

Little Pucketa Creek Improvements Are First Step Toward Relieving Flooding



Above: Little Pucketa Creek's channel has lost capacity over the years due to soil eroding from the streambanks.



Right: Phase One improvements, completed this fall, slowed erosion by stabilizing the streambank near Valley High School's athletic fields.

Despite its name, "Little" Pucketa Creek has been the cause of some major flooding for people and communities in northern Westmoreland County.

This rather harmless-looking stream that flows from near the small town of Markle in Upper Burrell Township a distance of about eight miles to the city of New Kensington, has for years been the cause of repeated heavy damage to homes and businesses along its path. During Hurricane Ivan in 2004, Little Pucketa swelled precariously high enough to threaten Valley High School – rising to within one inch of the school's front doorway.

Part of Little Pucketa Creek's problems arise from what has occurred near it. Over the years, development – particularly along Route 56, which runs parallel to a major portion of the creek – has covered nature's rainwater storage areas, flood plains, with hard building roofs, concrete sidewalks, and paved parking lots. With less porous

surface where rain and melting snow can sink into the ground, more water ends up rushing into the creek.

The other part of Little Pucketa Creek's problems come from the fact that the stream channel has lost capacity over the years. Soil eroding from the banks of the stream collects in the channel, leaving less room for water and more likelihood that heavy flows will spill out over the streambanks. Over time, huge sediment bars have been deposited and shifted the stream's channel, causing officials to resort to dredging – which helps to minimize flooding, but only until the sediment inevitably builds up again.

This year, a coalition of government and private organizations began to discuss how they could work together to resolve Little Pucketa Creek's problems in a more lasting and environmentally sensitive way.

They made their first order of business alleviating the flooding problems at Valley High School. From a watershed

perspective, this is a somewhat unusual place to begin, because Valley High School is in the lower part of the watershed. Most watershed efforts begin in the upper parts of the watershed, because that way, the benefits flow to all the places downstream. However, from a community perspective, there was no question that Valley High School and its students were the most important community asset along Little Pucketa Creek, and the number one priority to

continued on page 7

Inside this Issue

Sewickley Creek Watershed Tour.....	3
"Practical Green" Home.....	4-5
A Barn's Story.....	9
Annual Banquet Returns.....	10-12
Conservation for Horse Owners.....	13
Envirothon Winners.....	14
Calendar of Events.....	15
People in the News.....	18-19



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What is a Conservation District, anyway?

We're a group of people who work to promote the wise use of the natural resources we all share – the soil, water, forests, and so on.

We help local citizens take actions to minimize their impact on the natural resources, such as encouraging builders to install filter fencing (that wide black ribbon of plastic you often see on construction sites) to prevent erosion.

We also work with a variety of partners to help restore the health of natural resources that have been damaged, such as streams that have been polluted with drainage from abandoned coal mines.

And we support initiatives that promote quality of life, such as preserving open space, and developing quality recreation areas.

The Westmoreland Conservation District has on staff, a forester, hydraulic engineer, erosion-control technicians, a nutrient management specialist and a watershed specialist. We also offer a variety of workshops and events for technical professionals as well as for the general public.

For more information, visit our website, www.wcdpa.com, call (724) 837-5271 or email wcd@wcdpa.com.

2009 District Meeting Schedule

District meetings are open to the public and held at the District's headquarters, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg, on the following dates in 2009. Agendas are regularly posted on the District's website, www.wcdpa.com. Click on the meeting date on the interactive calendar in the upper righthand corner of the page.

Wednesday, January 14, 11 a.m.	Wednesday, July 8, 5 p.m.
Monday, February 9, 11 a.m. (tentative)	Wednesday, August 12, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, March 11, 11 a.m.	Wednesday, September 9, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, April 8, 5 p.m.	Wednesday, October 14, 5 p.m.
Wednesday, May 13, 5 p.m.	Friday, November 13 (tentative)
Wednesday, June 10, 5 p.m.	Wednesday, December 9, 11 a.m.

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We're glad to be working with such an outstanding conservation steward.

Conservation Tour of Sewickley Creek Watershed



During a day-long bus tour in late September, 59 participants got a firsthand look at the variety of ways land is used in Westmoreland County's central watershed, the Sewickley Creek Watershed, and a chance to see how each use directly affects the quality of the land and water, for better or worse.

The tour followed a route water takes as it flows through the watershed, beginning on Chestnut Ridge...continuing southwest through farmland, recreation areas, a highly commercial community, and areas of natural-resource extraction...before emptying into the Yougheny River, Pennsylvania's 2008 River of the Year.

Stops included: Saint Boniface Woods, Friendship Farms, Mammoth Park, New Stanton Borough, a private farm with a natural-gas well, and the innovative Lowber abandoned-mine-drainage cleanup site.



District Board Secretary Bill Doney shared his personal experiences with having natural gas wells on his property. The Doney's have nine shallow wells and three deeper wells drilled on their two farms in South Huntingdon Township.

The vast natural gas reserves in the Marcellus Shale region, which underlays two-thirds of Pennsylvania, have brought an explosive increase in drilling, and corresponding implications for the land and water.



At Lowber, tour participants saw how iron-laden water from abandoned coal mines is captured in holding ponds, and learned how it is later dredged and used beneficially to create pigment.

Before this remediation site was created, one million pounds of iron oxide were flowing directly into Sewickley Creek each year.



On Chestnut Ridge, participants learned how forests not only provide a beautiful, scenic place where we can escape into nature for recreation or inspiration, but that they also perform important conservation 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 habitat for native plants and wildlife.



Thanks to everyone who joined us for this informative tour!

The Sewickley Creek Watershed Association works to improve the quality of the land and water. Watch for the group's annual banquet this spring – www.sewickleycreek.com.

Conservation in Action

Local couple creates a model home that's "practical green"



Mac and Merriann Grant in the great room of their new home.

Merriann and Mac Grant's beautiful new Hempfield Township home is graced with 100-year-old strike plates, vintage light fixtures, and insulation made of newspapers. It is one of the area's most comprehensive examples of what homeowners can do to create living spaces that are wonderfully inviting and functional, while still being very easy on the environment.

