



Upcoming Programs

JANUARY

2014 Southwest Regional PA No-Till Conference Wednesday, January 29

9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Fred Rogers Center, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe

Learn how to increase profits and improve soil health. Speakers include Jim Hershey, president of the PA No-Till Alliance and David Lamm, team leader for Natural Resources Conservation Service's National Soil Health and Sustainability Team.

Cost: \$30 if registered by Jan. 20; \$40 for registrations after Jan. 20. To register, visit www.wcdpa.com or contact Dan Griffith at 724-837-5271.

FEBRUARY

Municipal Roundtable

Friday, February 14

J. Roy Houston Conservation Center

Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg

Municipal officials are invited to bring questions about environmental issues affecting their communities as they talk with the District's technical staff about how to work together to protect our natural resources. Details to be announced on www.wcdpa.com.

MARCH

Gravel Driveways and Unpaved Lanes Workshop

Tuesday, March 18

3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

J. Roy Houston Conservation Center

Westmoreland Conservation District, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg

Heavy rains and flooding can wash out unpaved driveways, farm lanes and access roads. In this informative workshop, participants will learn how to make repairs and how to help prevent problems in the future.

Register by March 14. Contact the Westmoreland Conservation District at 724-837-5271.

Engineers' Workshop

Thursday, March 20 and Friday, March 21

Same program offered both days; choose the day that best fits your schedule.

Fred Rogers Center, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe

Learn about erosion control regulations and innovative stormwater management techniques from some of the region's leading experts in the field.

Details to be announced on www.wcdpa.com.

APRIL

Envirothon

Monday, April 28

Twin Lakes Park, Greensburg

Local high school students test their knowledge of our natural resources as they compete to see who represents the county at the state Envirothon in May.

Free. For more information, visit www.wcdpa.com.



INSIDE

Conservation Champions

Lewis and Kate Lobdell

Steve Simpson

Jacobs Creek Watershed Association

Helen Clevenger

Rick and Mary Duncan

Big Changes at "The Barn"



J. Roy Houston Conservation Center
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- Paul Shaffer, Soil Conservationist
- Vivian Bernardo, Administrative Support Assistant

Dear friend of conservation,

We often talk about the conservation projects we're involved with – from rain gardens to rural roads.

But just as important is the work we do with *people*.

In the field or on the phone, our staff provides technical guidance, helps to find project financing, and offers support and encouragement to citizens who are practicing conservation in the work that they do...on the property that they own...and in the activities they pursue during their free time.

These community conservation stewards multiply many times the beneficial impact of what our staff alone could do. And they extend our message to even more audiences through the example they show to their friends, family, and neighbors.

In this second issue of the new *Landmarks*, you'll read about some of these committed conservation advocates and the difference they're making in our county, including:

- how Kate and Lewis Lobdell are caring for an important piece of the Chestnut ridgeline
- how Steve Simpson used his very special photography skills to give people a close-up look at the value of our natural resources
- how two generations of the Clevenger/Duncan family turned an always-wet farm into a showcase of conservation and a healthier watershed, and
- how an enthusiastic director and a core of very committed volunteers are improving the Jacobs Creek watershed.

You'll also meet Reid Crosby, a local artist who conserves man-made resources by turning rusted metal, salvaged wood, and even old sidewalks into one-of-a-kind sculptures and functional pieces with historic character.

I hope you enjoy!



Greg Phillips
District Manager/CEO

On the cover, Jacobs Creek by Stephen Simpson



**Forest Stewards
LEWIS & KATE LOBDELL**

Kate, District Forester Tony Quadro, and Lewis walked the golden-winged warbler stewardship site in Ligonier Township on a brisk day this fall.

Louis Lobdell will tell you that the best days of his youth were spent hiking the wooded slopes of the Blue Ridge Mountains near his North Carolina home.

The forest resonated with him so deeply in fact, that he dropped out of high school for a year and set off to hike our country's national forests. "I actually made it to about 20 of them before being drafted into the Army," he said.

Some four decades later, parts of Lewis's beloved Blue Ridge are suburban developments, and he now makes his home much farther north in the Appalachian chain – in Pennsylvania on Chestnut Ridge near Ligonier – with his Pittsburgh-born-and-raised wife, Kate, who has embraced his infectious love of the forest.

Yet even near the top of our local ridgeline, the Lobdells are feeling the rumblings of development pressure. "Ever since Unity Township expanded the sewer lines, there is more growth pushing upward from Youngstown, and forest fragmentation seems to be picking up. We have seen substantial changes in the 20 years we have been here," Lewis said.

Lewis and Kate's goal is not to stop the development, but to ensure the long-term existence of "a healthy Western Pennsylvania forest – with its native flora and fauna."

In 2004, they worked with the conservation district to develop a detailed forest stewardship plan for some land that they own



Lewis Lobdell recently retired as a managing director for a division of PNC. He is on the boards of the Westmoreland Land Trust and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and has participated in the Ligonier Valley Visioning project and several environmental organizations, with a special interest in The American Chestnut Foundation.

Kate Laffey Lobdell grew up in the Oakland area of the City of Pittsburgh, and often spent time on her grandparents' farm in the suburb of Allison Park. She graduated from Duquesne University School of Law and practiced law in Pittsburgh, serving for more than 20 years on the Council of the Allegheny County Bar Association Real Property Section and on the Board of Governors of the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the Arthritis Foundation. She is active in several community and environmental organizations, most recently with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Powdermill Nature Reserve Advisory Board.

Lewis and Kate have four grown children – two daughters and two sons – and three grandchildren, on whom, Lewis says, "we are depending to carry forward our conservation work."

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in Ligonier and Cook townships. In 2013, the Lobdells worked with the District again on a forest stewardship plan for an additional parcel in Ligonier and Unity townships.

The professional conservation practices that these plans suggested they employ are benefiting both the forest and the local waterways – Fourmile Run, Nine Mile Run, and the Loyalhanna Creek.

