

# Westmoreland Conservation District

Annual Report 2010



Featuring a special memorial tribute to  
Westmoreland Conservation District Chairman J. Roy Houston

# Westmoreland Conservation District

Roy Houston was our guiding force for 40 of the 61 years that the District has been in existence.

When he died in November 2010, we lost a treasured friend, a trusted advisor, and one of the greatest champions conservation in Westmoreland County has ever known.

Roy's balanced blend of piercing wit and disarming charm...his inevitably on-target instincts...and the solid strength of his character drew people to him and, fortunately for us, to the causes that he believed in. The District's deliberate, steady growth under his guidance – from a staff of one and seven volunteers, to a staff of 15 and more than 100 volunteers – is testimony to Roy's ability to reach that place in people that makes them want to ask "How can I help?"

And once he got people involved in conservation, Roy had a way of keeping them coming back. He was a master at keeping things lively and interesting, whether it was



J. Roy Houston

by punctuating a District meeting with a few scrappy comments, or by re-rigging the sails of our strategic direction into new areas that better served community needs. On an even deeper level, Roy kept people involved and united in the work because he demonstrated the qualities of true leadership: an ability to guide without interfering...to accomplish without taking credit...and to make everyone feel a part of something bigger than themselves.

We were very blessed to have had Roy Houston as our chairman, and his passing has left a huge void. What keeps us going are the glimpses of him that we see almost everywhere we look – from conservation projects such as the Jacobs Creek Flood Control Project, one of only a few in the entire U.S. to address an entire watershed...to the living conservation ethic of watershed association volunteers working to improve a stream.

Thank you for everything, Roy.

*In lieu of the District's annual banquet this year, we will be hosting a special event celebrating the life and contributions of Roy Houston.*

*This event is tentatively scheduled for August, and will be held at the District's barn headquarters.*

*Watch our website and newsletter for more information.*

## Dear friend of conservation -

Although bittersweet, it is an honor for me to write this year's letter as the new Westmoreland Conservation District board chairman. 2010 was a year of change, and there was perhaps no greater change for the Westmoreland Conservation District than the loss of our chairman of four decades, J. Roy Houston. For the past 18 years, I had the privilege of serving in several volunteer roles – treasurer and vice chairman – on the District Board under Roy's leadership and considered him a visionary, a friend and a mentor. In January 2011, I was elected to the position of District chairman.

Other changes to the District Board in 2010 were the appointments of Commissioner Ted Kopas and Chuck Duritsa and I am looking forward to working with them and to the energy and experience they bring to the District.

Major program changes included the District's new ability (delegated from the state) to take quick and definitive action to protect our natural resources on the few earth disturbance sites where environmental regulations are being repeatedly disregarded.

While funding from the state was reduced by 15% in 2010, the staff and board searched for ways to reduce expenses and find other sources of funding to maintain the high quality of core services the county residents expect and deserve. I am pleased to say we accomplished that challenge.

Working with the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management and our conservation partners, the District completed a year-long strategic planning process – the most comprehensive, ambitious, and far-reaching since our first plan in 1967. The new plan gives us solid direction to maintain core programs and services while providing relevant conservation programs for our communities, achieving new levels of outreach, and planning organizational succession. The plan also addresses emerging issues such as the impact of Marcellus Shale natural gas development on our region's natural resources and the challenges and implications of the current economic climate.

Although the District conservation initiatives are implemented at the local level, the Board and staff actively represent the county at regional, state and national levels, helping to shape conservation policy to benefit our citizens. As examples, Greg Phillips and Chuck Duritsa represent Pennsylvania on the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, an eight-state compact that works to control and abate pollution in the Ohio River Basin; Jim Pillsbury, hydraulic engineer, is recognized statewide as an expert in stormwater management; Chris Droste, senior erosion control specialist, has helped to develop a statewide manual for erosion control and to revise Pennsylvania's erosion control regulations; and I serve as the chairman of National Association of Conservation District's Urban and Community Natural Resource Policy Group.

I am grateful for the partnerships we enjoy and the support of our dedicated Board members, associate directors, advisory committee members, volunteers and staff. I am also grateful for the in-kind and financial support of local foundations, businesses and individuals. The District is fortunate to have the long-term fiscal and organizational support of the Westmoreland County Commissioners. I thank the current commissioners Tom Bayla, Charles Anderson and Ted Kopas for their unwavering commitment to the District.

As you read through this annual report, you will see that we have many opportunities for volunteers and supporters. If you are already involved, I thank you for your commitment. If you would like to become involved, I invite you to visit or call us and we will help you explore ways to become involved.

As the District continues to meet the opportunities and challenges of our mission, I look forward to my new role as chairman and working with the talented staff and conservation partners to achieve our goals of clean streams, healthy forests, productive farms and sustainable communities.

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Rohall



Ron Rohall was originally appointed to the Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors in 1993, and had served as vice chairman of the organization since 1998. He also previously held the position of board treasurer.

He is a past-president of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and serves as chair of the organization's legislative committee. He also has served in leadership roles on other committees for that organization, including the forestry committee, the leadership development committee, and the education and youth committee.

He serves as chair of the State Conservation Commission's leadership development committee. He is active with the National Association of Conservation Districts, serves as chair of the organization's urban and community resource policy group, has served on forest resources and legislative committees.

In 2007, he received two distinguished state awards for his outstanding service to conservation: 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.

Ron currently serves as the chairman of the Ohio Water Resources Regional Committee, and is a member of the Society of American Foresters and the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association. He is a professional consulting forester.





Infrastructure projects made up the most active earthmoving sites in the county during the year. Here, earth is moved for the county's expansion of Twin Lakes Park, just east of Greensburg.

## Stable Soils

For the second year in a row, infrastructure projects, including natural gas transmission lines, sewer and water line projects, and highway work, made up the most active earthmoving sites in the county.

Natural gas is getting a lot of attention these days. And while drilling projects related to the deep Marcellus Shale deposits are capturing most of the headlines, there also has been a **significant uptick in construction activity related to the distribution and storage** of this valuable resource.

In 2010, our erosion control specialist inspected some sizeable new additions – a compressor station, a measurement and regulation station, and pipelines – at the Oakford compressor station/underground natural gas storage facility near Delmont, which is jointly owned by Texas Eastern Transmission LP and Dominion.

We also received plans from Dominion for a proposed natural-gas transportation line that will disturb some 312 acres in Westmoreland County on its route from Kanawha County, West Virginia to the compressor station in Delmont.

The company has permitted the entire 50-foot right-of-way through our county and we expect that construction will begin in 2011.

We continued to monitor conservation controls on projects that are **bringing sanitary sewer infrastructure to some parts of western Westmoreland County for the first time.**

We monitored erosion controls at the Herminie Sanitary Sewer Project in Sewickley Township, which disturbed 83 acres. This major new infrastructure project was completed in 2010, and provides sanitary sewer service to Rilton, Herminie, and parts of Sewickley Township. This project ends at the border of Arona, a municipality that also undertook installation of a small sanitary sewer project, which we inspected, in 2010.

Another project we inspected for conservation controls was the first phase of a large sanitary sewer project, the Lincoln Heights Sanitary Sewer Project, which will serve an area along Route 136 from Arona Road to Route 30.

All of this new infrastructure will have a profound effect on water quality in the streams in this area, which are tributaries of Sewickley Creek. It also will no doubt have a stimulating influence on development in Hempfield Township as the economy improves.

Three other sanitary sewer projects, **the Ligonier East Sanitary Sewer Expansion in Ligonier, and the Pine Run and Upper Pine Run sewer projects in Washington Township**, were under way during the year and monitored by our erosion control specialist.

The Ligonier East project involves a pump station and approximately 15 miles of sewer line that runs from the intersection of Route 30 and Route 711, east. Sections of the project parallel Laughlintown Run, which is a high quality stream.

The Municipal Authority of Washington Township continued work on the eight-acre Pine Run Sewer Project in 2010, and began work on the Upper Pine Run Sewer Project, which involves some 11 acres of disturbed ground.

The two projects combined will serve some 1,900 residents. Plans for a third project, the Pucketa Creek Sewer Project, were approved in 2010.

### **Infrastructure projects in 2010 also included water line work.**

Our senior erosion control specialist inspected work at the site of a 48-inch water line replacement project that will run from Stone Church Road in Youngwood to Hempfield Township. The project, which involves some 15.5 acres in a lineal fashion, was about 25% complete in 2010.

A smaller water line project that we inspected in New Stanton involved 3.5 disturbed acres for a new 48-inch water transmission main that ran from Paintersville Road, under the Pennsylvania Turnpike, and up to Route 119 South, near Thermo Village Road. Erosion controls minimized the impacts of this project on the streams nearby.

PennDOT began a project in the fall of 2010 to **reconstruct and widen the Smithton Interchange on Route 70** and we were





On Mansville Road near Stahlstown, we coordinated the largest and costliest project ever undertaken by the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program in Westmoreland County, improving some 1,200 feet of road and reducing pollution in the nearby stream, a part of the Loyalhanna Watershed.

involved in reviewing the plans and inspecting the site to make sure that adequate erosion and stormwater controls were employed.

Sixty-five acres were disturbed at this South Huntingdon site, which is near a tributary to the Youghiogheny River.

On another area roadway project, our erosion control specialist made multiple inspection trips during the year to a **2-1/2-mile stretch of Route 22 in Derry Township** where the roadway was being widened to four lanes, a concrete median added, road shoulders paved, and drainage pipes and inlets improved.

**We undertook two dirt and gravel road projects in 2010**, one of which – Mansville Road – was the largest and costliest ever undertaken by the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program in Westmoreland County.

Mansville Road near Stahlstown was the worst unpaved road in the county in terms of erosion and the amount of water that was typically on it.

The roadbed was severely trenched – in places, its surface was as much as eight feet lower than the surrounding land – after years of being maintained according to the standard and accepted practice of simply scraping the mud off the road surface each spring.

The road's erosion problem was further compounded because the scraped mud accumulated along the sides of the road and acted like streambanks, channeling rain and melting snow right down the main road surface.

The \$24,000 repair project involved installing 2,000 feet of underdrain to help manage the water and 1,500 tons of fill – mostly rock – to raise the road surface level with the surrounding topography. A road drainage culvert also was added and a stream culvert was replaced. In all, about 1,200 feet of Mansville Road was improved, which should enhance the quality of the nearby stream, which is a tributary to Fourmile Run and part of the Loyalhanna Watershed.

Our partner on this project was Cook Township.

For 2011, we plan to improve another 800 feet of this roadway,

which is not far from Routes 130 and 711.

The second dirt and gravel road project completed in 2010 was done with Donegal Township in that municipality in late June.

There, more than 1,100 tons of Driving Surface Aggregate were used to **stabilize 2,000 feet of Stairs Road and improve the water quality of a tributary to Fourmile Run** just north of Donegal Lake.

Driving Surface Aggregate is a compacted mixture of different-sized stones that creates a dense and durable wearing surface. Preliminary studies completed by its developer, Penn State, show up to a 90% reduction in sediment runoff from this material, compared to existing road surfaces, even after three years of exposure and use.

**We revisited a past dirt and gravel road project during the year – White Oak Road in Laurel Mountain Borough** – where we had stabilized a roadside swale in 2007.

In 2010, we installed a conveyer-belt diversion on this same road to test how effectively this material diverts water from a road that is both heavily traveled and maintained in the winter.

The fiber-reinforced conveyer belt was installed in a trench that runs at an angle across the road's width, with about five inches of the belt's surface exposed.

The thinking is that the belt material is rigid enough to act like a waterbar, able to stop flowing water and divert it off the road surface and into the underdrain installed two years ago...yet, at the same time, also flexible enough to allow vehicles, including plows, to pass over it and then spring back into its original position.

Because of our good working relationship, officials from **North Huntingdon asked us to help them review existing detention ponds in the township to see if there were ways to improve their effectiveness and reduce maintenance.** In the past, state regulations had never clearly established responsibility for the long-term maintenance of detention ponds. Consequently, over the years, many of them have evolved into eyesores and hazards.

