

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME VII

ISSUE 1

Summer/Fall 2001

Engineers Start Work on Ashley Planes

Pennoni Associates, Inc., was recently retained to begin the detailed design and engineering specifications for The Ashley Planes Heritage Park.

The Ashley Planes project, one of the key components of Earth Conservancy's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan, entails the creation of hiking and biking trails throughout the historic Planes rail area, where coal was once transported from Ashley to larger urban markets.

The Ashley Planes are listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to the site's significance to transportation and engineering history, and the role they played during Northeastern Pennsylvania's anthracite era.

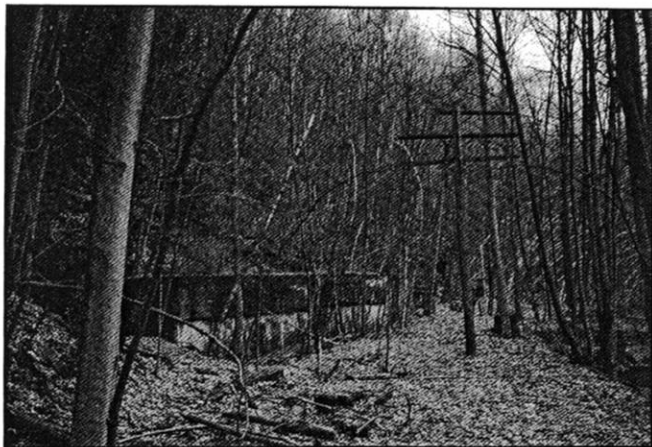
The park will incorporate interpretive signage along the trails to provide information on the area's rich mining history, environmental resources and unique natural assets. EC's development plans include a trailhead, visitor's center, and picnic and parking areas with a focus on the historic ruins that still exist there.

Over the winter, Pennoni and their subconsultants will develop site plans and the interpretive plan for the site.

When completed, the Ashley Planes Heritage Park will feature a series of hiking and mountain biking trails along the site's old rail beds, as well as through scenic natural areas such as this one, appealing to history buffs and nature enthusiasts alike.



A steering committee is being formed and EC will hold several public meetings throughout the plan's development to ensure that local residents have a chance to offer their input on the project. Watch the local newspapers for meeting announcements.



Plane No. 2, shown here, is one of the key interpretive areas that will be accessible via the trail system planned for the Planes. Interpretive signage will explain how the Planes functioned during the 100 years (1848 to 1948) they were in operation.



Solomon's Creek flows through the Ashley Planes site, adding yet another interesting and appealing facet to this unique site.

EC Says Goodbye to Founding Member

Dr. Christopher Breiseth Retires After Serving Organization for 10 Years

In May, Earth Conservancy honored one of its founding members and board chairman, Dr. Christopher Breiseth, at a celebratory dinner at The East Mountain Inn.

About 35 individuals, including current and former board members, local officials, and key individuals involved in Earth Conservancy's past and present efforts, gathered to celebrate Dr. Breiseth's contributions to the organization and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Dr. Breiseth, Wilkes University president for the past 17 years, announced his retirement last year, and accepted a position as President/CEO of The Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt Institute, in Hyde Park, NY. He is the organization's first full-time President.

EC President Mike Dziak presented him with a custom mosaic portrait that incorporated newspaper clippings and photos relevant to EC, and a scrapbook documenting his tenure as EC's board chairman.

Congressman Paul Kanjorski gave Dr. Breiseth a copy of the Congressional Record, commending his efforts on behalf of EC and the Wyoming Valley.

Others in attendance offered congratulatory remarks that highlighted Dr. Breiseth's significant accomplishments for EC and the impact they have had in improving the Wyoming Valley.

Dr. Breiseth was one of the driving influences behind the creation of EC in the early 1990's, along with Congressman Kanjorski and other local leaders.

