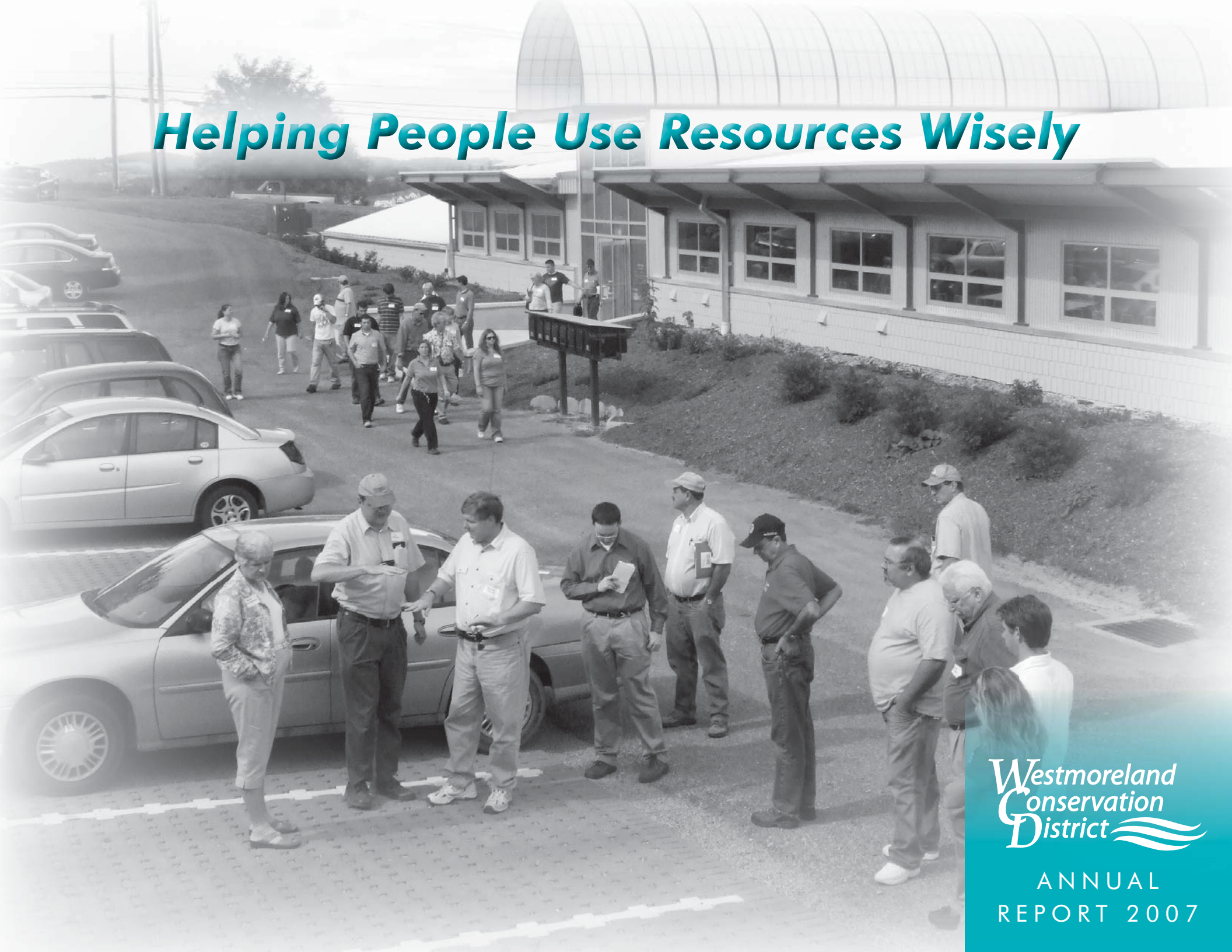


Helping People Use Resources Wisely

Westmoreland Conservation District

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

J. Roy Houston
Chairman

Dear friend of conservation –

I am happy to report that, as we closed out the year 2007, we also finished up the major rehabilitation work on the GreenForge building.

Transforming this vacant, 25-year-old commercial building into a model of sustainability has been a major undertaking – without a doubt, the largest conservation project our District has ever undertaken.

In every sense of the word – from the dollar-and-cents financial commitment to the number of staff involved and their investment of time and energy – GreenForge has stretched our resources and our resolve. Yet, we believe this innovative work needed to be done, and we are confident that our investment will pay great dividends for conservation and our community.

Indeed, our staff has learned a lot in this process.

- We now can claim firsthand knowledge about the performance of a variety of green building materials, such as cellulose fiber insulation made of recycled newspapers.
- We have direct experience with putting low-impact development theories into practice, such as creatively anchoring a hillside instead of cutting it away to create parking spaces.
- We have designed and built new ways to manage stormwater, such as a bioinfiltration island of native plants.
- And we've blazed new ground by creating the first green roof, the largest photovoltaic "solar power" installation, and the first use of permeable concrete in Westmoreland County.

We've been sharing our new technical capacity every step of the way with area builders, architects, engineers, and others, using our work at GreenForge to show them the benefits of these sustainable approaches…and to encourage them to incorporate conservation practices in all aspects of the building projects they undertake in our region.

At the same time, we've been reaching new levels of service in our traditional conservation programs – stormwater management, nutrient management, erosion and sediment control, and forestry. During the year, the amount of technical assistance we provided in these areas was up 15%…the number of site inspections we conducted also was up 15%…and the number of development plans we reviewed (initial and follow-up plans combined) was up 8% from 2006 levels.

Toward the end of 2007, we also made a renewed commitment to our traditional programs, and were fortunate to procure some significant grant support to help us build even more capacity, especially in the stormwater program, to meet the regional conservation needs.

With that program support in place and the GreenForge project complete, we look forward to the opportunity to focus our efforts in 2008 on the development of a new organizational strategic plan. To accomplish this work in a meaningful way, we will be soliciting input from our many community partners – businesses, government, grassroots organizations, and concerned individuals – to help us identify the long-term conservation needs of the region and their most effective solutions.

Thanks to everyone who has supported us in our work to-date. We couldn't have done it without you.

On the cover: A stop on the "Floods & Fixes" tour. See page 11.

CLEAN STREAMS AND WATER RESOURCES

Demand for our stormwater services continued to grow at a record pace in 2007, making it by far our fastest growing conservation program.

During the year, we experienced a 30% increase in the number of requests for technical stormwater assistance from traditional audiences – engineers, developers, and architects – throughout Westmoreland County.

In addition, we received a steady stream of requests from technical professionals in Allegheny County and other areas outside Westmoreland County for the stormwater expertise of our hydraulic engineer. Because of his reputation as one of the state's most knowledgeable individuals on this subject, our engineer was asked to be a featured speaker at multi-county conferences on stormwater management...to provide technical assistance for regional stormwater management projects...and to offer guidance to municipal planners.

Because stormwater management is a regional problem, we agreed to step beyond our county borders and participate in selected outside-Westmoreland-County requests, focusing on those whose audiences were the most likely to have a direct or significant influence in turning the concepts into on-the-ground practices. The number of these outside-Westmoreland-County activities that we participated in averaged about one per week. Regretfully, due to the volume of other work, we had to turn down an equal or slightly greater number of requests.