In North Huntingdon, the ponds we reviewed were some 20

years old and in less-than-ideal shape, with eroding sides, trees and weeds growing out of them, and collections of grass cuttings dumped inside.

We suggested that a comprehensive inspection be done of each pond, and that a database be developed that lists all of the particular issues for each pond, including the condition of the embankments and vegetation, and any control-structure failures. We also suggested that possible retrofits to control the water better be identified and that the ponds be inspected on a yearly basis.

Similar problems should be less common in the future, now that new provisions added to Pennsylvania's regulations in November 2010 require that a party responsible for both the operation and long-term maintenance of ponds be identified in writing (see last item on this page).

**Our staff and PennDOT's design consultants tried a new approach this year – a face-to-face pre-design discussion –** regarding all the state Department of Transportation bridges in Westmoreland County that were identified by that agency as a priority for repair or rebuilding.

In this intensive, day-long discussion, we reviewed the unique aspects of eight different bridge sites, and evaluated what erosion control methods would be the most effective at each location.

Sites discussed included the Brown Avenue bridge in Jeannette, and the bridges on Edna Road and Slate Run Road in Hempfield Township.

Everyone involved felt that this pre-design discussion was a very effective way to come to consensus on basic design features, eliminating a lot of back-and-forth comments on plans and expediting the permitting process.

Our staff **participated in 27 pre-planning meetings** during the year.

In these meetings, our technical staff meets with architects, contractors, and developers to share their insights and suggestions on how to control erosion and stormwater on specific development sites before the project is designed.

These meetings, which have been increasing in number, result in very constructive comments and actually reduce the time we spend reviewing and commenting on project drawings.

We also **participated in 17 pre-construction meetings** with township officials, contractors, and design engineers. These meetings help resolve any last-minute site questions before development begins.

In November, these meetings, which had been voluntary, became mandatory for earthmoving sites required to have a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit (see last item on this page).

Our senior erosion control specialist was part of a working group that explored the idea of **establishing review fees for the work conservation districts do for the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission.**

In past practice, as a professional courtesy to a state agency, conservation districts did not charge the turnpike commission

for reviewing erosion control plans or for inspecting construction sites for erosion control effectiveness.

Unfortunately, with escalating costs and tight budgets, many districts were having difficulty supporting this free service and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts established a committee to see what could be done.

The committee asked a number of districts, including ours, to determine how much time they spent in reviews and inspections on turnpike work over the past five years. From that information, the group determined that a fee of \$100 per acre of disturbed land would be reasonable and, with our senior erosion control specialist as spokesperson, presented this idea to the turnpike commission. In late December, the commission agreed to the suggestion and a formal agreement will be drawn up in 2011.

We successfully **demonstrated a unique use of Driving Surface Aggregate** – as a surface for a walking/biking trail outside our headquarters – in 2009, and that is leading to another such application locally.

Developers of the Rogers Trail, which will traverse some 2,000 feet between the Fred Rogers Center and the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College, plan to use this material for the trail surface.

We continued to **work during the year with a landowner who is reclaiming some 59 acres near Wyano.**

The soil here is very compromised – low in pH and poor in fertility – from being both deep- and strip-mined by previous owners.

In 2010, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection approved the use of biosolids on this site, which will help demonstrate their effectiveness in getting grass to grow on these difficult-to-vegetate mine spoil areas.

Application of the biosolids and establishment of the vegetation will get under way in 2011.

Our watershed specialist **provided technical assistance to a Penn Township resident who asked for our advice on stabilizing a stream** that had cut four-foot vertical banks through his front yard and exposed a gas service line to his home.

Based on our recommendations, the resident was able to successfully taper the banks back to a more gentle slope, grade and stabilize about 200 feet of stream, and relocate the gas service line. The stream is a tributary to Brush Creek.

In November 2010, **changes to Chapter 102 of the Pennsylvania Code, which requires earthmovers to follow erosion control and stormwater regulations, went into effect.**

Some of the major new revisions include:

- eliminating the proposed “permit by rule.” Conservation districts and most others (including the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency) view this as a major victory because it insures that land developers will continue to have their plans reviewed by conservation district staff before work at the site can begin.





More than 190 engineers and technical professionals came to our annual day-long workshop for updates on stormwater management and erosion control.

- making all disturbed sites of one acre or greater in size required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. Previously, these permits were required only for sites that had five acres or more of disturbed ground (or for sites that disturbed one acre or more and also had a point-source discharge). This change means that conservation districts will be involved in more development sites and doing more monitoring of both erosion and stormwater controls.
- codifying post-construction stormwater management requirements, including the long-term operation and maintenance requirements of best management practices, by requiring that all permits contain them.
- establishing riparian buffer and riparian forest buffer provisions on special protection waters.
- updating agricultural requirements to mandate that situations on farms where sediment or nutrient pollution is occurring directly next to a stream be addressed with conservation practices.
- requiring pre-construction meetings for any earth-disturbance activity that is authorized by a permit.

These latest revisions mark the first time in 10 years that this chapter of law was updated.

Our senior erosion control specialist worked on the regulations committee with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

Once the new regulations went into effect, our staff, and in particular our erosion and sedimentation program administrative assistant, spent a good deal of time sharing information and explaining the requirements to engineers and other professionals whose work is impacted by these changes.

**Pennsylvania's guiding document for effective erosion control underwent its second year of extensive revisions and**

**improvements**, and our senior erosion control specialist continued his service on the committee leading this process.

Much of the work in 2010 focused on clarifying diagrams and calculations for the variety of erosion controls discussed in the manual. This should help to standardize the way these controls are installed on sites all across the state.

The draft 500-page Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control Program Manual also includes expanded content that reflects many actual field situations, and a completely redesigned Table of Contents that will help users – including district staff, design professionals, engineers, and regulators – quickly find the information they're looking for.

The manual is scheduled to be published as a live document on the Internet in 2011.

The committee will continue to meet after the manual is published to review user comments and feedback.

Our watershed specialist **gave testimony on the benefits of the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program to the state House Transportation Committee** in June and delineated the program's successes here in Westmoreland County.

Pennsylvania has nearly 20,000 miles of unpaved roads and most are owned and maintained by local municipal governments.

These roads provide important access for residents. They also play a significant role in water pollution, as sediment from the eroding road surfaces finds its way into nearby streams.

Because most unpaved roads tend to be in the rural areas, the nearby streams are often some of the state's best quality waterways.

Late in 2010, a new allocation formula was approved for use in distributing funds to conservation districts for the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program. The allocations will be phased in over three years beginning in 2011.

Funding for the program is provided through the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission.

Our senior erosion control specialist serves on a committee



that is **identifying guidelines for knowledge and experience, as well as needed training programs, for erosion and sediment control staff** at conservation districts statewide.

Some areas identified include: more extensive knowledge of soil types, better training on how to perform calculations for channels and ponds, and more practical in-the-field experience.

The committee, which involves both the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, is looking to host both mini-workshops on specific topics, such as how to calculate storm runoff volume, as well as regional, week-long training.

In 2010, we **renewed our Conservation Partnership Agreements with Murrysville and Mount Pleasant townships, and established a new one with Washington Township.**

These agreements outline how the District and the municipality

will work together on natural resource issues related to forestry, agriculture, erosion and sediment control, and stormwater management.

**“Keeping Up... Keeping Ahead,” our workshop for engineers and technical professionals**, offered the latest news in post-construction stormwater management, in erosion and sediment control, and with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System construction permit program.

More than 190 professionals came to the event to hear speakers who included three representatives from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, professional engineers from The Markosky Engineering Group Inc. and Gibson-Thomas Engineering Co., a civil engineer with R.A. Smith National, a Rostraver Township planner, and members of the Westmoreland Conservation District staff.



In Mount Pleasant, rain gardens installed in municipal locations and on individual homeowner lots reduce the amount of water flowing into the borough's storm sewer system.

## Clean Streams and Water Resources

**I**n our first full year since re-assuming responsibility for issuing general permits for stream projects in Westmoreland County, we issued 101 of them.

These Chapter 105 permits relate to projects that are relatively simple and have only minimal stream impact. The work of reviewing the permit applications was divided among our technical staff.

We petitioned the state Department of Environmental Protection for the ability to issue these permits at the request of many of our clients, who preferred the convenience and timeliness of

being able to get these permits locally, instead of through the regional office in Pittsburgh.

**After the state Department of Environmental Protection delegated the ability to enforce the Clean Streams Law in Westmoreland County to us early in 2010, we initiated this level of action** on a waste area in the northern part of the county.

We asserted at a hearing that waste material from this site slid into the nearby stream and degraded it because the site was not properly stabilized and did not have adequate controls in place.

Resolution of the case – the first ever initiated by our District – was still pending at the end of 2010, and should be decided in 2011.

In addition to its potential to positively impact a local waterway, this enforcement case also was beneficial for the District because it served as the first test for our new Enforcement Advisory Committee and our new procedures for pursuing these rare instances where a person or company refuses to voluntarily comply with the Clean Streams Law.

**Our Stormwater Advisory Committee met to discuss how recent changes to Chapter 102 erosion control regulations of the Pennsylvania Code and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System construction stormwater permit will impact the District's stormwater management program (see Stable Soils, page 4).**

In Mount Pleasant, we began to **construct a number of rain gardens as part of a community-wide effort to manage stormwater.**

To our knowledge, no other community in western Pennsylvania has ever undertaken a stormwater retrofit of this scale, which to-date has involved installing both municipal and residential rain gardens.

Work on this extensive project will continue in 2011.

Funding for the rain gardens was secured by Mount Pleasant Borough from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection through Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (see Outreach and Education, page 16).

**The latest effort to reduce stormwater runoff and erosion at the Westmoreland Fairgrounds was finished in May.**

A new 40-foot by 150-foot basin, capable of retaining more than 130,000 gallons of water, was created at the property's low point along Fairgrounds Road. It is designed to catch water runoff from that road as well as from the parking lots and buildings on the hill above.

The new basin is the second to be installed at the fairgrounds. The first, an 80-foot by 200-foot one, was added in 2009 to capture water runoff from the heavily used Grandstand Arena. A third basin is scheduled to be installed in 2011 to manage most of the remaining water runoff from the fairground buildings and Fairgrounds Road.

All the work at the fairgrounds will directly benefit both the quantity and the quality of water in the Sewickley Creek Watershed, a 168-square mile area in the center of Westmoreland County.

Funding for the work at the fairgrounds is provided through an allocation by the Westmoreland County Commissioners from the Pennsylvania Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative fund. Significant matching funds (in the form of equipment and labor) were provided by Mount Pleasant Township for this most recent basin project.

When officials at the New Kensington-Arnold School District determined that an old, unused tennis court at Valley High School

would make better sense as a parking lot, **we helped them make the change in a way that resulted in double benefits – spaces for 39 cars and less stormwater running into Little Pucketa Creek.**

We did it by using permeable concrete pavers to create the parking lot, which give rain and melting snow a way to sink into the ground. This significantly reduces the amount of water that runs off the surface of the lot and into the creek nearby, even though the new parking lot is the same size as the old tennis court.

The parking lot is the latest project in a four-year effort to improve water quality and lessen flooding in the Little Pucketa Creek Watershed. Working with the Pucketa and Chartiers Creek Watershed Association and school officials, we've been able to improve the flow of water in the stream near the high school by removing nearly 2,000 tons of debris from the creek bed...reduce the rate of erosion from the streambanks by adding 400 tons of rock to deflect and slow the water's flow...and improve water quality by planting trees.

Officials in nearby Arnold took notice of our work on the tennis-court-turned-parking-lot project at Valley High School, and **asked us to help them design something similar for a group of vacant lots in their municipality.**

We provided a design that suggested the use of permeable paving and landscaping as a way to provide needed off-street parking without losing existing green space in the community.

Also in that area of the county, **we helped to repair and stabilize Chartiers Creek in Wolf Pack Park**, Lower Burrell's signature community park. This area of the county was particularly hard-hit during Hurricane Ivan in 2004 and many locations, such as at this site, are still in the process of recovering.