The novel, and controversial, idea of setting up a non-profit organization to rid the Wyoming Valley's landscape of its thousands of acres of abandoned coal

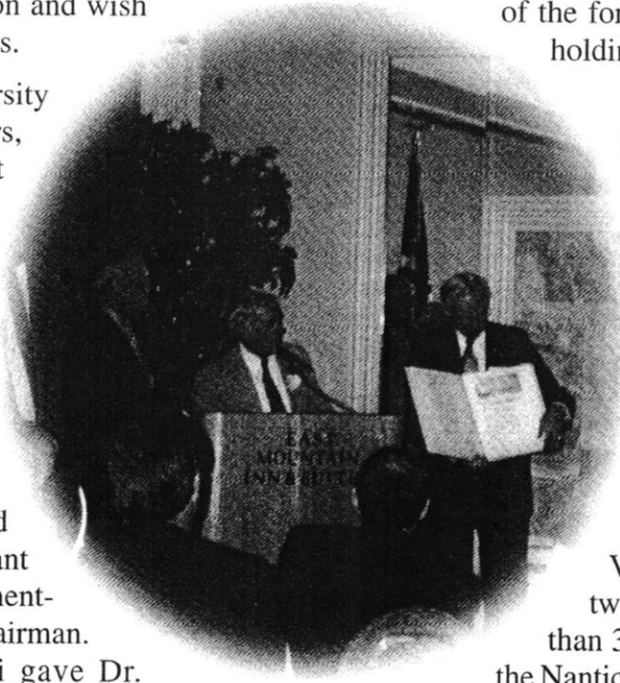
lands began in 1990.

After officially establishing EC as a non-profit, 501c (3) corporation in 1992, the founders spent another two years fighting for the federal grant that would make the purchase of 16,300 acres of bankrupt coal company lands possible. Dr. Breiseth and the other founders saw their plan come to fruition in 1994, when federal bankruptcy judge John Thomas approved the sale of the former Blue Coal Company's land holdings to EC.

"It wasn't easy in the beginning," said Dr. Breiseth, referring to those who were especially critical of the new organization in its early years. "We certainly had our detractors, but we stuck with it."

Today, EC has progressed with a successful track record that speaks for itself — more than 700 acres of Wyoming Valley land has been reclaimed; two artificial wetlands remove more than 350 pounds of iron per day from the Nanticoke Creek Watershed; more than 140,000 new trees have been planted on reclaimed sites; over 10,000 acres of EC lands have been set aside for conservation and open space; and several projects, including land development and transportation initiatives have been undertaken to stimulate economic development in the region.

"I'd like to thank Chris for all of his efforts and hard work on EC's behalf," said Mr. Dziak. "He has worked tirelessly to promote this organization and he is one of the main reasons for its success. He will be truly missed."



Dr. Breiseth, right, flips through the scrapbook given to him by EC, detailing his years as a Founder and Board President of the organization, while EC Board Chairman Mark Dingman, far left, and EC President Mike Dziak, center, look on.

Reclamation Progress Made in Hanover and Newport Townships

Local residents may have noticed a difference in the way things look as they drive along Route 29 through Hanover Township, and in Newport Township.

That's because Earth Conservancy has been busy with three major reclamation projects in those areas that will result in a healthier environment, additional recreational opportunities and much improved aesthetics.

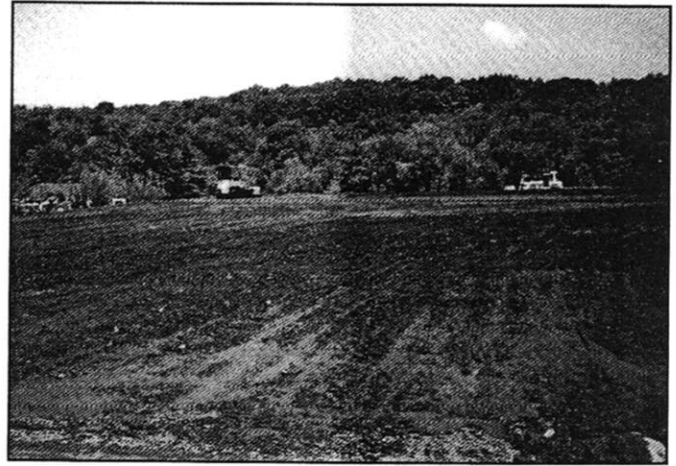
In July, EC partnered with the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to reclaim the 60-acre Sgarlet Bank, in Wanamie, along the West Kirmar Parkway. More than 500,000 cubic yards of material were excavated and the site graded and seeded. The site had been previously mined and abandoned by the North American Mining Co.