The Grants aren't architects or trained conservationists. She is a physicist turned jewelry designer, and he is a technology expert. They share a basic passion for reusing, restoring, and good stewardship. To that conservation ethic, Merriann added the all-important commitment of time and willingness to seek out the "practical green" materials, systems, and practices that would help them create a home that reflected their values. "We had four goals we tried to live by in the process of creating our new home: one – buy local...two – use reclaimed or recycled materials...three – incorporate things that reduce our energy consumption and carbon footprint...and four – choose green or sustainable products," Merriann explained.



After learning about the importance of infiltrating stormwater, the Grants decided not to pave their 300-foot driveway, but to keep it in gravel.

The project took them six years, start to finish, and led them to the Westmoreland Conservation District's first-ever Sustainable Energy Field Day in 2006. There, Merriann learned more about geothermal heating and cooling from speaker Denny Deverse, who she eventually went on to hire to design and install a geothermal system for her family home. "We learned from the District how important it is to view the home as an entire system," Merriann explained, "and so that led us to also install all ENERGY STAR® and low-E windows and doors, and all natural cellulose and borax insulation."

Another conservation practice they learned from the District was the importance of allowing rainwater to infiltrate into the ground. "When I learned how paved surfaces add to the burden on our storm sewer systems, Mac and I both agreed to give up the idea of paving our 300-foot driveway, and decided that it will stay in gravel," Merriann said. The couple also created a meadow on one of their five acres to infiltrate rainwater, create habitat, and reduce the need for mowing and fertilizing.

Some of the other conservation features of the Grant's unique home include: Hardi-Plank cement board



Large low-E windows, a simulated stone fireplace, and a mantel made of a 300-year-old wormy red oak log from a cabin in Bullskin Township reflect the family's conservation ethic and bring elements of nature and history into the home.

exterior siding, recycled carpeting made of #1 and #2 pop bottles, and compact fluorescent light bulbs in most fixtures.

Occasionally, practical considerations had to override the Grants' "ideal" choices. "In one instance, we were looking at a beautiful product for our roof that looked like slate but was made

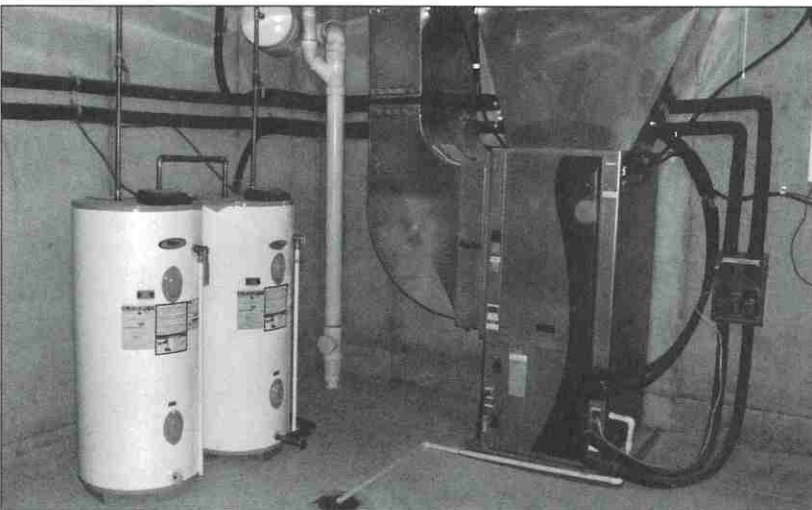
of 95% reprocessed rubber, polymers and fibers," Merriann said. "We would have loved to have used it, but it was about three times more expensive than a traditional, 50-year lifetime shingle and the cost was just too prohibitive."

Overall, the couple doesn't feel that their choices made their house more



The front door that Merriann's parents removed from their house when they remodeled in the 1960s now opens into the Grant's entryway closet. It is just one element of her original family home that is now incorporated into her new home. "Even though my parents replaced their home's original elements, I'm really glad they saved most of them," she said.

expensive to construct. And, so far, their choices have made it more economical to operate. "Our former home was about 2,500 square feet, and our new one is about 4,000. In our first two months in the new home (July and August 2008), our electric bill was \$65. In our old home, it would have been about \$200," Merriann said.



The Grant home, which includes a studio for Merriann and an office for Mac, was originally designed to have two natural gas furnaces. After learning about alternative energy at Sustainable Energy Field Day in 2006, the Grants opted for one, six-ton geothermal system instead, a decision they say they are extremely happy with. "It gives a nice steady heat that doesn't vary more than a degree or so," Merriann said.



After attending the District's first Sustainable Energy Field Day in 2006, and gathering her own firsthand experience in building a "practical green" home, Merriann returned to the 2008 Sustainable Energy Field Day as a panelist.

She shared many of the things she learned about creating a "practical green" home during the six years that she and her husband spent building their new home in Hempfield Township.



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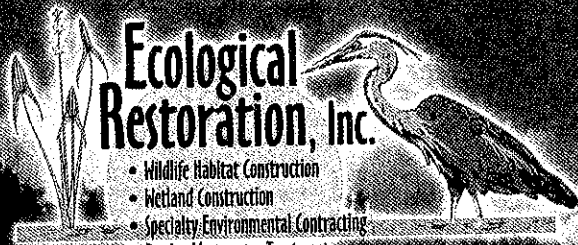
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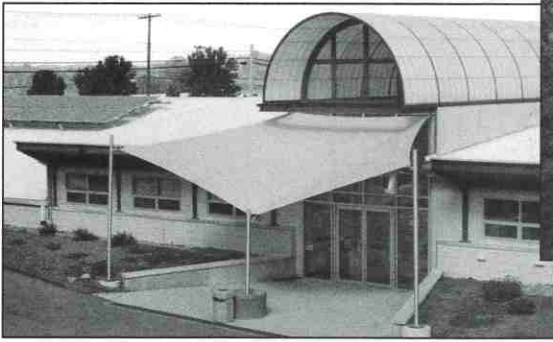
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Finishing touches added to GreenForge



A bright new Kevlar canopy was installed over the front entrance of the GreenForge building this fall and five new stations, each detailing one of the innovative conservation features of this unique green building, were added to the self-guided stormwater trail.

Both additions were made possible with the help of community contributions. The Community Foundation of Westmoreland County's Westmoreland Now & Forever Fund assisted with the canopy purchase by providing a grant

of \$7,000...and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education Grants Program provided \$2,000 for the new stormwater trail signs.