On one of the Lobdell properties, a parcel just off Binkey Road in Ligonier Township, they are creating a specialized habitat to attract the golden-winged warbler, a songbird that has suffered one of the steepest population declines in the U.S. in the past 45 years and near extirpation in the Appalachian



Ribbons mark out a grid on the Binkey Road property to ensure adequate removal of invasive plant species.

The Lobdell's warbler stewardship site "became a different woodland once the invasives were removed," Lewis said. The area was once so thick with briars and multiflora rose that it was not passable.

Invasive plants are a considerable threat to biodiversity. They grow rapidly and spread unrestricted over large areas, overwhelming and displacing native vegetation, and often forming dense monocultures.

An area of the Lobdell's most-recently acquired property is right on the crest of the ridge. This land was so compacted after being strip-mined by a previous owner in the 1970s that it doesn't look like a forest. The only things growing here are several species of locust and pine, some grass, and invasives such as autumn olive and honeysuckle that were intentionally planted after it was strip-mined as a way to control erosion.

Kate and Lewis have considered several options for regeneration, including maintaining it as open habitat and encouraging warm season grasses.



Mountains (population here is down 98 percent).

To create attractive breeding habitat for this neotropical bird, the Lobdells first removed invasive and undesirable species from the property, including spicebush, hayscented fern, Japanese stiltgrass, multiflora rose, and barberry.

Once the plant removal work was done, trees identified with the help of a warbler habitat manager began to be harvested. Ultimately, the land will be transformed into the right combination of "nearly clear-cut areas with mature forest nearby" that the golden-winged warbler seeks as breeding grounds.

But birds aren't the only species the Lobdells hope to attract to their property; people factor highly, too. They are considering connecting their woods with the 1,300 acres of mixed hardwoods that the Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and



Say "forest stewardship" and the first thing many people think about is timber harvesting.

And while harvesting certainly can be an element of stewardship, so can many other things, such as efforts to enhance the quality of the soil and water...the habitat for wildflowers, fish or wildlife...the aesthetic and recreation potential of the land, and so on.

A forest stewardship plan lays out a series of steps over a 10-year period to systematically manage any or all of the interconnected elements that make up the woods – trees, wildlife, wildflowers, waterways, fish, insects, wetlands, caves, amphibians, reptiles, birds, deadwood, and even recreation potential – for not just our immediate personal needs, but for future generations.

Recreation owns in the Loyalhanna Gorge. With the cooperation of several neighbors, they could open the woods for day hiking and other forms of passive, non-motorized recreation.

"I believe in connecting people to nature. When people walk through these woods and experience their beauty...when they see the vista along this spectacular ridgeline...I hope they will



A load of harvested logs ready for transport to the saw mill or pulp mill. The quality of the timber today was disappointingly low due to poor harvesting practices in the past that created equipment damage to most of the residual trees and severe erosion in the unreclaimed drag trails. Tree species on the Lobdell property include red and sugar maples; black cherry, locust and birch; white ash; yellow poplar; red oak; American beech; basswood; cucumber magnolia; and elm.

About 100 native tree species are found in Pennsylvania, but in any one woodlot you will seldom encounter more than 30 species.



The Lobdells discovered that an area of the property being managed for the golden-winged warbler had been used for decades as an unofficial community dump. Its cleanup will be an added benefit of their stewardship work.

Lewis also hopes to enhance the land by turning the opening to what was once a pocket coal mine into a vernal pond for wildlife.

Nationwide, one-third of all our country's endangered plants and animals depend on the forest.

agree with our goal of forest preservation. When people feel engaged with the forest, they are more likely to support its preservation and understand the importance of preserving large forest blocks for us all. We hope that, in another 50 years, these woodlands will be healthier and more diverse than today. That long-term goal is what we are working towards with our management practices," Lewis said.



Lewis is a hands-on forest steward. He walks his woods with a machete in hand, cutting down the ubiquitous grapevines. He also operates a forwarder for cutting and hauling small trees and a backhoe for putting in water bars, drainage culverts, and other conservation Best Management Practices to reduce erosion.

This past summer, he completed the 40-hour Pennsylvania Forest Stewards training at Penn State University.

Owner stewardship is critical to forest health, as 91% of the woodlands in Westmoreland County are privately owned.



Chestnut Ridge and its companion Laurel Ridge may be the largest contiguous forest areas in Westmoreland County, but there also are an almost equal number of smaller wooded acres in the rest of the county so that, added together, forests and woods cover just about exactly half of Westmoreland County's total land area.

When these 332,000 forested acres are healthy, they provide a beautiful, scenic place to escape for recreation or inspiration. They also perform important functions – acting as filters for the water we drink, reducing carbon dioxide and adding oxygen to the air we breathe, nourishing the soil, shading streams to sustain fish and aquatic life, and providing food and shelter for native plants and wildlife.

2013 Conservation Farmer of the Year Helen Clevenger, and Rick and Mary Duncan



(l-r) 2013 Farmer of the Year recipients Helen Clevenger, Mary Duncan, and Rick Duncan receive the award from District Board Members Ron Rohall and Fred Slezak.

Two generations of a Derry Township farm family – Helen Clevenger and Rick and Mary Duncan – were recognized as the District’s 2013 Farmer of the Year for the many conservation measures they’ve installed, with most of the improvements added in just the past two years.

Water has made farming the 180-acre property a challenge ever since Helen Clevenger’s grandparents purchased it in 1905. “Muck hole,” is the word Helen’s son-in-law Rick uses often to describe the almost-always-wet conditions he and the farm’s growing beef cattle herd have dealt with since he took over day-to-day duties several years ago and before the conservation improvements.

