

70

pretty EASY
&

NOT *very* EXPENSIVE THINGS

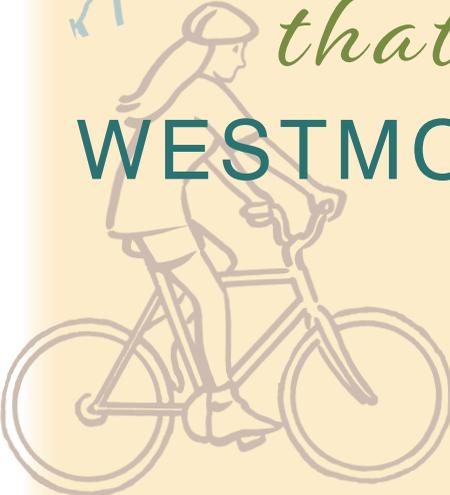


YOU *can do to*

CONSERVE

that GREAT *place:*

WESTMORELAND COUNTY



**Westmoreland
Conservation
District** 



Published as a public service by the Westmoreland Conservation District.
Celebrating 70 years of helping people use resources wisely.

Build a better backyard

1. **Plant native.**

To learn what types of trees grow well in our area, stroll through the free arboretum* next to the Westmoreland Conservation District's barn headquarters.

The barn and GreenForge building next door also are landscaped with a variety of native perennials and shrubs (be sure to stop at station #3 on the stormwater trail* to learn more about the benefits of these native species, including the fact that they need less water than non-native plants).



2. **Turn a backyard wet spot into a beautiful haven for wildlife.**

All you have to do is add some wetland plants and rocks and watch that wet spot become a favorite place for you, and for birds and wildlife.

Be sure to stop at station #8 on the stormwater trail* for ideas on creating a wildlife pond.

3. **Get a management plan for your woodlot.**

If you have a woodlot, you can get a plan to manage it from the Westmoreland Conservation District.

You also can learn a lot from like-minded folks in the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association. For more information on both, call 724-837-5271.

4. **If a small stream runs through your property, don't mow the grass right up to the water's edge.**

Create a "No Mow Zone" – a buffer along the entire length of the stream – by turning it

back over to Mother Nature. Let the grass grow, the wildflowers come in, and the small trees take root. The look may be a little unmanicured, but the benefits will be great. The larger plants will help tremendously in keeping the soil on the banks and out of the stream. And you'll have less grass to mow.

5. **Keep pets and livestock out of the stream.**

Animals tramp down the banks of the stream, causing soil to wash into the water and pollute it. They also can contaminate the water with their waste.

Contact the Westmoreland Conservation District for information on ways to limit your animals' stream access (www.wcdpa.com; 724-837-5271).

6. **And give streams plenty of "breathing room."**

Flash flooding can happen in a...flash. And even a small stream can quickly rise up and overflow its banks. So give all streams plenty of "breathing room."

Don't build sheds, garages, walls, or anything close to a stream. And keep debris away from pipes, drains, culverts, and bridges so the stream has a clear and safe path to follow.

7. **Be careful with fertilizers and pesticides.**

Choose less toxic options (such as a sprayer filled with water and dish soap without grease-solvent to get rid of certain pests) and use only what you need. Fertilizers and pesticides can end up in the stream – and in the water we drink.

8. **Get help with pond problems.**

Penn State Extension offers advice on construction, maintenance, and other issues related to small ponds (www.extension.psu.edu/water/pond-management).

9. Get a soil test.

That way, you'll know which nutrients your plants need, and how much they need. It's best to get separate soil tests for your lawn and for your garden.

Contact Penn State Extension at 724-837-1402.

10. Mulch.

Mulch enriches your soil and protects it from washing away. Use wood chips, shredded leaves, compost, straw, gravel, or clippings from grass that hasn't been chemically treated.

11. If you must water, do it early in the morning.

Watering your lawn or garden when the sun is less intense (before 10 a.m.) helps to reduce the amount of water lost to evaporation.

Use a rain barrel to collect rainwater from your gutters and downspouts, and use that water for your garden.

12. Switch from gas-powered to electrical or handpowered lawn tools.

You'll pollute less, reduce the noise level in the neighborhood, and maybe even get a little more exercise.



13. Get out the broom.

Save water and exercise those biceps by cleaning driveways, patios, and sidewalks with a broom instead of water pressure from a hose.

14. Choose permeable for patios, paths, and parking.

Patios, garden paths, and driveways can all be made of materials that allow rain and melting snow to sink into the ground instead of running off into the storm sewer or collecting around your house.

Permeable pavers, permeable concrete, and gravel are just some of the options that give water a place to sink into the ground.