In a partnership that included the District, the Pucketa and Chartiers Creek Watershed Association, the City of Lower Burrell, and Growing Greener II funding, we designed and installed 11 cross rock vanes in the stream to help keep it in its natural channel through the park, encourage proper water flow, and minimize streambank erosion.

In Vandergrift, our landscape architect helped the municipality reduce the amount of water flowing into its storm sewer system by **creating a unique area of street trees on Columbia Avenue.**

The 6-foot by 180-foot project featured six beautiful new trees, planted in an underground frame system called a Silva Cell™ that gives the trees a much healthier growing environment than most street trees enjoy.

On the surface, the new tree-planting system was paved with permeable concrete, another unique product that allows rain to run right through it and into the ground, instead of just hitting the surface and running off into the sewer system, as it would with traditional concrete.

Partners in the project include the Vandergrift Improvement Program, the borough of Vandergrift, and Bruce Construction, LLC. Funding was provided by the state's Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative program and private donations.

We transferred our success in Vandergrift to a project we



worked on with the Jacobs Creek Watershed Association in Scottsdale.

There, we helped to **design an innovative stormwater management project for a large downtown parking lot** that is shared by the municipality and the Southwest Regional Tax Bureau.

The design calls for a total of 10 trees, planted in three, six-foot-wide islands across the 120-foot width of the lot.

Underneath, the islands will incorporate Silva Cell™ technology and, on top, they will feature permeable concrete.

Construction is scheduled to start in 2011.

With the assistance of local businesses, we were able to **successfully resolve a runoff problem for a neighborhood of townhouses in the City of Greensburg** adjacent to the Davis Shopping Center on Pittsburgh Street.

Replacing an inlet and a pipe significantly curtailed the source of the problem – stormwater runoff that was flowing downhill from the 30-year-old retail complex, and over a steep hillside.

**Water quality issues related to Marcellus Shale gas extraction were a major outreach topic** for the water quality educator we share with Penn State Cooperative Extension.

During the year, she reached hundreds of people in Westmoreland County and the larger southwestern Pennsylvania region with information that addressed both drinking water and wastewater concerns.

In public meetings and in one-on-one consultations, she encourages homeowners to test their drinking water wells and springs both before and after gas drilling...and she informs people about the nature and treatment of the large quantities of wastewater generated by the extraction process.

We had the opportunity this year to **share conservation information with an entirely new audience: individuals training to become heavy equipment operators.**

The Western Pennsylvania Operating Engineers Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program, which provides the training, received a grant from the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry to develop curriculum that would teach students how to build innovative stormwater practices.

Typically, installing these practices requires a construction approach different from the one used to install traditional management controls. For example: when creating a rain garden, steps have to be taken to insure that the soil isn't compacted too tightly.

In addition to providing the unique "how to" information for constructing these innovative stormwater management controls, we also took this opportunity to incorporate information in the curriculum on the reasons why these practices require a different construction approach. This included information that explained the water cycle, soil properties, infiltration rates, and so on. Having this background will give the people building these structures the knowledge they need to troubleshoot during construction and make on-the-job decisions if needed.

The operating engineers program will begin using this curriculum in 2011 in their training programs in 14 counties in southwestern Pennsylvania.

Our hydraulic engineer was asked by two Pittsburgh city councilmen to **testify at a City Council hearing in mid-July regarding the benefits of using innovative stormwater management methods** such as permeable pavement, parking lot retrofits, and rain gardens.

Our engineer drew on the District's successful local projects – in the City of Greensburg, in Mount Pleasant Borough, and at the GreenForge building – to give real-world examples of the practicality and effectiveness of various control methods.

A few weeks after his testimony, Pittsburgh City Council unanimously passed a bill to apply more protective stormwater standards to publicly funded development. It requires developers to use the maximum amount of green, low-impact practices – such as man-made wetlands, rain gardens, and green roofs – to catch stormwater and reduce runoff.

It is estimated that these standards will prevent up to 1.5 inches of rainfall from leaving the site of new development in the city, and reduce combined sewer overflow problems.

Our hydraulic engineer **spoke on our District's successes in installing innovative stormwater projects at the National Association of Conservation District's Northeast Regional Meeting** in August.

More than 130 conservationists from 12 northeastern states attended the three-day event in Maine, which also included tours of practical conservation applications, including a multiple-partner urban stormwater management approach for a local watershed.

In addition to her traditional local **workshops on the proper siting, construction, and maintenance of onlot septic systems**, which attracted a total of 44 people this year, our shared water quality educator also presented the information in a new way, **via a live webinar** on Penn State Cooperative Extension's website.

Twenty-four people from across the United States and Canada participated in these two live Internet-based events, and had the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers about onlot septic systems, which collect all household water used in bathing, toileting, laundry, and dishwashing.

The 50-minute webinar, without the interactive feature, continues to be available for viewing on the District's site, [www.wcdpa.com](http://www.wcdpa.com).

Our hydraulic engineer **spoke to officials of the Manor Borough Planning Commission** to help them get a better understanding of the principles of stormwater management and some of the proven, innovative practices being employed.

This knowledge will help the officials of this borough, part of which is located in a floodplain, more effectively manage the land and development in their community.

Our popular **Stormwater Management for Homeowners workshop was held four times this year and attracted a total of 114 participants** who learned how to "read" the unique physical features of their property...uncover possible causes of water problems, including damp basements and water-ponding...and install creative and attractive solutions, from rain gardens to green roofs.





In downtown Vandergrift, a unique underground grid, permeable pavement, and a new row of street trees create a unique and attractive way to manage stormwater.

Participants had the option of taking home a ready-made rain barrel, obtained through our partnership with Westmoreland Cleanways.

Thirty-six people came to a **Pond Management workshop** at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College in mid-April to learn about pond ecology; water-quality concerns; maintenance and permits; plant, weed and algae identification and control; and wildlife and fisheries management.

Nearly 200 sixth-grade students in the Greensburg-Salem School District received **information about aquatic plants, macroinvertebrates, fish, nonpoint source pollution, and habitats** from our shared water-quality educator, and she also talked to juniors and seniors from The Kiski School about careers that involve working with water.

Our staff also **presented information on innovative stormwater management to a variety of other audiences**, including: an environmental law class at Saint Vincent College, master gardeners from Somerset, visitors at the Westmoreland Home Show and the Ligonier Country Market, and attendees at annual meetings of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society.

The handy new **“Field Guide to Common Aquatic Plants of Pennsylvania,”** coauthored by our shared water quality specialist and published by the Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences in 2009, **captured numerous awards in 2010**, including commendations from the Pennsylvania and National Associations of County Agricultural Agents, and the North American Lake Management Society.

The guide provides a written description, drawing, and photograph for each of more than 40 aquatic plants common to

our state. It also flags invasive species and suggests methods to control them.

We **updated our best management practices stormwater poster** to include real-world examples of projects right here in Westmoreland County, including the rain garden we installed at GreenForge.

The poster now also features more design data than ever before, updated rainfall information based on a broader range of data, and an updated listing of recommended trees, shrubs, and decorative plants.

The poster is free, and available for pickup at the District office.



Wayne and Eileen Baughman were named Conservation Farmers of the Year for 2010 for their stewardship of their Salem Township farm, where they raise a variety of crops and rotationally graze a herd of Black Baldy cattle.

## Productive Farms

**W**ork in the Stony Run Watershed in Derry Township continued in 2010, with conservation measures added on two farms near the Ken Laughlin farm, which was the largest investment of Growing Greener funds ever made on a single farm in Westmoreland County and the major focus of our efforts in 2009.

The 2010 improvements on neighboring farms will help these owners – Luanne Saffron and Scott Malnofski – improve the viability of their operations while also benefiting the larger community by improving water quality in Stony Run.

On the Saffron farm, Growing Greener II funds were used to add two stream crossings and, on the Malnofski farm, fencing, spring developments, and three stream crossings were installed.

A unique situation next to the Malnofski property – a huge gully that is attracting water from many different directions – is scheduled to be remedied in 2011 using “shotcrete,” a process that pneumatically projects concrete at high velocity onto a surface. In this instance, it will create an “cast-in-place” liner for the gully. This will be the first application of this process in Westmoreland County.

In 2006, Pennsylvania expanded its Nutrient Management Law to apply not only to production animal operations, but also to operations with certain numbers of livestock, poultry, and pleasure horses.

Since then, the District has been **making a concerted effort to reach out to the equestrian community** in particular, as the population of horses in Westmoreland County is growing significantly, and has doubled in the last decade.

To help the District get better known with horse owners, in 2010 we offered a special program where we would visit a equestrian operation, take soil samples, and submit the samples to Penn State’s lab for testing – all at no charge.

Seven area horse farms took us up on the offer and test results showed that only one of those seven had pasture soil with a pH that was adequate for growing grass.

Our agricultural specialist plans to follow up with these owners next summer to provide conservation information and to encourage them to follow the recommendations given with their soil test results for improving their soil quality.

**Seven area farmers applied for the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program in 2010**, almost a 100% increase from the low of four in 2009, and a positive sign that the economy may be improving to the point where farmers are able to make the upfront financial investment in stewardship plans and/or best management practices required to apply for this state tax credit.

Most farmers use this program as a way to purchase no-till equipment, including planters and drills.

Our agricultural technician made **56 personal visits to area farms during the year** to help farmers employ conservation methods that promote the viability of their operations.

He also participated in an approximately equal number of meetings with farmers who came to the office for advice.

**Five Westmoreland County farmers voluntarily submitted nutrient management plans for their operations in 2010.**

These plans benefit farmers by helping them manage their operations in ways that save time and money, and they benefit the community by keeping excess nutrients out of nearby streams and waterways.

The farmers whose plans were approved by the Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors during the year, the acres under the plan, and the watershed neighbors who directly benefit from these stewardship plans are:

- Mike Baker, 574 acres in East Huntingdon Township, benefiting the Jacobs Creek Watershed;
- Tim Catalina, 965 acres in East Huntingdon Township, benefiting the Jacobs Creek Watershed;
- Ben Logan, 277 acres in Hempfield Township, benefiting the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed;



- Kim Miller, 220 acres in Ligonier Township, benefiting the Loyalhanna Watershed; and
- Bill Selembo, 809 acres in Salem Township, benefiting the Loyalhanna, Beaver Run, and Turtle Creek watersheds.

In addition, **one farmer renewed an existing nutrient management plan.**

Changes to Pennsylvania's nutrient management law now require nutrient management plans to be formally reviewed every three years by a certified nutrient management specialist, soil tests to be updated, and certain soil indexes to be rerun.

Todd Fescura, who farms 138 acres in Unity Township, fulfilled those requirements and has an active nutrient management plan that benefits the Sewickley Creek Watershed.

**Another farmer whose nutrient management plan was up for renewal in 2010 chose not to do so** and we believe that economic concerns, not a lack of commitment to conservation, was the reason. Meeting the requirements for renewal can cost a farmer between \$400 and \$800.

We also believe that the few farmers who haven't officially renewed their plans in the past two years are still putting them into practice, and following their plans in the way they manage the land.

We're hopeful that, as the economy continues to improve, the number of new and renewing nutrient management plans will increase.

The cumulative result of the new, renewed, and lapsed nutrient management plans is that **some 17,025 acres in our county were being systematically managed for nutrients according to a current nutrient management plan in 2010.**

In 2010, we **began to map the farms in Westmoreland County on the Geographic Information System.**

By putting area farm locations in this powerful electronic format, we can then look at a wide variety of their features – from floodplains to contours, elevations to aerial views – to help us make the best, site-specific conservation recommendations for each particular farm.

Thanks to the Westmoreland County Planning Department, which shared information, we were able to immediately map about 700 farms. We will continue to add farms as time and staff availability allow.

**The District's nutrient management program was evaluated for the first time by the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission in 2010.**

The commission administers the Nutrient Management Program, as well as the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program, and provides oversight and professional certification for nutrient management specialists.

The evaluators noted that the District's close cooperation with many agricultural partners plays an important role in implementing best management practices.