In peak season and at peak flow, large volumes of water were traveling through the farm. That’s because the land is filled with natural underground springs and seeps, and because the surface terrain is steep and sloping, making a perfect runway for water to race toward the lowest

point – a meandering tributary of Stony Run. Along the way, all that surface water often ran straight through lots of mud and manure, adding pollutants to a watershed already deemed to have one of the highest levels of sediment and nutrients in Westmoreland County.

But even during last summer’s unusually soggy weather* – the first since



By providing a set path for the cows to travel to the pastures and water troughs, a new stabilized walkway helps to reduce erosion.

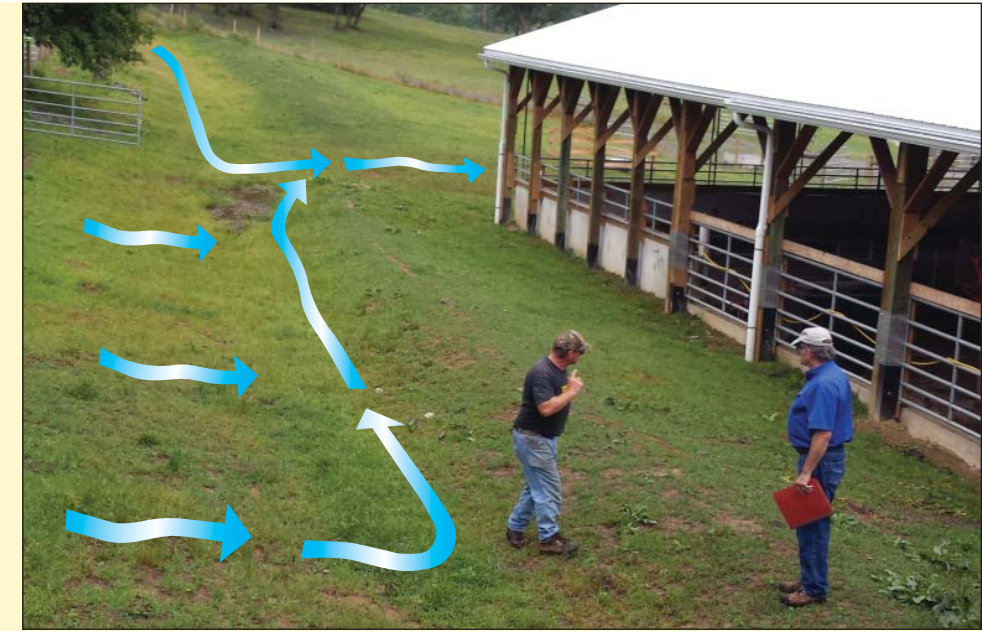
the conservation improvements were installed – the farm owners have noticed a significant difference. “It all dries up much quicker now,” Rick said of the land since the addition of some \$150,000 of conservation improvements that included roof gutters and downspouts with sub-surface drainage, a spring development with water troughs, a 210-foot-long access road for people and equipment and an animal walkway for the cows, a 350-foot-long diversion ditch and a number of smaller surface ditches filled with gravel, an elaborate below-ground piping system, and a 3,250-foot-long vegetated buffer along the stream.

Perhaps the most dramatic conservation addition on the farm is a large, open-sided, roofed building that provides a sheltered, paved place where the herd can stay in inclement weather and

* Nearly 5.5 inches of rain fell in June 2013, and more than 6 inches fell in July, giving our area 3.5 inches more than normal for the two months.



(l-r) Dan Griffith, District nutrient management specialist, reviews the farm’s nutrient management plan with Rick Duncan and Helen Clevenger.



Rick steps up and out of the new diversion ditch. Arrows show how this depression has been designed to collect the water that runs down the hillside and then direct it away from the new building.



One of the new water troughs, and pastures that are now green instead of mostly mud.

where manure can be stored. Keeping 1,200-pound animals out of pastures that are soft and wet significantly reduces mud and erosion (sediment) and keeps animal contaminants (nutrients) out of the path of flowing water.

Rick has also noticed a definite improvement in animal health since the improvements. The three pigs the family raises each summer for their own use

grew “amazingly” this past year when they were kept out of the mud and given access to fresh water. And now that the cows aren’t more-than-knee-deep in mud, their health also has been better.

Maintenance also has been simplified now that the farm has been fenced into nine paddocks and each has water on it.

The Stony Run Watershed – which in 2008 was identified as having one of the highest levels of sediment and nutrient pollution in Westmoreland County – has been a focus of conservation efforts since 2009.

Eight farms in the region have installed a total of 46 conservation measures – from numerous small stream crossings and fencing to multiple riparian buffers, one of which is nearly a mile long.

In addition to the Duncan/Clevenger’s, the farms where conservation measures were installed are those owned by Matt Borbonus, Bill Johnston, Ken Laughlin, Harry Ribblet, Scott Malnofsy, Clint and Amy McChesney, and Luanne Saffron.

Program money from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, along with \$173,000 of Growing Greener II funds and land-owner investments made the conservation measures possible.

Conservation work in the watershed also included a special project on the Lydick farm to restore an area of Stony Run that had disappeared into a sink-hole created by subsidence of an old coal mine. This project was funded by the state Department of Environmental Protection.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection will re-assess the water quality in the Stony Run Watershed to determine the benefit these conservation improvements have created.

The District’s next area of concentrated focus will be the impaired McGee Run Watershed, which, like Stony Run, empties into the Conemaugh River.

The 2013 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award Recipient

The Jacobs Creek Watershed Association



(l-r) Jacobs Creek Watershed Association members Mike Barrick, president; Patty Miller, executive director; Joe Kalinowski, general member; Barry Whoric, treasurer; Andrew Dzurko, project manager; Sharyn Kmieciak, general member; and Kristina Tarasan, vice president, accept the award from Conservation District Board Members Bill Doney and Ron Rohall.

The Jacobs Creek Watershed Association was recognized by the District as the recipient of the 2013 J. Roy Houston Conservation Partnership Award for its decades of important conservation work, including helping to realize one of the most significant conservation improvements in Westmoreland County, the Jacobs Creek

Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Project.

