

THE WESTMORELAND COUNTY  
SOIL CONSERVATION DISTRICT  
FOURTH ANNUAL REPORT

1953

The following are Directors for the Westmoreland County Soil Conservation District:

Chairman - Mortie Gongaware, Irwin, Pa.  
Vice-Chairman - Wm. J. Griffith, New Stanton, Pa.  
Member - Robert Torrance, Export, Pa.  
Member - Eugene Cairns, Ligonier, Pa.  
Member - Harry G. Gongaware, County Commissioner

Ford M. Frank, Ruffsedale, Pa. served as appointed Secretary for the Board.

The Directors are appointed by the Board of County Commissioners from lists submitted by county farm organizations. They serve for a period of four years without compensation. The main responsibility of the Directors is to coordinate the conservation activities of cooperating agencies such as the Soil Conservation Service, Department of Forest and Waters, Department of Highways, Fish Commission, Game Commission, Extension Service, Vocational Agriculture Department, Agriculture Conservation Program and Farmers Home Administration in order that soil and water conservation problems in the county can be met in the best possible manner. The goal of the District Directors is to encourage all Westmoreland County Farmers to become Conservation Farmers.

The Directors feel that the best approach to soil and water conservation is by working with groups of farmers on small watersheds. By this method, results can be obtained in less time and at reduced cost.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISTRICT

Highlights of the Districts activities during 1953 follow:

As of this date there are 474 farmers developing conservation plans for their land comprising over 62,000 acres of which 88 became cooperators during 1953.

The District was responsible for 46 news articles, 3 conservation tours, one demonstration and 9 conservation education meetings.

The District is entered in a conservation contest sponsored by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company.

The farm of James F. Torrance and Son was selected to enter the statewide Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Conservation Contest and was awarded second place in Pennsylvania.

A proposal for the prevention of floods on Jack's Run was submitted for consideration to interested groups on the watershed. Jacks Run was one of the 50 watersheds named in the Anderson-Hope Bill as pilot watersheds to determine the feasibility of the small watershed approach toward National Flood Prevention. Due to apparent lack of interest by local groups, this proposal was withdrawn.

The District assisted the Agriculture Conservation Program with the installation of the permanent type conservation practices which they were encouraging farmers to install thru there cost-sharing program.

The District <sup>was</sup> represented at the Annual Meeting of the Soil Conservation District Directors called by the State Soil Conservation Commission in Harrisburg.

During 1953 twelve board meetings were held, and representatives from the cooperating agencies attended.

FOLLOWING IS A BRIEF REPORT BY COOPERATING AGENCIES OF 1953 ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN COOPERATION WITH THE DISTRICT PROGRAM.

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

	<u>Farm Plans</u>		<u>Acres</u>	
	<u>This Year</u>	<u>To Date</u>	<u>This Year</u>	<u>To Date</u>
Basic Plans (Active)	2	235	249	28,942
Initial and Advanced Plans	88	474	10,070	62,113
Conservation Surveys			8,717	61,305

To combat erosion and improve wildlife habitat during 1953, the District, through cooperation of the Soil Conservation Service, furnished cooperators with 43,850 trees and 44,500 shrubs and hedges.

THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPILATION OF SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION PRACTICES ESTABLISHED:

<u>PRACTICES</u>	<u>UNIT</u>	<u>ESTABLISHED</u>	
		<u>THIS PERIOD</u>	<u>TO DATE</u>
Contour Farming	Acres	1133	4886
Cover Cropping	Acres	75	539
Strip-Cropping	Acres	1120	5575
Conservation Crop Rotation	Acres	226	3226
Rotation Grazing	Acres	60	2094
Pasture Seeding	Acres	63	336
Pasture Improvement	Acres	133	1564
Establishing Perennial Hay	Acres	38	308
Tree Planting	Acres	34	160
Woodland Protection	Acres	91	571
Hedges	L. Ft.	25300	114700
Fish Pond Improvement	No.	1	6
Wildlife Borders	Acres	0.5	9
Farm Drainage	Acres	51	191
Closed Drains	L. Ft.	38460	69519
Diversion Construction	Miles	0.8	2.
Farm Ponds	No.	7	30
Constructed Outlets	L. Ft.	2000	7000
Channel Improvement	L. Ft.	2500	2500
Land Clearing	Acres	20	320

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF FORESTS AND WATERS,  
WESTMORELAND COUNTY.

During the year the foresters assisted forty-three different land-owners in the reforestation of cut-over woodlands or the planting up of old fields not profitable for other agricultural work. When going over the areas, suitable varieties and ages of planting stock for the different soil sites and exposures would be determined. Methods of mixing seedlings or transplants and the planting of same would likewise be discussed.

Eighty-four applicants submitted applications through the district office for planting stock. These applications were carefully reviewed to determine from information set up on them whether the applicant might unknowingly select unsuitable varieties or ages of planting stock for soil and site conditions. It is the aim to provide the most suitable stock for any given site, not only for timber production but likewise for soil erosion prevention and for food and shelter for wildlife.

In eleven instances, woodland owners were assisted in the sale of a portion of the timber. The forester goes on the timber area and will usually make a close tabulation and estimate of the quantity of timber which will be removed, from sample plots, marking or otherwise designating with the landowner or his men, what particular trees should come out and what should be left. The owner is likewise assisted in contacting local lumbermen in order that he might secure competitive bids for the trees marked for sale in accordance with regulations and restrictions suggested by the forester.

Many public speaking engagements before different groups were made. Sound-colored films were shown if they were desired and when they were desired throughout the county. Because of the numerous requests for this service, not all of which could be accomplished by the forester, in several occasions, films were given to show without the forester's presence. While the forester can add informative remarks in addition to what the film shows, when present, judging from the comments received from parties holding the meetings, the groups invariably manifested great interest in the pictures.