The new canopy's color and shape are deliberately dramatic, as a way to

call attention to the unique GreenForge building. It also has a more practical purpose – shading the main entrance lobby to reduce the amount of energy needed to cool that glass-ceilinged area in the summer.

The five new stormwater trail stations explain some of GreenForge's most innovative features, including: its low-impact development techniques, green roof, stormwater forebay, permeable concrete sidewalks and parking areas, and bioinfiltration swale.

There are now a total of 16 stations on the entire stormwater trail, which highlights conservation practices at the District's barn headquarters, on the surrounding grounds, and now at GreenForge.

Many of the stations have free, take-home fact sheets on the practices demonstrated so visitors can recreate them at their home or business location.

The trail is self-guided, and open to the public every day of the week during daylight hours.

Little Pucketa Creek Improvements continued from page 1

be protected.

The Westmoreland Conservation District worked with area officials to develop a plan for doing this, and to build a coalition of funders who could provide the money to make the plan a reality.

State Senator Sean Logan and State Representative John Pallone procured state funding for the project, and PennDOT, Westmoreland County (through the Growing Greener County Initiative), and the Colcom Foundation also contributed. In all, the group amassed more than \$400,000 for this effort, which will be done in three phases over the next two years.

The first phase, completed this fall, was to slow erosion by stabilizing the streambank near the school's athletic fields.

Phase two will involve adding flow deflectors and trees, as well as removing sediment from the stream in front of the high school and along the track.

The final phase includes plans to create a debris basin upstream from the

athletic fields. This basin – essentially a large, bowl-shaped concrete pad – will help reduce flooding below it by providing a place where channel-clogging sediment and debris can fall out of the stream. It will be the first basin of its kind in Westmoreland County. A similar debris basin was created in Allegheny County to help relieve problems along the flood-prone Girty's Run, which runs through Millvale.

Longer-term, the District hopes to undertake additional projects in the upper parts of the Little Pucketa Creek watershed that will also help to reduce flooding. "We'd like to help install stormwater retrofits in the upper, developed areas of the watershed...and to add new, innovative stormwater practices throughout," said Westmoreland Conservation District Manager/CEO Greg Phillips. "We'd also like to encourage municipalities to review or create ordinances for managing stormwater.

"Established urban areas present unique challenges for managing stormwater and minimizing flooding, but it can be done, and done effectively,"

Greg said. (See page 11 for how the District helped the City of Greensburg do this). "The practices we are putting in place in New Kensington would work just as well in Latrobe, Jeannette, Monessen, and other cities in Westmoreland County."

The headwaters of Little Pucketa Creek originate about one-half mile northwest of Markle.

The main stem of Little Pucketa Creek flows in a general westward direction to New Kensington, where it takes a southerly course to meet Pucketa Creek.

With all of its tributaries, Little Pucketa Creek is 21.7 miles long. The length of the main stream is 8 miles.

Little Pucketa Creek and two unnamed streams join together to make up the Pucketa Creek Watershed. This larger watershed is 37 square miles in area, and most of it is in Westmoreland County. A small portion is in Allegheny County.

Little Pucketa Creek drains into Pucketa Creek, which then drains into the Allegheny River.

STORMWATER PROGRAM MEETS ITS MATCH!

Thanks so much to everyone who answered the Colcom Foundation's challenge, and helped us raise a record level of funds to support our growing stormwater management program!

The Colcom Foundation generously offered to invest up to \$100,000 in our work to improve water quality and reduce flooding IF we could find folks to match their dollars, one for one.

Thanks to all of you who stepped forward to help, we met the challenge! That means that we will have the resources in 2009 to offer more technical assistance...to put more regional demonstration projects on the ground... and to offer more relevant workshops (see article on page 1 re: Little Pucketa Creek).

Thanks to the Colcom Foundation and the following donors for their support!



District Landscape Architect/Stormwater Technician Kathy Hamilton supervises the installation of a stormwater demonstration best management practice at GreenForge.

Stormwater Management Program Donors March 2008 – November 2008

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In addition to donations in support of our stormwater program, the District recently received the following support for our general operations, and for our GreenForge project.

We appreciate the support of these generous donors!

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New Bronze Plaque at District Headquarters Tells Story of Barn



(l-r) Lauffer family representatives Shirley Gosnell, Jim Lauffer, Peggy Anthony and Alan Mochnick dedicate the plaque. More than 100 Lauffer family members attended the reunion and dedication.



A new bronze plaque highlighting the 130-year history of the District's barn was donated by the Lauffer family and unveiled at their family reunion on August 17.

The barn's known history dates back to 1873, when Peter Lauffer purchased a farm in Penn Township. Lauffer family historians have been unable to say with certainty whether Peter built the barn or whether it was already on the property when he purchased it. They are sure, however, that he used the barn during his lifetime (1827-1886) to house grain, animals, and farm equipment.

After Peter's death, two other families – first the Wagners and then the

Campbells – purchased the property and continued to use the barn for agriculture.

In the late 1990s, local developer and District Board Member Kim Miller acquired the former Lauffer property and donated Peter's barn to the Westmoreland Conservation District. Amish craftsmen dismantled the barn to be used as a

recreation center. The history and name of this barn is a tribute to Westmoreland County's agricultural heritage and a dramatic symbol of the conservation effort.



NATURALLY

Delicious

by Karen Barnhart

Here's another favorite from the family cookbook

SWEDISH MEATBALLS

- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 cup bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup finely chopped onions
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 egg
- 1/8 tsp nutmeg
- 1/8 tsp pepper
- 1 jar barbecue sauce
- 1 jar chili sauce

Combine first 8 ingredients. Mix well and shape into bite-size meatballs.

To brown meatballs, place on a cookie sheet and bake at 350° for 15-20 minutes.

No need to turn and no mess to clean up. Plus you skip the extra fat of browning in butter.

Put in slow cooker to heat with 1 jar barbecue sauce and 1 jar chili sauce.

300 Friends of Conservation Join Us for the Re



Just as District Manager/CEO Greg Phillips promised, the District's 2008 Annual Awards Banquet returned bigger and better than ever this year, and a record crowd of 300 friends of conservation joined us on Friday, November 14 to celebrate the happy event.