Currently, there are no immediate plans for this site, although it is designated for residential use in EC's Land Use Plan.

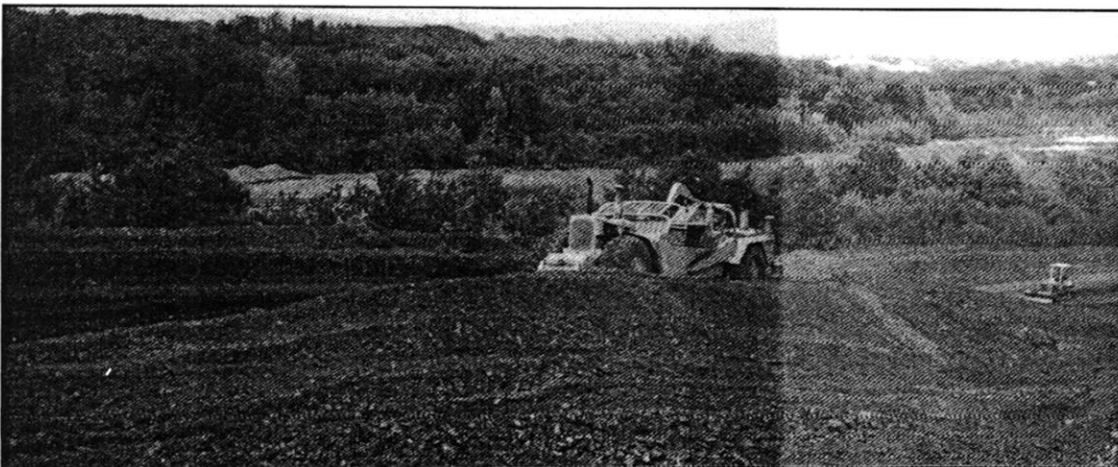
Funded by the PA DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, this site is adjacent to a mountain biking trail EC will be developing next year with funds from PennDOT's Transportation Enhancement Program and Luzerne County.

Another 41-acre reclamation project is underway in Hanover Township, at the Preston Bank off of Main Street in Sugar Notch and adjacent to Route 29. Expected to be complete by the end of this Fall, this Keystone Opportunity Zone (KOZ) site has been identified for industrial/commercial use. The KOZ program was established by Gov. Tom Ridge in 1999 as an incentive to attract new businesses, industries, and residents to Pennsylvania. Those who locate in a KOZ, will benefit from tax exemptions for up to 12 years.

This reclamation project was funded in part through a \$750,000 Pennsylvania Growing Greener Grant and abuts a 63-acre recreational facility EC is currently developing on former coal-mined land. (See story on page 4).



Top right: After excavating more than 500,000 cubic yards of waste material, a portion of the Sgarlet Bank site is graded and leveled during the reclamation process. Above, newly planted grass grows on this once mine-scarred, 60-acre site, which is now suitable for re-use.



Reclamation in Progress. Earthmoving equipment is used during reclamation of the 41-acre Preston Bank site in Hanover Township.

Elected Officials Unite for Recreation

The first phase of Earth Conservancy's 63-acre recreational facility in Hanover Township, consisting of two multi-purpose athletic fields, a walking trail, and parking area, is almost complete and the second phase has begun.

Throughout the summer, EC carefully maintained the newly planted grass on the fields to ensure its long-term vitality once they are opened for public use.

In an effort to have an efficient maintenance system in place at the facility for the local youths and residents who will be using it, EC and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) began working with elected officials in Ashley, Hanover Township, Sugar Notch, and

Warrior Run, and the Hanover Area School District to form a multi-municipal recreational entity.

EC met with the local officials and DCNR representatives and recently helped the entities listed above apply for a Peer to Peer Grant from the state. This \$7,500 grant will be used to hire a state-approved mediator to guide the participants in building the type of partnership needed. The participating boards collectively provide the required 10 percent match.

Hanover Township graciously agreed to serve as the lead applicant and the state is expected to assign the group a peer mediator this Fall.

Huber Breaker Preservation Society Gaining Momentum

Since a feasibility study was completed last year on the possible preservation and restoration of the historic Huber Breaker in Ashley, the newly reorganized Huber Breaker Preservation Society (HBPS) has made great strides in its efforts to rally public support for this significant undertaking — trying to make the feasibility study a reality.