15. Manage stormwater on your property.

A rain barrel, a rain garden, even a few well-placed trees all can help collect and manage rain water on your property.

The Westmoreland Conservation District's website (www.wcdpa.com) has a Homeowner's Guide that shows you how.

16. Keep mosquitoes at bay.

Eliminate standing water and you take away the mosquitoes' favorite breeding ground. Regularly empty any water that collects in tires, buckets, planter pots, wheelbarrows, etc. that are on your property. If you have a pond or rain barrel, the Westmoreland Conservation District can tell you ways to keep mosquitoes out (724-837-5271).

17. If you have horses or farm animals, develop a plan to manage manure.

It's important to keep manure out of area streams and waterways. A manure management plan will help you do that. It's not very complicated to do and the Westmoreland Conservation District can help you develop one (724-837-5271).



Give things more than one life

18. Don't discard usable clothing or household items.

Donate them to a nonprofit organization such as Christian Layman Corps, Goodwill Industries, or Salvation Army; have a yard sale; or put them on consignment at a neighborhood recycle shop.



H&M will take all unwanted textiles and clothing (recycle box is located at the store) for rewear/reuse/recycling.

19. Turn your kitchen scraps and yard waste into black gold.

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling has information on backyard composting – and vermicomposting (composting with worms) – on its website (www.westmorelandcleanways.org). It offers free workshops on request on how to turn everyday household food and yard waste into rich compost for your lawn and garden.

Also check Penn State Extension's website (www.extension.psu.edu) for information and periodic workshops.

20. Reuse whenever you can.

Plastic food storage bags, jars, and cans can be washed well (just don't use super-hot water) and reused to store anything from dinner leftovers to screws and buttons. Exception: Never reuse anything that contained raw meat.

21. If you use plastic bags, recycle them properly.

NEVER PUT THEM IN YOUR CURBSIDE PICKUP.

Curbside garbage collections do NOT accept plastic bags. And don't put your

other recyclables (cans, newspapers, etc.) in plastic bags, either. Just put them in your recycle can directly.

PUTTING OTHER RECYCLABLE MATERIALS IN PLASTIC BAGS WILL MAKE THEM UNACCEPTABLE.

Most big grocery stores and retailers have a bin where you can return your plastic bags. Just be sure that you take out any receipts, stickers, food, etc. first.



22. Learn what your community's curbside recycling accepts.

Not every community accepts the same things. If your community doesn't recycle aluminum, you can take your crushed cans to area scrap dealers (search the Internet under Recycling Centers). Also see #25, recycle glass.

23. Take your used motor oil to a service station or auto parts store that participates in a motor-oil recycling program.

While you're there, ask if they also accept used anti-freeze. It can be recycled, too. And some auto stores also accept batteries for recycling.

24. Recycle newspapers.

If your community doesn't recycle them, you can also use newspapers to keep down weeds in your garden. Apply them a few layers thick and overlap the sheets. Then top with mulch.

Some farmers and animal shelters also make good use of newspapers.

25. Recycle glass (here's how).

As of this writing (2019) most curbside pickups do not recycle glass. But you still can – just take it to Westmoreland Cleanways' Recycling Center.

First remove any metal lids, rinse the bottles/jars, and separate by color – clear, green, and brown.

Recycling glass helps the environment as well as the local economy (a Greensburg-area company recycles the glass).

26. Recycle even hard-to-recycle items.

Flea collars, oven cleaners, solvents, lawn chemicals, nail polish, antifreeze, mercury thermometers and many other such things can be recycled at special "Household Hazardous Waste" collections.

27. Have your septic system inspected every two to three years, and pumped out if necessary.

Malfunctioning septic systems are a major cause of water pollution in Westmoreland County, and one of the leading causes of waterborne illnesses in Pennsylvania.

28. Have your septic system's inlet and outlet baffles or tees checked every time there's a pump-out (see #27).

If either is broken, have repairs done immediately. The inlet should also be checked to see if wastewater is continuously flowing into the tank from previously undetected plumbing leaks.

29. Install aerators on your kitchen and bathroom faucets and a low-flow head in your shower.

They are inexpensive, easy to install, and can cut your water use by as much as 50%!

30. Use less water.

Choose a shower, rather than a bath. Scrape your plate instead of rinsing it (and if there is no meat on the plate, consider composting your food scraps). Run the dishwasher only when you have a full load.

31. Consider replacing your old toilet.

Toilets are the single-largest water-users in our homes.

If you replace an old toilet with a Water Sense model, you will reduce toilet water use by 20% - 60% and save more than \$140 a year in water costs.



