

# EARTH CONSERVANCY NEWS

VOLUME V

ISSUE 2

Spring/Summer 1999

## Thousands of New Trees Abound on EC's Reclaimed Lands

*A Major Volunteer Initiative Involves Hundreds*

Land once scarred by decades of past mining activity is now further along the road to recovery thanks to some very ambitious and energetic volunteers that offered their time and "muscle" to help plant thousands of trees on several EC sites.

Over 3,000 seedlings were planted during five volunteer plantings held in April and May. A larger reforestation project was also done on 110 acres of EC land in the lower Wyoming Valley through the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (See story on p. 7).

The first volunteer tree planting took place on the second Saturday in April at EC's Phase II Wetland site. This particular area, along Dundee Road in Hanover Township, recently began removing iron from water released by the Askam Borehole into Nanticoke Creek (See story on p. 5).

Volunteers from the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority planted 80 trees at the site, which is also being



*WWSA employee Amie D'Angelo, standing, helps some young volunteers plant spruce trees at EC's Phase II Wetland site. The group planted 80 trees at the site, which is used by EC to treat mine drainage from the Askam Borehole.*

used as an outdoor educational facility by EC for local school students. In addition to employee volunteers, the WWSA supplied the trees and equipment needed for the planting. Some trees came from the Authority's nursery, while others were purchased with funds raised by an employee dress-down day, with participating employees donating \$5 to dress casually on a selected Friday.

In Newport Township, a 30-acre site will benefit from the 2,700 seedlings planted there by student volunteers.

Over 400 students, chaperones and teachers from Wyoming Valley West Middle School planted nearly 2,000 trees there. The students not only planted trees, but also held dances and

*cont. page 2*



*This group of volunteers spent a recent Saturday morning planting over 300 white pine seedlings at one of EC's reclaimed sites in Warrior Run. In front, from left are Carrie Rightmire and Jeffrey Kinney. Standing, from left, are Joel Minsavage, Heather Hogan, Tim Mulcahy, Mike Kinney and Dennis Bobo.*

doughnut sales to raise the money needed to pay for the buses that took them to the site.

Dave Guzofski, a teacher at Nanticoke High School, organized a tree planting at the same site. About 20 students from his environmental science class planted about 700 trees, and were also given a tour of EC's wetland sites and compost facility.

DCNR District Forester Nick Lylo attended two of those plantings, instructing students on the proper way to plant the seedlings for best survival and the benefits their efforts will provide. He also helped plant some seedlings.

All of the trees planted by the students and other volunteers will help further the benefits of reclamation done at former mine-scarred sites by helping to control soil erosion and improving soil quality by returning nutrients to the soil. As the seedlings grow, these benefits will increase and also provide other benefits, such as habitat and shelter for wildlife.

Members of Wilkes University's Programming Board, a student organization that helps plan events at the campus,



*Tree planting efforts like this one organized by Nanticoke H.S. teacher Dave Guzofski and his environmental science students, complement reclamation efforts on EC lands.*



*Working in small groups, like these, students from Wyoming Valley West Middle School planted almost 2,000 trees on a reclaimed site in Newport Twp.*

planted about 200 White Pine trees near EC's Phase I Wetland site in Hanover Township. Tim Mulcahy, a Techneglass employee, organized a group of friends and fellow employees to do a tree planting in May at a reclaimed site in Warrior Run, along Main Street.

The group, although small, planted over 300 White Pine, Black Locust and European Alder seedlings at the 55-acre site.

With the exception of the trees planted by the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority, EC provided the trees for all of the plantings.

Based on the success of this year's tree plantings, EC is looking to organize others for next spring. However, because we need particular species of trees due to the conditions of soil on reclaimed sites, we will need to place our tree orders by next fall. If anyone is interested in donating money, trees, or tools, or would like to participate in a volunteer program next spring, please contact Amy Gruzsky at 823-3445.



*Members of Wilkes University's Programming Board spent a sunny spring afternoon planting pine seedlings at EC's Phase I Wetland site. The newly planted trees will help improve soil conditions at the site and provide an enhanced habitat and food source for wildlife there.*



# OPEN SPACE PLAN PROJECTS UNDERWAY

*Work Will Begin On New Regional Recreation Center This Summer*

EC's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan has been approved by the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and implementation efforts are in full swing.

The plan calls for 55 miles of hiking and biking trails, 32 miles of motorized trails, six parks, including a motorsports park, 6,700 acres of conservation lands, and 4,260 acres of open space. There are also plans for a 37.5 mile scenic drive throughout the lower Wyoming Valley.

Work is slated to begin within the coming weeks on a regional recreation center in Hanover Township, at the intersection of Interstate 81 and Route 29.