During the year, we worked to grow our stormwater capacity by increasing income for the program from a variety of sources. (Also see Organizational Development, pages 12 -13).

In all, **our hydraulic engineer spoke at 23 different public events throughout Westmoreland County and the larger region during the year, reaching more than 1,575 people** with information on practical new approaches to effectively manage stormwater – the rain and snow melt – that runs off impervious surfaces.

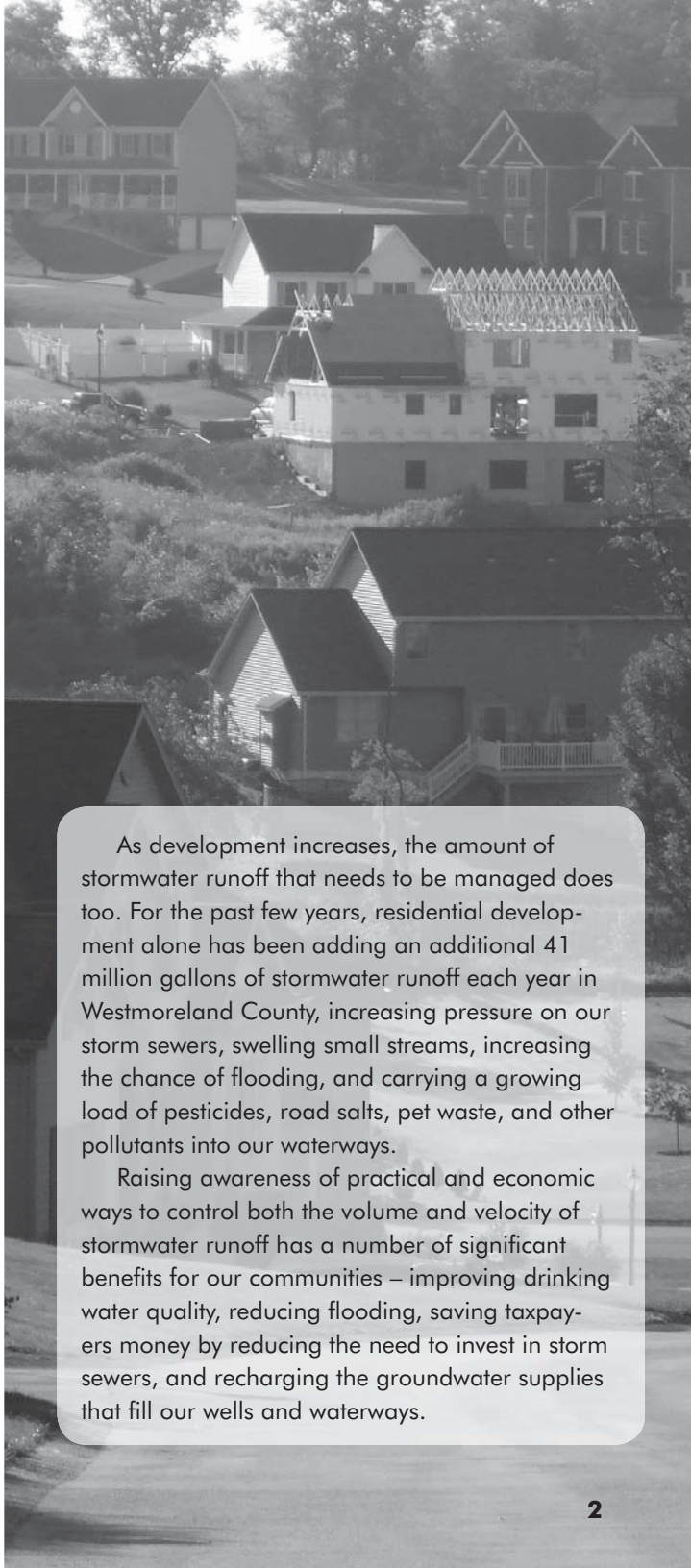
One of the largest stormwater projects in the county during 2007 involved the planned widening of the Pennsylvania Turnpike between the Irwin and New Stanton exits. District staff met with turnpike representatives and their consultants several times to help create plans to protect water quality during and after the construction.

The detailed plans for this major undertaking, which will add two new lanes to this eight-mile stretch of highway, were submitted for our final review by the project's engineers in 10 separate, 3-inch-thick binders.

Our hydraulic engineer systematically checked designs and calculations for such proposed conservation measures as the stormwater detention basins that will manage the additional stormwater runoff created by all of this new pavement. The turnpike made several changes to the plan in accord with our recommendations, in an effort to protect the Sewickley Creek Watershed.

In addition to the turnpike-widening project, the District's staff reviewed another 237 plans in 2007 for a wide variety of potential developments – from housing plans to industrial parks – in the county. **Of these, 59 also required a review to ensure proper stormwater management measures were included.** These special stormwater management reviews were done by our two-person technical program staff.

We installed a number of innovative stormwater management measures ourselves during the year at GreenForge, our demonstration green building.



As development increases, the amount of stormwater runoff that needs to be managed does too. For the past few years, residential development alone has been adding an additional 41 million gallons of stormwater runoff each year in Westmoreland County, increasing pressure on our storm sewers, swelling small streams, increasing the chance of flooding, and carrying a growing load of pesticides, road salts, pet waste, and other pollutants into our waterways.

Raising awareness of practical and economic ways to control both the volume and velocity of stormwater runoff has a number of significant benefits for our communities – improving drinking water quality, reducing flooding, saving taxpayers money by reducing the need to invest in storm sewers, and recharging the groundwater supplies that fill our wells and waterways.

Model practices designed by our landscape architect/stormwater technician included:

- a low-impact design, where we stabilized a 150-foot-long slope with only minimal earthmoving and special concrete blocks made with built-in "pockets" of soil where plants could be added;
- native-plant landscaping with hardy species of rhododendron, hydrangea, potentilla, viburnum, bayberry, holly, and low-bush blueberry;
- a combination forebay, rock-lined channel, and detention pond to remove any sediment and debris that stormwater might carry as it travels across paved areas;
- a unique, porous concrete material, used to create a walkway and parking spaces that allow water to infiltrate right through them; and
- a bioinfiltration swale to control runoff from the section of GreenForge's roof where the solar panels are located.

These innovative stormwater demonstrations not only have positive benefits for the health of our natural resources, but they also serve as teaching tools in our education program for commercial developers, homebuilders, and others involved in regional construction work.

The bioinfiltration swale helps control runoff during a storm.

We managed a number of stream-improvement projects during the year that had been identified under the state's Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative Program.

District Hydraulic Engineer Jim Pillsbury speaking at one of many technical workshops.

On Mill Creek, a high-quality stream that supplies drinking water for some residents of Ligonier Township, work was done to significantly reduce erosion at the point where Hannas Run enters the stream.

On Jacob's Creek in Laurelville, where some 10 to 15 feet of streambank had been lost to erosion over the years, work was done to grade the high vertical bank back to a 1:1 slope, strengthening it by filling the voids, and adding trees for stabilization.

Some 2,000 tires were removed from an unnamed tributary to the Kiskiminetas River that runs along Indian Hill Road in Allegheny Township, and its streambanks were stabilized. (For other Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative Program work, also see Productive Farms, page 8, and Sustainable Communities, page 9).