They also praised the exceptional tracking process the District uses to follow a nutrient management plan through submission, review, and implementation and suggested that this system could be useful to other districts.

In 2010, we signed a new contract with Penn's Corner and the Natural Resources Conservation Service, **committing to promote all conservation farm programs that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has available in our region.**

These programs include: the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, Conservation Stewardship Program, Environmental Quality Incentives Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program, Agricultural Management Assistance, and Grassland Reserve Program.

This contract makes official the work we have been doing all along to encourage farmers to put conservation practices on their land. It also provides some funding to support the work of our agricultural technician, and helps to lessen the impact of recent state budget cuts.

**Wayne and Eileen Baughman of Salem Township were named Conservation Farmers of the Year for 2010.**

The Baughmans own a small farm in Salem Township, where they have a herd of "Black Baldy" cattle (a cross between an Angus bull and Hereford cows) and grow a variety of crops, including small grains, hay, black raspberries, blackberries, sweet corn, tomatoes, and potatoes.

The Baughmans have made a variety of conservation improvements on their property over the past five years, adding fencing to keep the cows out of the stream, creating five paddocks so they can employ rotational grazing, installing roadways and water-runoff systems to prevent erosion, and using no-till methods to refurbish their pastures and to plant wheat and soybeans.

The conservation work that the Baughmans did adds to the quality of the local stream, which flows directly into Beaver Run, the source of drinking water for some 50,000 homes and businesses in Westmoreland County.

After a five-year hiatus, we again **cosponsored a bus tour to Holterholm Farms in Jefferson, Maryland**, an organic, seasonal rotational dairy farm that is extremely successful both in protecting the natural resources and in achieving very impressive net income figures – about three times better than most comparable farms, according to a study by the University of Maryland.

Forty-five people joined us for the day-long program in which participants saw the results of the Holters' pasture management system, which follows the ground and, when the grass seed is ripe, lets the heifers reseed it by knocking the mature seed from the grass.

Several Westmoreland County farmers are seriously considering adopting these methods of production.

The bus tour was a regional project of Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council, and was cosponsored by the District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In late May, **11 people joined us for a horse pasture walk** at Ford Acres in Fairfield Township.

There, they viewed the operation's paddocks, fencing, animal walkways, and watering system and had a chance to ask the owner questions about his operation.





Forests act like a filter for rainwater, improving the quality of our streams and rivers.  
About half of all the land in Westmoreland County is forested.

## Healthy Forests

**S**mall but solid signs of economic recovery resulted in an **increase in the number of logging plans submitted for review** in 2010 to 21, from a low of 13 in 2009. In an average year, that number is closer to 30.

Likewise, active logging in the county picked up from almost a standstill in 2009 to the point where our forester went out on **40 inspections on timber harvest sites during the year**.

A forest management plan is a helpful tool in making sure that a woodlot is managed wisely.

The District provides two levels of plans for woodlot owners in the county: a woodlot exam with basic management advice, and a more comprehensive Forest Stewardship Plan.

During 2010, **we prepared basic woodlot exams for six property owners** in the county, including one for a community of homes on some 100 acres in Derry Township. These exams include a basic inventory of the woodlot and general written recommendations on the best way to manage it.

We also completed work begun in 2009 on **one more extensive Forest Stewardship Plan for a property owner in Donegal Township**. This conservation-minded family also worked with our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician on a pasture management plan for their horse pasture.

**We provided information to some 40 landowners during the year** on timber harvesting, timber sales, the Clean and Green Law, tree shelters, tree diseases, and general woodlot management.

At their request, we continued to work with The Friends of Murrysville Parks to **document the age and condition of trees in Duff Park**, a 148-acre natural area in Murrysville, just off Route 22.

Specifically, we helped to identify, measure, and inspect about 30 species of trees on that municipal property, including some

notable white and red oaks that could be as much as 300 years old.

In early November, our forester presented an **hour-long webcast on best management practices for forest roads**, which are one of the major causes of erosion and sediment in woodlands.

The free event presented information to consider in locating and building a forest road; best management practices, including waterbars, dips, and cross drain culverts; stream crossings; permits needed for road construction; erosion control plans; and how to maintain and retire a forest road.

The webcast initially was broadcast live over the Internet twice in one day, giving those 120 individuals who participated an opportunity to submit questions and receive answers.

The webcast, without the interactive feature, continues to be available for viewing through Penn State University's Pennsylvania Forests Web Seminar Center.

Our forester gave **talks on forestry and the Envirothon competition to some 40 students** from Saltsburg High School and Carmichaels Junior/Senior high schools during the year.

We continued to **provide support to the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association**, a local organization that provides a forum for anyone interested in stewardship of woodlands.

In 2010, the District helped the group organize board meetings, issue a newsletter, and host an annual meeting, a tree farm field day, and a meeting on tree farms and forest stewardship plans.





We promoted energy conservation through the demonstration practices we built into in the GreenForge building (left) and in a special series of targeted workshops we hosted during the year for building managers (right).

## Green Building and Alternative Energy

When Westmoreland County received stimulus funding to improve the energy efficiency of county facilities, the Westmoreland County Commissioners wanted to share the wealth. So they set aside a portion of the funds to help area schools, businesses, nonprofit organizations, and municipalities learn how to add energy efficiencies to their buildings as well.

The Commissioners asked us to **work with the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation to host four free energy-education workshops during the year**, each customized to show the particular audience how to identify energy guzzlers, ways to save energy, and the funding available to help...and to **create and launch a new website** of energy-conservation information and resources, <http://energyefficiency.wcdpa.com>.

All four of the workshops featured top-notch speakers and were well-attended by Westmoreland County building owners and decision-makers representing nonprofit organizations, municipalities, large and small businesses, and schools.

In addition to its countywide benefits in conserving energy, this experience has benefited the District by introducing our organization and staff to a new audience – building owners – that we hope to do more work with.

One of the partners in the energy workshop/website project, AllFacilities, Inc., offered to **do an energy audit of our 10-year-old District headquarters**, and work on that begun in late 2010.

This Pittsburgh-based organization that offers business development services is examining all aspects of our barn headquarters – floor plans, windows, doors, roof insulation, the building envelope, bathrooms, the heating and cooling systems, indoor and outdoor lighting, and so on – in order to provide a total energy audit.

Our publicity on GreenForge caught the attention of local Public

Broadcasting Service station **WQED TV**, which sent a crew to **our campus to film its own segment on the green rehabilitation we did on this 23,000 commercial space**.

The feature aired in late October on the television station's Emmy-winning news magazine onQ, and showed GreenForge's living plant green roof, solar power installation, geothermal heating and cooling system, and use of recycled building materials.

GreenForge is a demonstration green building – **a place to test and showcase a variety of conservation materials, methods, and techniques** in an operating commercial building.

Because of its experimental nature, a demonstration building sometimes reveals things that don't work so well. That was the case with some permeable, brick-shaped pavers that were installed several years ago to create 16 parking places around the building.

The toll of four years of western Pennsylvania weather and the corrosive effects of inappropriately applied salt proved too much for the initial pavers, which were replaced at no charge with a newly formulated batch by R.I. Lampus of Springdale.



Westmoreland County Commissioners (l-r) Ted Kopas; Tom Balya, chairman; and Charles Anderson.



In Leechburg, we helped to facilitate the removal of a nonfunctioning earthen dam, eliminating a financial liability for the borough and restoring the land and a nearby stream to their natural state.

## Sustainable Communities

Even though the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection decided in March 2009 that, with regard to Marcellus Shale gas-drilling sites, the erosion and sedimentation control program (Chapter 102) and waterways and encroachment program (Chapter 105) of the Pennsylvania Code would no longer be implemented at the local level by conservation districts but instead by that agency, our Board knew that it was imperative that our District find a way to be involved in this region-changing activity.

In 2010, we began a preliminary dialog with potential partners and from these discussions, **devised a plan to work with local landowners, municipal officials, and the industry to identify and promote proven and practical best management practices for conserving the natural resources – the soil, water, forests, and farmland – disturbed by the activities of the Marcellus Shale industry.**

At the end of the year, we were actively seeking funding for this initiative.

Our staff met individually with officials from Hempfield Township and jointly with officials from other municipalities to **discuss the new floodplain maps being prepared by the Federal Emergency Management Agency.**

The federal agency began a nationwide effort in 2002 to review and update these maps, which are used to determine where the risk of flooding is high. Maps in Westmoreland County are expected to be completely updated by the spring of 2011.

With new technology, officials can examine a site's contours in much smaller increments than ever before (2-foot increments vs. 10-foot increments), and make much more accurate flooding assessments. The update process has changed things for many communities by showing that some floodplains aren't as wide as previously believed while others are much broader.

About 5% of the land in Westmoreland County is designated by the federal government to be in the "100-year floodplain." This means that these places are expected to be flooded during a very large storm.

Floodplain designations have implications for communities – influencing where and what type of development can occur – as well as for property owners, who may or may not be eligible for national flood insurance.

In all, we personally reached more than 80 local officials with this information during the year.

Many of our technical staff members were **active in supporting the work of Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council**, a nonprofit organization that works in eight counties in southwestern Pennsylvania to enhance the area's natural resources and build strong communities.

Our nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician served as chair of the group's **Agricultural Committee**, which accomplished a number of goals during the year, including: developing a two-year planning calendar for farmers, with room to keep records regarding grazing, nutrient management, and planting...facilitating a statewide grasslands evaluation contest in May in State College for high school students interested in studying agriculture...initiating an outreach effort to make farmers aware of the Conservation Stewardship Program, which resulted in five additional farmer signups...and hosting the annual Regional No-till Conference, which drew more than 135 people in February to learn how to put minimum and no-till farming methods to work.

Our shared water quality educator served as chair of the **Alternative Wastewater Committee** for Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Council.

In addition to sponsoring onlot septic workshops, this committee also is working with Alcoa's location in the Westmoreland Business and Research Park on pioneering wastewater treatment methods, including the use of wetland treatment for sanitary wastewater.

In initial testing, this treatment method is working extremely well, in addition to being much less expensive to install, operate and maintain than regular sewage treatment.





Our work to create sustainable communities included providing support for the Route 30 corridor visioning project (left) and the region's recreational trails (right).

Our communications consultant and visual communications specialist helped Penn's Corner's **Communications Committee** create a detailed internal communications plan and update the organization's logo.

A meeting our hydraulic engineer facilitated in 2009 led in 2010 to the **successful removal of a dam that had been both a safety hazard and a financial burden for the community of West Leechburg** since the early 1990s.

The half-million-dollar project removed the dam's earthen breastwork, graded the impoundment area of the former reservoir to restore its original contours, restored Penn Run to its natural flow, and planted some 3,900 trees and shrubs.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service partnered with the District and the West Leechburg Council on the project.

Our visual communications specialist **provided graphic services to other, likeminded organizations during the year.**

He helped the Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County refine and produce a new brochure, promoting the use of the Route 30 Master Plan and Westmoreland Cleanways adapt its logo for printing on a t-shirt.

He also assisted the Headwaters Resource Conservation and Development Council in producing a field guide to noxious and invasive weeds in that area. This is the fourth such field guide we've helped to produce for resource conservation and development councils throughout the state.

The District provides this kind of support and advice on a case-by-case basis and as time permits. A modest fee is charged to cover the staff time invested.

Several meetings were held during the year to begin a dialogue on the feasibility of **creating a year-round farmers' market** on our Donohoe Center campus.

Our landscape architect **offered a landscape design for the**

**entrance drive the Greensburg Garden Center.**

This nonprofit, horticultural-educational organization has been undergoing an effort to revitalize its grounds, which include an arboretum that once featured some 150 species of trees, shrubs, flowers, and plants.

Our fiscal administrator continued to **provide the services of a treasurer for the Five Star Trail**, a hiking/biking trail between Greensburg and Youngwood, and to act as a financial passthrough agent for Westmoreland County's annual allocation to the Regional Trail Corporation, a recreation organization actively involved in the development of land trails in Allegheny, Westmoreland and Fayette counties.