Since the group began regularly meeting late last year, it has attracted almost 200 members, organized a board of directors, raised several thousands of dollars, and conducted a series of improvements on the Huber Breaker site.

The group has held volunteer community clean-ups, cleared brush from the site, installed dusk to dawn lighting to deter vandalism, and is now investigating possible grant and donation opportunities to carry out the study's initial recommendations of fencing off the breaker's perimeter and erecting informational signage. The group will need about \$30,000 for the fencing.

The breaker is owned by No. 1 Contracting Company, whose owner, Al Roman, has said that once the group is financially able to take over the site, he would donate it to them, provided that they are able to preserve the structure.

EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

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

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.

Gardeners Enjoy Fruitful Growing Season

For the second consecutive year, EC offered free gardening plots in Plymouth Township to interested Wyoming Valley residents.

By mid-April, all 40 plots were accounted for and a waiting list had to be established. Pennsylvania American Water Co. also joined in on the effort, providing free water service to the gardening area for the entire growing season, so participants didn't have to bring their own.

Participants grow vegetables, herbs, spices, and flowers for their personal use and assume responsibility for planting and maintaining those plots during the growing season. Any Luzerne County resident is eligible.

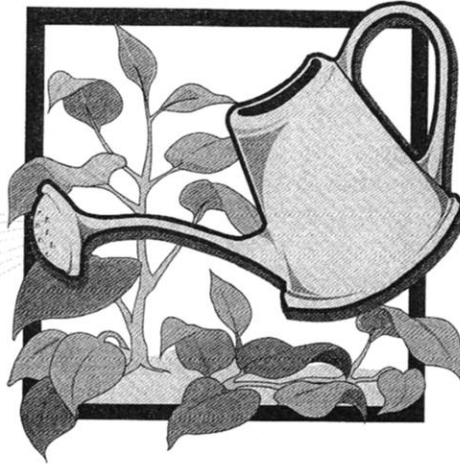
The Community Gardening Project was started last

year after Deborah Shoval, a Kingston native, suggested the idea to EC's Board of Directors. Since then interest has continued to grow, and it looks as

though the program will be expanded next year to accommodate even more gardeners.

"We're happy to be able to provide this service to residents who are interested in gardening but may not have the land available to do so," said EC President Mike Dziak. "It's good to see so many people taking advantage of this."

The growing season lasts until mid-November and the program will be offered again next spring. Interested participants can call Amy Gruzesky at 823-3445 to sign up for next year's program now or early next year.



Five New Board Members Join EC

Earth Conservancy recently welcomed Joseph Frank, Dr. Joseph Gilmour, Anne Glauber, Gary Lamont and Larry Newman, to its Board of Directors.

Mr. Frank is chairman/CEO of Centralia Coal Sales Company and President of Penn State Mechanical Contractors and a WWII veteran.

Dr. Gilmour is the new president of Wilkes University. Prior to joining Wilkes, he had held administrative positions at Missouri State University, Georgia Tech, the University of Maryland, Penn State University, and for the Council of State College and University Presidents for Washington State.

Ms. Glauber, vice president of Friedman Electric in Exeter, has over 20 years experience working with international corporations, institutions, and government agencies and extensive experience managing global media relations campaigns.

Mr. Lamont is the principal of the Conyngham Pass Company, a management advisory firm and president of the CANDO Foundation.

Mr. Newman, a consulting planner, is president of Urban Workshop, a firm specializing in urban, economic development and historic preservation planning for public, institutional, and non-profit clients.

"These five individuals bring a great deal of talent, skill and expertise to our board and I look forward to working with them on future projects," Mike Dziak, EC President, said.

Earth Conservancy Staff

Michael A. Dziak

President and CEO

John Renfer

Executive Administrator

Amy Gruzesky

Director of Public Affairs and Development

Rick Ruggiero

Property Documentation Specialist
and Survey Coordinator

Tommy Thomas

Document Researcher

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



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. 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.*

Printed on recycled paper.

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wilkes-Barre, PA
Permit No. 474

101 South Main Street
Ashley, PA 18706
Phone: (570) 823-3445
Fax: (570) 823-8270

Earth Conservancy