The site is a 65-acre mine scarred area that will be reclaimed and developed in five phases.

Phase I is a 10-acre section and will feature two soccer/football fields, a basketball court, parking areas and a walking trail.

Athletic fields, particularly for

soccer, are needed in the Wyoming Valley.

A recent letter by Nanticoke sixth-grader Caitlin Klish to EC, Congressman Paul Kanjorski and Rep. John Yudichak, asked the above entities to build a recreation park with playing fields on EC land.

Her letter specifically mentioned the shortage of available soccer fields in our area.

Luzerne County supports this project and has committed \$100,000 toward the project.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service provided \$200,000 from its Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) to help with reclamation and the U.S. Soccer Foundation is helping with the field design and development.

EC hopes to have the Phase I portion seeded by the end of this fall, and the fields ready for play within two years.

The remaining four phases

include plans for tennis and basketball courts, little league and baseball fields, a community recreation building, more parking and an extended trail.

They will be developed as EC obtains funding for reclamation and construction.

Other priority Open Space projects are the Mocanaqua Loop, which will be the first three miles of the 9-mile Escarpment Trail on the northern reach of Penobscot Mountain, and trails in the Ashley Planes, where EC wants to develop an Ashley Planes Heritage Park.

EC has applied for federal and state funds for these projects and will know this summer if any projects will receive outside funding.

If funding is received, these projects could begin this fall.

EC's Lower Wyoming Valley Open Space Master Plan was funded by EC, Luzerne County and the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

## 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.

## EC's Land Use Plan Earns National Recognition

Earth Conservancy's Land Use Plan received a Certificate of Environmental Achievement for Growth Management/Regional Planning from Renew America.

The recognition qualifies EC to be included in Renew America's Environmental Success Index, a one of a kind database filled with successful environmental programs across the U.S. The index provides businesses, local governments and civic and environmental groups with practical, proven models they can replicate.

To be included in the index, EC's program was evaluated in four areas: program effectiveness, natural resource conservation, economic progress, and human development. Each qualifying program passes a rigorous, three-stage review process.

# THE HUBER BREAKER:

## *Bringing Luzerne County's Past Back Into The Future*

Earth Conservancy is partnering with the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and local businessman Al Roman, owner of No. 1 Contracting, to help preserve an important piece of the region's past.

The Huber Breaker is a regional landmark and one of the few remaining breaker buildings of its size left in the state of Pennsylvania, if not the country.

Currently, it is owned by No. 1 Contracting, which is working with EC and DLNHC in their preservation efforts.

Architect John Gianacopoulos will perform a feasibility study this summer to determine if all or part of the vacant structure can be converted into a community park/tourist attraction.

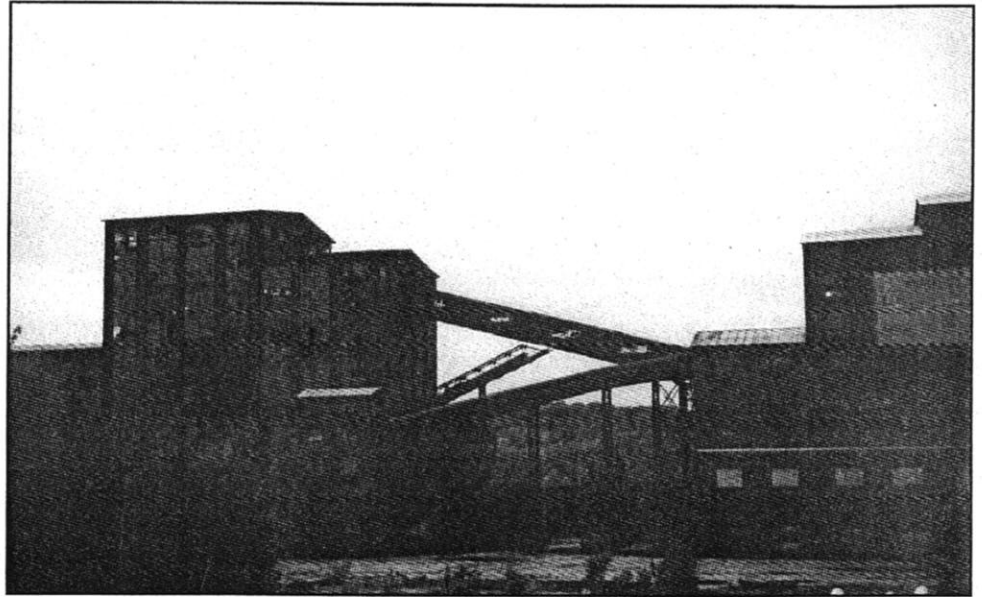
The study, which is being funded by a Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources grant, will include design recommendations and cost estimates for stabilizing the 61-year-old building.

