



FOCUS: **BLISS BANK**

Another Piece in Turning EC's Vision into Reality

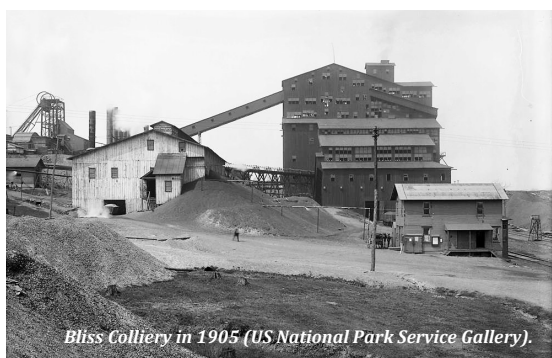
Back in 2017, the cover of the Earth Conservancy (EC) newsletter featured a large greening slope. The site, located off Middle Road in Newport Township, was Phase I of EC's Bliss Bank and its reclamation had just been completed. Now, five years later, more progress has been made: an additional 80 acres have been reclaimed, utility connections are in place, and a roadway into the site is nearly finished. More significantly, Missouri-based NorthPoint Development has purchased the full, 130-acre tract, and is preparing the parcel for two new distribution centers, as seen above.

The story of Bliss Bank started like many other EC properties, with the construction of a breaker on the site in 1892 by the Delaware, Lackawanna, & Western Railroad Coal Company. Bliss was one of the first four breakers in the area and, together with the Auchincloss, Truesdale, and Loomis collieries, processed the majority of the South Valley's coal. In 1924, Bliss alone produced more than 731,000 tons and employed well over 1,000 people. Although the breaker stopped operations in 1953, the area continued to be strip-mined until the early 1970s. The site had several different owners, including Glen Alden and eventually Blue Coal.

Blue Coal declared bankruptcy in 1976. From that time on, the land sat mostly idle until EC's purchase of the Blue Coal estate in 1994. Recovery of the property didn't begin until 2005, when EC received a PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) Energy Harvest grant, which helped underwrite the removal of 700,000 tons of coal waste for power cogeneration. The site's reclamation started in 2015, supported by the PA DEP Growing Greener and US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) Brownfields Cleanup programs. Work on Phase I was completed 2016, and Phase II in 2019. *(continued next page)*



Northpoint groundbreaking at Tradeport 164, October 2021.



Bliss Colliery in 1905 (US National Park Service Gallery).



View of the Bliss culm bank in 2005.

Phase III was a larger undertaking. First, with Espy Run's stream reconstruction bordering the site, the new channel and vegetative buffer areas needed to be accommodated. Second, as part of a \$3 million award from PADEP's Abandoned Mine Lands Pilot Program, infrastructure was included, thereby increasing the site's potential for reuse.

To date, over \$6.5 million has been invested in reclamation of Phases I-III. Now under NorthPoint's control, the site is undergoing additional preparation for development, including extensive dynamic compaction. Two buildings are slated for the site: one 1.2 million square feet, and one 536,254 square feet. EC, meanwhile, will continue its reclamation of Phases IV and V in 2022.

Dziak Drive Ribbon Cutting | What better way to follow the Tradeport 164 groundbreaking than with a celebration of our own! On November 4th, EC hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony for Dziak Drive, our fourth constructed access road off the South Valley Parkway. Named in honor of EC's original President/CEO, Mike Dziak, the road leads into the reclaimed Bliss Bank site and additional mine-scarred properties.

Speakers during the event – including Terry Ostrowski of EC, Eric Watts of NorthPoint Development, and Tom Lawson of Borton Lawson & EC's Board of Directors – lauded Mike on his contributions to the South Valley's recovery. True to form, Mike was humble in his acceptance. But as Senator John Yudichak noted, "All great monuments begin with a great architect who sketches out a masterful plan, and Mike Dziak was the chief architect of the Earth Conservancy and its indelible legacy of mine reclamation, land conservation, and economic development." We at EC couldn't agree more. Thank you, Mike, not only for what you've accomplished, but what is still to come. We appreciate everyone who attended and sent their well wishes.

The access road was funded in part by grants from the PA Department of Community & Economic Development and PA DEP.



EC's Geoff Shaw presents framed sign to Mike Dziak.