For our Donohoe Road neighbors, the Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation, we designed and oversaw installation of a natural-looking 100-foot-long, 30-feet-wide, 4-foot-deep **swale to manage runoff** from the paved road and parking areas on that property.

The new swale also helps reduce pollution because it contains several ponding areas lined with rocks that act like filters to trap any debris that the runoff might be carrying. This helps protect Slate Creek, a tributary of Sewickley Creek.

This $14,000 project was partially funded by the Pennsylvania Growing Greener program.

Our shared water-quality specialist conducted **seven workshops during the year to help area individuals with water-quality issues** related to their wells, ponds, and septic systems. A total of more than 150 people attended these events.

Our staff supported the Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County in its effort to **create a comprehensive and integrated land-use and transportation plan for the Route 30 corridor in Westmoreland County.**

The culminating document of this effort is an Implementation Toolkit, which identifies decision-making tools, policies, programs, funding, and improvements that will help achieve the long-term vision for Route 30 – the 40-mile, east-west "main street" across our county.

STABLE SOILS

Earthmoving in the county continued at a brisk pace throughout 2007, and **our erosion control specialists were kept busy reviewing plans and visiting sites** of projects that covered all sizes and types of development, and all corners of the county.

The year saw steady commercial development, such as the new Lincoln Place being built on the 15 acres on Route 30 in Hempfield Township previously occupied by the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County ...residential development, such as Phase 1 of the 57-acre Chestnut Hill housing plan in North Huntingdon... industrial development, such as the continued activity at several Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation sites...highway construction, such as the continuing work on Route 22, which in 2007 focused on the section of this major east-west thoroughfare in Derry Township...recreational development, including a 5-acre skate park at the county's Twin Lakes Park... and nonprofit development, including the new, 12-acre Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning complex at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe.

Any earthmoving project that involves the disturbance of one acre or more of earth is required to have a plan that details how erosion and sediment will be controlled. The District's technical staff reviews these plans to ensure that appropriate conservation measures have been incorporated.

In 2007, our staff **reviewed 238 such plans for proposed developments and other work that would impact the natural resources throughout the county.** In 95 cases, revisions were made to those plans and our staff reviewed them again.

Our erosion control specialists also regularly visited active development sites in the county to ensure that the conservation measures being put on the ground matched the intent of the plans. In all, our six person technical staff made **a total of 558 on-site inspections** of these works-in-progress during the year.

Our erosion control specialists continued to **work with local township officials** during the year to foster more awareness of conservation issues related to development, runoff, and erosion.

Our staff also held 25 meetings with engineers to help them consider conservation measures for development sites before plans were drawn up, and an additional 25 meetings with contractors before construction began to review the proposed conservation measures.

This proactive approach is something the District initiated several years ago and it has been making a significant, positive difference in the way our natural resources are being protected once the earthmoving actually starts. For instance: on one site in Hempfield Township, we were able to significantly reduce the amount of earth disturbed by showing how the building could be made to work with the location's existing topography.

Technical assistance is another major service the District offers, and **our staff fielded 210 separate requests for guidance** during 2007.

Requests came in the form of telephone calls, emails, and face-to-face conversations, and covered such topics as specifications for conservation controls on site...permits required for various types of work...and the parameters of municipal ordinances.

During 2007, the District continued its efforts to **help local municipalities minimize erosion from unpaved roads** – particularly those that are near high-quality streams in the county, where erosion becomes a doubly troublesome conservation problem because the loose soil often ends up in the stream where it narrows the channel (raising the chance of flooding), reduces the water quality, and hampers aquatic life (smothering small insects and larvae).

Our work to minimize erosion and water pollution from dirt and gravel roads during the year included: a

In mid-December, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Watershed Management conducted a **comprehensive evaluation of our erosion and sediment pollution control program and our National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System program, and determined both to be meeting or exceeding expectations.**

This evaluation is conducted every three to five years and was last done in 2004. It looks at a variety of program aspects, including how well we provide information, process permit applications, work with local municipalities, keep records, handle complaints, and conduct site inspections.

Evaluators stated that our District "does a commendable job of administering its delegated duties," and added that "surrounding conservation districts routinely rely on and appreciate their expertise."

$9,450 roadside swale stabilization project along White Oak Road in Laurel Mountain Borough (benefiting Loyalhanna Creek), a $5,487 roadside swale stabilization project along Church Camp Road in Fairfield Township (benefiting Tub Mill Creek), and $13,300 road base project on Noel Road in Cook Township (benefiting Loyalhanna Creek).

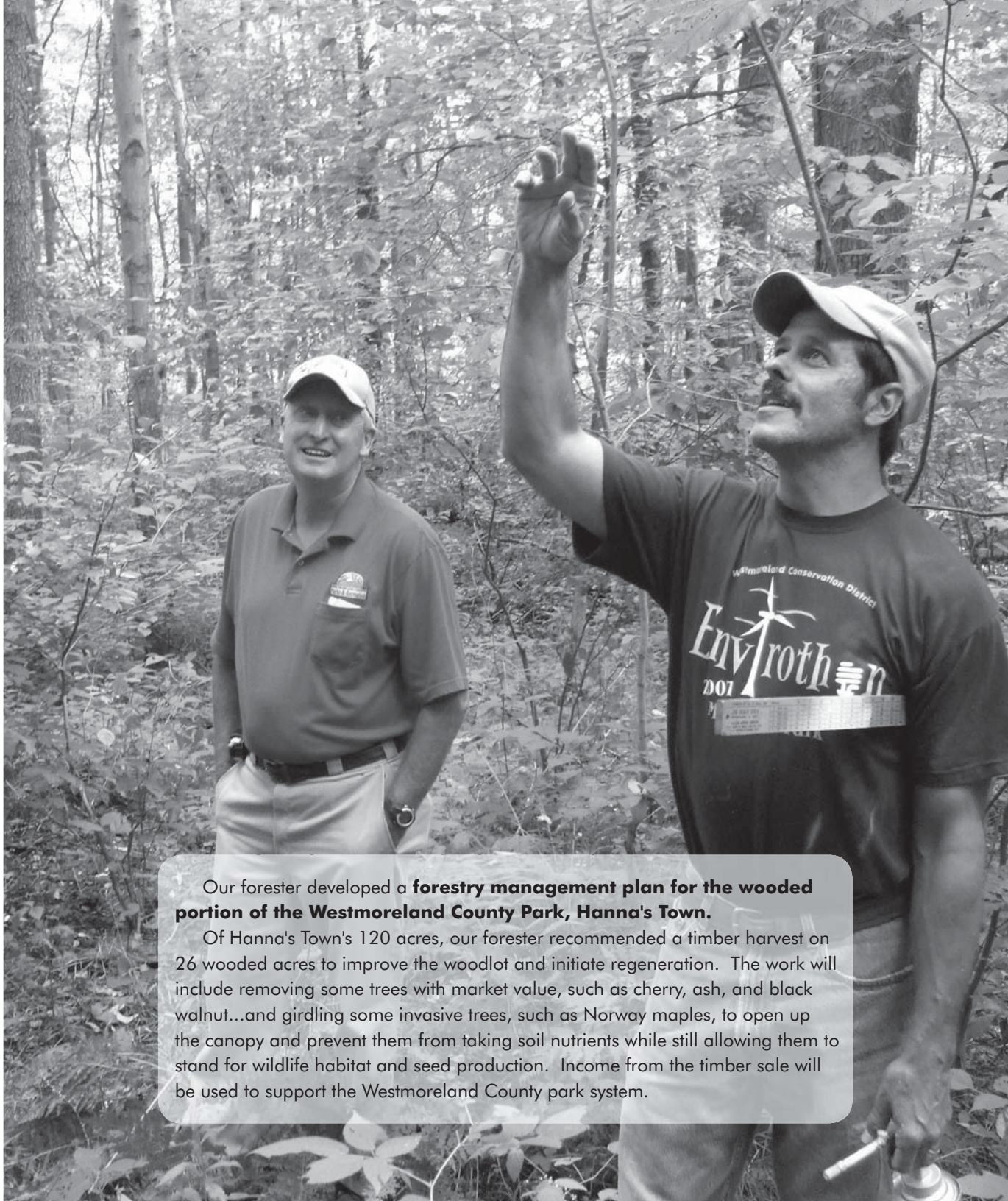
Late in 2007, the Dirt and Gravel Road Committee also set priorities for next year and awarded grants for improvement work to be done in 2008 that included: Furnace Lane in St. Clair Township (benefiting Baldwin Creek); Crooked Run Road in Salem Township (benefiting Beaver Run); Oak Road in Donegal Township (benefiting Loyalhanna Creek); and Clark Hollow Road and Church Camp Road in Fairfield Township (benefiting Tubmill Creek).

