

Conservation Education Center Launched

A long-time District dream took a major step toward becoming a reality when Allegheny Power presented a \$25,000 check to help build the Center for Conservation Education in Westmoreland County. This unique facility will allow us to expand our education programs and reach more residents with the conservation message.

The presentation took place July 13th at the proposed site of the center, just inside the grounds of Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park and adjacent to Donohoe Center, Donohoe Road, Hempfield Township.

In presenting the check to District Chairman J. Roy Houston, Peter Skrgic, senior vice president of Allegheny Power, said his company strongly supported environmental education as "the real key to preserving and enhancing our natural resources. It's environmental education—not just in school, but throughout one's lifetime—that will lead to continuing environmental stewardship," he said.

Claude Petroy, director of Westmoreland County Department of Public Works, told more than 60 guests, "As our county continues to grow, develop, and put more pressure on our natural resources, the work of this center in promoting good stewardship will become increasingly important." He called the center a much-needed and logical addition to the environmental education work the naturalist at Twin Lakes and others in the county are doing.

A survey of community-sponsored environmental education programs reveals they are doing well in reaching younger students (kindergarten through junior high) in the county, but later, there is no comprehensive effort to reach older students or adults.

"The center for Conservation Education will specifically address this need," said Greg Phillips, district



(Above) Installing an Interpretive Trail marker, left to right are Peter Skrgic, J. Roy Houston, Claude Petroy, and Commissioner Richard Vidmer.

manager. "It will allow us to expand our education programs for developers, engineers, farmers, and other members of the community who work daily with our county's natural resources, and to reach

continued on page 2



(Above) Guests enjoy the Richard E. Thorn Memorial Gardens.

RESTORED, RECLAIMED BARN PROVIDES SYMBOL

The Center itself will be a dramatic symbol of the conservation message—a bank barn, constructed at least in part from materials used in a once-working barn in Westmoreland County.

Reclaiming barn materials that have fallen into disuse or are about to be lost to development is practicing the conservation ethic we preach and honoring our history. What we know as the Westmoreland Conservation District today began more than 50 years ago as "barn meetings"—local farmers

gathering in a neighbor's barn to discuss soil, crops, and conservation.

Restoring and reusing a barn also graphically illustrates today's need to conserve resources and heritage, and ties directly with the county's Farmland Preservation Program, which helps guarantee that the county's prime agricultural land will not be developed. The Westmoreland Conservation District provides office space for the county's Farmland Preservation Program in its Donohoe Center headquarters.

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County Farmland Preservation P

The Westmoreland County Farmland Preservation Program is in high gear. We are placing the largest contiguous tract of farmland ever protected in Southwestern Pennsylvania under easement.

This picturesque and highly productive 500 acres of farmland, owned by Heinnickel Farms, Inc., brings the total acres protected in Westmoreland county to 3,112 acres on twenty farms. Three additional farms will be included by year-end.

The Heinnickel Farm is a beef cattle and cropping farm in Hempfield Township, adjacent to the historic village of Hannastown, three miles from the City of Greensburg. Ranking number one of fifty-four farm applications reviewed in 1997, the farm has been a #1 priority project for the past 1 1/2 years. Funding to protect this farm is being provided by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, Westmoreland County, private donations, and for the first time in Southwestern Pennsylvania, the United States Department of Agriculture. The 1995 USDA Farm Bill included funding for farmland protection, thanks to the efforts of Senator Rick Santorum.

In 1855, following his service in the Civil War and at Gettysburg, Adam Shuck, Great-grandfather of the current owners, (Alquin, Philip, William, Adam, Mary (Wine), and John Heinnickel), he purchased the first tract of land that



This productive farm field does double duty as an urban growth

would become the cornerstone of Heinnickel Farms, Inc. Conservation of the land was important to the landowners. In 1952 Sylvester Heinnickel became one of the first Conservation Cooperators in the county, establishing contour strips on all cropland. The layout of those strips by USDA in 1952 is still maintained today. In 1958, Sylvester Heinnickel was named Outstanding Cooperator of the Year by the Westmoreland Conservation District. Again in 1989, Alquin Heinnickel, current

Conservation Center... continued from page 1

out for the first time in a comprehensive way to members of the general public as well."