Ribbon cutting on Dziak Drive.

EC continued to face challenges in 2021 due to the COVID-19 epidemic. Nevertheless, I am pleased to say we still advanced Earth Conservancy's mission to lead local communities in the reclamation of mine-scarred lands and streams to restore economic, environmental, and social value to the region. This included the completion of Dziak Drive, which opened up hundreds of acres of reclaimed land off the Prospect Street roundabout in Nanticoke. Missouri-based Northpoint Development was the first to take advantage of the area, planning for two logistics centers in Newport and Hanover Townships on what was formerly part of the Bliss colliery. The buildings will total totaling 1.7 million square feet. Several other establishments also opened on reclaimed EC lands: Thrive Market, an online grocery store selling organic foods and products using a sustainable approach; hardware wholesaler True Value; specialty fitness and wellness retailer Johnson Fitness; and a new state-of-the-art barracks and training center for Troop P of the Pennsylvania State Police.



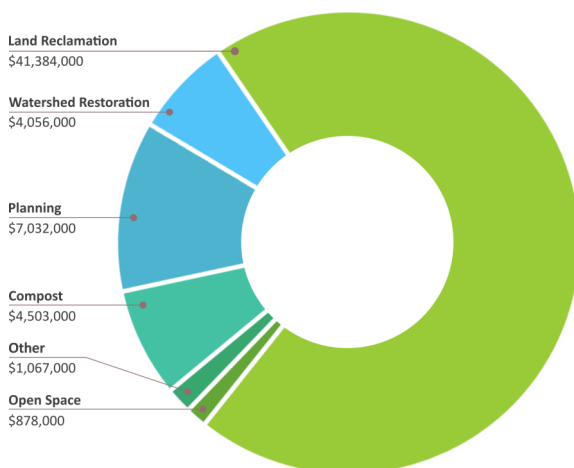
In addition to these economic gains, 2021 brought progress on EC's efforts to increase recreational and green spaces in the region. This included the continuation of EC's feasibility study for an Off-Highway Vehicle Park in Newport Township; and planning for a potential recreation area in Hanover Township, adjacent to the new Troop P facility. EC also completed installation of a new irrigation system for its community garden, and made a \$100,000 donation towards a special needs playground in Kirby Park. For 2022, we predict continued progress. We are undertaking a solar feasibility study, which will allow us to review available EC lands for siting solar farms. We also are carrying on with Bliss Bank's reclamation and the restoration of Nanticoke Creek and Espy Run. To see these streams flow freely, no longer diverted underground into the mine pools, will be a great accomplishment. That said, no achievement is ours alone. Success comes through our many partnerships with government, agency, business, and community organizations, as well as individuals like you. On behalf of EC's staff and Board of Directors, I thank you for your continued interest and support.

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.

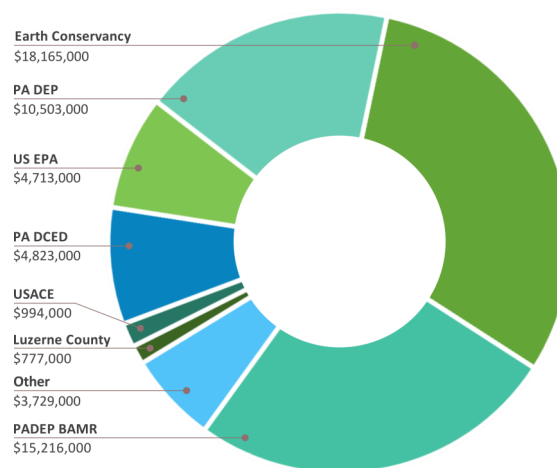
Financial statements are audited annually by an independent accounting firm. Overviews of EC's project expenses and funding sources since inception are provided in the charts below.

Project Expenses through 2021

Total Investment: \$58,920,000



Sources of Funding through 2021





EC President/CEO Terry Ostrowski, left, shows completed work on Espy Run to representatives from USEPA Region III. USEPA has been one of the major funders for the restoration project.