At the request of the owner of a local construction company, our staff presented a **special seminar** just for his employees to help them better understand Pennsylvania's regulations for crossing streams and the proper way to do so to minimize the impact on the environment.

More than 45 employees of the company attended the training, which used actual construction sites they had worked on as illustrations.

Some 195 engineers and other professionals came to **our annual, all-day technical workshop in March.** This year's workshop was a "Design Roundtable" that featured new information on practical applications of conservation-by-design practices and erosion-control materials.

In addition to District staff, speakers included Alex Graziani, ACIP, of the Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County; and Chris Kriley, PE, and Bob Scheib, PE, of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Bureau of Watershed Management.



Our forester developed a **forestry management plan for the wooded portion of the Westmoreland County Park, Hanna's Town.**

Of Hanna's Town's 120 acres, our forester recommended a timber harvest on 26 wooded acres to improve the woodlot and initiate regeneration. The work will include removing some trees with market value, such as cherry, ash, and black walnut...and girdling some invasive trees, such as Norway maples, to open up the canopy and prevent them from taking soil nutrients while still allowing them to stand for wildlife habitat and seed production. Income from the timber sale will be used to support the Westmoreland County park system.

HEALTHY FORESTS

In 2007, our forester helped a number of woodlot owners develop detailed plans to manage their property wisely, including a **comprehensive Stewardship Plan for the 92-acre Flax Scutching Grounds in Stahlstown.**

A Stewardship Plan is very specific to the property and quite detailed. It not only looks at ways to effectively manage the timber, but also other aspects of the land, such as the presence of invasive plant species, or the effects of deer overpopulation and the need to encourage regeneration. And it offers suggestions on actions to take to restore or maintain the health of the forest.

As part of the plan, a sign is posted on the grounds stating that the property has a Stewardship Plan. The Flax Scutching Grounds are open to the public for several major events during the year, and so many people will see this sign and the healthy, well-managed woods.

Our forester also completed review of a comprehensive **forestry management plan for the Loyalhanna Gorge.** This scenic 1,300-acre property between Latrobe and Ligonier is notable for its steep slopes, second-growth timber, and several unique species of plants and animals.

The county's Bureau of Parks and Recreation owns the gorge and will use the forestry management plan to care for this natural treasure.

Before timbering began in a number of locations throughout the county, our staff **reviewed 37 separate logging plans** to help ensure that both erosion from these sites and sediment in nearby streams would be kept to a minimum.

The number of logging plans the District receives for review has been holding steady for the past few years due, in part, to the fact that a number of municipalities in the county have adopted ordinances requiring review of erosion-control plans.

Our forester personally **visited 57 active logging** sites in the county during the year, including several large, 100-acre sites in Rostraver and Ligonier, to make sure that work was being done according to the erosion and sediment control plan.

Controlling erosion is a challenge on most logging jobs because roads have to be cut across the forest's earthen floor to get the harvesting equipment to the trees, and then to provide a pathway for hauling the heavy logs out.

This year, the challenge to conserve soil on timber-harvesting sites was compounded by the wet weather and the delayed freezing of the ground.

A total of **46 people came to our two forestry workshops.** These half-day workshops – an introduction and an intermediate course that give participants both classroom and in-forest experience – have each been offered once a year since 2004, and have consistently drawn a capacity audience each time.

Although we don't know exactly how all the participants employ the knowledge they gain from these workshops, we were gratified to have one individual who attended our introductory course request a comprehensive Stewardship Plan for his 100-plus acre property in Hempfield Township.

During the course of reviewing timber-harvesting plans and visiting logging sites, our forester identified a number of items that consistently present challenges to loggers, and then **developed a new workshop** to address them.

Thirty loggers came to the event in May that presented practical tips on such things as how to find information on soil types, stream classifications, and special plant species. All of this information is important to preparing an effective erosion and sediment control plan for a logging site.

In addition to our own education offerings, we partnered with other organizations during the year to present information on forest stewardship. One of these events was a **"Backyard Woods" workshop** we offered in April in conjunction with Penn's Corner Resource Conservation & Development Area, Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association, and the PA Bureau of Forestry, Forbes District.

The event presented ways to keep woods healthy, attract wildlife, and help preferred trees grow, and drew 22 people, mostly small woodlot owners, to our District headquarters. These individuals represent an important new audience that we had not customarily reached with our more-technical forestry programs.

Our forester and erosion control specialist helped Norwin School District layout its new, half-mile-long **historic walking trail** connecting the Norwin High School campus, the new Hahntown Elementary School, and the township's Tinker's Run Park. Our forester also identified trees along the trail in the nature preserve area, which will be used as an outdoor classroom for students.

Westmoreland Conservation District

Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association

Forestry I Workshop

Learn basic tree identification, common forestry terms, and timber measurement methods.

Saturday, September 29, 2007

8:30 a.m. – noon

Westmoreland Conservation District office

and

Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park, Greensburg

Put on your outdoor clothes, lace up your hiking shoes, and join Forester Tony Quadro for this fun and informative workshop.

Register by September 27

Call 724-837-5271, ext 210 or email christie@wcdpa.com

or

mail the form below to

Westmoreland Conservation District

218 Donohoe Road

Greensburg, PA 15601

This workshop is sponsored by the Westmoreland Conservation District and the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association.

Forestry I Workshop

Name

Address

City State ZIP

Daytime phone email

Cost: $10; $5 for members of the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association.

Make checks payable to: Westmoreland Conservation District

PRODUCTIVE FARMS

Our agricultural technician personally **visited 52 different farms** throughout the county in 2007, many of them more than once, to provide site-specific technical assistance on topics ranging from appropriate best management practices to cost-share funding available to local farmers.