32. Never put pesticides, paint, paint thinner, etc. down the drain.

Keep these poisons out of our drinking water. You can take many of them to Westmoreland Cleanways' special recycling days (www.westmorelandcleanways.org; 724-879-4020).

33. Never flush medications.

Wastewater treatment plans are not designed to filter out pharmaceutical compounds.

You can take your unused, unneeded, or expired medicines to various locations, including police departments and hospitals, throughout Westmoreland County. For a list of locations, go to <https://apps.ddap.pa.gov/GetHelpNow/PillDrop.aspx>.

34. Avoid hazardous cleaning chemicals.

Vinegar, ammonia, baking soda, and detergent each can work as well as their more toxic counterparts, and are cheaper, too.

35. **Audit your home's energy use.**

An audit can show where your home is wasting energy. Sealing the air leaks and taking other steps can often reduce energy use 25%-30%.

You can do a general assessment of your home's energy efficiency on the www.energystar.gov website. Look for Home Energy Yardstick.

36. **Install a programmable or smart thermostat.**

Then, set it to automatically turn off or turn down heating and cooling when you are asleep or away.

You can save about 10% a year on your heating/cooling bills by setting your thermostat back 10-15 degrees for eight hours (e.g. while you're sleeping or away).

37. **Insulate your home.**

You'll save energy, money, and your family will be more comfortable – in both winter and summer.

The Westmoreland Conservation District (724-837-5271) can tell you about innovative ways to insulate. Its barn headquarters uses "sandwich" insulation (two pieces of waste wood with a non-CFC-producing foam in between). And the GreenForge building next-door uses cellulose insulation*.

38. **Choose compact fluorescent or LED light bulbs.**

CFLs last about 10 times longer than regular (incandescent) light bulbs and use only about 25% as much electricity.

LEDs last even longer (about 15 times longer than regular light bulbs) and are about 90% more efficient.

Because CFLs contain a trace amount of mercury, they should be recycled carefully. As of this writing (2019), Westmoreland



Cleanways, the Home Depot, and IKEA all take back used, unbroken CFLs for free.

39. **Rethink building and remodeling.**

You don't have to landfill building materials that you remove during remodeling. If they're useable, contact American Architectural Salvage in Mount Pleasant (724-552-0491 <http://americanarchitecturalsalvage.com>).

This place also sells windows, doors, plumbing, kitchen fixtures and more for a fraction of the cost of new.

Getting around



40. **Ride your bike to work, to a friend's house, or for a nearby errand.**

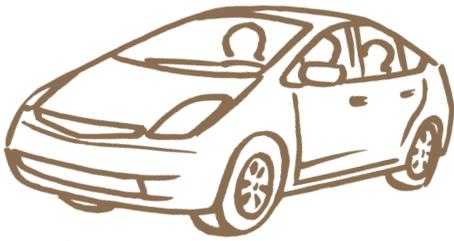
Pedal-power doesn't pollute and gives you some of that all-important daily exercise.

41. **If you can't pedal, carpool or take the bus.**

The Westmoreland County Transit Authority (www.westmorelandtransit.com; 1-800-221-9282) has routes throughout the area. And seniors age 65 and over ride free on all routes at all times (get an ID card from Westmoreland Transit first).

42. **If you absolutely must drive, "trip-link."**

Combine errands and plan an efficient route to reduce driving time.



43. Keep your car tuned up.

You'll reduce your car's emissions and enhance its performance if you follow the manufacturer's guidelines. Proper maintenance generally involves replacing filters, spark plugs, oxygen sensors, hoses, and other expendable parts at regular intervals.

44. Re-think the need to idle.

You'll save gas and reduce pollution by turning your car engine off and re-starting it again if you expect to idle for more than 30 seconds.

In cool weather, modern vehicles need very little time to warm up, and idling won't help do the job. In fact, long periods of letting your engine idle in cold weather can actually cause excessive engine wear. The best way to warm up your late-model car is to drive it.

45. Check your (tire) pressure.

You can improve your gas mileage by 0.6% on average—up to 3% in some cases—by keeping your tires inflated to the proper pressure.

46. Drive wisely.

While each vehicle is different, gas mileage usually decreases rapidly at speeds above 50 mph.

You can assume that each 5 mph you drive over 50 mph is like paying an additional \$0.19 per gallon for gas.

47. Learn about natural-gas-fueled vehicles.

The Westmoreland Conservation District has two clean-burning natural gas vehicles, and a slow-fill station that provides natural gas to fuel them.

These vehicles emit less than gasoline-powered vehicles and so benefit air quality. Running on natural gas also reduces the risk of fuel spills into waterways.