Bliss Bank & Espy Run Stream Restoration | As reported in our cover story, reclamation of Phases I-III of Bliss Bank is complete, and the combined 130-acre parcel has been sold to NorthPoint Development, who quickly began construction activities. Design of Phase IV was also finished. Earthwork is anticipated for the spring of 2022. For Espy Run, permitting was completed, allowing channel excavation to resume. Design for the final segment, which reaches the Hanover Dam, is currently underway by POZ Engineering. EC also is beginning downstream improvements on Espy Run to accommodate eventual increases in its flow. Major supporters of the projects are PA DEP and US EPA.

Hanover 7A | EC selected Harrisburg-based K&W Engineers to lead a planning study for a regional recreation area on the 30-acre Hanover 7A site in Hanover Township. The team organized an initial meeting of the steering committee, as well as administered an online public survey. The project is funded in part by a grant from the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources (PA DCNR).

Loomis Bank | In August, EC staff and several board members attended a ribbon cutting for e-grocer Thrive Market, which occupies the first of three buildings constructed by Northpoint Development on the former Loomis Bank. Reclamation of the site was completed by Northampton Generating Company in 2015, which included remining the coal waste for electrical co-generation. Their work received a 2016 Excellence in Surface Coal Mining Awards from the US Office of Surface Mining & Reclamation Enforcement.



Steering Committee member Alan Brezinski from the Luzerne Co. Planning Department reviews early concept maps for the OHV study.

Newport Twp. OHV Study | Consultant LAIRD continued work on a feasibility study for an OHV recreation park in Newport Township. The study area now includes an additional 1,400 acres along Penobscot Mountain. The team convened several steering committee meetings, conducted more than a dozen stakeholder interviews, held two public meetings, and facilitated a public survey with nearly 3,000 responses. EC is currently reviewing draft sections of the report, which we anticipate sharing with the community in the spring of 2022. Updates will continue to be posted on Facebook and at www.earthconservancy.org/recreation/newport-twp-ohv-study/. The study is funded by a PA DCNR All-Terrain Vehicle grant as part of its Community Conservation Partnerships Program.

EC values the assistance we receive from funders at the federal, state, and local level, as well as that from individual and corporate grants and donations. Thank you to all those who support EC in its efforts towards revitalizing the environment, economy, and communities of the lower Wyoming Valley.

ARC | Solar Feasibility Study

The Appalachian Regional Commission awarded EC \$21,000 to support a study to assess the suitability of approximately 6,000 acres for solar development. As EC's Terry Ostrowski noted, "Those properties that meet the selected criteria will have great potential for reuse, which ultimately can help northeastern Pennsylvania meet its energy needs."

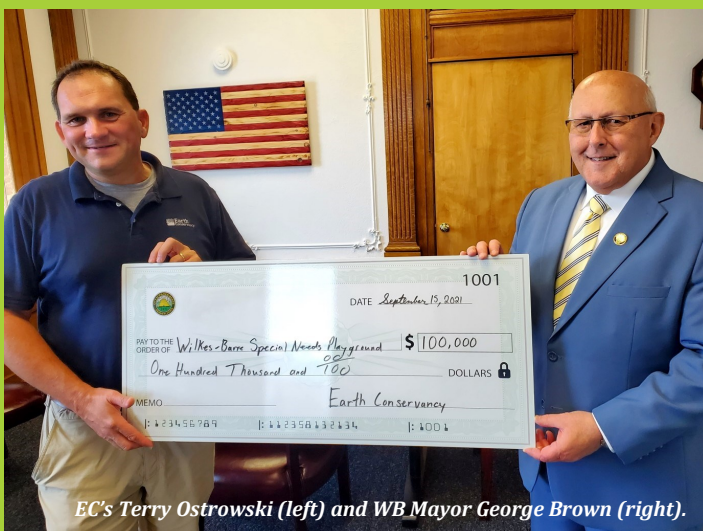


Community Garden | Started in 2000, EC's Community Garden has been an annual fixture for many, allowing up to 30 individuals to farm a small plot, free-of-charge, in the Flats section of Plymouth Township. In 2021, EC sought funding to upgrade the garden's water system – which had consisted of a single hose – to better serve participants. Grants were received from Price Chopper's Golub Foundation (\$1,000) and the PA Department of Agriculture (\$2,500) to support the project. The installation of the new waterline was completed at the end of 2021.