Jim Kepple, owner of a 440-acre farm in Salem Township, worked with our agricultural technician to **voluntarily create a nutrient management plan** for his operation in 2007. That brings to 35 the number of farms in Westmoreland County that now have these plans in place. These farms represent a combined total of 13,419 acres that are managed according to good conservation practices.

A nutrient management plan is a guide to help a farmer manage fertilizers and animal wastes profitably and efficiently, based on the specific conditions and needs of the land. Good management not only saves the farmer time and money, but also helps the community by keeping excess nutrients out of nearby streams and waterways.

A day-long **forum we helped to sponsor in February on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program** attracted 101 attendees.

In this program, landowners voluntarily agree to take measures to reduce erosion on their properties. Reducing erosion benefits Westmoreland County's number one industry, agriculture, because it helps retain important, fertile soils...and it benefits water quality by minimizing the amount of soil in streams and waterways that can harm aquatic life and promote flooding.

Our work with the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program expanded this year when we received a $7,000 grant from Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Area to **develop a comprehensive field guide on noxious and invasive weeds common to southwestern Pennsylvania and to host a workshop/field trip on the subject.**

The pocket-sized field guide identifies these unwanted weeds, which can produce significant changes in the way an ecosystem works and threaten our native wildlife, and offers recommendations on how to control or eliminate them. The field guide was so well-received that we were asked to develop one just like it, focusing on the noxious and invasive weeds common to the southeastern part of the state.

The day-long corresponding workshop/field trip drew 80 participants who came to hear speakers from the District, the US Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and Penn State Cooperative Extension Westmoreland County and to tour a nearby farm where effective weed-control was in place.

For the third year in a row, the District also was a cosponsor of a **regional Tillage Conference** promoting minimum- and no-till farming methods.

This innovative way of farming reduces the number of trips a farmer has to make across the field before crops are planted, saving time, reducing costs, creating bigger crop yields, and reducing erosion.

More than 100 people attended.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff visited our campus in early October as part of his annual Harvest Tour of the state.

He met with local agricultural leaders over dinner in our District headquarters, held a public meeting, and then toured our campus.

After the tour, he said he "liked a lot" the measures we are putting into action here to encourage the use of alternate energy and green building materials and practices. He also said that our campus could serve as a model for organizations across the state that are trying to save energy and clean the environment.

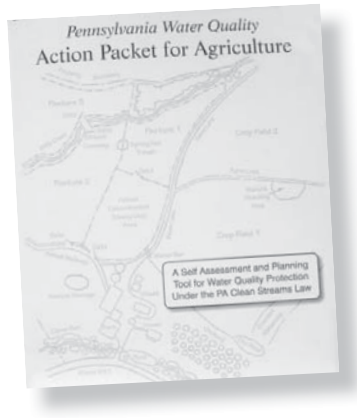
Terry Matty, 2007 Farmer of the Year, on his farm in South Huntingdon Township

The District Board of Directors selected Terry Matty as 2007's "Outstanding Farmer of the Year."

Terry operates five separate farms on more than 300 acres in South Huntingdon Township and uses rotational grazing on all of it.

Because our annual banquet was not held in 2007 (see Organizational Development, page 12), Terry will be officially honored at the 2008 banquet, along with the outstanding farmer chosen in that year.

Our visual communication specialist completed work this year on the **"Pennsylvania Water Quality Action Packet for Agriculture,"** a statewide project that the State Conservation Commission contracted with us for $11,500 to provide graphics and design.



This reference document is now being used by farmers across Pennsylvania to assess their operations and to ensure that they are in compliance with the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law.

Growing Greener II funds, along with money from the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, were used to **cost-share conservation projects on five farms in the county.** This work not only benefited the landowner, but also the residents of two of the county's watersheds.

Patty Smith, a beef farmer in South Huntington Township, used $15,400 in Growing Greener II funds, along with her own cost-share investment, to install a heavy-use area with manure storage on the pad, plus streambank fencing and stream crossings.

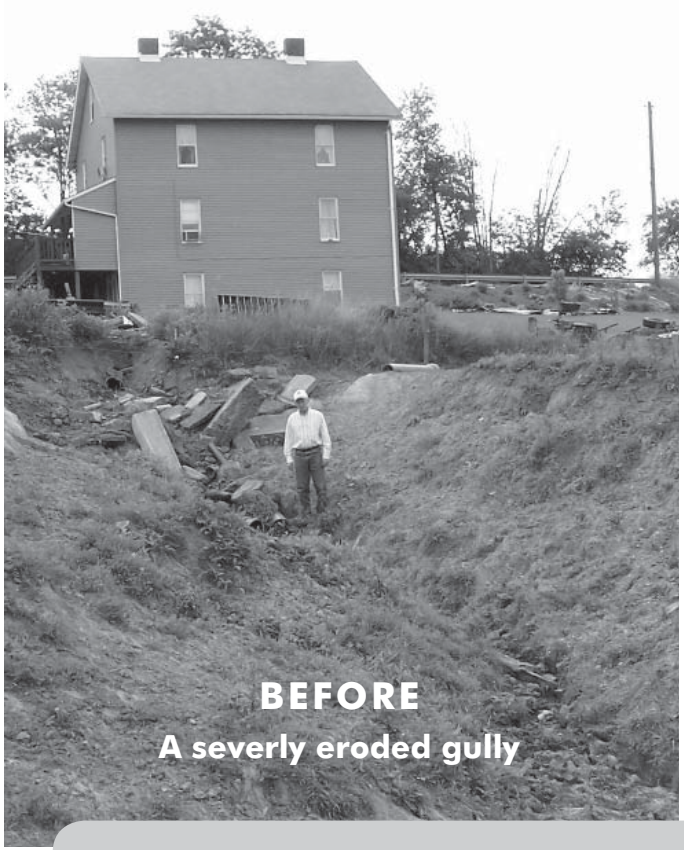
Wayne Frye, a dairy farmer near Crabtree, installed a grassed waterway in a problem spot to minimize stormwater runoff from his fields. His financial investment in this project was aided by a $5,600 Growing Greener II grant.

Jim Kepple, a dairy farmer in Salem Township, installed a stabilized pad, a grassed waterway, and two stream crossings across Whitethorn Creek, thanks to $25,000 from Growing Greener II and his cost-share.

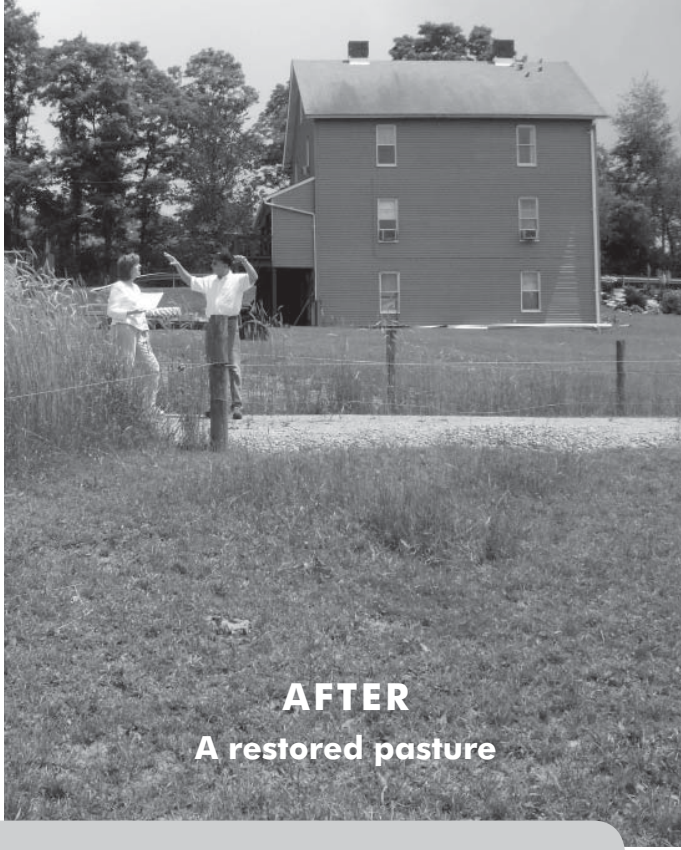
Bob Berich, a farmer in South Huntingdon Township who raises beef, hogs, sheep and chickens, installed three spring developments, water troughs with stabilized pads, and an access road to minimize disturbance close to the barn. Growing Greener II contributed $14,400 to this project, and Bob contributed his share.