We also continued to provide meeting space for the Westmoreland Land Trust, a new organization that works to preserve open space in our county.

We inherited a **large-capacity shredder** from another agency this year and, along with it, a great opportunity to reuse the shredded material.

We give the shredded, non-confidential documents to an employee of one of our partner agencies, who uses it as bedding for her horses.

Our shared water quality educator **took the conservation message to counties beyond Westmoreland during the year.**

She presented information on aquatic plant management to 29 people from around the region at a turf management conference in Somerset in March.

Additionally, she spoke to 40 people from several counties at a Master Well Owner Network training in Indiana County in April on water conservation and well-head maintenance and the importance of both with private water wells.

Finally, she also took the message of proper well and onlot septic system maintenance to 18 homeowners in Clarion County in January.



We took our conservation message to a variety of audiences during the year, including adults participating in a skills retraining program (left) and local citizens attending their municipal meetings (right).

## Outreach and Education

**A**n extensive, year-long outreach effort kept our innovative stormwater work in the public's awareness.

Thanks to a \$100,000 grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation, we were able to extensively promote innovative stormwater management in Mount Pleasant and surrounding communities, and also to effectively introduce the concept in Vandergrift.

**In Mount Pleasant**, where we were installing both municipal and residential rain gardens, our outreach included:

- a public meeting
- a series of customized letters to homeowners, each providing detailed information about the status of the rain garden project
- news releases, feature stories, and display ads in the public media
- interpretive signs for public locations
- website posts
- information resources, including a rain garden fact sheet, sample rain garden designs, and a list of plants suitable for rain gardens.

We also made Mount Pleasant Borough our featured partner at the District's awards banquet in November, which gave us an opportunity to feature the rain gardens in a display and in a PowerPoint presentation at the event, and in all the event pre- and post-publicity, including news releases, an article in the District's newsletter (distribution 4,100), and so on.

The banquet was attended by media representatives from the Latrobe Bulletin and Mount Pleasant Journal, both of which ran feature stories and photos.

**In Vandergrift**, we promoted a presentation by our staff on innovative stormwater methods through a news release and display advertising. This April 26 meeting was attended by more than 70 people.

When we undertook a first-of-its-kind retrofit project in the

city several months later (see Clean Streams, page 7), we promoted that project with a detailed news release and photos.

Pickup on this news release by area media was good, and it also elicited a feature story by the region's major area newspaper, the Valley News Dispatch.

**Our outreach efforts also generated a good deal of interest in stormwater management from other communities and led to some additional on-the-ground projects.**

We were asked to speak on the subject in a municipal meeting in Manor Borough, and an initial result of this meeting is that one Manor resident has installed a rain garden.

The growing awareness of rain gardens also led about 40 students at the Central Westmoreland Career and Technology Center to design, coordinate, and build a rain garden to catch runoff from a recently installed basketball court. This rain garden is the first in New Stanton.

Our staff was asked to speak on rain gardens and other innovative stormwater measures to some 35 Hempfield Township residents in April. We reinforced this information the following month by running a full page of information on rain gardens in the "Headlining Hempfield" publication, which is distributed to all residents in that township.

In September, we spoke to six members of Sustainable Monroeville who were interested in rain gardens and native plants.

**An invitation from our Board resulted in a personal visit to our District by the new CEO of the National Association of Conservation Districts in September.**

Jeff Eisenberg and members of his staff spent a whole day with us, learning more about the work we do, particularly in urban areas; meeting many of our partners; and touring the passive wetland that is treating abandoned mine drainage and improving water quality in Monastery Run in Latrobe.

In May 2010, Pennsylvania mandated that professional engineers, land surveyors, and geologists licensed in Pennsylvania must **complete 24 Professional Development Hours of continuing**



**education** in each two-year renewal cycle as a condition of license renewal.

Because engineers are such a large segment of the audience we work with, our erosion and sedimentation program administrative assistant spent a good deal of time interfacing with them about these new requirements, and helping them identify qualified workshops and obtain needed documentation.

This year, improved tracking of our **technical assistance** phone calls, and field and office visits revealed that our staff **made some 1,816 of these outreaches in 2010.**

Examples ranged from a several-hour visit to a local farm to offer advice on how stabilize a barnyard...to a 20-minute telephone conversation with an engineer about the requirements for submitting development plans.

**Two new program brochures** – one for Forestry and one for Erosion and Sediment Control – were completed during the year and are being used by our technical staff to explain our programs and services.

Copy for brochures on three other topics – green building, alternate energy, and education resources – also was researched and written.

The brochures are printed on an as-needed basis, using the District's economical in-house color copier.

Funding for the brochures' development was provided by the Dominion Foundation.

**Our website continues to attract an average of 500 visitors a week**, and is proving to be an effective way to share the latest conservation news.

In the fall, our visual communications specialist began to investigate ways to improve both the look and functionality of the site, including moving to a new design platform called WordPress.

Our communications consultant developed a new design template for the site and we are hoping to have the new site launched in 2011.

We enjoyed our first full year of **participating in "Headlining Hempfield,"** a community newsletter that gives residents in Hempfield Township information on a wide variety of topics related to quality of life, from recreation opportunities to recycling.

On each of our quarterly pages, we featured: an overview of our programs, our stormwater and rain barrel workshop, how to make a rain garden, and how to keep septic systems working well.

In late April, the District's **annual report** rolled off the presses.

The 32-page, full-color report featured the accomplishments of 2009 – the 60th anniversary of the formation of the Westmoreland Conservation District.

Vignettes of key conservation milestones over the past six decades were woven throughout the report, and the names of more than 400 individuals instrumental in advancing the conservation ethic over the years were featured.

Also during the year, we issued our second full-color issue of our award-winning newsletter, *Landmarks*.

**We offered design and content recommendations to the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts** on its new undertaking, a statewide annual report featuring one page on each of Pennsylvania's 66 conservation districts.

Once again this year, our receptionist/secretary updated all the contact information for our **Conservation Directory**, a booklet listing more than 100 people, organizations and agencies dedicated to the conservation, restoration and wise use of our county's natural resources.

The 40-page resource is provided as a public service to the community in both hard copy and electronic versions.

**We issued 13 news releases** during the year, with good direct pickup by the media.

Some, including our releases on the Mount Pleasant stormwater project, the Farmer of the Year awardees, and the Silva Cell™ project in Vandergrift, also led to major media-written features.

Our visual communications specialist designed a **new, 14-foot by 4-foot, full-color overhead banner for the county fair display** we host jointly with partners in Donohoe Center.

The banner featured an aerial photo of our conservation campus.

Although **this year's annual banquet** venue did not allow us to feature our traditional local-foods menu, it did provide space large enough to accommodate our greatest-ever number of guests.

Some 300 friends came to the Fred M. Rogers Center at Saint Vincent College in November for an evening of socialization and celebration of conservation.

Wayne and Eileen Baughman were named 2010 Conservation Farmer of the Year, Bob Berich was recognized as the 2009 Conservation Farmer of the Year, and Mount Pleasant Borough was our featured partner.

Thanks to the generous support of our lead sponsor, Adam Eidemiller, and our eight table sponsors, we were able to keep the event significantly under budget.

**2010 marked the 25th consecutive year that we have hosted the Westmoreland County Envirothon**, an academic competition for high school students that tests their knowledge of natural resources.

Kiski Area High School Team #1 captured first place in this year's competition, which was held on May 3 at Twin Lakes Park, and Yough Senior High School Teams #1 and #2 followed with second and third place, respectively.

In addition to the winning schools, other schools with teams in the event were: Burrell, Derry Area, Greensburg Central Catholic, Greensburg Salem, Mount Pleasant Area Junior-Senior, and Southmoreland high schools, as well as The Kiski School.

In all, some 80 students tested their knowledge of forests, soil, wildlife, aquatic environments, and this year's special issue, which was protecting Pennsylvania's groundwater through urban, agricultural, and environmental planning.

A number of cooperating agencies assist us in hosting the Envirothon, including: The Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, the Natural Resources

Conservation Service, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Penn State Cooperative Extension Westmoreland County, and the Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation.

Kennametal Inc. and the Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County were this year's corporate sponsors.

**Several nontraditional audiences came to our campus this year to learn more about the District and its work:** 13 students from the K.A.R.A.T. School of Learning, a Greensburg educational institution that combines classroom instruction and on-site experiential lessons, and 25 people in a Carnegie Mellon University sponsored program that helps them identify new interests and retool their skills.



In a series of barn meetings, area citizens and partners helped us to identify new and changing local conditions and set priorities for our most recent long-range plan.

## Organizational Development

**W**ith the assistance of the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management and many of our friends and colleagues, we **completed work on our latest long-range plan in July.**

The plan identifies five major goals related to programs, finance, GreenForge, marketing, and organization. It also sets specific objectives for achieving the goals in each area.

The new long-range plan will be our guiding document for the next three to five years.

**One of the top goals in the new strategic plan we completed this year related to the GreenForge building** and our continued involvement with it.

Despite its successes as a model green building and incubator for conservation organizations, GreenForge has been a major financial and human resources drain for the District, and in the course of evaluating our organizational direction, it became clear that we needed to either set a plan and timeline for making the building sustainable...or set a plan to divest it.

Our Board voted to pursue the first option and we put together a team that included representatives from the District and GreenForge Inc., the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management, and the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation, as well as professional fundraising consultants.

The team began working on a plan in mid-year, and developed

a strategy that includes both aggressive marketing of the building's rental space by the Westmoreland County Industrial Development Corporation...and fundraising from a mix of potential partners.

The plan set a goal of having GreenForge be financially sustainable by December 31, 2013.

We are grateful to the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation, which during the year reclassified an interest-free loan it had made to the GreenForge project as a grant of the same amount.

In October, we held a **staff retreat** and worked as teams to identify in greater detail the specific steps that need to be taken to realize the five major goals identified in the District's new long-range plan.

The work done at this retreat also helped in setting meaningful individual staff goals for 2011.

Another outcome of our strategic planning process was the need to **establish a Government Relations Committee** to help the District maintain a regular and visible presence with local, county, state, and federal elected officials.

The Board formed this committee and appointed Associate Director Joe Dietrick as its chair and Ron Rohall, Ted Kopas, Fred Slezak, and Chuck Duritsa as members.

Three Board members and our District manager traveled to



Harrisburg in March to **meet personally with our state legislators** or members of their staff.

Our message during this “Capitol Days” outreach this year urged legislators to maintain the 2010/2011 state allocation for conservation districts at the previous year’s level, create a dedicated source of funding for conservation districts, fund another Growing Greener type program, and increase the investment in maintaining dirt and gravel roads.

We followed up on these personal visits with a two-page letter to each representative, thanking them for their time and reiterating our positions.

During the year, we **undertook our most extensive legislative campaign to-date.**

The state of Pennsylvania provides a significant portion of our annual funding, and in July we began a campaign of sending letters from our chairman to our state legislators, urging them to pass a severance tax on the extraction of natural gas.

In September and October, we stepped that effort up considerably, enlisting the help of every member of our Board and Associate Board to write letters to their respective state legislators, asking them to not only pass a tax on Marcellus Shale natural gas extraction, but to allocate \$15 million of it to conservation districts.

We also generated an email campaign that featured two new messages each week – one, an advocate stating why he/she supported the tax and the other, a natural resource benefit that conservation districts help to achieve. This campaign reached every Westmoreland County legislator twice a week for five consecutive weeks.

Unfortunately, the tax failed to pass in that legislative session. We are hopeful, however that some sort of dedicated funding will be allocated to conservation districts in the future.

Declining state revenues, a deficit budget, and expanding demand for our programs and services meant we **worked hard to procure new and diverse funding sources during the year.**

In addition to obtaining a number of government and private foundation grants, we found several new sources of funding (see Stable Soils, page 4), qualified as one of only 70 organizations to be eligible for the first-ever Westmoreland Day of Giving (and raised \$1,600), took on some additional projects (e.g., flood plain management) that come with funding support, and became more proficient at capturing the true costs of the services we provide.