This project, which includes Acme Dam, Bridgeport Dam, Greenlick Dam, and the Scottdale Channel, has been protecting area residents and businesses from flooding and providing recreation opportunities since the early 1970s. It is one of only a few such projects in

the entire U.S. that addresses an entire watershed.

In years since, the watershed association has stabilized thousands of feet of streambanks along Jacobs Creek and its tributaries including Anderson Run, Brush Run, Sherrick Run, and Shupe Run, as well as stabilizing the shoreline of Greenlick Dam Lake.

More recently, Jacobs Creek Watershed Association has been getting ready to construct measures that will 'green' Scottdale. A variety of infrastructure improvements will be added in the business district to manage stormwater and, at the same time, to improve the historic town's charm and aesthetics.

Measures to be installed next year include porous pavement, porous pavers for crosswalks, and street trees and other plants. This work will complement similar measures that have been added in the past few years in nearby Gazebo Park and the area around the Scottdale Library.

The association also received two



The watershed association is planning to install rain gardens on the properties of five private landowners in Scottdale as part of a larger effort to alleviate water runoff problems in that area.



From the time that it was first built until the association undertook the first remediation efforts in 2010, more than 12 feet of shoreline at the Greenlick Dam Lake had eroded into the lake, adding 12 tons of sediment to the lake and greater watershed each year.

In the spring of 2010, more than 325 feet of southeastern shoreline was graded and restored and planted with native trees and shrubs.

Large rocks also were placed in the lake to decrease the force of the waves reaching the shoreline. Later that year, similar work was done along more than 480 feet of the lake's northeastern shoreline, preventing as much as 175 additional cubic feet of sediment from entering the lake every year.

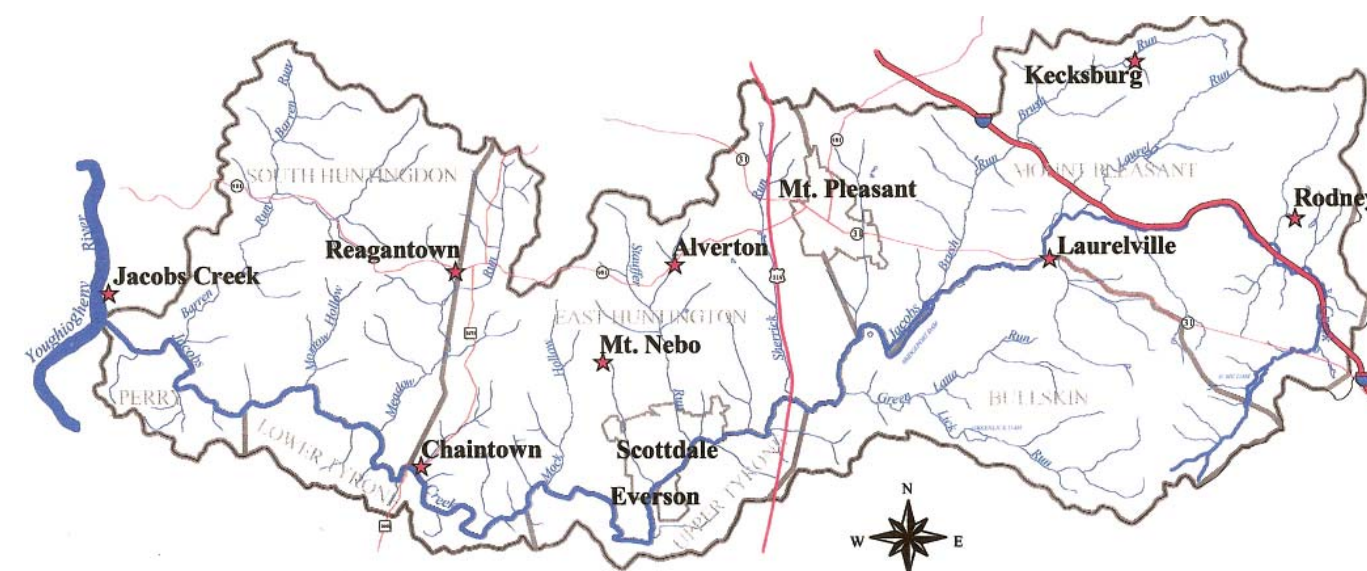
grants from the Environmental Protection Agency for similar work in Mount Pleasant. One is to design stormwater management improvements at the Polish Falcons parking lots and at the Maruca Mobile Home area, both of which discharge into Shupe Run. The other grant is funding the design of stormwater management and green measures along Main Street, the Kennedy Street area (near the former Cook's Hardware) and at the Mount Pleasant SHOP 'n SAVE.

The Jacobs Creek Watershed Association also conducts environmental education talks...participates in youth and community service programs...and holds fun, informative, and educational events, including bird-watching field trips, Earth Day bat box installations, Adopt-a-Highway cleanups, and macroinvertebrate studies on streams.

The association was first organized in the 1960s to address the severe flooding problems in the Scottdale area. After that

successful effort and several decades of work, the group disbanded but was reformed in the late 1990s and has been active ever since.

Mike Barrick, who previously worked as an erosion-control specialist for the conservation district, was instrumental in re-energizing the organization and has served as its president ever since. Patty Miller, the first-ever executive director of the association, has been with the group since 2009.



Jacobs Creek Watershed covers approximately 98 square miles in Westmoreland and Fayette counties and contains more than 177 miles of streams.

The main stream, Jacobs Creek, originates in the Laurel Highlands. At its headwaters on Chestnut Ridge, it is a cold-water stream. By

the time it reaches the Bridgeport Dam, it is a warm-water stream. Jacobs Creek includes waterfalls and rapids and ultimately empties into the Youghiogheny River.