Conservation work done through Growing Greener II funds on the fifth farm, owned by Bob Pore, is detailed in the caption to the right.

The work done by Patty and Bob and Bob benefits the Sewickley Creek Watershed; Wayne and Jim's improvements help the Loyalhanna Watershed.



BEFORE
A severly eroded gully



AFTER
A restored pasture

Thanks once again to Growing Greener II funds, we were able to help a local farmer make a **major improvement in the Sewickley Creek Watershed.**

A farmstead recently inherited by long-time conservationist Bob Pore had been a major source of sediment pollution into an unnamed tributary of Little Sewickley Creek for many years. According to Bob, the problem had started decades ago, when the state improved Route 136, which runs along the entrance to the farm, and routed the road's stormwater runoff directly onto the farm. Over the years, the combination of the volume and force of this water and the hoofs of the 1,100-pound cross-bred Angus and polled Hereford cows that grazed in the pasture had worn a gully that was as much as 10 feet deep, 15 feet wide, and 50 feet long.

In 2007, we helped Bob undertake a conservation repair that included extending the existing road drainage pipe some 50 feet underground, and adding a drop box able to accept the runoff generated by most storms and convey it underground through 375 feet of new pipe to the stream. Additionally, 380 feet of grassed waterway was installed to act as an overflow area for the occasional heavy storm.

Other work on the 120-acre property included moving the water trough to a stabilized area and tying all the barn gutters together and routing the runoff underground. As a result of all of this conservation work, the entire barnyard was stabilized.

Growing Greener II contributed more than $14,400 to this $18,000 project and the landowner made up the difference.

For the ninth year in a row, District staff and Board members have joined with volunteers from other community groups to plant hundreds of annuals at the Westmoreland County Courthouse.

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES

The District played an important role in the **formation of the new Westmoreland Land Trust.** At the request of the Westmoreland County Commissioners, the District formed a steering committee in early 2007 to explore the possibility of creating a land trust as one way to respond to the desire expressed by local citizens to retain the rural character of the county.

The steering committee, made up of representatives of a variety of stakeholder agencies as well as interested citizens, met four times during the year and ultimately recommended that the trust be formed. The County Commissioners did so in early December. (Also see Organizational Development, pages 13-14).

Unprecedented levels of federal funding – more than $1.4 billion over the next 15 years – were allocated to Pennsylvania during the year to help **clean up the pollution, safety hazards, and other damaging legacies left in our communities by abandoned coal-mine operations.** The money comes from fees imposed on current coal-mining operations.

Many people and organizations have worked for decades to encourage the federal government to make this allocation, which represents the full amount Pennsylvania was entitled to under the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

The Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation has identified nearly $15 million worth of high-priority projects in Westmoreland County.

We began work during the year on a number of new conservation projects throughout the county that were funded in 2006 through the state's Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative Program.

Applications were made, scope of work and budgets determined, and agreement of partners was procured for projects that will add stormwater controls to the Westmoreland Fairgrounds, restore a stream channel and add a riparian buffer on the Lydick Farm in Derry Township, stabilize a section of Ridge Road in Donegal Township that is polluting Four Mile Run, and stabilize an eroding streambank on Shupe Run, a collection point for much of Mount Pleasant borough's water runoff.

Work on each of these projects is expected to begin in 2008.

In addition, the District advanced a number of other conservation projects funded by this initiative in 2007, getting on-the-ground work under way or completed in 2007 (For other Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative Program work, also see Clean Streams and Water Resources, page 3, and Productive Farms, page 8).

Late in the year, we **completed all the major rehabilitation work on the GreenForge building,** and occupancy of the 23,000-square-foot building at year-end was about 95%.

USDA-Rural Development, the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Westmoreland Cleanways, Outside In, and several small businesses all moved in during 2007.

New signage and directories were developed and installed to direct visitors to the building's various tenants.

And the District entered into a formal Property Management Agreement for the services our staff provide for the operation of the building, including work our administrative assistant does to coordinate maintenance services, prepare leases, and facilitate tenant relations; and the work our financial administrator does to manage accounts payable and receivable.

In 2007, we continued our efforts to **raise public and private funds to help underwrite the costs of the GreenForge project,** which are estimated to total $2.1 million. Thanks to the generosity of many conservation-minded organizations and citizens, we moved closer to this goal in 2007.

GREENFORGE DONORS

January – December 2007

Benefactor

($10,000 and above)

Department of Environmental Protection Nature Park/ Donohoe Creek Protection and Restoration Plan Phase II

Adam Eidemiller, Inc.

Hillman Foundation

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Westmoreland County Commissioners – Chairman Tom Balya, and Commissioners Tom Ceraso and Kim Ward (Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative)

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Associate

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Joseph J. Seren

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James Stossel

Tri-County Engineering, LLC

In addition to the innovative stormwater management practices we incorporated into the GreenForge building during the year (see Clean Streams and Water Resources, pages 2-3), in late April, we also added **one of the largest photovoltaic "solar power" installations in Westmoreland County.**

Two locally manufactured solar arrays – each made up of 18 individual 100-watt photovoltaic cells – capture the sun's radiant energy, which is ultimately turned into electricity that is used at the building.

The solar arrays produce enough electricity to meet the needs of a small family, living in an Energy-Star-rated home.

The District's **new website was launched** in May with an updated design, improved functionality, and expanded content that includes an interactive calendar...links to frequently used forms...PDFs of publications and reference materials...and the latest District news releases.

New software was purchased to allow our staff to edit and update the site at any time, so that it stays fresh and relevant.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

After the spring and summer storms that caused flooding problems for communities, businesses, and homeowners throughout our region, 54 people joined us in early October for a **day-long conservation tour that highlighted "Floods & Fixes"** – flood-prone areas in the Murrysville and Greensburg areas as well as places that have installed innovative ways to capture, divert, and infiltrate stormwater and so lessen the chance for flooding.

Stops on the tour included: the Murrysville Public Works Building, which features a sediment-control structure on a detention pond and control measures that prevent road-salt piles from contaminating Haymaker Run; Marquis Place, a residential development that features a minimum amount of paving and an innovative pond that keeps a permanent level of water at all times; a new parking lot in the City of Greensburg that uses landscaping, infiltration pavers, and large buried chambers to significantly reduce runoff; and the GreenForge building, which features the first green roof in Westmoreland County.

