits



The Preston Bank reclamation project was funded through a \$750,000 Growing Greener Grant EC received in 2000. Here, piles of culm, mine rock and other mining wastes are being leveled, in order to make the site reusable for future development.

to our community," said EC President Mike Dziak. "It will improve the appearance and environmental health of the entire area, but more importantly, it will eradicate the mine scarring that was present there for decades, making this land usable once again. This will increase our residents' quality of life and increase economic growth within existing populated areas."

The Huber, Preston and Sugar Notch Banks are adjacent to the existing Hanover Industrial Estates and the area is visible from Route 29, Interstate 81 and Main Street in Sugar Notch and Hanover Township. EC's planned improvements will, in effect, create an improved and aesthetically pleasing gateway to Ashley, Sugar Notch, Warrior Run and Hanover Township and the industrial park.

Work has already begun on this project, which will take approximately three years to complete.



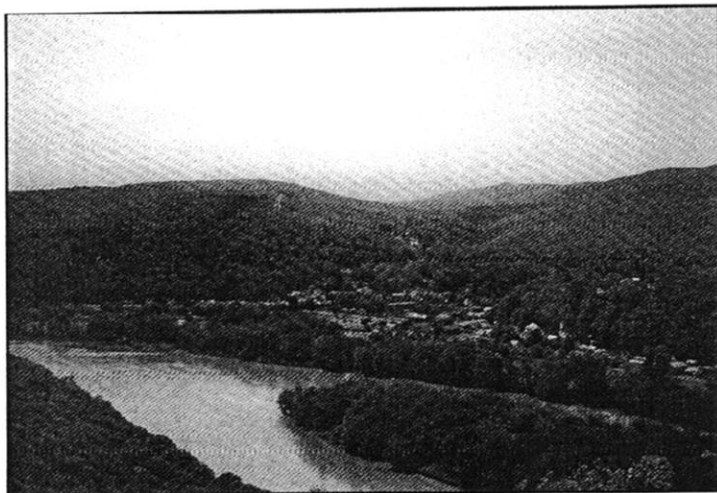
Today, the 43-acre Preston Site is remarkably changed and is being marketed as a commercial site.

EC recently received another Growing Greener Grant to continue the reclamation of the Sugar Notch Bank, which is adjacent to the Preston site, and continue developing it for community recreation. This is a shot of Phase II of that project site during the initial reclamation phase.



There's a New Trail in Town

Mocanaqua Loop completed and ready for hiking enthusiasts



The Mocanaqua Loop offers many scenic areas and vantage points, and is one of the few trails in our region that take advantage of the Susquehanna River. Here, the trail overlooks Bellis Island in the river and the historic town of Shickshinny.

Starting this Fall, local hikers got a new place to explore and out-of-town outdoor enthusiasts a reason to visit the Lower Wyoming Valley.

In October, EC completed work on its Mocanaqua Loop, a series of four looping trails that cover approximately 8 miles of varied terrain along the northern reach of Penobscot Mountain.

The trail follows the ridgetop and offers users several scenic overlooks of the Susquehanna River and the valley below, as well

as variety in both terrain and natural areas. The terrain varies from flat, shaded meandering areas to challenging steep vertical climbs along rocky slopes to slight inclined areas.

The area itself is also unique in that there are untouched natural areas, areas that were mined almost 100 years ago, but have since repaired themselves, and some mine-scarred areas that bear testament to the environmental damage that the area's former anthracite industry inflicted.

The Mocanaqua Loop Trail was initially proposed in EC's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan and is the first trail EC has developed to date. The trailhead, and starting point for this trail is in Mocanaqua, along the Susquehanna River, and adjacent to the Shickshinny Water Treatment Plant.

It is a non-motorized trail designed for low-impact users such as hikers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. The area, which has been a local hunting spot for decades will remain open for hunting and will be patrolled periodically by the PA Game Commission for violators of the trail's usage policy. Conyngham Township will oversee and maintain the trail and trailhead areas. It was funded in part by Luzerne County, the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, a D.I.R.T. grant from the PowerBar Corporation, and EC.