Tribute to a friend - Steve Simpson

Steve hiked the Laurel Highlands Trail to take a photo from this scenic vista and his friend, Shanna Blasingame, took his picture.

We've been blessed with many amazing friends over the years, and Steve Simpson certainly was one of them.

Steve was an artist whose medium was the camera. His beautiful images of Westmoreland County – misty farm orchards... still, clear pools in streams... historic community neighborhoods – have helped the District communicate the conservation message for more than 20 years.

We first met Steve in the late 1980s and were immediately impressed with the depth of his passion for nature. We had never before met anyone who routinely carried pounds of professional camera equipment into the woods or who walked for miles down the middle of a creek to capture images that, from the banks, would never be seen.

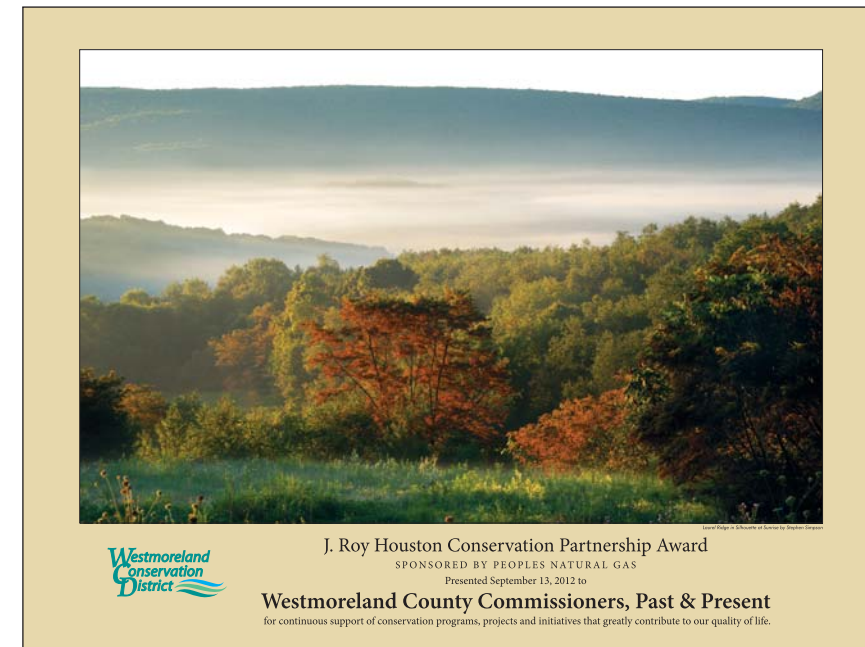
Steve got his love of nature early in life, on outings with his dad in search of arrowheads and wild mushrooms, and he continued to enjoy hiking and kayaking and snow-shoeing as long as his health permitted.

He was passionate about cleaning up Turtle Creek, which ran through his boyhood home of Export, and he donated many hours of time and countless photographic images to that effort.

His generosity extended to other conservation groups as well, including the District. Mark Jackson, visual communications specialist, remembers an early meeting with Steve when he simply opened his large portfolio of images and said, "You're



Shortly after our former chairman, Roy Houston, passed away, Steve captured a double rainbow over our barn headquarters. We used the photo on the cover of our 2010 annual report, in which we honored Roy.



Steve's work has graced many District outreach items over the years, from Envirothon T-shirts...to long-range plans...to awards. Mark Jackson, who made many of those selections, said, "One thing I really enjoy about Steve's work is his composition. He gives your eye a nice ride through his photos. Composition, point of view, color, lighting and novelty are the strengths of a Steve Simpson photo. Steve worked hard at getting his shots, which often involved getting up at sunrise or standing on a hill during a fierce thunderstorm to get a shot of lightning. He told me that once he returned to a spot in Pittsburgh 14 times to get a special storm/lightning shot. I personally feel that Steve was one of the greatest photographers in Western Pennsylvania."

welcome to take anything you can use."

More recently, Steve gifted us with two flash drives full of his photography and permission to use as many of them as often we wished.

Thank you, Steve. We will do our best to make sure your art and your love of the natural resources live on.



Steve was an associate director of the District from 1998 to 2000. He passed away in October 2013 at age 60.



Steve's Highlands Art Gallery in Donegal featured his photos, many of which were framed with wood he and his sons Matt and Jason cut from local sassafras, walnut, and maple.

The next two pages feature a photograph Steve took of Jacobs Creek. We hope that you will remove these pages from the magazine and hang them where you can enjoy this beautiful scene.

Jacobs Creek by Stephen Simpson

WESTMORELAND COUNTY



Changes at "the barn"

New Name...More Space...and Improvements that have a history



(l-r) Members of Roy Houston's family – his sister Lou Houston, and his daughters Tracy Halleck and Kathy Heider – join Peoples Gas manager of communications and community affairs, Barry Kukovich, for the official naming of the building.

The District's headquarters – what many people refer to simply as "the barn" – was officially christened with a real name in mid-September: The J. Roy Houston Conservation Center.

The naming was announced during an evening reception at the building, and Roy's family participated in unveiling the new hand-lettered rustic sign that now hangs above the main entrance to the 130-year-old repurposed barn.

Roy served as the District's board chairman for 40 years, and helped the

organization grow from one conservation program (flash flood warning) to eight (erosion and sediment control, stormwater management, agriculture, forestry, dirt and gravel road maintenance, water quality, watershed restoration, and education and outreach)...from one employee to 15...and from nine volunteer directors and associates to 24.

Roy's four decades of volunteer service is unparalleled in our organization's 64-year history.



The wooden plank used for the barn's new nameplate originally was part of a carriage house that once stood on the Saint Vincent monastery grounds in Latrobe.

The wood was planed some 150 years ago by the monks, and still bears the evidence – in the extreme consistency of the vertical blade cut marks – of how reverently they went about their work.



The barn's official name now greets visitors.