The tour was partially funded by a $2,500 grant from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

We hosted an **Energy Efficiency Workshop for municipal officials** in May.

Thirty-five government employees attended the event, which was presented in cooperation with the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors, the Pennsylvania Department of General Services, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Steel City Biofuels, and GE Lighting.

The workshop was partially funded by a $1,500 grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

GreenForge's solar installation was featured on "Capitol Connection," a **video information program for members of the Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Caucus,** in August.

The half-hour program also discussed wind power and energy conservation and was broadcast statewide on cable channel PCN.

Our shared water-quality educator reached an important new audience during the year when she offered to do a **customized program on water-quality concerns for area realtors.** Some 35 realtors attended the program, which gave them answers to questions perspective property buyers might ask about how to manage wells, septic systems, and ponds for water-quality.

The program gave us an opportunity to introduce ourselves and conservation to a new segment of the public, and we hope this will be the beginning of a longer-term relationship. Indeed, several of the realtors who attended the program have subsequently called us for additional information on these subjects.

For the third year in a row, students from the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes (a group of home-school students based in Norwin) won the **Westmoreland County Envirothon,** an academic competition in which high school students test their knowledge of the natural world. Franklin Regional High School brought two teams to the 2007 competition and they captured second and third place respectively.

The Westmoreland Conservation District has been sponsoring the Envirothon for 22 years. This year's competition attracted 105 students from grades 9-12, representing 11 Westmoreland County high schools.

As the 2007 county champs, the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes went on to compete in the Pennsylvania state Envirothon, where they placed ninth overall in a field of 66 teams.

Our Communications Advisory Committee provided valuable direction during the year on how to **ensure**

that we are effectively reaching people with the conservation message.

This group of volunteer communications professionals helped us set a course in which the District will continue to use traditional communication approaches, such as print publications, but in a more streamlined way (e.g., the scaled-back format of this annual report). This will allow us to continue to provide information in hard-copy form for those who prefer it...but also to allocate more resources to outreach vehicles, such as the website, that allow us to present information in a more timely way.

Our outreach efforts also got a boost from our ongoing work to regularly update and improve the functionality of our **9,000-name database,** which allows us to tailor the conservation information we develop to the individuals and organizations for which it is most relevant, such as providing nutrient management information to farmers.

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The state of the economy, combined with our commitment to completing the GreenForge project, meant that **we worked extra hard in 2007 to trim costs wherever we could.**

We eliminated our annual banquet for the first time in three decades, cut back our education program coordinator position to part-time, and reduced expenditures across the board. While difficult, those actions were absolutely necessary and ultimately helpful in dealing with the tight financial situation we faced.

Also helpful was our ability to institute new fees for services and to increase existing ones...and to procure sponsorships, direct donations, and several significant foundation and government grants to help us with the important conservation work we are doing.

Also significant was the financial support of our Westmoreland County Commissioners, who continued to recognize the value of the work we do and to support our operations through a 2007 budget allocation.

This year was the first time in the 19-year history of our stormwater program that we **charged a fee for our technical services.** Our volunteer Stormwater Advisory Committee recommended this action to our Board of Directors, which voted to institute the new fees in light of the escalating volume of stormwater work and the need to recover some of the associated costs of these services.

During this first year, we were able to collect $11,000 toward our program's operating costs.

Likewise, we **realigned the fees we charge for our erosion and sediment control plan reviews,** setting a new minimum fee of $250.

And the District Board also made some changes to our Timber Harvest Review Fee Schedule, including offering a discounted rate for those applicants who are up-to-date with their Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative courses. This incentive is designed to encourage more conservation awareness and on-the-ground best management practices.

In addition to our on-going efforts to raise capital funds for our GreenForge project, we also sought and were successful in **attracting major financial support for our growing stormwater management program** in 2007. Most of these funds will be available for our use in 2008.

The Colcom Foundation in September awarded the District a **$50,000 grant to encourage innovative stormwater management practices** throughout our region. In addition, Colcom offered a challenge grant in which it will match, dollar-for-dollar, up to and including $100,000, any additional funds raised in support of our stormwater efforts. The challenge grant

Financial Statement

Concise Statement of Financial Position

Combined Funds – December 31, 2007

ASSETS

Cash		$ 333,029
Loan Receivable-GreenForge, Inc.		896,042
General Fixed Assets		47,632
	TOTAL	$1,276,703

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

Current Liabilities		$ 1,662
Loan Payable for GreenForge, Inc.		870,609
Funding Source Share of Equipment		47,632
Total Liabilities		919,903
Net Assets		356,800
	TOTAL	$1,276,703

Concise Statement of Activitites

Combined Funds – Year Ended December 31, 2007

SUPPORT

Westmoreland County	$ 790,357
State Grants	281,885
Other Revenue	94,590
Fees	148,910
Farmland Preservation	4,868
WPCAMR	37
Interest Income	3,815
Special Projects	96,156
	$1,420,618

EXPENDITURES

Program Services	$ 886,085
Management & General	393,766
Fundraising	0
	$1,279,851
Excess (Deficiency) – Current	140,767
Net Assets – Beginning Balance	216,033
Net Assets – End of Year	$ 356,800

is on-going through the fall of 2008.

In December, the Laurel Foundation announced that it was awarding a **$20,000 grant to help support the District's 2008 conservation education program**, which focuses on creating broader public awareness of water-quality issues in our region and providing the information, tools, and motivation citizens need to reduce the number one threat to water quality, non-point source pollution.

Also toward the close of the year, The Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation presented the District with a **$25,000 grant to enhance stormwater infiltration** by adding additional landscaping at GreenForge and by improving the natural and manmade connections between the buildings on our campus.

We also **successfully petitioned the Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education Program for two grants** – one for $20,000 in support of our conservation education program and one for $2,000 to add new stations to our existing Stormwater Trail to highlight the model conservation materials and practices added to the GreenForge building.

Our District manager and Board vice chairman spent two days in Harrisburg in early spring, **meeting directly with our state legislators** to discuss conservation issues and the need for funding.

In all, they were able to talk directly with six of the representatives and five of the senators who represent Westmoreland County.

Our Board vice chairman additionally met in July with all of Westmoreland County's federal delegation – four representatives and two senators – in their Washington, D.C. offices on the same matters.

Changes to the District Board of Directors during the year included the appointment of Fred Slezak, and the reappointment of Tom Balya and Kim Miller.

Fred Slezak was appointed to the District Board by the Westmoreland County Commissioners in February to a four-year term, which runs through the end of 2010. He had served as an associate director since January 2006.

Fred operates a cash grain farm in New Alexandria and uses no-till almost exclusively. He also is the manager/owner of Lone Maple Farms, president of Lone Maple Ag Services, and a certified crop advisor.

Westmoreland County Commission Chairman Tom Balya's reappointment to the Board was for one year (January through December 2007) and **Kim Miller's** was for four years (January 2007 through December 2010).

Our Board of Directors also sadly changed when long-time Director **P. Roy Kemerer** passed away in November.

Roy had been active with the District for 25 years, beginning with his service as an associate director in 1982. He had served a director since 1988, and had held the position of Board secretary from 1995 until his death.