We also reviewed (but did not raise) our fee structure. In 2010, **fees for our stormwater and erosion control plan review services provided some \$84,000 in revenue.** In addition, some \$23,750 in state fees was retained by the District for our work with issuing National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permits.

This money helps to offset the costs of our erosion control and stormwater programs and staff.

We also **received many generous donations during the year.**

A major donation of office furniture from the departing Sony Technology Center allowed us to upgrade all of our technical staff offices as well as to add a new, much-needed dedicated workspace

for what we hope will some day be an additional technical support person.

We donated the office furniture we had previously to a variety of area nonprofit organizations, including the Loyalhanna, Jacobs Creek, and Mountain watershed associations; the Ligonier Church of Christ; and ART WORKS in Johnstown!

We are grateful to Sony, as well as to the following businesses and individuals, for their generous financial support in 2010.

## Donor Update

Donations listed were received during the period January 1 – December 31, 2010.

### SUSTAINING DONORS

(Supporting general District operations)

#### Benefactor

(\$10,000 and above)

Sony Technology Center

#### Partner

(\$500 to \$999)

Carol Pollock

#### Associate

(\$250 to \$499)

Cathy Herrholtz

#### Donor

(up to \$249)

Brian Beskitt

Bruce Construction, LLC

Charles Duritsa

Jeff Gilmore

Linda and George Gould, Jr., in memory of Elwood Leslie

Mark Jackson

Mike and Karen Jurkovic

Joseph Kalinowski

Barbara Kochaniak

Kim Edward Miller

David Oshnock

Peggy Outon

Nancy Page

Gregory Phillips

James Pillsbury

In honor of J. Roy Houston

– James Rumbaugh and the Meritage Group

Jack Scott

Juanita Showalter

## GREENFORGE PROJECT

(Supporting the District's demonstration green building and conservation incubator)

### Benefactor

(\$10,000 and above)

R.I. Lampus Company

Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation

Along with a broad base of income sources, **our 2010 budget likewise included belt-tightening** in those areas within our control, such as administrative and supply costs. We also did not fill the receptionist position vacated by a staff retirement in late 2009.

**Despite our best efforts, 2010 was the first year in the District's 61-year history that the organization adopted a deficit budget.**

A combination of factors, including cuts in state revenue support and increases in operating costs, moved the Board to take this unprecedented step, which was done only after much soul-searching by our leaders who have deep convictions about using resources wisely.

By the end of the year, through a combination of generating new income and organizational belt-tightening, we were able to eliminate this \$100,000 deficit.

We fully appreciate the challenge the **Westmoreland County Commissioners** face in providing for the needs of county residents while, at the same time, ensuring that all expenditures are both necessary and judicious.

And so, even with our own budget challenges, the District Board voted to present the commissioners with a 2010 budget proposal that did not ask for any increase in allocations. This was the second straight year that we did not ask for any increase from the county.

The county's support provides the very foundation of our work, allowing us to encourage clean streams, healthy forests, sustainable communities, productive farms, and stable soils throughout Westmoreland County, and we are very grateful to the commissioners for approving our 2010 budget request.

On Saturday, November 27, **J. Roy Houston, our District chairman and guiding force for the past 40 years, passed away.**

We invited our friends to join with us in honoring this outstanding conservation leader by sharing a memory of him with us via email. Some of these remembrances are included in the special section honoring Roy on pages 23-31 of this report.

**Westmoreland County Commissioner Ted Kopas and Associate Director Chuck Duritsa were appointed to the District Board of Directors.**

Ted, a District associate director since 2004, was chosen unanimously by the county's judges in May to serve on the county's Board of Commissioners following the resignation of Commissioner Tom Ceraso.

Commissioner Kopas then replaced Commissioner Tom Balya as the commissioners' delegate to the District.

Chuck has been a District associate director since 2006. He is the retired Director of the Southwest Regional Office of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. He currently works as an environmental consultant and serves as a Pennsylvania Commissioner on the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, and as a Board member of the Westmoreland Land Trust and Turtle Creek Watershed Association.

**Kim Miller and Fred Slezak were reappointed to the Board** for terms that will run until December 31, 2014.

Our staff took part in a variety of **professional development opportunities** during the year.

Our visual communications specialist attended a half-day seminar on Social Media for Business and Organizations at Saint Vincent Small Business Development Center.

Our fiscal administrator attended a day-long professional development class in which she gained some new insights on how to prepare nonprofit budgets.

And our administrative assistant participated in a six-week online course on administrative fundamentals.

We were fortunate to have a **record number of interns** working with us this past summer.

Six college students helped our staff with water-quality and soil sampling, designing rain gardens, and mapping agricultural operations throughout the county.

In response to a need identified in our strategic planning process, we contracted with the Bayer Center for Nonprofit Management for a **review of the District's technical, contacts, and events databases.**

The goal of this project is to improve the accuracy and efficiency of our ability to report on such things as the status of plan and permit application reviews, the type and frequency of technical assistance, and so on.

We hope to have this new functionality in place in early 2011.

Our receptionist/secretary and our erosion and sediment control administrative assistant extensively **updated our in-house technical guidance binder** to reflect the numerous changes this year in state regulations and fees.

By providing a detailed, step-by-step guide, the binder facilitates cross-training by giving multiple members of our staff the ability to process erosion control, stormwater and timber-harvesting plans.

A **shared document system**, GoogleDocs, was introduced to our staff by our education program coordinator and was used to gather staff input for a comprehensive report for county planning.

An organizational goal identified in our new long-range plan is to **insure the organization's long-term integrity and quality of leadership**, and one of the ways we hope to do this is by providing incentives that will attract and retain good staff members.



To that effect, we began looking into the nonprofit equivalent of a 401K plan (called a 457 plan) that would give our employees an opportunity to invest their own money in a retirement savings account and, at the same time, reduce their current taxable income.

We also were able to **double the amount of company-paid life insurance** we provide to staff at no cost to our employees, thanks to our fiscal administrator who found a way to save on another insurance expenditure.



Six college students interned with us during the summer, helping with water-quality and soil sampling, designing rain gardens, and mapping agricultural operations throughout the county.

## Financial Statement

### Concise Statement of Financial Position

Combined Funds – December 31, 2010

#### ASSETS

|                                  |    |         |
|----------------------------------|----|---------|
| Cash                             | \$ | 322,576 |
| Loan Receivable-GreenForge, Inc. |    | 192,597 |
| General Fixed Assets             |    | 32,166  |
|                                  |    | <hr/>   |
| TOTAL                            | \$ | 547,339 |

#### LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

|                                   |    |         |
|-----------------------------------|----|---------|
| Current Liabilities               | \$ | 770     |
| Funding Source Share of Equipment |    | 33,841  |
| Total Liabilities                 |    | 34,611  |
| Net Assets                        |    | 512,728 |
|                                   |    | <hr/>   |
| TOTAL                             | \$ | 547,339 |

### Concise Statement of Activities

Combined Funds – Year Ended December 31, 2010

#### SUPPORT

|                       |    |           |
|-----------------------|----|-----------|
| Westmoreland County   | \$ | 873,500   |
| State Grants          |    | 376,466   |
| Other Revenue         |    | 14,427    |
| Fees                  |    | 107,757   |
| Farmland Preservation |    | 4,921     |
| Interest Income       |    | 40        |
| Donations             |    | 732       |
| Special Projects      |    | 248,687   |
|                       |    | <hr/>     |
|                       | \$ | 1,626,630 |

#### EXPENDITURES

|                      |    |           |
|----------------------|----|-----------|
| Program Services     | \$ | 1,108,448 |
| Management & General |    | 437,284   |
| Fundraising          |    | 0         |
|                      |    | <hr/>     |
|                      | \$ | 1,545,732 |

|                                |    |         |
|--------------------------------|----|---------|
| Excess (Deficiency) – Current  |    | 80,898  |
| Net Assets – Beginning Balance |    | 431,830 |
| Net Assets – End of Year       | \$ | 512,728 |



# Conservation Team

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Ron Rohall, *Chairman*  
 William Doney, *Vice Chairman*  
 Conrad Donovan, *Treasurer*  
 Fred Slezak, *Secretary*  
 Albert Barnett  
 Charles Duritsa  
 County Commissioner Ted Kopas  
 Kim Edward Miller  
 Paul R. Sarver

## ASSOCIATE DIRECTORS

Robert Ackerman  
 Bruce J. Corna, Jr.  
 Joseph Dietrick  
 Charles Duritsa  
 Alexander J. Graziani, AICP  
 Karen Jurkovic  
 Joseph E. Kalinowski  
 Ellen Keefe  
 Barbara D. McMillan  
 Theresa Gay Rohall  
 Jesse Jon Salensky  
 Dwight Sarver  
 Elmer G. 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  
*Director of Administration*  
 Mark Jackson  
*Visual Communications Specialist*  
 Christie Sebek  
*Receptionist/Secretary*

## Technical Staff

James W. Pillsbury, PE  
*Hydraulic Engineer*  
 Kathryn Hamilton, RLA  
*Landscape Architect/Stormwater  
 Technician*  
 Robert D. Cronauer  
*Watershed Specialist*  
 Christopher Droste  
*Senior Erosion Control Specialist*  
 Nicole Miller  
*Erosion Control Specialist*  
 Daniel Griffith  
*Nutrient Management  
 Specialist/Agricultural  
 Conservation Technician*  
 Kathleen Fritz  
*Erosion & Sedimentation  
 Program Administrative Assistant*

## Education Staff

Mimi Thomas-Brooker  
*Education Program Coordinator*  
 Dana Rizzo  
*District/Penn State Extension  
 Water Quality Educator*

## ADVISORY COMMITTEES

### Agriculture

*(formerly Nutrient Management)*

Wayne Baughman  
 William Clouser  
 William Doney  
 Rita Coleman  
 Dustin Heeter  
 Sherene Hess  
 John Lohr  
 Kim Edward Miller  
 Robert Pore  
 Betty Reefer  
 Paul Sarver  
 John Scott  
 Gary Sheppard  
 Thomas Sierzega  
 Fred Slezak

## Communications

Karen Jurkovic  
 County Commissioner Ted Kopas  
 John Turack  
 David Uhrinek

## Conservation Education

Angela Belli  
 William Doney  
 Ed Johnstonbaugh  
 Karen Jurkovic  
 Tom Pearson  
 Theresa Gay Rohall  
 Gary Sheppard  
 Thomas Sierzega  
 Joseph Stefko

## Dirt and Gravel Roads

Ron Rohall  
 Thomas Sierzega  
 James Vatter

## Erosion Control Compliance

Tom Crist  
 Charles Duritsa  
 Kim Edward Miller

## Forestry

Robert Ackerman  
 Edward Callahan  
 Mike DiRinaldo  
 Tom Fitzgerald  
 Ron Rohall

## Government Relations

Joseph Detrick  
 Chuck Duritsa  
 Ted Kopas  
 Ron Rohall  
 Fred Slezak

## Stormwater

Andrew Blenko  
 Chris Bova  
 Emil Bove  
 Lucien Bove  
 Kevin Brett  
 John Campfield  
 Joseph Dietrick  
 Larry Gasparato  
 Donald Hixson  
 Charles Kubasik  
 Brian Lawrence  
 Dallas Leonard  
 Suzy Meyer  
 Kim Edward Miller  
 Les Mlakar  
 Ken Murin  
 Ken Orié  
 Stephen Pilipovich  
 Bob Regola  
 Ron Rohall  
 Darl Rosenquest  
 Robert Scheib  
 Thomas Sierzega  
 Tamira Spedalieri

## Sustainable Energy

Charlie Frederickson  
 Maggie Hall  
 Karen Jurkovic  
 Karen Kuhns  
 Barbara McMillan  
 Gary Sheppard

## Water Quality

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



# Westmoreland Conservation District



He left an indelible mark on the lives of thousands as dynamic Chairman of the Westmoreland Conservation District through a time of remarkable achievement.

## The J. Roy Houston Era 1968 - 2010

Once upon a time, I was asked to take an executive portrait of the Westmoreland Conservation District Board Chairman for the District's 1984 Annual Report. That photo shoot was my introduction to J. Roy Houston.