The evening featured a new location, the Westmoreland



Menu

Assorted garden vegetables, salads and breads
Assorted Pennsylvania perogies

Roasted whole hog with
kielbasa, sauerkraut and bread dressing
Flavored applesauces

Grilled lemon herb chicken with
a trio of barbeque sauces

Herb-encrusted leg of lamb with
port wine jelly, mint jelly, apple mint chutney,
tomato ginger jam and green tomato conserve

Lamb ragout with
fennel, leeks, and mushrooms
Saffron rice pilaf

Chili-crusteD brisket of beef with
charred tomato sauce and red chili sauce

Assorted pies, cobblers, ice cream and toppings

Coffee, tea, milk

Thank you to Martin Thomas, Westmoreland Country Club clubhouse manager, Chef Steve Hill, and the country club staff for creating the menu and preparing the banquet foods.

Country Club in Export...new suppliers, including Fisher's Honey of Greensburg...new local foods, including organic produce...a spectacular menu featuring beef, lamb, chicken, and a roasted whole hog...and a very special keynote speaker – longtime radio personality Jack Bogut, who shared his personal credos for living.

Awards were presented to those whose leadership and commitment advanced the cause of conservation in our county.

Charles Duritsa and Karen Jurkovic were named Conservation Volunteers of the Year for their service as Chair and Secretary, respectively, of the new Westmoreland Land Trust.

The City of Greensburg was named Municipal Conservation Partner of the Year for the innovative way it managed stormwater in two new city parking lots.

Terry Matty and the Costello family of Friendship Farms were both named Farmer of the Year for their extensive use of rotational grazing as well as for a variety of other conservation applications specific to their farms. Terry received the award for 2007, and the Costellos received the award for 2008.

P. Roy Kemerer, a volunteer with the District for 25 years who served as an associate director, a member of the District board, and the Board's secretary, was posthumously inducted into the Conservation Hall of Honor.



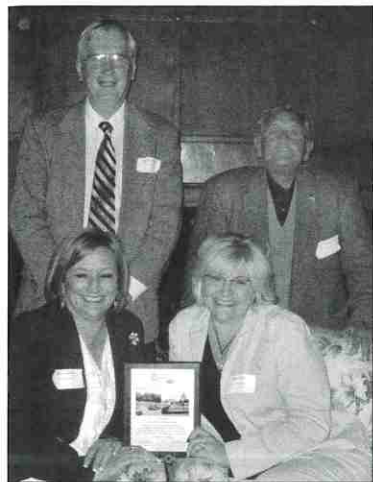
Karen Jurkovic and Charles Duritsa were named Conservation Volunteers of the Year for their service on the new Westmoreland Land Trust.



Westmoreland Land Trust

The 10-month old Westmoreland Land Trust has made great strides in establishing its mission, policies, bylaws and other elements important to its organizational structure, and will soon begin to conserve land that has value to the community, such as land that has scenic value, or land that is ecologically or historically important, or land that offers a recreational opportunity.

Return of the District's Annual Awards Banquet



The City of Greensburg – represented by (l-r) Barb Ciampini, Sue Trout, Randy Finrock, and Emil Peterinelli – was named Municipal Conservation Partner of the Year.



City of Greensburg parking lot

The City of Greensburg's storm sewer system has been effectively relieved of runoff from three acres of land because the city's two new parking lots were built with a variety of innovative practices – from a bioinfiltration swale to infiltration pavers – that allow stormwater to infiltrate into the ground.

Terry Matty (l) was named Farmer of the Year for 2007. Board Secretary Bill Doney presented him with the award.



Terry Matty's farm

Terry Matty is one of the county's pioneers in rotational grazing. He started employing this conservation practice some 15 years ago and now has it in place on nearly all of the 350 acres he manages in South Huntingdon Township. His efforts significantly reduce erosion, and benefit both the Youghiogheny and the Sewickley Creek watersheds.

Thanks to our banquet sponsors, who helped make the evening possible

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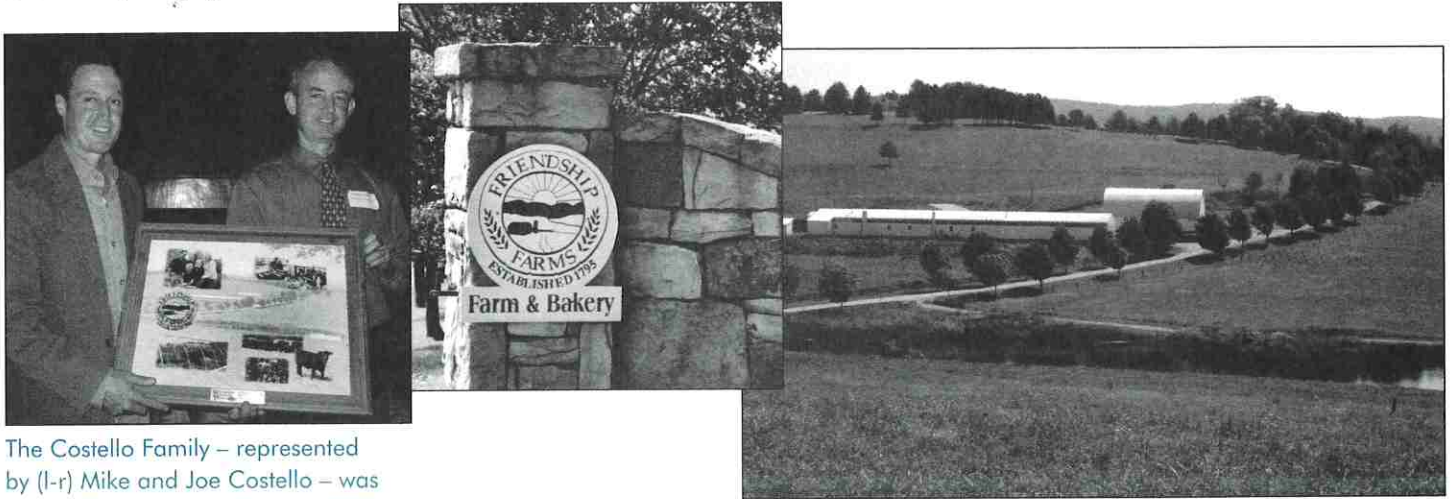
Local Food Producers

Bardine's Country Smokehouse Crabtree kielbasa, sausage	Kerber's Dairy* North Huntingdon ice cream
Bell-View Foods* Penn condiments, relishes	Morris Farm* Irwin organic broccoli, hot peppers, beans
Fisher's Honey* Greensburg beeswax candles, honey, lip balm, lemon hardtack with honey centers	Sand Hill Berries Mount Pleasant jams, jellies, syrups, pies
Friendship Farms* Lycippus grass-fed Angus beef, dinner rolls/breads	Schramm Farms & Orchards* Jeannette green tomatoes, stayman winesap apples, yams, beets, carrots, onions, apple cider
Greenawalt Farms* West Newton all natural eggs from free-roaming chickens	Stone Villa Wine Cellars Acme wine
Hearts Content Farm New Alexandria all natural grain-fed pork; pasture-ranged, grain-fed chicken; potatoes	Turner Dairy Farms, Inc.* Penn Hills† half & half, buttermilk, white & chocolate milk
Jamison Farm Latrobe free-range young lamb	Wendel Springs Farm* Herminie organic garlic, cabbage, green peppers

*These producers generously donated or discounted their products for the banquet.