Westmoreland Conservation District
(www.wcdpa.com; 724-837-5271).

Help while you have fun

48. Have fun without a motor.

Choose a sailboat, canoe, or kayak instead of a motor-boat; a pedal bike instead of a dirt bike; skis instead of a snowmobile. You'll not only pollute far less, you'll be much quieter, and increase your chance to observe wildlife.

49. If you hike, stay on the trails.

It's tempting to wander off to get a better look at that blooming hepatica, but resist. As few as 15 people taking a shortcut can destroy fragile vegetation and cause soil erosion.

50. Pick up trash as you walk...

Loop a bag over your arm when you set out for a walk and clean up litter along the way.

51. ...but never pick anything else.

By not picking the wildflowers or disturbing the homes of wildlife, you are ensuring that the natural area will remain a special place that you can visit again and again.

52. After the holidays, recycle your Christmas tree.

It can be ground up for mulch or used for animal habitat.

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling publishes a list of drop-off locations and information on how to prepare your tree (www.westmorelandcleanways.org; 724-879-4020).



Build a better community

53. Join a watershed association.

As a grassroots group with local control, a watershed association can initiate environmental cleanup projects, provide education and information, obtain funding, and lobby for action. Here are some watershed associations in or near Westmoreland County.

Jacobs Creek
www.jacobscreekwatershed.org
724-887-8220, ext. 3

Kiskiminetas
Chelsea@wcdpa.com
724-837-5271

Loyalhanna
www.loyalhannawatershed.org
724-238-7560

Mountain
www.mtwatershed.com
724-455-4200

Pucketa and Chartiers Creek
victoriafarina@verizon.net
724-335-1975

Sewickley Creek
www.sewickleycreek.com
724-610-0829

Turtle Creek
<https://turtlecreekwatershed.org>
turtlecreekwa@gmail.com

54. Buy from local growers and producers.

You can get milk, lamb, organic carrots, jelly, and a whole lot more from local farmers.

Some sell their goods in area grocery stores; others, in farm markets.

For information on the seasonal and year-round farmers markets in Westmoreland County, visit www.wcdpa.com.



55. March for Parks.

Form a team of friends and family and spend a fun Saturday morning at this annual spring fundraising walk.

Proceeds benefit Westmoreland County's 10 great parks and five trails (www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/parks; 724-830-3950).

56. Join Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling.

This nonprofit organization cleans up illegal dumpsites and littered areas and sponsors recycling for hard-to-dispose-of items, including tires, appliances, vehicle batteries, electronics, and household hazardous waste. Dues are \$5/year for individuals; \$15 for families (www.westmorelandcleanways.org; 724-879-4020).

57. Conserve special land.

The Westmoreland Land Trust conserves land of special value in Westmoreland County.

The group has protected almost 300 acres in seven area communities since its

founding in 2007.

To learn more: www.westmoreland-landtrust.org 724-325-3031.

58. Help beautify our highways.

Join a litter cleanup crew on local and county roads and trails.

To find area events (generally held in the spring), go to Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, <https://gacofpa.org/great-american-clean-up-of-pa-find-an-event/>.

You can also Adopt A Highway through PennDOT's roadside beautification program, <https://www.penndot.gov/about-us/RoadsideBeautification/Pages/Adopt-A-Highway.aspx>.

59. Help maintain a trail.

Volunteers meet regularly to keep the area's hiking/biking trails in good shape. Join them for some non-strenuous maintenance.

Email msias@co.westmoreland.pa.us if you would like to help on the Five Star, Coal and Coke, or Westmoreland Heritage trails.



60. Call, write, fax, e-mail, Tweet, or visit your legislators.

Let them know where you stand on conservation, pollution, and the environment.

61. Encourage your high school to take part in the Envirothon.

The Envirothon is a national academic competition that started in Pennsylvania in 1979, and helps high-school students better understand the environment and their role in it.

Five-member teams of students in grades 9-12 compete by doing such things as exploring a soil pit, measuring trees, testing water samples, and identifying bird eggs. For more information, contact the Westmoreland Conservation District at 724-837-5271.



62. Teach your children.

Kids learn what they see. Share your love of nature and respect for the environment every chance you get. You'll leave an important legacy.

63. Volunteer.

Many environmental and conservation organizations need your help.

The Westmoreland Conservation District (www.wcdpa.com; 724-837-5271) has opportunities for adults to help with office work, light landscaping, minor building maintenance, and event setup.

64. Give the gift of conservation.

For birthdays, holidays, or 'just because,' a membership in a watershed association... trail group...land trust...or recycling organization is a gift with lasting benefits.