Later this summer, public meetings will be held to share site concepts and collect public input on the project.

It is hoped the building can be transformed into a community asset that would be used by residents and visitors for recreation.

Ideas for the site include facilities for picnics, concerts, and historical markers to explain various aspects and past uses of the building.

Built by the Glen Alden Coal Company, the Huber Breaker was one of the largest breakers ever built. It began operating on Feb. 1, 1939, processing coal from Huber Colliery mines and Glen Alden's other Wyoming Valley mining operations. At its peak, it employed 6,000 men and produced over 1 million tons of coal per year.



*THE HUBER BREAKER AS IT STANDS TODAY. A feasibility study will soon be done to determine how this historic structure can be revitalized.*

EC and DLNHC would like to see the breaker preserved and its resulting use linked with other heritage-related projects and trails proposed throughout our area, particularly with the proposed Ashley Planes Heritage Park suggested in EC's Open Space Master Plan.

EC is also working to create the Ashley Planes Heritage Park in the historic Ashley Planes rail area, parts of which are adjacent to Route 309. The park would include hiking and biking trails along the old railroad beds and interpretive signage along the trails to tell users about the area's rich mining history and environmental resources.

"The Huber Breaker is a very important and valuable link to our area's past and will be a valuable asset to the region and its future generations," said EC President Michael Dziak.

"It has the potential to serve not only as a unique recreational area, but also has educational value as an existing relic of a by-gone era and its people who helped build the Wyoming Valley and drive our nation's industrial revolution."

Anyone interested in participating in the preservation efforts should call Amy Gruzesky at EC at 570-823-3445.

# New Constructed Wetland Helping to Control Mine Drainage Problem

## *EC's Phase II Site To Treat Mine Water And Serve As Outdoor Classroom*

On April 26, EC's Phase II Wetland, along Dundee Road in Hanover Township, began treating mine drainage from the Askam Borehole that flows into Nanticoke Creek.

This project is the only one of its kind in our region and is unique both in its use of a special device called a Maxistripper, which adds atmospheric oxygen to the water being treated, and because water is being pumped uphill to the treatment site.

The Phase II wetland was constructed to remove iron and other heavy metals that now contaminate the water in Nanticoke Creek. The iron is what gives mine drainage its signature bright orange color. The water also often has a sulfuric odor.

Phase II will treat up to 500 gallons of mine drainage per minute, with future expansion capabilities. The maximum flow of water from the borehole has been estimated at up to 7,000 gpm. However, the amount of water discharged from the borehole varies, based on the level of water in the mine pool.

"There are times when Phase II will be treating all of the mine drainage emanating from the borehole, and others, when it is treating the maximum amount

possible," said Tom Chesnick, EC engineering projects manager.

In addition to the site's environmental benefits, Phase II will double as an educational site. EC will offer tours of the site to local school groups and others to show them first-hand the effects of mine drainage and available treatment methods.

EC is also working to obtain funding to develop an educational video that could be used by teachers and students prior to visiting the wetland area, to give them background information on this environmental problem.

"The start-up of this project is extremely significant to the Susquehanna River watershed and is a major step forward in EC's land and water reclamation activities," EC President Mike Dziak said.

This is EC's second constructed wetland. The first is a 0.3-acre site that treats mine drainage adjacent to Espy Run, in Hanover Township. It does not however, use any mechanical devices in its treatment process.

Both wetland projects were subsidized through a grant from the U.S. EPA. Wilkes University and Kings College provided technical assistance on both projects and permits were obtained through the PA DEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.



*Wetland plants in the polishing cell at the Phase II site help further the treatment process by catching iron particles and keeping water in the treatment cell longer, allowing more iron particles to fall out of the water before it is released back into Nanticoke Creek.*



# EC STARTS NEW WEBSITE, ADDS TAG LINE TO NAME

Earth Conservancy has a new presence on the World Wide Web.

With all of the projects currently taking place at EC, there was a need to

update our existing web page and use

the Internet to keep interested parties informed of our activities.

Anyone with a PC and Internet access can now check out EC's projects and current events at: [www.earthconservancy.org](http://www.earthconservancy.org).

"Having a presence on the Internet will help further EC's mission of reclaiming and finding new uses for lands that have been scarred by past mining activity," EC President Mike Dziak said. "It will also increase our visibility on a global level."

Several of EC's projects have already garnered interest through local, state and national media outlets.

This year, EC projects have been highlighted in both state and national publications.