† Many Westmoreland County farmers provide milk to Turner's, which then processes it in nearby Allegheny County.

continued on page 12



The Costello Family – represented by (l-r) Mike and Joe Costello – was named Farmer of the Year for 2008.

The Costello's farm

The Costello family changed over their entire 370-acre Mount Pleasant Township farm to rotational grazing, which allows animals to graze in only one area of the pasture at a time while the other areas are rested. Their efforts benefit the two watersheds that cross their property – the Loyalhanna and the Sewickley Creek.



P. Roy Kemerer was posthumously inducted into the District's Hall of Honor.



More than 20 members of Roy and Thelma Kemerer's family attended the banquet.

P. Roy Kemerer

Generations of 4-H members, young farmers, and aspiring conservationists grew in their knowledge and love of the land because P. Roy Kemerer committed his time to a variety of youth agriculture organizations. His 25 years of volunteer service to the District is one of the longest in the 59-year history of our organization.

Jack Bogut spun folksy stories to illustrate his top five principles for living, including an experience from his days in military service that taught him the best way to respond to the things that tend to get us stuck in life. He called it the FIDO principle, which stands for "Forget It, Drive On."



Conservation for Horse Owners and Boarders:

Pasture Walk and Equine Association Meeting Reach Out to New Audience

Even though the District has been working with large-animal owners for nearly 60 years, one audience that we have not typically reached is the equestrian community – horse-barn owners, boarders, stable managers, and those who keep horses on their property.

Yet these folks face many of the same land- and water-quality challenges dairy farmers do – keeping a healthy pasture area, preventing over-grazing, and managing mud and manure.

This summer, the District joined with Penn State Cooperative Extension Westmoreland County, the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Lindwood Farm to offer horse owners and boarders a "Pasture Walk" – an event that used both classroom speakers and an on-site visit to a local horse farm to illustrate specific ways to create safe and healthy horse pastures, reduce erosion, and maintain water quality.

Nutrient management, pasture quality, fencing, pond quality, and soil tests and soil amendments were topics presented during the classroom portion of the event. The field trip to Lindwood Farm, a member of the Standardbred Breeders Association of Pa., gave practical examples of how putting best management practices to work maintains pasture quality, controls mud, and manages stormwater runoff.

Nineteen horse owners and boarders joined us for this morning program.

In November, the "Second Chance Equine Association," a group that rescues and rehabilitates horses, asked us

to present a similar program at their monthly meeting.

Dana Rizzo, District/Penn State educator, Dan Griffith, District nutrient management specialist, and Tammy Colt, a former CREP specialist now

with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, shared information on pasture management, water quality, nutrient management plans, and cost-share programs to the group's 38 attendees.



Do Horse Owners and Boarders Need a Nutrient Management Plan?

Horse owners and boarders will need a nutrient management plan if their operation meets two conditions: one, that it has eight or more animals, and two: that the amount of ground available to spread manure on is less than one-half acre per animal.

Pennsylvania set these criteria as of October 1, 2006 in the Nutrient Management Law (Act 38).

A nutrient management plan is a recommended course of action that the landowner takes to keep nutrients (fertilizers and animal wastes) out of nearby streams and waterways.

Depending on the particular conditions of the operation, a nutrient management plan might recommend a variety of measures: adding fencing along a stream to restrict where the animals can cross the waterway...installing gutters and drainage systems in the barnyard/stable area...or building a storage pit for manure.

In addition to conservation benefits for the soil and water, a nutrient management plan also helps the landowners by making them eligible to apply for certain cost-share programs that help pay for the conservation measures they install.

Dan Griffith, the District's nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician, can answer your questions or help you develop a plan, using a standard format developed for this purpose.

His services are free-of-charge. He can be reached at 724-837-5271 or dan@wcdpa.com.

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Envirothon Results

More than 70 students representing 10 area schools participated in the annual Westmoreland County Envirothon competition at Twin Lakes Park on May 5.

Students representing Burrell High School, Derry Area High School, Greensburg Central Catholic High School, Greensburg Salem High School, Kiski Area School District, Mt. Pleasant Area School District, Southmoreland High School, The Kiski School, Yough Senior High School, and the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes were challenged on their knowledge of forests, soil, wildlife, aquatic environments, and this year's special challenge: "recreational impacts on the natural environment."



Westmoreland Enrichment Classes placed first. For the fourth year in a row, this group of home school students based in Norwin won the Westmoreland County Envirothon.

Pictured, l-r, are team members Michael Pacacha, Evan Zajdel, Amanda Wilson, Susie Deemer, and Emily Deemer. At far right is Team Advisor Tammy Deemer.

After their county win, the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes team then went on to represent Westmoreland County in the state Envirothon on May 19 and 20 at Penn State University, where they placed sixth out of a field of 66 teams.



Second place went to Yough High School, represented (l-r) by: Neil Trout, Sam Greenawalt, Cady Muziani, Christine Barrett, and Jenna Johnstone. At far right is one of the team's advisors, Greg King. Not pictured is Co-advisor Jason Kramer.



Third place winners were the Kiski Area High School Team #1. They included (l-r): Matt Miller, Patrick Wilkinson, Laura Beskitt, Ryan Learn, and Eric Hrovski. Team Advisor is Ralph Lemmon.

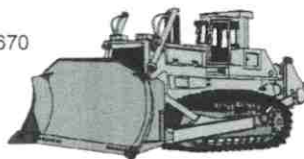
All Westmoreland County students in grades 9-12 are welcome to form a team and participate in the 2009 Envirothon, which will be held on Monday, May 4, from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. at Mammoth Park in Mount Pleasant. There is no charge to participate and study materials are provided.

