1970 Annual Report

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT

YOUR DISTRICT

WESTMORELAND COUNTY SOIL & WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT is a legal subdivision of Pennsylvania State Government responsible under state law for conservation work within its boundaries. The District's purposes are to focus attention on land, water, and related resource problems and to develop programs to solve these problems. It also enlists and coordinates help from all public and private sources that can contribute to accomplishing these goals.

Our appreciation is expressed to the Westmoreland County Commissioners–John J. LaCarte, Dr. Bernard F. Scherer, and James R. Kelley for their financial support and encouragement in accelerated environmental programs brought about by increased pressures on land, water, and other natural resources. We also want to thank the cooperating agencies, organizations, and individuals whose personnel and facilities have helped further conservation programs in Westmoreland County.

Board of Directors

J. Roy Houston . . . . . Chairman
Paul A. Heyworth . . . . . Vice Chairman
John J. LaCarte . . . . . County Commissioner Director
Edward A. Rinkhoff, Jr. . . . . Treasurer
DeWitt W. Rugh . . . . . Director
Frank E. Skacel, Sr. . . . . Director
Gilbert Hutter . . . . . Director

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Father Firmin Beyer
Randall Campbell
Thomas Hughes
Milan Martinisko
Thomas H. Nemick, Jr.
Grant Porterfield, Jr.
Ronald Rigby
Mrs. Harry Saxman
Mrs. John Turnage
Joseph E. Simon
Alex Smith

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Ford M. Frank . . . . . District Secretary
Elwood J. Leslie . . . . . Executive Assistant
Marge Copeman . . . . . Administrative Secretary
Barbara Skinner . . . . . Secretary

The major responsibilities of your Soil and Water Conservation District are: Conservation of public and private lands; coordination of District programs with cooperating agencies and other organizations; promoting concepts of proper resource planning, management, and conservation; motivation of conservation programs; and providing conservation information, planning, and administration.

COVER PICTURE – Rebecca Clawson of Avonmore, Westmoreland County Conservation Queen, was crowned Pennsylvania Conservation Queen at a contest in Harrisburg during 1970. Queens from many of the 65 Districts in Pennsylvania were in the competition.

SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION

During 1970 the United States Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service and the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service provided technical and cost-sharing assistance in planning and establishing 849 acres of stripcropping; 65,066 feet of tile drains; 7,469 feet of diversions; 12 acres of grassed waterways; 16 ponds; and 31 spring developments.

Many acres of agronomic practices such as conservation cropping systems, cover cropping, pasture and hayland planting and renovation, and crop residue use were also applied to aid in conserving soil and water. The Westmoreland County Cooperative Extension Service assisted landowners in their soils and forage testing programs.

Gilbert Hutter, District Director, left, and John Skinner, USDA Soil Conservation Service, right, view applied resource conservation practices on Mr. Hutter's farm near Kecksburg.

Fifty-four landowners received technical assistance in developing soil and water conservation plans for their land. The District received requests for planning from one hundred and twenty-seven landowners during the year.

WATERSHED PROTECTION AND FLOOD PREVENTION

Considerable progress can be reported in moving ahead with the Jacobs Creek Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Project during 1970. An intensive program of contacting landowners in the drainage area able Site PA 655 (Bridgeport) and resulted in nearly one hundred landowners becoming District cooperators. Acquisition of land rights for sites PA 657 (Acme) and PA 656 (Green Lick) moved ahead.

Efforts of the Westmoreland County Soil and Water Conservation District Directors, its cooperating agencies, and concerned citizens of Westmoreland County resulted in the formation of two watershed associations during 1970. The Loyalhanna and Turtle Creek Watershed Associations were chartered and are now developing environmental action programs.