Foresters are continually on the alert to detect serious tree diseases, particularly oak wilt disease.

During the year four (4) areas were observed where one or more oak trees were infested. Following such observation, every tree was properly treated as well as adjacent trees which showed no visible infection to prevent further spread of the disease. Furthermore re-inspections of the areas treated the previous year were made to make certain there was no further spread.

The strip mine forester inspected completed strip mine operations and made up planting plans for eight (8) strip mine operators in the county, who planted about 55,000 forest tree seedlings. This stock was planted in accordance with the strip mine forester's plans. In some cases, where the farmers found it desirable to farm the stripped area, the forester would make up a planting plan including seeds and fertilizers. This planting, also, was done by the operator. In these cases, the strip mine forester would work in cooperation with the farmer in order to best fulfill the object which the farmer had in mind.

V. M. Bearer--District Forester

VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE AND VETERANS FARM TRAINING PROGRAM,  
WESTMORELAND COUNTY.

Vocational Agriculture in Westmoreland County Schools is taking an active part in the Soil Conservation Program in Westmoreland County. These classes are taking numerous field trips in order to help the boys understand the need of soil conservation as well as securing first hand information on the supervised Soil Conservation Program as it is being conducted by the Westmoreland County Soil Conservation District.

It is interesting to note how Conservation-conscious the farmers living in the area of these schools has developed. The group meetings have been conducted by the teachers of Agriculture in our various Vocational Departments, as well as the instructors of the Veterans Agriculture Program.

The Future Farmer Organizations in the County have been developing Soil Conservation Projects, and are being supervised by the local Agriculture Instructors. In an article entitled "The Soul and the Soil", Reverend Otto Bruber says, "Our duty to the land and its relationship to the dynamics of a living faith...The good earth as a primary factor upon which every civilization depends." He also states, "That had Moses foreseen the conditions which man has brought about through the misuse of the good earth, he might have included an eleventh commandment which might have read something like this: "Thou shalt inherit the earth as a faithful steward, conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from erosion, thy waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation, thy hills from over-grazing, so that thy descendants may have abundance without measure. If thou shalt fail in this stewardship, the fields will become gullies and man shall, in time, vanish from the earth."

The Westmoreland County Schools, through Soil Conservation, are

trying to make the following come true: "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Ray E. Seamens, Adviser, Agriculture Education

PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION - WESTMORELAND COUNTY.

As a cooperating agency of the Westmoreland County Soil Conservation District, the Pennsylvania Game Commission respectfully reports the following field activities during 1953 relative to Soil Conservation and better land use program:

1. Distributed, free of charge, 24,600 evergreen seedlings and 300 chestnut seedlings to 62 farmers for reforestation and food production, effecting approximately 18 acres.
2. Distributed, free of charge, 8,250 Multiflora rose seedlings to 14 farmers to reduce soil erosion by establishment of living fences and to furnish food and cover for wildlife.
3. Furnished 325 pounds of rye grass seed to 3 farmers to encourage its use as a cover crop in corn fields effecting 31 acres.
4. Clear out woodland border 1,850 feet by 25 feet to increase crop production on adjoining fields and improve wildlife habitat.

Please note that the activities listed above were effected on eight Cooperative Farm-Game Projects sponsored by the Pennsylvania Game Commission within the County.

G. L. Norris, Supervisor, Southwest Division.

PRODUCTION & MARKETING ADMINISTRATION, WESTMORELAND COUNTY.

Our program's purpose is to provide assistance to aid individual farmers in protecting and improving their land and in conserving water. Following is a report of assistance granted to Westmoreland County Farmers for materials ordered through the Conservation Program and assistance on other practices under the 1953 Program:

MATERIALS:

14,052 tons of limestone  
961 cwt. of 18% superphosphate  
6,607 cwt. of 20% superphosphate  
11,050 cwt. of 0-20-20  
2,814 cwt. of 0-12-12  
2,749 cwt. of 0-14-14  
450 cwt. of 0-15-30  
278 cwt. of 0-10-20

PRACTICES:

1,075 Acres of Strip-Cropping  
3,475 Ft. of Field Diversions  
43,661 Ft. of Tile Drainage  
2,800 Ft. of Soil Waterways  
5 Farm Ponds

These figures include only materials ordered through the program. It does not include cash payment practices completed by the farmers. Technical practices are only those completed under the supervision of the Soil Conservation Service.

Mortie Gongaware, Chairman,  
Production & Marketing Administration

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS, WESTMORELAND COUNTY

In order to establish vegetative cover and prevent soil erosion on slopes that have been disturbed by Highway construction, it is the policy of the Highway Department to seed, mulch, and where necessary, plant with shrub and/or vines, all these disturbed areas. In addition to this Roadside Development which is done immediately following construction, the Department tries to maintain the turf which has been established on slopes in past years. Since the soil involved is usually a sterile subsoil, periodic top dressings of lime and fertilizer are necessary.

During the past year, Roadside Development work was done on approximately sixty-five (65) acres of land along and adjacent to approximately eighteen (18) miles of new highway construction.

The following is a partial list of materials used in this work:

6500 Lb. Grass Seed  
162 Ton Hay for Mulching  
31 Ton Fertilizer  
85 Ton Agricultural Lime  
1500 Ea. Ground Cover Shrubs  
23505 Ea. Vines and Roses  
2180 Ea. Tree Seedlings

In addition to this, approximately twenty (20) tons of fertilizer were used by Department forces in top dressing slopes which had previously been stabilized.

The above is a report of Erosion Control Practices in cooperation with the Westmoreland County Soil Conservation District.

J. W. Geary, Jr., District Engineer,  
District 12, Pa. Dept. of Highways.