For more information, contact Mimi at 724-837-5271, ext. 211, or mimi@wcdpa.com.



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Calendar of Events January - May 2009

JANUARY

GIS (Geographic Information System) Workshop

Tuesday, January 6

8:30 a.m. - noon = Web-based

Mapping Systems

1:00 p.m. - 3:30 p.m. = Introduction to Arc GIS

Come to both, or choose the one that's right for you.

Westmoreland County Community College, Commissioners Hall, Room 2401, Youngwood

You don't have to be a computer expert to tap into the wealth of information available through GIS. This workshop will help you discover how to use this powerful electronic tool to mix and match any variety of data to solve your organization's toughest problems, improve your planning, and help make important decisions.

Presenters include: Rob Knight, soil scientist, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service; Dan Griffith, nutrient management specialist/agricultural conservation technician, Westmoreland Conservation District; and Brad Hurlburt, GIS technician, Westmoreland County GIS Department.

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210, or christie@wcdpa.com by December 22. \$10 for nonprofit organizations; \$25 for for-profit organizations, includes snacks. Price includes either or both sessions.

Contractors' Workshop: Commercial Building and Highway Construction BMPs

Friday, January 23

7:30 a.m. = registration and breakfast

8:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon = workshop

Westmoreland Conservation District, Greensburg

This workshop will focus on Best Management Practices for controlling erosion and managing stormwater on both highway and commercial sites.

Proper installation of water bars, filter bags, and stream crossings; erosion controls for large construction sites; and the use of native plants and low-impact development are just some of the practices that will be discussed.

Specific topics include: "Construction Site Plan and Sequence," "Stream Crossing Installation," "Stormwater BMP Construction and Successful Planting," and "Coordinating Pre-construction Meetings with Agencies and



Municipalities."

Presenters include: Darl Rosenquest, PE, PA Department of Environmental Protection, and the staff of the Westmoreland Conservation District.

Participants will receive a copy of the "Typical Best Management Practices for Construction Sites" manual.

A certificate of completion will be awarded at the conclusion of this course.

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210, or christie@wcdpa.com by January 16. \$20, includes breakfast and manual.

MARCH

Forestry II Workshop

Saturday, March 28

8:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Westmoreland Conservation District and Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park, Greensburg

This program is for woodlot owners and others interested in forest stewardship. It will provide information on basic woodlot ecology, silviculture, and measurement and timber-volume determination. Also discussed will be: stand development and forest history, forest succession, tolerance, crown position, relative stand density, and types of cutting. The group will have the opportunity to apply this information by developing a stand prescription in nearby Nature Park. Led by forester Tony Quadro, this workshop is cosponsored by the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association.

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210, or christie@wcdpa.com by March 25. \$10; reduced rate of \$5 for members of the Westmoreland Woodlands Improvement Association.

Engineers' Workshop

This same one-day workshop will be offered twice:

Thursday, March 5

Friday, March 6

Choose the date that best fits your schedule.

Registration = 8:00 a.m.

Workshop = 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Fred Rogers Center, Saint Vincent College, Latrobe

This year's workshop focuses on a mix of timely and new topics especially relevant to engineers, municipal officials, and others who design, review, or build stormwater and erosion control systems. Updates on NPDES, fingerprinting sites, and the innovative use of landscaping for stormwater management are just some of the topics that will be addressed

during the morning sessions.

The afternoon will offer participants a choice of breakout sessions ranging from basic (completing NPDES forms) to more-advanced (using computer tools to model a watershed) topics.

Excerpts from "Liquid Assets," the new documentary produced by Penn State Public Broadcasting on our nation's water, wastewater, and stormwater systems will be shown and discussed.

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210, or christie@wcdpa.com by February 19. \$50, includes breakfast and lunch.

MAY

Envirothon

Monday, May 4

8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Mammoth Park, Mount Pleasant

This academic competition helps students in grades 9-12 develop a better understanding of the environment and their role in it.

Topics include: aquatics, soils, forestry, wildlife and an annual special issue, which this year is biodiversity.

For information on forming a student team and participating, contact Mimi at 724-837-5271, ext. 211, or mimi@wcdpa.com Free.

Also watch for these events, offered in conjunction with some of our conservation partners

Southwest Regional Tillage Conference

Wednesday, January 28

9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Giannilli's II, Route 30, Greensburg

This year's conference features Franke Dijkstra, a pioneer in no-till farming in Brazil, whose efforts earned him his country's Scientific Merit in 2004. Mr. Dijkstra's farm - which includes 4,000 acres of cropland and a 1,000-cow dairy operation - was named the Best Farm of Brazil in 2007 by Exame Magazine and the Best Managed Farm in Brazil in 2007 by Agroconsult. He will speak twice at the event on the topics: "Say 'Yes' to No-Till," and "No-Till Systems."

Other speakers include: Steve Groff of Lancaster County, who pioneered the permanent cover cropping system, "Why I Use Cover Crops & No-Till"; Joel Myers, retired state agronomist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, "Transition to No-Till"; Sjoerd Duiker, assistant professor of soil management and applied soil physics from Penn State University Department of Crops and Soils, "Cover Crops"; and Ted Kuckuck, a southwestern Pennsylvania

continued on page 17

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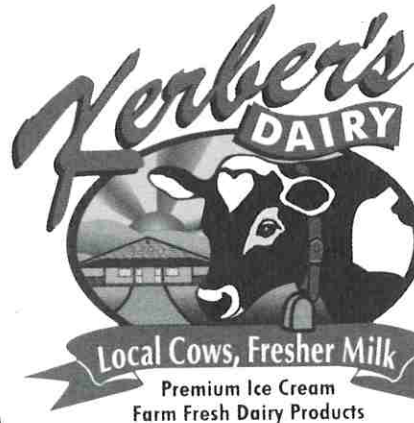
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LANDMARKS

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Contributing Photographers -
 Rob Cronauer, Kathy Hamilton,
 Mimi Thomas-Brooker

Printed on recycled paper 1/09.

farmer and member of the State Conservation Commission, "Planter Maintenance."

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Dan Griffith at 724-837-5271, ext. 103 or Kevin Fry at 724-548-3447 by January 21. \$30, includes lunch. \$40 after January 21.