Presently, EC is developing more trails – the Ashley Planes Heritage Park, which will offer a trail through the historic rail area, and the Penobscot Ridge Mountain Biking Area.

The Mocanaqua Loop was funded through a \$100,000 PA Recreational Trails Grant from the PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Recreation and EC.

Compost Facility Receives Third State Award

The PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has again recognized EC's Yard and Leaf Waste Composting Facility for its accomplishments in contributing to Pennsylvania's waste reduction goals.

DEP Secretary David E. Hess presented John Renfer, composting project manager, with the award. EC was one of 59 award recipients from 28 counties across the state to receive this prestigious honor.

The Waste Watcher Awards are given out each year to recognize public and private entities for various efforts to reduce the landfill waste stream.

EC's Composting Facility was established in 1995 along Kirmar Parkway in Newport Township. It processes over 8,000 tons of material annually, including approximately 10,000 Christmas trees.

The facility accepts yard and leaf waste from all Luzerne County residents and municipalities free of charge. Private businesses can also use the facility and are charged a small fee to cover processing costs.

The mulch produced at the facility is then used on EC's reclamation projects to help hasten the reclamation process by stabilizing recently reclaimed lands and helping to re-vegetate former mine-scarred lands.

It is the only facility of its type in Luzerne County.

Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Saturdays, 8 a.m. to noon as seasonal demand dictates.

EC Garners Second Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence

For the second time in four years, EC has been honored by the Governor's Office and the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) for its work in reclaiming mine-scarred lands and converting them into uses that benefit the community.

EC received this year's award in the Land Use Category for the creation of two athletic fields on a former mine-scarred site, currently known as the Luzerne County Recreation Area, in Hanover Twp., adjacent to Route 29. This is the first phase in a multi-phase reclamation and re-development project planned by EC. (*See cover story.*)

The 63-acre, mine-scarred site is being reclaimed and developed for recreational uses in phases. The 15-acre Phase I, for which EC won the award, was completed last year and contains two athletic fields, a basketball court and a parking area. This summer, EC granted permission to the Hanover Area Mini-Hawks and Hanover Area Youth Soccer to use the fields for practices and games.

EC President Mike Dziak accepted this year's award on Sept. 25 in a special ceremony in Harrisburg. EC was one of only 41 organizations to receive this prestigious award and one of only 3 qualifiers in the Land Use Category.



*EC's 2002 Governor's Award
for Environmental Excellence*

The awards have been presented each year since 1997. The Land Use Category recognizes projects that use or reuse land to create environmental/community benefits. EC also won in 1998 for its Land Use Plan, which was developed to guide the reclamation, development and re-use of 16,300 acres of former coal company-owned lands in the Wyoming Valley.

The Recreation Area's Phase I is a former mine-scarred site that EC reclaimed and now offers much needed soccer and football fields to hundreds of local youth on a daily basis. Eventually, this land will be donated to a community entity that can oversee and maintain this site for community recreational use.

EC Welcomes Bernie McGurl to Board; Director Manley Retires

Bernie McGurl, Director of the Lackawanna River Corridor Association and an active local environmentalist, joined EC's Board of Directors in April. He replaces Director James Manley, who retired after 10 years of service on EC's Board. During his tenure, Mr. Manley also served on the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees.

"We are certainly sad to see Jim Manley leave," said EC President Mike Dziak. "He was a true resource to our organization and his years of service and guidance are greatly appreciated and will not be forgotten."

Although a new member, Mr. McGurl has jumped right into his new role. He serves on the ATV Feasibility Study Steering Committee and has been an active participant during EC's board meetings.

"We were very pleased when Bernie accepted our invitation to join our Board," Mr. Dziak said. "Someone with his background and knowledge will be a great help to us as we continue our efforts in revitalizing mine-scarred lands."

Earth Conservancy Staff

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Compost Foreman

Nicholas Kratz
Compost Site Foreman

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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, Bernie McGurl, Robert Mericle, Lawrence Newman, Fr. Thomas O'Hara, Edward Schechter, and Harold C. Snowdon, 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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