The Westmoreland County Commissioners issued a proclamation in honor of the naming of the District's barn for J. Roy Houston. State and local officials also recognized the event with proclamations.



Interior Improvements

Peoples Natural Gas, the company whose community involvement was responsible for introducing J. Roy Houston and the Westmoreland Conservation District in the early 1970s, honored his volunteer service most recently by funding a number of interior improvements to the building that now bears his name.

Peoples Gas's generous contributions allowed us to enclose the deck, expanding and improving the functionality of our meeting room so we can accommodate bigger events and education workshops. Some of the specific improvements Peoples Gas funded include a projector, speakers, and microphones; improved lighting; and a serving area with cabinets and appliances.

The company also made it possible for us to update our signage, including the addition of a unique new monument sign (see photos throughout this article).

Peoples Natural Gas also created the J. Roy Houston Partnership Award in

2012. The award is now being given each year to an individual or organization that has demonstrated exemplary dedication to working with the District to advance conservation (see pages 6 and 7).



Reid Crosby, a local industrial artist whose stated philosophy includes a commitment to reuse, resourcefulness, and fun, created many of the new additions. In the future he will also be installing a few additional elements at the center, including a folding room divider near the reception area.

He'll also be involved in a re-do of the existing pantry, where he plans to incorporate many of the same elements he used in the new serving area.



The District's exterior monument sign is undergoing a makeover.

Reid created a one-of-a-kind sculpture that combines historical elements from agriculture and forestry, including a unique set of left and right moldboard plows, two large farm wagon wheels, and a saw blade from Ritenour Lumberyard in Champion.

The District's logo will be installed in the center of the saw blade in early 2014, as this computerized mockup shows. The logo is now being fabricated in aluminum in colors that will complement the new metal sculpture.



With the addition of the new, expanded physical space to host larger meetings and workshops came the need to provide a more efficient way to accommodate the hospitality needs that are often part of those events.

The District worked with Reid Crosby to create a unique and functional serving area in the meeting space.

The elements Reid used reflect the history of our area and the agricultural and natural resources roots of the District.

Reid created countertops from sandstone and shale stones that were sidewalks in the City of Greensburg in the early 1900s. For the cupboards below, he used framing that came from the old Loyalhanna school outside of Latrobe and barn wood that once was rolling doors on a commercial building in Blairsville.

The ring hardware came from the same St. Vincent carriage house as the wood used for the District building's new nameplate (see photo), and they originally were used to tie up horses. Like the wood for the sign, these rings date from the 1860s and were made by hand on the monastery grounds.

The cupboard hinges were originally part of an 1870s-era barn on Route 30 near Chambersburg.

Behind the new serving area is corrugated metal that came from the roof of the barn that is now the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve in Latrobe.



The new enclosed deck area, projector and sound system are in demand, supporting a number of meetings such as this webinar on combined sewer watersheds, which was part of a series by the Center for Watershed Protection. Participants included engineers, municipal representatives and landscape architects.

With help from Westmoreland County Department of Public Works & Peoples Natural Gas
Damaged Trees Removed from Campus

The emerald ash borer, a 1/2-inch-long beetle native to Asia, is responsible for the removal of six white ash trees on the Donohoe Center campus.

The ash trees, part of Donohoe Center's original landscaping, were about 20 years old.

The emerald ash borer's larvae feed in the outer sapwood of the trees and can rapidly girdle stems and branches, causing the trees to die within one to three years following the initial attacks.

Five of the ash trees removed most likely had been infected for at least a year, District Forester Tony Quadro said.



Several other campus trees that had been damaged by lightning also were removed, including a large red oak (seen being removed in the photo to the left) that the District planted as part of its 50th anniversary celebration in 1999.

The red oak will be replaced and some of the ash trees also will be replaced with other species.

Special thanks to Westmoreland County Department of Public Works for cutting the trees, and to Peoples Natural Gas for donating their employees' time and equipment to remove the stumps, backfill the holes, and tamp the ground down.

County Comprehensive Plan To Be Updated

About 10 years ago, Westmoreland County developed its first-ever comprehensive plan – a guide to help steer our county so that it grows and develops the way local citizens want it to.

From input gathered during 13 public meetings all across the county, conservation ranked high among the priorities of local citizens. There was a strong desire by the public to maintain the pleasing rural character of the region and to conserve key natural resources.

To respond to the public's desires, a matrix of specific action steps was developed, and the District has worked steadily over the past decade to make these items a reality. Some of the many actions we have taken include the following.

- Developing a database of some 8,500 woodland owners in Westmoreland County with the ability to further identify these owners according to the number of forested acres they hold. This ability means that we can provide them with information on the specific stewardship practices that are relevant for their property.
- Working with the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association to build membership and to publicize and host several workshops a year on forest management.



- Promoting innovative stormwater management (such as the installation of infiltration parking lots in the City of Greensburg and dozens of rain gardens throughout Mount Pleasant

continued on page 21



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Landmarks

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Recent Dirt & Gravel Road Maintenance Projects

Improved travel for motorists; reduced sediment in streams



The addition of pipes for drainage (left) and raising and stabilizing the road surface (right) have made Larimer Trail Road better for drivers and the nearby stream.

With the state transportation bill that became law in late November came a significant increase in funds for Pennsylvania's Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program and a broadening of the program's scope so that it also now will include low-volume, paved public roads.

Pennsylvania has more than 20,000 miles of unpaved public roads. Many of these contribute significant pollution, especially sediment pollution, to streams and rivers. Since the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program began 16 years ago, it has completed more than 2,500 road improvement projects statewide.



In these two photos District Watershed Specialist Rob Cronauer dramatically illustrates the road conditions – before and after – improvements.

Larimer Trail Road, Washington Township

This project, completed in the fall, is an excellent example of how people can work together to bring about a long-term community benefit.