As I entered Roy's office at the Peoples Natural Gas Company, I was impressed with how relaxed he was. He knew exactly how to work with a photographer – posture, eye contact, smile. Here was a seasoned marketing professional, immaculately dressed, charismatic and engaging. Roy appreciated what I was doing because he knew the value of putting one's best foot forward.

I am truly grateful that we became friends over the years. He had a profound influence on my life, as he did for so many others. His words of wit and wisdom still echo in my ears. The following tribute to Roy features some of the quotes I remember, along with what I believe inspired them.

- Mark Jackson,  
Visual Communications Specialist



(l-r) Former Westmorland County Commissioner Ted Simon swears in Westmoreland Conservation District Directors J. Roy Houston and Gib Hutter.

*“Houston, you’re going to a meeting tonight..”*

J. Roy Houston went to his first Westmoreland Conservation District Board meeting in the late 1960s because he was told to do so by his employer, the Peoples Natural Gas Company. This was during a time when large cooperations often required employees to serve in nonprofit, community focused organizations.

Roy enjoyed telling this story. “I was sitting in my little office one day minding my own business, when my boss suddenly opened the door, stuck his head in and said, ‘Houston, you’re going to a meeting tonight.’ When I asked what kind of meeting, he responded, ‘Some bunch of farmers.’ So I went to my first meeting not really knowing what to expect.”

Roy ended up making life-long friends at the Westmoreland Conservation District, and he brought with him a high standard of professionalism.

*“Elwood and I were both firemen..”*

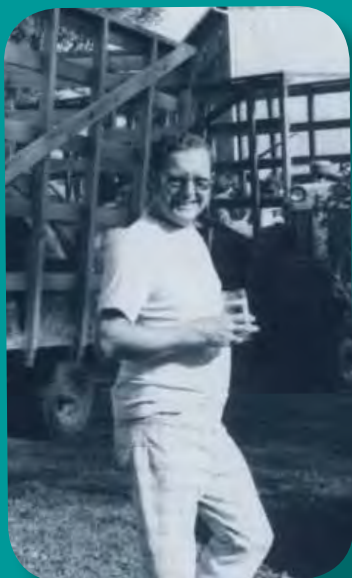
Around 1970 there was need for a new, full-time manager at the Westmoreland Conservation District. Roy immediately thought of his good friend Elwood Leslie and recommended him for the job. They had served together as Murrysville volunteer firemen. Elwood also had professional landscaping and waste water treatment experience. Roy was familiar with his work ethic and high standards.

Elwood eventually became one of the most successful conservation district managers in Pennsylvania and the nation. He established cornerstone District programs like erosion and sedimentation control.

Behind it all was a simple Murrysville fireman’s creed Elwood shared with Roy, “If we don’t do something, who will?”



(l-r) J. Roy Houston, an unidentified award recipient and Elwood Leslie, the first District manager.



*“And so I asked him, how about some money for conservation?”*

Roy had a magnetic personality. People enjoyed being around him.

Through his work he often found himself in the company of public officials. Once as he was golfing with a state senator, Roy casually asked, “How about some money for conservation?”

After a brief explanation of a District program, Roy had the first of the many funding commitments he would secure for the District over the years.



*“That’s my kind of music..”*

If you were ever with Roy in a car or at an event and an old country song started playing, he would often say, “That’s my kind of music,” and softly sing right along.





(l-r) J. Roy Houston, an unidentified public official and state Representative Amos K. Hutchinson

*“Amos Hutchinson was a worker..”*

Roy respected those who served in public office and who were committed to maintaining and improving the quality of life in Westmoreland County.

One of the public officials he admired through the years was the late state Representative Amos K. Hutchinson. Roy often remarked, “Amos was a worker. He would be working away in his office long after others had gone home.”

Roy kept track of government officials carefully. He wanted to know who was able and willing to support and further the District’s mission on a variety of fronts. He often said, “We need help from everyone.”



The generation of Westmoreland Conservation District Directors in this photo took conservation to a new level in Westmoreland County and Pennsylvania. (l-r) Gib Hutter helped produce the District’s first long range plan; Frank Skacel carefully managed the District’s finances as if they were his own; Alex Smith served as president of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts; J. Roy Houston served as District Board chairman for 40 years; William Buttermore owned one of the first farms in Westmoreland County to go into the Farmland Preservation Program; and Boyd Wolff served a term as the Pennsylvania Secretary of Agriculture.



*“That’s a nice idea, but remember our mission..”*

Roy enjoyed creative thinking. While he was open to new ideas, he always asked good, hard questions –Who are we trying to reach? Why should we do this? Who’s going to be working with us? Do we have a budget?

Roy was easy to talk to. You could bounce ideas off of him. Sometimes he would remark, “That’s a nice idea, but remember our mission.” Roy had a way of keeping people on track while allowing them to enjoy the ride.

*“No meeting should last more than an hour...”*

One of the worst case scenarios for Roy was to be stuck in a meeting that went on forever and ended up going nowhere. If he had anything to do with a meeting or event, it moved along so as not to waste anyone else’s time. He liked keeping an agenda moving and accomplishing the task at hand, because he had places to go, things to do and people to see.



(l-r) J. Roy Houston, Lorrie Quadro and Kathy Fritz dressed for an annual report with a Hollywood movie theme.

*“Anyone want a Necco Wafer?”*

It was fun working with Roy Houston and he loved having fun. He was a good sport and laughed easily. He enjoyed “kibbitzing” and making others laugh. “Keep it light and airy,” he would say.

He always cooperated in dressing up for a special themed photo or event for the District.

If you were riding in his car Roy would offer to share some of his favorite candy. Holding up an opened wax paper package he would ask, “Anyone want a Necco Wafer?” To Roy the simplest pleasures were the best.



left: J. Roy Houston and Greg Phillips as Laurel and Hardy  
above: a birthday surprise for Roy - Necco Wafers.



*“We’re one of the best conservation districts in the state - if not the country...”*

Roy had faith in good people. He had faith his fellow District directors and associate directors. He trusted the District staff, and had a way of empowering everyone to do their best.

Roy usually stopped by the District office at least once a week. As he walked past the staff offices, he would call out the their names one at a time, “Hello Christie. Hello Sandy. Hello Dan...”. When he was ready to leave he said goodbye to everyone the same way.

The individual was important to Roy. He knew that confident individuals formed a confident team. He acknowledged individuals in such a way as they felt appreciated. As a result, great work got done. Cutting-edge conservation projects, promotions and education programs got on the ground.

Recognition then came in the form of media coverage, and state and national awards. It always felt good to make Roy proud.



With the Goodyear Award in 1997 (l-r) Ron Rohall, Keith Walters, J. Roy Houston and P. Roy Kemerer.



## THE J. ROY HOUSTON ERA



Receiving the Governor's Environmental Excellence Award in 2005 (l-r) Greg Phillips, Ron Rohall, J. Roy Houston, Kathleen McGinty, former secretary of the state Department of Environmental Protection.



The Board of Directors at the 60th anniversary celebration (l-r): Ron Rohall, Fred Slezak, Conrad Donovan, Kim Miller, County Commissioner Tom Balya, Paul Sarver (on tractor), Bill Doney, Al Barnett, J. Roy Houston.



J. Roy Houston and Dan Griffith.

### *"People are our most important resource..."*

The quality of life in Westmoreland County and beyond was maintained and greatly enhanced by the work of the Westmoreland Conservation District during the tenure of J. Roy Houston as Board chairman. Stable soils, clean streams, healthy forests, productive farms and sustainable communities became core components of the District's mission.

Although he highly valued the wise use of our natural resources, when Roy Houston was asked to comment on District activities he would often state, "People are our most important resource."

On a regular basis he publicly recognized people for their contributions to the District's mission at monthly board meetings. He also valued teamwork and partnerships.

Kindness and working towards the common good were a big part of Roy's nature. Under his guidance the District became a friendly, approachable organization with a great sense of community and fairness.

### *"It's a wonderful day in the neighborhood..."*

If you had the pleasure to have known J. Roy Houston you would remember his firm, but soft voice and something he said that made you laugh. You might also remember a comment of his that may have changed your life in some positive way.

Roy enjoyed sharing what he had learned in life. He had a knowing about him. Public officials, community leaders, business people, employees, family and friends all sought his advice. He always thought carefully before answering, and he usually knew if something would or wouldn't work.

Roy earned his knowing. He was a Marine and a Murrysville fireman. He started digging ditches at the Peoples Natural Gas Company as a young man and worked his way up to become one of their best marketing professionals.

He used this knowledge to help chambers of commerce and community planners strengthen the local economy.

Through his work with the Westmoreland Conservation District, J. Roy Houston left a remarkable legacy – a strong, empowered District helping lead the way to a better tomorrow through the wise use of our resources.

As Roy said in his closing remarks at the District's 2010 Annual Banquet held at Saint Vincent College's Fred Rogers Center, "It's a wonderful day in the neighborhood." Thank you, Roy, for helping to make it so.



## THE J. ROY HOUSTON ERA

Roy joined the Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors in 1968 and, in 1970, was elected Board chairman, a post he retained until his death in November 2010.

Here are some of the many accomplishments the District realized during Roy's tenure.

### Then

### Now

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Westmoreland County Soil and Water Conservation District | Westmoreland Conservation District   |
| 1 employee   | 13 full-time, 1 part-time, and 1 shared employee   |
| 7 volunteer directors                                    | 9 volunteer directors  |
| 2 associate directors                                    | 15 associate directors   |
| no advisory committees                                   | 10 advisory committees   |
| 1 program: flash flood warning program                   | 7 programs: erosion and sediment pollution control (one of the first in Pennsylvania); stormwater management (the first in Pennsylvania); agriculture; forestry; dirt and gravel road maintenance; water quality; watershed restoration; energy conservation; education and outreach |
| several Memorandums of Understanding                     | 24 Conservation Partnership Agreements   |
| less than \$5,000 annual budget                          | \$1.6 million annual budget  |
| solely dependent on government funding                   | variety of revenue sources, including government funding, fees for service, foundation grants, and private donations   |
| shared office space with U.S. Department of Agriculture  | dedicated 7,600-square foot historic barn headquarters   |
| no formal marketing effort                               | professionally designed logo, <i>Landmarks</i> newsletter published continuously for 24 years, website established   |
| no formal education effort                               | established first "Environmental Information Center" in Pennsylvania, developed school curriculums, developed a variety of non-point-source pollution-prevention programs, established a dedicated education center and education coordinator staff position                         |
| one long-range plan                                      | three additional strategic plans developed over the years, including the first one ever produced with the assistance of a nonprofit management center (2010)   |

### *With Roy at the helm, the District also:*

was one of the first districts in Pennsylvania to implement a soil erosion and sedimentation control program (1972)

was the first district in the state to award a project under the Landowner Reclamation Program, which allowed property owners to reclaim abandoned mine lands for the amount of forfeited bonds (1987). In all, six sites in Westmoreland County totaling 121.4 acres were reclaimed under this program over the years.

helped to bring about the Jacobs Creek Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Project, a \$10.1 million federally funded project and one of only a few in the entire U.S. that address an entire watershed (dedicated in 1996)

had its communications named "Best in the Nation" three times (1987, 1997 and 2006) by the National Association of Conservation Districts, besting nearly 3,000 other districts nationwide

helped to create the area's first watershed-wide stormwater management plan, focusing on the Turtle Creek Watershed (1987)

became one of only a few places in Pennsylvania where the public can see an interpretive display of our most basic natural resource, soil (2005)

undertook a public/private effort to revitalize the county's Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park (1996)

was part of a coalition that improved water quality in Monastery Run by using passive wetlands (began operating in 1997)

supported the creation of a variety of watershed associations and conservation organizations, including the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, the Smart Growth Partnership, the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association, PA/Westmoreland Cleanways, Farmland Preservation Program, and Westmoreland Land Trust

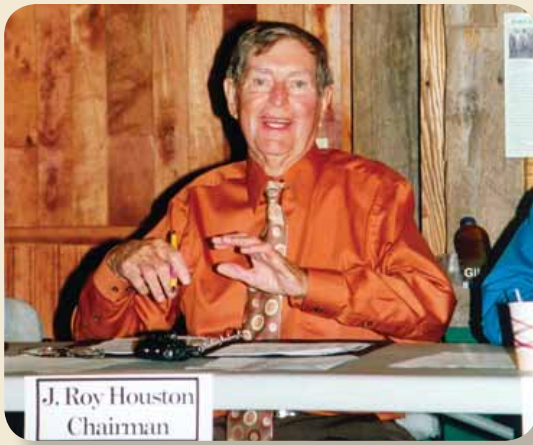
supported the creation of major area hiking/biking trails, including the 5 Star Trail, the trails in the Regional Trail Corporation, and the Westmoreland Heritage Trail

was successful twice in getting reauthorization of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act, which provides funds for fixing acid mine drainage problems in Pennsylvania (1984 and 2007). Note: SMCRA was passed in 1977.

helped to create the unique Donohoe Center conservation campus, including Donohoe Center, the District's headquarters, and GreenForge.



