



FOCUS: NURSING HOME SOS PROGRAM

Responding to community need

When the world shut down in March of 2020, Earth Conservancy (EC) was in the fortunate position of being able to carry on most operations remotely. However, for many in the community, this was not the case. We saw municipalities and organizations overstretched and underequipped. Working with Senator John Yudichak (I-14) and the AllOne Foundation, EC established the NEPA Nursing Home SOS Program – short for “Supply, Operate, Save” – with the intent of assisting area nursing homes in obtaining personal protective equipment (PPE) during the coronavirus pandemic. The program started with an initial \$250,000 donation from EC, which the AllOne Foundation matched. The fund then grew to over \$1 million through contributions from Luzerne County, Lackawanna County, the Luzerne Foundation, and the Carbon County Community Foundation. Additional partners included One Point, Inc., LeadingAge PA, and the Pennsylvania Health Care Association. As of April, 2021, the program had distributed over two million items of PPE to more than 30 nursing homes.

Municipalities also faced increasing financial pressure during the pandemic, needing to maintain services, while keeping employees and residents safe. To ease the strain, EC donated \$50,000 to the Lower South Valley Council of Governments (LSVCOG) for the purchase of PPE and other protective supplies. “Having worked closely with these communities for over 27 years, we want to support them as best we can and make sure their needs for safety and health are met,” explained EC’s President and CEO, Terry Ostrowski. Members of the LSVCOG include Nanticoke; Newport, Plymouth, and Hanover Townships; and Plymouth, Sugar Notch, and Ashley Boroughs. Warrior Run Borough was also included in the distribution of funds.

Above: Senator John T. Yudichak (I-14) provides an update on the NEPA Nursing Home SOS Program at the Meadows in Dallas in October, 2020.



View of Bliss Bank, looking west. Espy Run and an access road leading to Bliss IV and V are in the foreground, followed by the now-reclaimed Bliss Bank, Phases III, II, and I.



Development on west side of Loomis Bank



Synching new levellogger at Askam



View of the Hanover Reservoir

Bliss Bank & Espy Run Stream Restoration | Although there were delays due to the pandemic, reclamation of Bliss Bank Phase III was completed, allowing it to be marketed with Phases I and II as a single 130-acre parcel. The tract is now under a sales agreement with a national developer to close in 2021. Restoration of the Espy Run stream channel moved a bit slower, as technical revisions and permitting delayed work. Substantial completion is anticipated by 2022. The projects have been supported by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA).

SVP Access Roads | Three of four access roads (Hanover 9, Hanover 7A, and Loomis Bank) are now complete, facilitating easy access to the South Valley Parkway and interstate highway system. Only the Bliss roadway remains, the start of which can be seen in the photo above. Projects were funded by PA Department of Community & Economic Development's Multimodal Transportation Fund.

Hanover 7A | Construction was completed on the new barracks and training facility for the Pennsylvania State Police, Troop P. On H7A's remaining ± 30 acres, EC is undertaking a master planning study for a regional recreation area, funded in part by a grant from the PA Department of Conservation & Recreation (PA DCNR). The project will involve public meetings and collaboration with local stakeholders.

Nanticoke Creek Watershed Reassessment | Many of EC's reclamation and restoration projects have been guided by a 2005 study of the Nanticoke Creek watershed, done in cooperation with PA DEP and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Because of the progress made, EC decided a reevaluation of its restoration strategy was warranted. The study, led by George Albert, PE, and subconsultant Greenman-Pedersen, will reassess the watershed's hydrology and recommend future steps. EC also purchased and installed four levelloggers in the watershed through a grant from ARIPPA. The instruments will monitor flow rates that will then be correlated with rainfall and mine pool data.

Little Wilkes-Barre & Penobscot Mountains | Funded through a PA DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) grant and in partnership with North Branch Land Trust, EC continued efforts to transfer approximately 1,400 acres of land across Little Wilkes-Barre and Penobscot Mountains into the State Forest System, which features the picturesque Hanover Reservoir.