Environmental Workforce Training Program | EC received four grants to support the 2021 and 2022 cohorts of the EWT Program: a \$200,000 cooperative agreement with the USEPA through its Environmental Workforce Development & Job Training Program; two grants from the PPL Foundation totaling \$4,500; and a \$10,000 grant from the Robert H. Spitz Foundation via the Scranton Area Community Foundation. The program, which trains unemployed and underemployed residents of northeastern Pennsylvania in surveying and environmental cleanup skills, is done in collaboration with Penn State Wilkes-Barre, four regional workforce development boards, and numerous other community partners.

PADCED | Luzerne County Local Share Account

In partnership with Hanover Township and the rest of the Lower South Valley Council of Governments, EC was awarded \$15,371 to support the purchase of a new screener for its large-scale composting facility. Since the launch of the compost facility, EC has processed nearly 181,000 tons of material, collected from 18 communities, several schools, and hundreds of residents and small businesses. Services for Luzerne County residents and municipalities has remained free.



EC's Terry Ostrowski (left) and WB Mayor George Brown (right).

EC Supports WB Special Needs Playground

As part of its mission to increase recreation and greenspace resources for the community, EC announced a \$100,000 donation to the Wilkes-Barre Special Needs Playground Project Fund in August 2021.

EC President/CEO, Terry Ostrowski, said the decision to support the project was an easy one for him and the Board of Directors, explaining that although Kirby Park is outside EC's usual geographic focus, it is a special resource for many within Luzerne County. It, like many of EC's conservation efforts, was set up with the stipulation it be for "the use of the public, forever." Additionally important is the project's inclusive focus. As Ostrowski noted, "Inclusivity is just commonsense. It means the space is user-friendly for all abilities and ages. Barriers will be eliminated. It's an opportunity

for everyone to play and enjoy the outdoors together." He added, "We at EC believe this is an investment that will make a meaningful and long-lasting difference in the community."

6 ENVIRONMENTAL WORKFORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

EC is pleased to congratulate the seven individuals who completed the Environmental Workforce Training (EWT) Program in the fall of 2021. Although we compressed the course timeline by two weeks, the group impressed us with their engagement, intelligence, and commitment as they worked through the intense 233 hours of training. Topics included surveying, AutoCAD, GIS, hazardous material cleanup, and environmental sampling, among others. To date, three graduates have found employment and two have enrolled in college-level coursework.

The EWT Program started in 2018 through a partnership with Penn State Wilkes-Barre and the region's four workforce development boards, with the goals of bringing attention to regional environmental and remediation needs, cultivating a skilled workforce, and advancing economic growth. It has been supported over the past four years by the US EPA, the Appalachian Regional Commission, the PPL Foundation, and the Robert H. Spitz Foundation.



Graduates of the 2021 Environmental Workforce Training Program.



Red Cabbage at EC Community Garden; Photo by E. Hunt



\$58.9
million
invested



2,030
acres
reclaimed



8,677
green acres
preserved

Earth Conservancy Officers | Board of Directors

John D. McCarthy, Jr. | Chair
Kelly M. Ciravolo, Esq. | Vice-Chair
Thomas E. Lawson, PE, PLS | Treasurer
Daryl Pawlusch | Secretary
Terence J. Ostrowski, PE | President/CEO
John E. Cavanaugh, Jr.
Joseph A. Frank, Jr.
Holly T. Frederick, PhD, PE, BCEE
Joseph C. Hillan
Michael J. Hirthler
Michael J. Johnson
Thomas P. Leary
Rev. Thomas P. Looney, CSC, PhD

Earth Conservancy Staff

Terence J. Ostrowski, PE | President/CEO
Geoffrey D. Shaw, CPA | Executive Administrator
Elizabeth W. Hughes, EdD | Director of Communications
Jason R. Tarnowski, PLS | Project & Operations Manager
Karen L. Warho | Administrative Specialist
Nicholas Kratz | Compost Facility Foreman
Joseph English | Compost Program Manager

Earth Conservancy is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) corporation and is dedicated to conducting its affairs in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, regulations, and fiduciary responsibilities. Board meetings are open to the public and are held on a quarterly basis at 8AM at Earth Conservancy's offices, 101 South Main Street, Ashley, PA 18706. Call the office at 570.823.3445 for meeting dates and times.