# Remembering Roy



I met Roy in the summer of 1972 when we were both working for Peoples Natural Gas Co. He was one of the nicest men then and stayed that way his whole life. I am proud to say we were friends. The conservation district could not have had a better chairman.

Jim Rumbaugh  
and the Meritage Group

At the Smart Growth Partnership Board of Directors meeting on December 3, 2010, the board members took a moment to remember Westmoreland Conservation District Chairman J. Roy Houston. Most of our board have benefited from knowing Roy.

(from Alex) I always appreciated Roy's humor and his willingness to share with me stories of Westmoreland County in your office. Thanks for sharing him with me.

(from John) I echo Alex's sentiments. As a new township supervisor, meeting Roy was one of the determining factors in my becoming involved with the conservation district. I remember thinking: these are the types of people I want to be associated with; these are totally good people that can be of benefit to my community.

An outstanding conservation leader, his dedication and contributions to Westmoreland County were numerous. Roy will be dearly missed by all of us.

Alex Graziani and John Turack  
Smart Growth Partnership

I knew J. Roy Houston as a vendor, as a civic leader, as a good customer, as a counselor, and more importantly, as a friend.

I really got to know Roy in the old days at the Sheraton Inn Greensburg Prospect Lounge. I always looked forward to him stopping in. Whether or not I joined him for an after work cocktail or just visited with him for a quick hello, "how are you?" stop, it was just always a pleasure to see him.

Many people don't know this, but if it weren't for J. Roy Houston, there would have never been a Sheraton Inn Greensburg. It was the urging upon my mother, Elizabeth, which Roy did, when he was Chamber chairman and she was a Board member that she

needed to build a place to have large banquets and large meetings.

I remember how the guys in the lounge would gravitate around Roy during happy hour – he had that kind of an affect on people, as he shared news, events and maybe a quirky joke. If you had one to tell him and he liked it, he would make a one line/one word entry in a little Day-Timer he carried around in his jacket pocket so he could remember it the next time he had to stand at a podium to address a room full of people. He was the best at public speaking. I think I had at least three entries in his little book if I can remember.

The 1980s were great times, especially Thursday afternoons in the summer months. Roy and a few others would always show up for a quick nine on the Sheraton golf course. As a result of these rounds of golf played with Roy and the boys, Roy gave me one of the greatest lessons in life which impacted me so much that I have followed it up to this day and will follow his wisdom of advice to the day I die – "never play golf on your own time."

Lou Batistella  
Adam Eidemiller, Inc.

Learning to love and respect a person was my experience with Roy Houston. Ten years ago I didn't know Roy or anything about the conservation district. I was asked to be a Board member for the "one meeting a month."

My first introduction came as I was invited to the office to find out about the finances of the District before the first formal meeting. I was introduced to the full Board. Roy was in charge and he made me feel that I was part of the group. In my first impression of Roy, I was impressed by his quiet humor and the great number of people he knew. He seemed to have a personal relationship with many.

I found out why he had this relationship with so many people. It was because he took time and showed a true desire to know them and their families and their personal interests. We had a lot in common and Roy always remembered and shared in this. My sons were in the Navy and he asked me about them just about every meeting we had. He had a love for his fire department and found that I am also a fireman. Even though we lived at opposite sides of the county, he knew about the activities of my fire company and related that he listened to his fire radio and monitored all calls.

Roy's leadership on the conservation Board never wavered. He always kept an eye on the future and planned ahead. He continually said that the people are the most important part of the organization. I feel I am a better Board member and a better person because of my relationship with Roy Houston.

Bill Doney  
Vice Chairman  
Westmoreland Conservation District  
Board of Directors

# Remembering Roy



Roy will surely be missed by all that knew and worked with him. He brought a business approach to running the conservation district that always looked into the future and helped develop it as the premier district in Pennsylvania, and surely one of the finest conservation organizations in the country.

Above all, I will remember his great sense of humor and

the way that he made everyone want to follow him. He was a great person that was very influential in my personal and professional development.

My sincere condolences to Phyllis and his family and the District family.

Craig Barras  
Blazosky Associates Inc.

Remembering Roy Houston –

He was a great man with many accomplishments. He always made me feel special with his compliments and wonderful sense of humor.

My thoughts and prayers are with all of you at this time. Look to your memories for comfort.

Paula Korber  
Botanical Society of  
Westmoreland County

During nearly all my 35 years with the local Farm Service Agency office, the face of local conservation has been J. Roy Houston. In the hundreds of meetings I have attended, first at the gas company meeting room and today in the “Barn” at the Donohoe Center, the one constant was Roy.

As Conservation District Board Chairman, Roy was always well versed in the issues of the day and was prepared to run a well-organized meeting while having the unique gift of being able to be very inclusive, making both regular attendees and guests feel welcome. I also admired Roy’s special appreciation of our county’s agriculture producers and their role in the conservation and stewardship of our natural resources. Roy regularly joined forces with some of this county’s agricultural pioneers like Gib Hutter, Roy Kemerer, Bill Buttermore, Boyd Wolff, and Frank Skacel, to just name a few.

I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge Roy’s sense of humor. Everyone Roy counted as a friend was fair game to his sharp wit.

We’ll miss Roy, but our little corner of the planet will be better for his years of Westmoreland Conservation District service.

John R. Lohr  
County Executive Director  
Farm Service Agency

In the 40 years of practicing architecture and meeting so many wonderful people, Roy will always have a special place in my memory. In my career, I have been called many things by my clients, but Roy called me something uniquely special: “Fronk” (the over-the-top wedding planner from the movie “Father of the Bride”). Given my calm personality, I am not sure how anyone could associate me with such a character (sic)!!

Roy never called me “Fronk” in person; however it was somewhat of an open secret in the office. It took Greg several months to tell me. When he did, I could not stop laughing! I thought it was great because I learned a long time ago that most people consider you as their friend when they make comments such as this. It was then that I knew Roy had the same affectionate feeling for me as I did for him. He considered me a friend; I was accepted.

Shortly thereafter, I was having a brief conversation with Roy and I informed him that I thought the “Fronk” character was one of my favorites. Roy, then knew that I knew the office secret. We both had a great laugh!

From that day forward, I always referred to myself as “Fronk” to everyone in the office. Now, every time I hear my name, I will think of my friend, Roy.

“Fronk” (aka Richard Glance)  
Glance & Associates, Inc.

Thank you for forwarding the sad news of Roy Houston’s passing through Joanne Nardone. Jack Dehoff, York Conservation District chairman, and Patricia Sueck, York Conservation District director, mentioned Westmoreland Conservation District received a visit from the National Association of Conservation Districts staff.

Jack commented that Westmoreland Conservation District was a premier conservation district and the national association picked a good one to visit. This was at our November meeting and my thoughts went to Roy Houston and I wondered how he was doing. He was such a kingpin for Westmoreland Conservation District and responsible for much of its success.

Roy was just one hell of a guy. He had the ability to warm a room and make everyone feel special. He also seemed to be able to make work fun. I’m sure his passing has saddened many, but we will have a smile on our faces as we recall his memory. I can just think of the mischief that Roy, Paul Heyworth, and Elwood Leslie might get into on the other side!

Bruce Holbrook  
Associate Director  
York Conservation District

Oh I am so sorry to hear this news. I was a real fan of Roy’s as you know...the world is definitely poorer today...My heart goes out to all of you who loved him so much and will miss him enormously...

Peggy Morrison Outon  
The Bayer Center for  
Nonprofit Management at  
Robert Morris University



At the close of our monthly meeting last night, discussion centered upon Roy Houston. Everyone felt shock at the news of his passing and a strong sense of loss. Our board, staff, and members' most sincere condolences go to his family, friends, and colleagues. This region needs more people like Roy, who made Southwestern Pennsylvania a better place to live, not fewer.

There were fond remembrances of Roy's efforts to help Turtle Creek Watershed Association get off the ground in the 1970s and to help us do good work thereafter. There were stories centering upon his charismatic personality, his dedication to conservation and other causes he loved, and of course, his many accomplishments.

We trust the District will fittingly honor Roy's work and his memory, and Turtle Creek Watershed Association lends our voice to those who agree he richly deserves such a memorial tribute.

Diane D. Selvaggio  
Turtle Creek Watershed Association



I wanted to pass on my condolences to all for the passing of Roy. I saw his obituary in the paper and know how much he meant to you all. The District has been fortunate to have so many talented and forward thinking Board directors and staff.

Tom Page  
URS Corporation

What I most fondly remember about Roy Houston was that he was unfailingly appreciative of the work that the staff did for the Board. That may not seem like such a huge deal until you start talking to employees of other districts who tell us that is amazing, because they do not receive thanks like we do. It encouraged the staff to work better because we want to please people, not some impersonal corporation.

Daniel E. Griffith  
Westmoreland Conservation District

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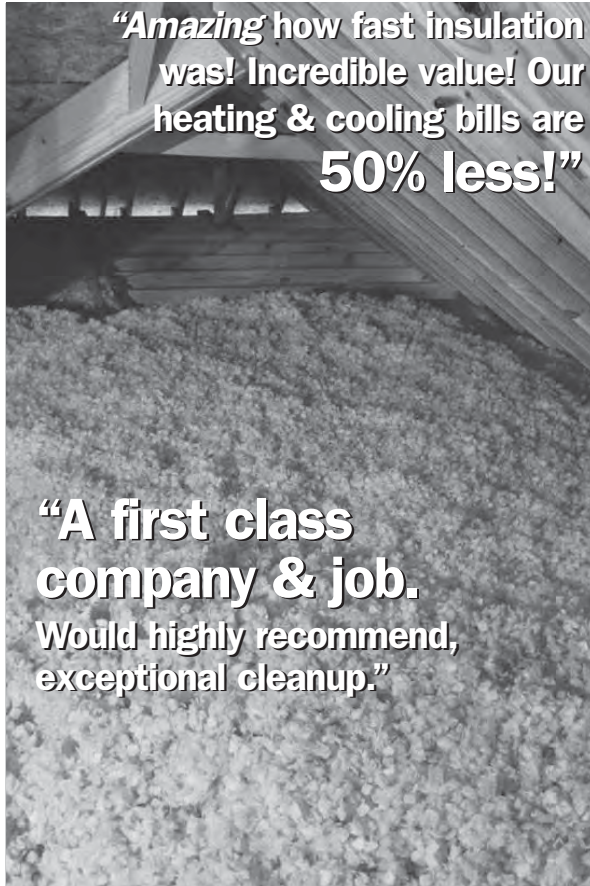


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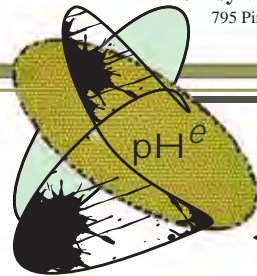
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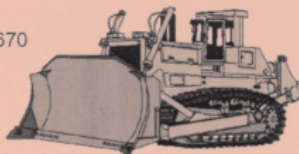
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