In 2020, EC moved forward with its feasibility study for an off-highway vehicle (OHV) recreation area in Newport Township, covering $\pm 10,000$ acres, 2,500 of which EC owns. LAIRD Landscape Architecture was engaged to lead the study. The team not only had prior experience in OHV trail and park design, but also genuinely understood the sport, being riders themselves. LAIRD also brought WAR Landscape Architecture and the Institute for Public Policy & Economic Development on board to assist with planning, surveys, and data analysis.

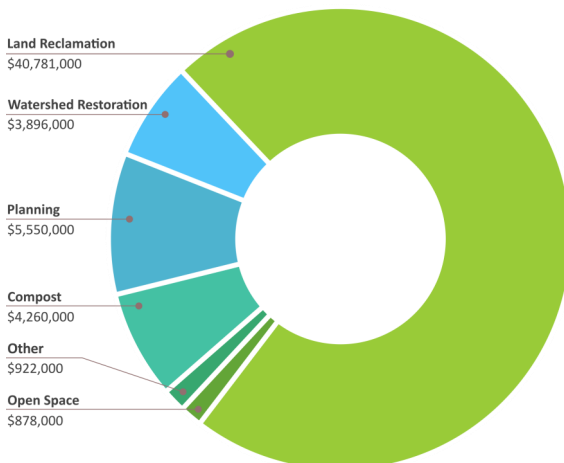
After initial planning activities, the steering committee met in September 2020. Jim Laird, RLA, engaged participants by seeking professional and personal perspectives on the OHV study and park, including concerns. The feedback provided excellent insight into opportunities and challenges in the region, and demonstrated real enthusiasm for the potential of outdoor recreation as an economic driver. Future committee meetings, stakeholder interviews, a public survey, and public meetings were planned for 2021. Updates will be posted on Facebook and at www.earthconservancy.org/recreation/newport-twp-ohv-study/. The study is supported by a C2P2 grant from PADCNr, awarded in 2019.

EC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to addressing the impacts of historical coal mining practices in northeastern Pennsylvania. EC seeks to lead our communities in the reclamation of mine-scarred lands and streams, returning strong economic, environmental, and social value to the region by creating a well-planned, vibrant valley, protected by green ridgetops. To this end, EC develops sustainable land-use plans; leads reclamation efforts of damaged minelands and watersheds, and guides their reuse; commits to provide 10,000 acres for recreation and open space; partners with local communities to achieve our mission; and educates the community on our work.

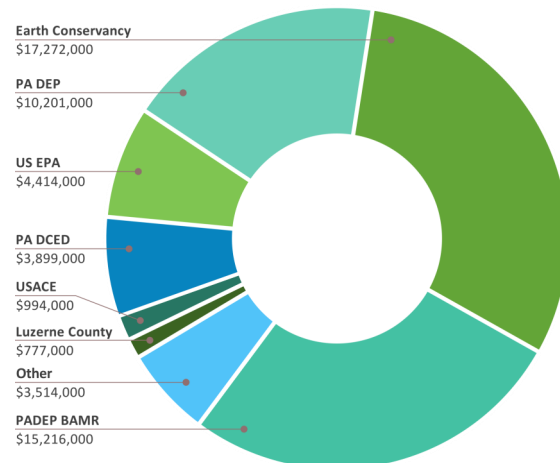
Financial statements are audited annually by an independent accounting firm. Overviews of EC's project expenses and funding sources since inception are provided in the charts below.

Project Expenses through 2020

Total Investment: \$56,315,011



Sources of Funding through 2020



The disappointment was obvious when EC had to suspend classes for the 2020 cohort of the EWT Program, especially as field surveying – one of the program’s main draws – had just gotten underway. EC immediately shifted to helping participants with their job search, not knowing if or when classes would resume. Consequently, by the time Penn State Wilkes-Barre returned to in-person learning, the cohort had decreased from 16 participants to five. Nevertheless, over half the group found work in the challenging job market. The 2020 cohort was funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission and PPL Foundation.

For the 2021 and 2022 cohorts, EC and Penn State Wilkes-Barre anticipate an experience closer to normal. The two years of training will be supported by a recently awarded cooperative agreement from the USEPA. EC also received a sustaining grant from the PPL Foundation for additional program expenses.



Bumblebee at EC Community Garden; Photo by E. Hunt



\$56.3
million
invested



2,000
acres
reclaimed



8,677
green acres
preserved

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