WOODLAND IMPROVEMENT

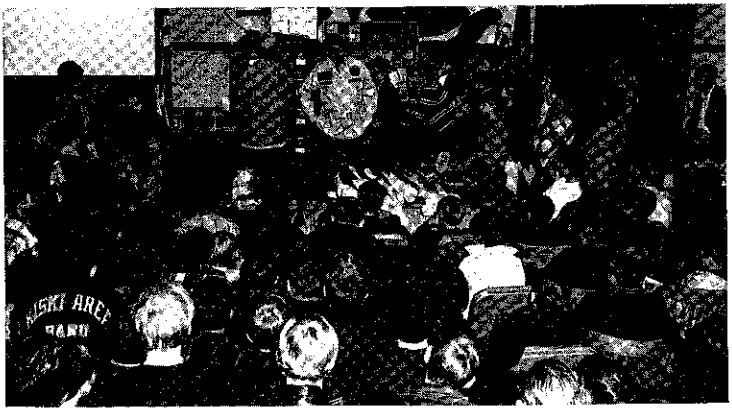
Westmoreland County has 312,000 acres in woodland. Approximately ninety-three percent of this woodland is owned by private landowners and needs improvement. County woodlands should be managed to develop the maximum potential for timber production, recreation, and watershed protection in accordance with the soil site index.

The Pennsylvania Department of Forest and Waters distributed 56,000 forest tree seedings in Westmoreland County. Seven woodland management plans were developed and 27 woodland recommendations made. Timber stand was improved on 75 acres.

WILDLIFE HABITAT IMPROVEMENT

Pheasant, rabbit, squirrel, grouse, turkey, deer, and bear are among the species of wildlife found in Westmoreland County. Farm lands provide much of the food and cover necessary to maintain wildlife. Special wildlife planting and conservation on farm lands contributed to the increase in wildlife in 1970.

Landowners received 94,405 seedlings and assistance in establishing 290 acres of border cuttings. The Pennsylvania Game Commission continued wildlife habitat improvement on their lands in 1970. The Commission has 70,560 acres open to public hunting in the county comprising Game Lands and 1-2-3 Safety Zone and Farm Game Projects.



Hunter Safety Discussion

Sportesmen's groups continued their activities in improving wildlife habitat in the county and assisting with conservation education.

Thirteen farm ponds were stocked with fish from the United States Department of Interior during the year. Farm ponds management by fertilization was carried out on a large number of these ponds.

Twelve trout streams, one Trout Lake, two warm water Lakes, eight Community ponds, three county owned Lakes, and the Youghiogheny River were stocked with fish by the Pennsylvania Fish Commission during 1970.

RESOURCE PLANNING IN URBAN AREAS

Effective solutions to Westmoreland County's environmental problems begin with planning. Broad resource plans can guide and control urban growth.

The Westmoreland County Conservation District, U.S.D.A., Soil Conservation Service and the Westmoreland County Planning Department continued to give technical resource data pertaining to soil, water, and plant conservation and their relationship in upgrading the quality of the environment.

The resource data serves as a basis for decision making by local authorities to fulfill the objectives established by broad plans. These objectives included: Reserving best agricultural areas for cropland; maintaining an economic agricultural use; protecting historical, scenic and natural beauty areas; providing for open spaces and parks; developing attractive residential, institutional and industrial areas; and proper use of floodplains.

Business establishment forced to close because of soil slippage. Use of Basic Natural Resource Data before construction would have prevented this.

Major activities in resource planning in urban areas for 1970 included:

1. Soil and water management inventory and evaluations prepared for 42 acres of land undergoing urban development in Westmoreland County. This included housing, mobile home and industrial development sites, highway construction sites, etc.
2. Inventories and evaluations of resource data provided to 21 planning commissions and other agencies of local and state government.
3. Inclusion of erosion and sediment control guidelines in local ordinances.
4. Review of highway corridor locations.

ROADSIDE CONSERVATION AND BEAUTIFICATION

Approximately 578,857 square yards of highway rights-of-way were seeded, mulched and soil supplemented. Eighty-nine 1½"-3½" caliber evergreen and deciduous tree species were planted throughout Westmoreland County. Established areas of crown vetch and turf grass on slopes, highways, grass interchanges, islands, and median strips were fertilized and maintained. Unwanted growth of grass and weeds was controlled and tree trimming and removal were performed. Boy Scouts in planting projects undertook the planting of 1,000 White Pine seedlings along Traffic Route 30 and Youngstown Interchange.

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

Conservation moved into high gear in Westmoreland County in 1970. The new burst of energy was created by a broader scope of public involvement. The District tackled ecological problems from pollution to land use control.