The Southwest Regional Tillage Conference is sponsored by Penn's Corner Resource Conservation & Development, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Conservation Districts located in the southwestern region of Pennsylvania.

Drinking Water Clinic

Tuesday, April 7

The same clinic is offered twice on this day. Choose the time and location that is best for you.

1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Penn State Cooperative Extension, Somerset OR

7:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Donohoe Center, Greensburg

This clinic, sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension, is designed for anyone with a private drinking water system, such as a well or spring, or anyone interested in the quality of such systems. Topics to be covered include: private water system basics, proper well construction and management, wellhead protection and land-use impacts, drinking water standards and water test interpretation, and solving water problems.

Registration is required. Contact Dana at 724-837-1402, or def18@psu.edu by April 3. \$5.

Earth Day

Saturday, April 18

Time - TBA

Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College, Latrobe

Pond Management Workshop

Saturday, May 9

9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Location TBD

This workshop, sponsored by Penn State Cooperative Extension, is for landowners who either have built or plan to build a pond on their property. The workshop will focus on ponds that are 1/2-acre or larger and will cover pond construction; water-quality concerns; maintenance; permits; plant, weed, and algae identification and control; and fisheries management. The workshop will feature a classroom portion as well as a field trip to a local pond.

Registration is required. Contact Dana at 724-837-1402, or def18@psu.edu by May 6. A fee will be charged.

Thanks, volunteers!



OMNOVA Solutions employees Doug Phillips and Roger Sidehammer (l-r) remove the existing stormwater trail signs to prepare for the installation of new ones as part of the United Way's "Day of Caring" on September 10.

Other OMNOVA Solutions employees – Debbie Baker, Karen Dittman, Roy Hall, Joe Little, Frank Raneri, Mike Robosky, Cindy Obruba, Charlie Yuhas, and Sue Zinkan – also donated their wide range of talents and incredible energies to the District that day.

They worked tirelessly at both the barn and the GreenForge building to paint parking lines and the handicapped ramp railing, weed shrub beds and plant day lilies, fix the water pump, and secure parking bumpers with rebar.

THANK YOU, one and all!



Joanne Caffrey is our newest conservation volunteer.

She recently retired as food service manager for Westmoreland Manor, and has an

interest in conservation.

Joanne and her husband, Mike, attended our Sustainable Energy Field Day this October, and she also joined us for this year's bus tour through the Sewickley Creek Watershed.

Joanne recently spent a few hours helping us with the many preparations for this year's Annual Award Banquet and helping to decorate the barn for the holidays. Thank you!



Special thanks also go out to Margaret Ackerman, Al and Helen Barnett, Thelma Kemerer, and Dorothy Stoner who helped us address, stuff, seal, and stamp the invitations to our Annual Awards Banquet.

The District has a variety of volunteer opportunities available for adults who want to support conservation in our county, including: office work, such as copying and mailing; event setup; light landscaping work (mulching, weeding, and planting); guiding tours of the District's barn headquarters; researching information; minor building maintenance; and more.

If you have some free time and an interest in supporting conservation, contact Mimi Thomas-Brooker at mimi@wcdpa.com or 724-837-5271, ext. 211.

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People In The News

Awards

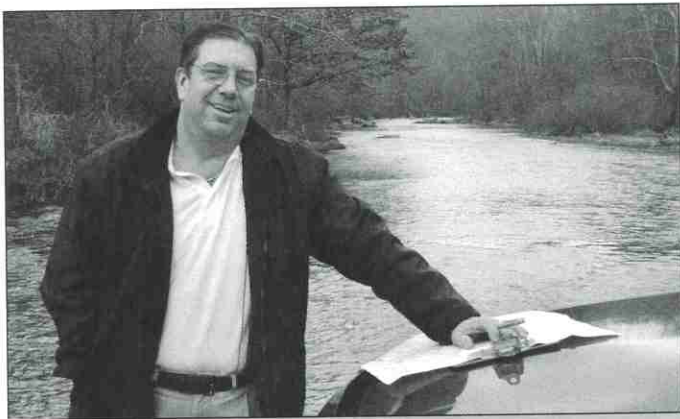
The Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture presented a Leadership Development Award to the Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors in August for their ability to “promote and inspire district leadership excellence.”

The District's board members were recognized specifically for their efforts to assure the relevancy of the organization to the community and its long-term viability.



The all-volunteer District board is made up of: (l-r, standing) Fred Slezak, County Commissioner Tom Balya, Kim Edward Miller, Albert Barnett, and (l-r, seated) Ron Rohall, vice chairman; J. Roy Houston, chairman; Bill Doney, secretary; and Conrad Donovan, treasurer.

Recent Appointments



Pennsylvania Governor Ed Rendell appointed District Manager/CEO **Greg Phillips** to serve as one of three commissioners representing Pennsylvania on The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission.

ORSANCO works to control and abate pollution in the Ohio River Basin. All of the water in the streams that flow through Westmoreland County eventually ends up in the Ohio River and so contributes to the overall water quality of this basin.

“I am looking forward to learning more about the issues facing this six-

state compact and to the opportunity to add my experience with upper watershed work and non-point-source pollution control to the commission,” Greg said.

Non-point-source pollution is the number one source of water

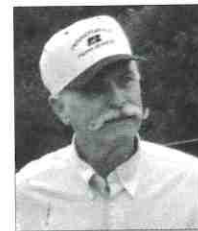
pollution in Pennsylvania. It is called non-point-source because it doesn't originate from a single, easy-to-see place, such as a pipe from a factory. It also can be many different kinds of water pollution. For instance: it could be soil that washes off a long stretch of bare streambank, or motor oil and debris that is carried into a stream from a shopping center parking lot, or excess fertilizers and pesticides that migrate from lawns in a residential development into our waterways.

Phillips' appointment to ORSANCO will run until September 2010.



Karen Jurkovic was recently named an associate director of the District.

She is a communications consultant specializing in conservation and environmental communications. She has more than 30 years' of professional communication and fundraising experience, and is currently serving as the secretary of the new Westmoreland Land Trust (see page 10).



Dwight Sarver, a Greensburg beef producer, also has been named as an associate director of the District.

Dwight currently is president and director of the Westmoreland County Farm Bureau and serves on the Alternate County Farm Service Agency Committee.