Board Vice Chair Ron Rohall received two distinguished state awards at a ceremony in July: the Conservation Leadership Award, the highest recognition of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission; and one of only two annual awards, the Ann Rudd Saxman* Conservation District Director Excellence Award, from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

Both awards were given for his outstanding service to conservation, which included a leadership role in an effort that recently earmarked more than $1.4 billion in federal funds to Pennsylvania to help clean up the pollution, safety hazards, and other damaging legacies left in our communities by abandoned coal mine operations (Also see Sustainable Communities, page 9).

Our **Associate Director Chuck Duritsa was voted chair of the newly formed Westmoreland Land Trust board in January. Also serving on the trust board** are our forester (chair of the project

committee) and our communications consultant (board secretary).

A **new addition to the District staff during the year** was Dana Rizzo, who was appointed water-quality educator, a position shared by the District and Penn State Cooperative Extension, Westmoreland County.

She brings a decade of experience in conservation and education, and an M.S. in Park and Resource Management & Environmental Education from Slippery Rock University.

Our Erosion Control Specialist Christopher Droste completed the courses necessary to become a **Certified Professional in Erosion and Sediment Control™.** This designation certifies individuals who are qualified to practice in the fields of erosion and sediment control or stormwater quality, based on a thorough examination and review of their educational, scientific and service activities.

Chris plans to complete the other portions of the process, including the exam, in 2008.

Our administrative assistant and secretary attended a **seminar in April on mailing regulations,** rate changes, and other post office requirements for various types of mailings.

Our **Employee Handbook underwent its annual review** and several changes were made to ensure that it remains relevant, including clarifications and updates in the areas of employee categories and pension program.

** Ann Rudd Saxman was a botanist, landscape architect, teacher, community volunteer, and conservationist. She was one of the earliest advocates for the preservation of open space in Westmoreland County. She also was an associate director with our District from 1969 to her death in 1990.*

The award named in her honor was established by the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts in 1990, and is funded through the generosity of the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation of Latrobe.

Westmoreland Conservation District

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

J. Roy Houston, *Chairman*
Ron Rohall, *Vice Chairman*
Conrad Donovan, *Treasurer*
William Doney, *Secretary*
County Commissioner Tom Balya
Albert Barnett
Thomas E. Kuzemchak
Kim Edward Miller
Fred J. Slezak

ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

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Bruce J. Corna Jr.
Joseph Dietrick
Charles Duritsa
Alexander J. Graziani, AICP
Joseph Kalinowski
Ellen Keefe
Ted Kopas
Barbara D. McMillan
Theresa Gay Rohall
Elmer Slezak
John Turack
Keith Walters

STAFF

Gregory M. Phillips
District Manager/CEO

Anthony P. Quadro, Jr.
Assistant District Manager/ Technical Programs Director

Karen Barnhart
Fiscal Administrator

Sandra Dzendzel
Administrative Assistant

Mark Jackson
Visual Communications Specialist

Joanne Kitsko
Receptionist/Secretary

Technical Staff

James W. Pillsbury, PE
Hydraulic Engineer

Kathryn Hamilton, RLA
Landscape Architect/Stormwater Technician

Robert D. Cronauer
Watershed Specialist

Christopher Droste
Erosion Control Specialist

Nicole Bossart
Erosion Control Specialist

Daniel Griffith
Nutrient Management Specialist/Agricultural Conservation Technician

Kathleen Fritz
E & S Program Administrative Assistant

Education Staff

Mimi Thomas-Brooker
Education Program Coordinator

Dana Rizzo
District/Penn State Extension Water Quality Educator

Christie Sebek
Secretary

ADVISORY COMMITTEES*

Communications

Karen Jurkovic
Ted Kopas
John Turack

Conservation Education

Angela Belli
William Doney
Karen Jurkovic
Tom Pearson
Theresa Gay Rohall
Tom Sierzega
Joseph Stefko

Dirt and Gravel Roads

Ron Rohall
Tom Sierzega
James Vatter

Forestry

Robert Ackerman
Edward Callahan
Thomas Fitzgerald
Ron Rohall

Nutrient Management

William Clouser
Dustin Heeter
John Lohr
John Scott
Gary Sheppard
Tom Sierzega
Larry Stokum

Stormwater

Andrew Blenko
Emil Bove
Lucien Bove
John Campfield
Joseph Dietrick
Kim Gales
Donald Hixson
Charles Kubasik
Dallas Leonard
Suzy Meyer
Kim Edward Miller
Les Mlakar
Kenneth Murin
Ken Orie
Stephen Pilipovich
Senator Bob Regola
Darl Rosenquest
Robert Scheib
Tom Sierzega
Tamira Spedaliere
John Surmacz
R.D. Whitling

Sustainable Energy

Charlie Frederickson
Maggie Hall
Karen Jurkovic
Karen Kuhns
Barbara McMillan
John A. Malone
Gary Sheppard

Water Quality

Michael Barrick
Michael Bazley
Todd Burd
M. Curtis Fontaine
Barbara McMillan
Larry Myers
Ron Rohall
John Turack

* District staff members also serve on these committees.

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Westmoreland Conservation District

Mark Your Calendar
Friday
November 14, 2008
6 p.m.

Annual Awards Banquet returns

And, as promised, it will be bigger and better than ever!

Here's a sampling of what you can look forward to:

A new location – the classically beautiful Westmoreland Country Club in Export

A new chef – who is planning an inspired menu

New foods – including locally grown organic produce

A very special keynote speaker – **Jack Bogut**, nationally known radio personality...

and well-deserved honors for our area's outstanding conservationists.

Hope you can join us
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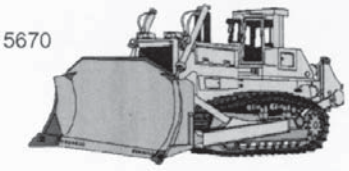

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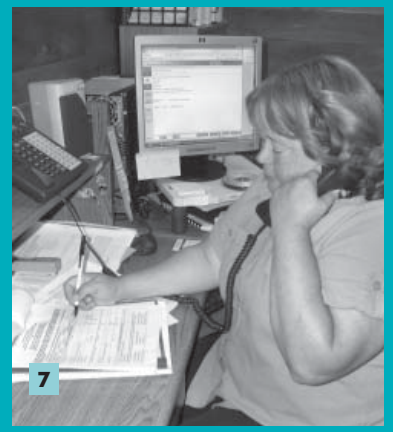

1: Dan Griffith, nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician, points out the advantages of agricultural best management practices **2:** Joanne Kitsko, receptionist/secretary, schedules visits to legislators in Harrisburg **3:** Associate Director Chuck Duritsa makes a public presentation on the newly formed Westmoreland Land Trust **4:** (l-r) Ellen Keefe, associate director and Westmoreland Cleanways Executive Director, Sandy Dzendzel, administrative assistant, and Michelle Keenan, Westmoreland Cleanways administrative assistant, examine a new composting bin **5:** Rob Cronauer, watershed specialist, wades in Mill Creek during a streambank stabilization project **6:** Director Kim Miller explains stormwater control best management practices during a tour of his Penn Glade development in Penn Township **7:** Kathy Fritz, E&S program administrative assistant, guides a caller through a permit application

Westmoreland Conservation District

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