For many years, Larimer Trail Road, a horseshoe-shaped feeder road near Routes 66 and 356 in Washington Township, had been eroding badly, and was often muddy and difficult to travel.

Today, thanks to the work of a partnership that included state and local funding; local landowner, Ted Kuckuck; Washington Township; the Westmoreland Conservation District; the Foundation for PA Watersheds; and the Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies at Penn State University, not only is Larimer Trail Road significantly easier and safer for motorists to travel,

but it also will be less costly for the township to maintain from this point forward.

An added bonus of the road-improvement partnership project is the significant decrease – a reduction of more than 40 tons of sediment a year – in pollutants that enter Beaver Run and then further impact the Allegheny River and other waterways downstream.

All of the community benefits of this project were accomplished with a total investment of some \$48,000 in materials, services, and in-kind donations, which were used to install proven Best Management Practices including cross pipes, stone fill, and underdrains. The entire length of the road – some 2,000 feet – has been improved.

Keiper Road, Fairfield Township

A 500-foot-long section of Keiper Road near Bolivar in Fairfield Township also has been recently improved under the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program.

The road surface was raised as much as three feet in an effort to improve natural drainage and to eliminate the streams of flowing water that hindered travel on this two-lane, unpaved road and washed sediment into nearby Tubmill Creek.

Some 840 tons of shale were added to the road surface, raising it between two and three feet so that it now is level with the surrounding terrain and no longer the low point where water can collect. Next, new cross pipes and underdrains will be added to also help manage the flow of water.

Fairfield Township partnered with the District on this project, which was funded by a \$9,000 grant from the Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program.



Because it was so badly eroded, Keiper Road was almost like a streambed – the low point where water would collect.



Improvements included raising the road surface as much as three feet. Pipes and underdrains will also be added and the combined effect will be to keep as much water as possible off the road surface.

A workshop on "GRAVEL DRIVEWAYS AND UNPAVED LANES" will be held on Tuesday, March 18, from 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. See back cover for more information.

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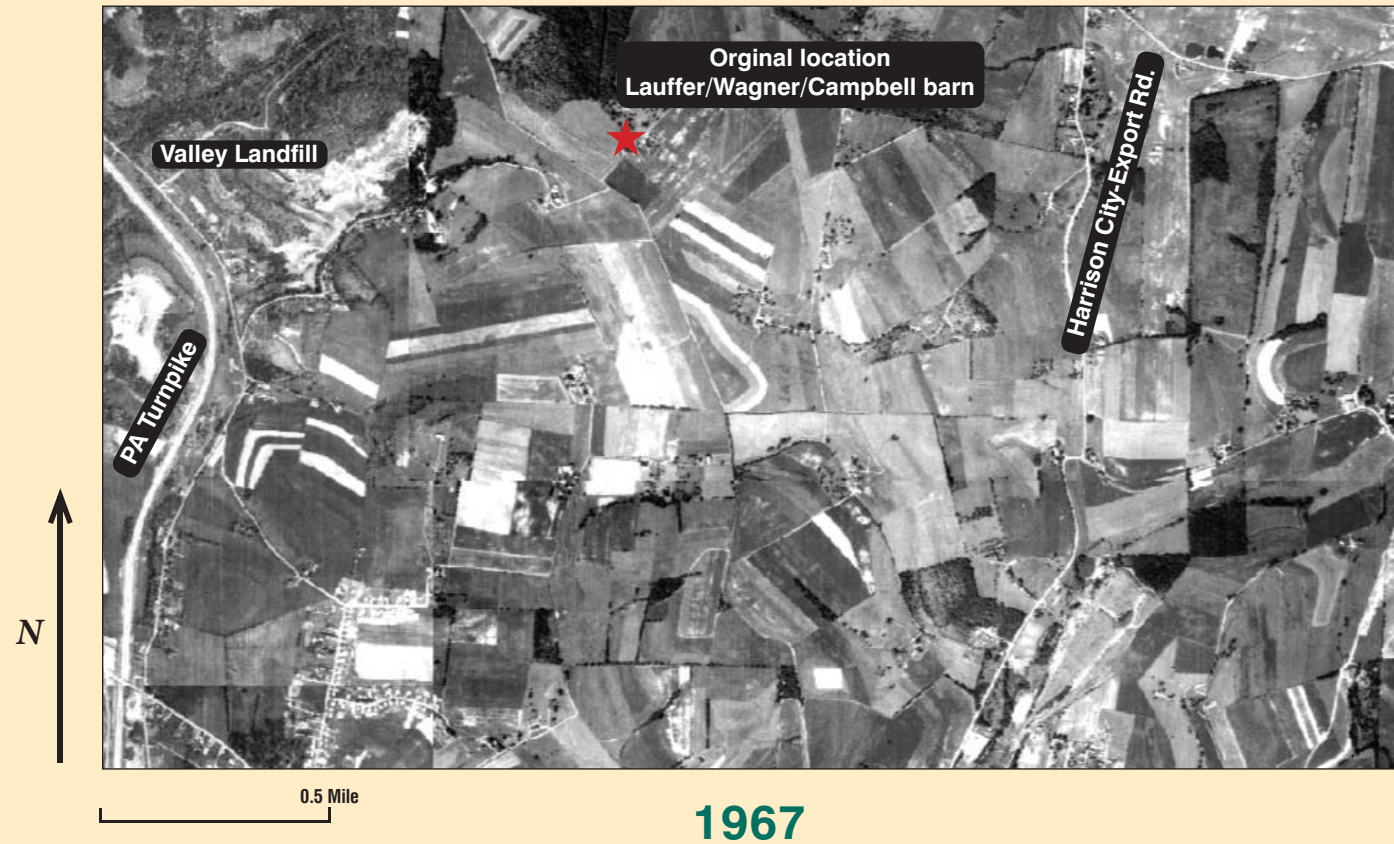


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Then and Now - Aerial Views of Westmoreland County - Penn Township

These aerial photographs are part of a larger collection commissioned over the years by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



1967

In the 1960s, developments were starting to overtake significant amounts of farmland and open space, and the need for conservation was beginning to be felt in these new suburban areas.