Great strides were made in working with young adults. We assisted the Girl Scouts, Future Farmers of America, 4-H and other youth groups in improving our environment. The District worked closely with the Boy Scout's (SOAR) Program, providing both material and guidance.

A Junior Board of Directors was formed (the first in the state) which has been very active on many ecological fronts. Exhibits were entered in County Fairs and the Tri-Color Conservation Exhibit Award received. The District granted five conservation scholarships to members of the board. Membership has been expanded to include high school graduates and college students in this group who are working for a better environment.

Junior Board of Directors: Seated left to right – Helen Hart, Treasurer; Ken Reed, Vice Chairman; Richard Kemerer, Chairman; Nancy Stewart, Secretary. Standing left to right – Directors: James Meyers, Neil Kinnier, Vincent Brown, Rodger Campbell, and Richard Hawley.

Watershed Associations were formed in Turtle Creek and Loyalhanna. In Jacobs Creek sufficient landowners became conservation cooperators to fulfill the District's responsibility under Public Law 566. In 1970 land acquisition started on Acme and Greenlick dam sites.

We continued to expand our promotional activities. Bus and air tours, radio and television shows, and conservation seminars were conducted for civic and education groups. Widespread recognition of Soil Stewardship Week and Earth Day were encouraged. A Plowing Contest was held and a Conservation Queen chosen. Westmoreland's Queen went on to become the State's Conservation Queen. A week-long Conservation Show was held at Greengate Mall. Farmers, developers, and industrialists were encouraged to develop conservation plans for their properties.

In the field of education, we distributed educational material and worked directly with teachers on biological laboratories and establishing environmental education in the curriculum. Scholarships were awarded to teachers and Alex J. Smith, Central Westmoreland Vo-Tech School, was named Conservation Educator of the Year.

In areas where the District dealt more directly with environmental problems, we met with realtors, industrialists, civic and social groups. We also worked with county and municipal planners in instituting conservation land use practices. Through cooperation with the Soil Conservation Service, school districts were assisted with future land use in school site development. The District found itself involved in legal action governing the sedimentation of

streams. We were requested to review plans for new highway construction and make recommendations to the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation on conservation practices. Ecological problems surrounding Murrysville Route 22 By-Pass were directly reviewed and recommendations made. We responded to complaints concerning contamination of county streams and worked with citizens and government officials toward correcting these situations.

A unique feature found in reviewing 1970 was the extension of involvement by Conservation Districts in air, water, and industrial pollution; municipal planning; and in the creation of an environmental directory.

DISTRICT PROGRAM

With support from the Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners and increased participation of local citizens who gave freely of their time and effort, the following projects are about to be finalized: (a) Establishment of an Information Center and Environmental Reference Library; (b) Publication of an Environmental Information Booklet; (c) Formation of a "Citizens Environmental Alliance" — As an Associate Member of the Westmoreland County Conservation District, concerned citizens will unite to work for a better environment.

District representatives were active on the State level in drawing up legislation contained in the new Clean Streams Act. We were also active in obtaining Federal assistance for the Rural Environmental Assistance Program, Watershed Projects and other programs existing in Westmoreland County.

DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The District Board of Directors held 12 regular meetings and two special meetings to conduct the business of the District. The District program was formulated, assistance secured from cooperating agencies, services of governmental agencies coordinated and priorities assigned.

The District was represented at Executive Council Meetings of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and at the State and National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts Annual Conventions.

COOPERATING AGENCIES

The following local, state, and federal agencies are playing a vital role in assisting the Westmoreland County Soil and Water Conservation District.

Pennsylvania Department of Forests and Waters
Pennsylvania Department of Health
Pennsylvania Department of Highways
Pennsylvania Fish Commission
Pennsylvania Game Commission
Pennsylvania State Soil & Water Conservation Commission
U.S. Department of Interior
U.S.D.A. Agricultural Stabilization & Conservation Service
U.S.D.A. Farmer's Home Administration
U.S.D.A. Soil Conservation Service
Westmoreland County Agricultural Extension Service
Westmoreland County Department of Parks and Recreation
Westmoreland County Planning Department
Westmoreland County Vocational Agricultural Schools

WESTMORELAND COUNTY
SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
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