The national trade publication,

Waste News, mentioned EC's composting facility winning its second consecutive state Waste Watcher's Award, and the DEP Update, a state publication, had

articles on EC's Phase II Wetland, our 1998

Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence, and the recreation area being developed in Hanover Township, near Route 29.

## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Earth Conservancy has been in existence since 1992, yet we have found that our name oftentimes confuses people.

Many times, staff members have been asked if our organization is national, or even global.

So, a decision was made by our Board of Directors to better explain our name, in order to

clarify the organization's goals and activities.

On June 3, the Board approved a tag line to be added to our original name.

Earth Conservancy has now become:

*Earth Conservancy  
A Not-for-Profit Corporation  
For Conservation and Land  
Revitalization in the  
Wyoming Valley.*

"This addition adds a focus statement to our original name that now clarifies our purpose and our mission," Mr. Dziak noted.

"It will especially help those unfamiliar with Earth Conservancy by immediately providing a bit more information on our purpose," he added.

The new tag line follows the revamping of our mission statement, which was done last year.

**Earth Conservancy**  
***A Not-for-Profit Corporation***  
***For Conservation and Land***  
***Revitalization in the***  
***Wyoming Valley.***

## Father Lackenmier Retires from EC Board

In April, Father James Lackenmier C.S.C., president of Kings College and a founding member and board member of EC for the past seven years, retired.

He is leaving the Wyoming Valley for Austria, where he will remain for the next two years.

During his tenure at EC, Father Lackenmier helped guide the organization from its earliest beginnings to its present status.

"Father Lackenmier was an integral part of this organization, and he will be missed by all of us," EC President Mike Dziak said.

"The insight, knowledge, and guidance he shared with this organization over the past seven years was invaluable."

Board members honored Father Lackenmier with a special luncheon, and a plaque recognizing his contributions to EC and its board.

# Former Mine-Scarred Site Now Home to 135,000 New Seedlings

A former mine-scarred, 110-acre site in Newport Township will soon be seeing "greener" days thanks to Earth Conservancy and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Bureau of Forestry.

Using money obtained through the Project 20 Fund, EC, in conjunction with the DCNR's Bureau of Forestry, planted 135,000 seedlings on the Newport Twp. site. The Project 20 fund is financed through the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund.

EC worked with the state Department of Environmental Protection to reclaim the site a few years ago. This tree planting will now help further those reclamation efforts and reforest this once damaged site.

DCNR's Bureau of Forestry administers Project 20 funds and oversaw the tree planting. "The Bureau of Forestry will continue to monitor this site and will continue these types of projects in Luzerne County," said Nick Lylo, DCNR Forester for the Wyoming Forest District.

A variety of trees were planted on the site, based on their ability and tolerance to grow on anthracite mine spoils. Species included Japanese Larch, Norway Spruce, White Spruce, White Pine, Red Pine, Black Locust, Bristly Locust, European Black Alder, Quaking Aspen, Pitch Pine/Lob Lolly Pine hybrids and Austrian Pine/Japanese Pine hybrids.

The seedlings will help with soil and erosion control, aid in building soil nutrients, provide wildlife habitat, and complement the area's aesthetics and recreational opportunities, Lylo said. Long-term benefits include reforestation of a site that, prior to mining, was once forested lands, and improved water quality, which is always affected by good forestry, he added.

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

*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](http://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 bases, 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*

**Thomas Chesnick**  
*Engineering Projects Manager*

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

**A. Vaughn Bland**  
*Operations Engineer - - ROW*

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

**Tommy Thomas**  
*Document Researcher*

**Shirley Santine**  
*Real Estate Sales Coordinator*

**Anna May Hirko**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Dana Kendreth**  
*Secretary / Courier*

**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*



## ➤ Recycling Reminder

You know summer is truly here when the steady hum of lawnmowers and hedge trimmers can be heard throughout local neighborhoods in the early weekday evenings and throughout the weekends.

EC would just like to remind all residents that our Composting Facility on West Kirmar Parkway in Newport Township accepts yard and leaf materials from all Luzerne County municipalities and residents free of charge, although donations are gratefully accepted. Businesses are charged a nominal fee.

Materials dropped off at the facility are composted into a mulch, which EC uses on its reclamation projects, to help foster new vegetation growth on former mine-scarred sites. This mulch was also used at the Phase II Wetland project, as a substrate material.

Currently, 11 municipalities use our facility, which helps save them money by reducing the amount of waste material they have to take to area landfills.

Drop-off hours are Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday hours are in effect as needed. Please call EC's office at 823-3445 ahead of time to find out when weekend hours are available.



101 South Main Street  
Ashley, PA 18706

Phone: (570) 823-3445  
Fax: (570) 823-8270

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