The star on the photo shows the original Penn Township location of the barn that is now the District's

J. Roy Houston Conservation Center.

Peter Lauffer (1827-1886) was the earliest known owner of this barn. After him, two other families – the Wagners and the Campbells – farmed that land and used the barn to house animals and grain.



2009

The same location, 42 years later.

The explosion of residential development is obvious, especially through the center of the photo. Penn Township was and continues to be one of the areas of greatest development in Westmoreland County.

Interestingly, there also is a significant portion of land in the photo in agricultural use, as evidenced by all the contour strips on the right side of the photo (the conservation district and the Natural Resources Conservation Service helped to lay out many of these

strips). These contoured areas are part of some 400 acres now being farmed by Schramms. The Schramm family moved their farm market operation to Westmoreland County in 1981 to escape development pressures in their original location in Allegheny County.

The Lauffer/Wagner/Campbell barn was relocated to its present location on Donohoe Road in Hempfield Township in 2000 for transformation into the District's headquarters.

LAND USE FACTS

- Just about exactly 50% of Westmoreland County land is forest or woodland. (For more information about forests and woodlots, see the sidebars in the article on the Lobdells on pages 2 and 3).
- More than 23% of Westmoreland County land is currently used for agriculture.
- The remaining 25% or so of Westmoreland County land is developed with houses, shops, businesses, churches, and so on.
- More than 18% of the soil in Westmoreland County is considered "prime agricultural soil." Prime agricultural soil has the best

combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops. More than 83,000 acres of farmland in Westmoreland County are in Agricultural Security Areas. These are communities where the local officials agree to support agriculture by not passing nuisance laws that would restrict normal farming operations.

- More than 10,000 acres of farmland in Westmoreland County are in the Agricultural Easement Program, commonly known as farmland preservation.

Farmland preservation places this land under a perpetual agreement that prevents development or improvement of the land for any purpose other than agriculture.

- There are five major watersheds in Westmoreland County: the Youghiogheny, Allegheny, Monongahela, Kiskiminetas, and the Conemaugh. None of the rivers that also go by these names actually flow through very much of the land in our county, though. They mostly skirt along a border we share with another county.

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People In The News

Staff



Gregory Phillips, District manager/CEO of the Westmoreland Conservation District, was recently honored by the Northeast Association of Conservation District Employees with its 2013 Regional Employee Award.

Greg was chosen from conservation district professionals in thirteen states for his "professionalism and dedication to the cause of conservation."



Jen Novak recently joined the Westmoreland Conservation District as its education program coordinator and will be responsible for developing workshops, tours, field days and special events that promote conservation principles and practices.

She has worked in the environmental/conservation field for 18 years in positions with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and for 3 Rivers Wet Weather. She interned at the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and volunteered for the Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Section of Botany.

She has a Bachelor of Science in ecology and evolution from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Environmental Science from Miami University.

Interns



Zachary Klueber returned to the District last spring as part of his senior-year community-service class at Greensburg-Salem High School. He had previously spent time with the District the summer before, working with us to create a rain planter prototype to manage stormwater as part of his senior project.

Through the spring semester, Zach worked with many staff members on a wide variety of projects in areas including stormwater management, erosion control, and education.



He currently is enrolled at Penn State University's main campus, studying engineering.

Ralph DeStefano joined us during summer break from his environmental studies at the University of Pittsburgh, main campus.

Ralph, who also is working toward a GIS certificate, created a number of important mapping projects for us, including identifying all commercial properties in the county that are greater than five acres (information that will help us in identifying potential stormwater management projects), forest land ownership by three parcel sizes – 2 to 5 acres, 5 to 100 acres, and greater than 100 acres (which will help in encouraging forest stewardship), and watersheds, and high-value waterways (which will help in promoting erosion control).

Partners



John Lohr, county executive director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Farm Service Agency since 1978, retired at the end of November.

John worked for the Farm Service Agency and its predecessor, the Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, for his entire career, beginning as a part-time field assistant in 1968, after graduating from Mount Pleasant High School.

He originally administered Farm Service Agency programs in Westmoreland County, but in recent years, also covered Fayette County from a consolidated office in Donohoe Center in Greensburg.

Earlier in his career, John had received the Farm Service Agency's prestigious Administrator's Award for Service to Agriculture for his work in forming the township-level Agricultural Security Areas and for his efforts in helping establish the

County Comprehensive Plan To Be Updated continued from page 15

Borough)...and working to raise funding to complete the first-ever Westmoreland-County-wide Act 167 plan, a comprehensive assessment of stormwater management conditions in each watershed in Westmoreland County.

- Hosting a number of education programs on erosion control and stormwater management for traditional audiences who work with our county's natural resources, as well as reaching new audiences, such as owners of unpaved lanes and driveways, with this message.
- Successfully lobbying to have more than one billion dollars released from the federal government to help clean up the pollution, safety hazards, and other damaging legacies left in Pennsylvania communities by abandoned coal mine operations.
- Helping to form and supporting the work of a new organization, the Westmoreland Land Trust, which in just five years has preserved some 200 acres of land that adds scenic, recreational, and ecological value to our communities.

The first update of the County's comprehensive plan will begin in 2014 and will be led by the Westmoreland County Department of Planning.



Employees past and present gather to wish John Lohr well at his retirement party.

county's Agricultural Land Preservation Program.

From 2007 until his retirement, John served on the executive committee of the 7000-member National Association of Farm Service Agency County Office Employees. In 2011 and again in 2012, John was elected national president of NASCOE.

John is a charter board member of the Westmoreland Land Trust.

In retirement, John and his wife, Carol, plan to travel and spend more time searching for their "dream" retirement home.



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