Become more aware

65. Sign up for a workshop.

The Westmoreland Conservation District offers a changing variety of fun, informative, low-cost workshops where you can learn about how to prevent gravel driveway washout as well as manage forests, farms, and stormwater, and other conservation topics.

Current programs and registration information are on the website: www.wcdpa.com.

66. Explore the world under your feet.

The Westmoreland Conservation District is one of only few places in Pennsylvania where you can get an in-depth look at the world underneath your feet.

Five vertical slices of Westmoreland County soils are displayed at eye-level and, by reading a few simple clues, you can discover what goes on in this fascinating underground world.

The exhibit is free and open during regular district business hours* (724-837-5271).

67. Change the way you look at rain.

There's only been a given amount of water on earth. So it's used over and over again.

Take a walk on the Westmoreland Conservation District's "stormwater trail"* to learn what you can do to keep this limited resource clean.

68. Visit Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park.

This undeveloped, natural oasis is the perfect place for a quiet escape, and located just one mile from Westmoreland Mall.

It is also a place to learn about what makes

a forest healthy, and what doesn't.*



69. Visit the Monastery Run stream cleanup project.

Three wetlands were built adjacent to the historic Saint Vincent Gristmill in Latrobe so that nature could clean up the pollution from underground coal mines that had been degrading the Loyalhanna Creek for more than 30 years. <https://www.stvincent.edu/community-events/monastery-run-improvement-project#s2s>

70. Spread the word.

When you find new ways to conserve, let your friends know, too. Encourage them to do the same.



*The five-acre campus at the Westmoreland Conservation District includes an arboretum, a stormwater trail, a soil display, and buildings that feature many "green" materials and practices. The campus connects to Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park. It is located at 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg.

A selected list of conservation resources mentioned in this brochure

American Architectural Salvage

<https://americanarchitecturalsalvage.com>
724-552-0491

Coal and Coke Trail

<https://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/1006/Coal-Coke-Trail>

Energy Star

www.energystar.gov

Five Star Trail

<https://www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/1007/Five-Star-Trail>

Jacobs Creek Watershed Association

www.jacobscreekwatershed.org
724-887-8220

Kiskiminetas Watershed Association

kiskiwatershed@gmail.com

Loyalhanna Watershed Association

www.loyalhannawatershed.org
724-238-7560

Mountain Watershed Association

www.mtwatershed.com
724-455-4200

PennDOT

<https://www.penndot.gov>

Penn State Extension

<https://extension.psu.edu/westmoreland-county>
724-837-1402

Pucketa and Chartiers Creek

Watershed Association

victoriafarina@verizon.net
724-335-1975

Sewickley Creek Watershed Association

www.sewickleycreek.com
724-610-0829

Turtle Creek Watershed Association

<https://turtlecreekwatershed.org/turtlecreekwa@gmail.com>

Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling

www.westmorelandcleanways.org
724-879-4020

Westmoreland Conservation District

www.wcdpa.com
724-837-5271

Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation

www.co.westmoreland.pa.us/parks
724-830-3950

Westmoreland County Transit Authority

www.westmorelandtransit.com
1-800-221-9282 (toll free)

Westmoreland Heritage Trail

<https://co.westmoreland.pa.us/1010/Westmoreland-Heritage-Trail>

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

www.westmorelandwoodlands.org
724-837-5271

Thank You

We are indebted to many resources for either direct or suggested information in this brochure, including:

Backyard Conservation, published by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

The National Association of Conservation Districts

The Wildlife Habitat Council

Backyard Stewardship Church Leader Guide, published by the National Association of Conservation Districts

The National Arbor Day newsletter and the various organizations and websites mentioned throughout this publication.

What is a conservation district anyway?

We're a group of people who work to promote the wise use of the natural resources we all share – the soil, water, forests, and so on.

We help people who work with the natural resources minimize the impact their work has on them. For example: we work with builders and earthmovers to prevent erosion on construction sites. If you see bales of hay or a hefty black “tube,” or a two-foot-tall black ribbon of plastic along the edge of a construction site, it's there to conserve the soil and prevent erosion.

We also work with a variety of partners to help restore the health of natural resources that have been damaged. One effort we have worked on is to reduce the amount of abandoned mine drainage that gets into streams and waterways (abandoned mine drainage is the pollutant that turns the water orange).

We also support initiatives that promote local quality of life, such as conserving open space and developing quality recreation areas.

If you are interested in joining us in caring for our county's soils, streams, forests, farms, and communities, please contact us.



J. Roy Houston Conservation Center
218 Donohoe Road
Greensburg, PA 15601

724-837-5271 Fax: 724-837-4127

wcdpa.com

wcd@wcdpa.com