He has been active in developing interest in western Pennsylvania in the Pennsylvania Friends of Agriculture's Mobile Ag Education Science Lab, a 'classroom on wheels' where elementary and middle school students conduct experiments on different aspects of agriculture, including Pennsylvania's primary commodities, the environment, biotechnology, and food and fiber.



Mimi Thomas-Brooker was selected as the District's new education program coordinator.

She brings expertise in coordinating information programs and volunteers

for a number of organizations, including the American Red Cross, a professional development firm, and the U.S. military.

She has both a bachelor's and master's degree in music from East Carolina University and sings with the choir at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral in Greensburg. She and her husband, Michael, live in Hempfield Township.

She can be reached at 724-837-5271, ext. 211 or mimi@wcdpa.com.



Sherene Hess was appointed coordinator for Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Area (also see "Transitions," this page).

Sherene previously served as project director of WREN, the Water Resources Education Network, which is a program of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania's Citizen Education Fund, and as executive director of the Indiana County Solid Waste Authority, which also included oversight of the county's recycling center.

Sherene is a graduate of Penn State, with a BS in Environmental Resource Management.

She can be reached at 724-853-5555, ext. 116, or at sherene.hess@pa.usda.gov.

Notable



Jim Pillsbury, District hydraulic engineer, was quoted in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review and in the nationwide newsletter for the American Society of Civil Engineers this summer.

Jim was quoted offering his expertise to a coalition tackling stormwater issues in East Liberty. He explained how perme-

able parking and vegetated roofs could reduce the need for the Pittsburgh community to invest in expensive upgrades to its sewer systems.



Chris Droste, District erosion control specialist, is one of 15 people selected to help develop a new erosion-and sedimentation-pollution-control manual for the state of Pennsylvania.

The user-friendly manual will be very comprehensive, featuring new and innovative control methods that have been proven to work in the field, and good engineering practices.

The committee gathered input from the public, engineers, and conservation district personnel statewide to help them shape the content of the new manual, and they hope to have a draft complete and available for public comment in 2009.



Board Treasurer **Conrad Donovan** and his wife **Sandy** accepted a plaque from the local historical society this summer, designating their home in Hillside as a Derry Area historic site.

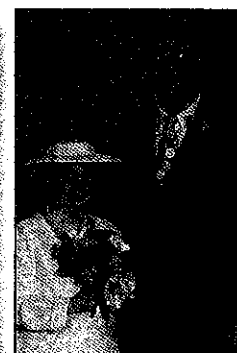
The house they live in was built in 1848, with a two-story addition added in the early 1900s.

The Donovans, with the help of Dale Forsha and Vaughn Donovan, restored the home to its original period over the course of four years.

Transitions



Bill & Nicole Miller



Sarah & Jim Pillsbury

Two District staff joined the ranks of married couples recently.

Nicole Bossart, District erosion control specialist, is now known as Nicole Miller after she and Bill Miller were married on October 4. The couple makes their home in Youngwood.

Jim Pillsbury, District hydraulic engineer, and Sarah Frankland were married on November 22, and are making their home in Southwest Greensburg.



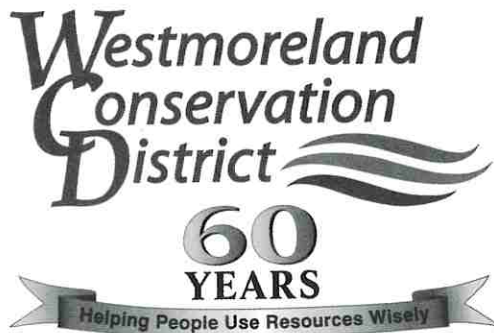
Bobbi Bailey, coordinator of Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development Area since 2004, recently returned to her home state of West Virginia to work with the state Department of Agriculture in Morgantown (also see "Recent Appointments," this page).



Natalie Irizarry, soil scientist with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, recently took a new appointment in the state of Wisconsin. Natalie will work on updating the soil survey for that part of the country, just as she did for us here in western Pennsylvania.

Natalie and her husband Javier recently added a daughter, Mia, to their family.

What's in store for 2009 – Long-range planning, 60th anniversary



A look ahead and a look back.

The District's staff and volunteers will be thinking hard about both the future and the past in 2009 as they work on two major projects: developing a new, comprehensive long-range plan to guide the organization for the next three to five years...and planning for the District's 60th anniversary celebration with a retrospective of conservation accomplishments of the past.

Long-range Plan

Under the leadership of Board Vice Chairman Ron Rohall, the District began this fall to take the first steps toward creating a new long-range plan. "One of the things we all agreed on is that we want to involve members of the local community in this process," Ron

said. "We want our plan to reflect the input of the people who use our services and who benefit from the work that we do. It is important that we understand what their conservation needs and priorities are...how they want us to respond to those...and where we can best put our energies and resources."

Community members will be asked to be a part of focus groups early next year. "I want to extend an invitation to our *Landmarks* readers that, if they would like to be involved in this long-range planning process, to please let us know." Interested readers can call the District's receptionist, Joanne Kitsko 724-837-5271, or send an email with the subject line "long-range plan" to wcd@wcdpa.com. Be sure to include your name and contact information.

As one of the first steps in the planning process, Ron led a small group of staff and Board members this fall in a goal-by-goal review of the District's current long-range plan. "It was clear that we have accomplished virtually 100% of the goals we outlined in our current long-range plan, including the creation of a dedicated, locally focused conservation education program. The District has always emphasized education, and all of our technical staff focus

on it as a key element in their interactions with the public. But, in the late 1990s when we were working on our current long-range plan, it became clear that, to be truly effective in promoting the conservation message, we needed a broader and more deliberate outreach effort. So we put that as a top priority in the plan. Then, it was just a dream; today, we have a 7,600-square-foot education facility, a two-person support staff for the education program, and a comprehensive curriculum that this year offered 17 programs and reached 1,575 people. In our new long-range plan, we hope to set goals that are equally as relevant and meaningful to the community," Ron said.

1949-2009: 60 Years of Conservation

Brainstorming began shortly after this year's Annual Awards Banquet for the best way to celebrate the District's 60th anniversary in 2009.

Preliminary ideas include a year-long series of events and a new twist on the annual banquet.

Watch future issues of *Landmarks* and the District's website, www.wcdpa.com, for more information.

Westmoreland Conservation District

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