County Commissioner Chairman, Richard Vidmer, helped install the first marker for the new interpretive trail that will wind through the Donohoe Center grounds and into Nature Park.

A campaign to raise the additional funds to build the Center, estimated to be in the range of \$100,000, is under way. Ground breaking is set for the spring of 1999.

PARTNERSHIP POWER

The Center already has received an endorsement from the Westmoreland County Commissioners and a commitment of support from Allegheny Power and several private individuals, putting it well on the way to being the latest in a long line of conservation projects realized because of the power of partnerships.

In 1994, similar partnerships led to the construction of Donohoe Center, a one-stop conservation resource center. And, in 1996, partnership efforts brought about the revitalization and rededication of Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park, Westmoreland County's unique 63-acre passive recreation area.

Program Takes Giant Step Forward



boundary.

operator and president of the corporation, was named Outstanding Farm Cooperator.

Conservation practices included installation of over 10,000 feet of diversions, contour crop system and crop rotation. Improvements include installation of drop boxes and sub-surface drains and construction of several farm ponds. Most recent improvements to the farm include use of conservation tillage systems almost exclusively on all cropland.

Alquin has been a leader in learning about and using an intensive grazing system for the beef cattle raised on his farm, with 95% of the farm used as cropland and pastureland. The farm is superior in the amount of prime farmland soils when compared to typical farms in Western Pennsylvania. In Westmoreland, only 18.93% are classified as prime farmland soils. This farm is 32% prime farmland and 68% soils of statewide importance. Crops grown on the farm include corn for grain, wheat, alfalfa hay, oats, barley and soybeans.

Easements have been placed on 646 acres of farmland in nearby Salem Township, just two miles from the Heinnickel site. The likelihood that these farms would be converted to non-farm use is high, based on the close proximity

to Greensburg and Hempfield Township, the second fastest growth municipality in the county.

Land in near proximity to Heinnickel's is being converted to non-agricultural use at a rapid pace, as growth from Greensburg reaches north. Plans are underway to develop a golf course to the west of the farm, converting 234 acres of farmland to non-ag use. Two miles west, along SR 819, construction of "Northpoint" housing plan continues, creating approximately 150 new homes. To the south, less than 1 mile from Greensburg, "Lindwood Estates" is being converted to housing, on 300 acres of farmland. A 32 acre site adjacent to Lindwood Estates will become a retirement housing community.

Protection of the Heinnickel farm will help create an urban-growth boundary to slow development before it moves into the productive valley of large-scale dairy and cropping farms north of Greensburg to Route 22. The future of our agriculture industry lies in protecting and preserving the land where agriculture is now productive and helping to keep those businesses viable.

We congratulate the Heinnickel family for their foresight in protecting this land for future generations.



NATURALLY

Delicious

by Karen Barnhart

Zucchini & Tomatoes

- 1 small zucchini or summer squash – sliced ¼ inch thick
- 1 small onion – sliced into ¼ inch wedges
- 1 teaspoon olive or vegetable oil
- 1 tablespoon water
- 2 small or 1 large tomato cut into small wedges
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- pepper to taste

Using a 9" skillet, cook zucchini and onion in oil over medium heat. Add water as zucchini begins to stick to pan. Add remaining ingredients until zucchini reaches desired tenderness. Stir constantly.

KATHY'S KIDS KORNER - Jim's Engineering Numbers Match

By Jim Pillsbury

**These numbers are used in our various conservation programs.
Can you match the numbers with their correct association?**

Square feet in one acre	37
Counties in Pennsylvania	7,000
Inches of average yearly rainfall in Westmoreland County	43,560
Volume of sediment basins per tributary acre, cubic feet	3.1415
Ratio of a pipe's circumference to its diameter	3
Year that Westmoreland Conservation District was founded	67
Square miles in Westmoreland County	1949
The General Permit which allows streambank repair	1,000
Acres in one square mile	65
Number of municipalities in Westmoreland County	640

MORE TREES OF DISTINCTION

Several new trees have recently been added to Westmoreland County's Tree of Distinction list. Here are some of the more interesting entries:

A Hawkin's oak, *Quercus hawkinsae*, which was submitted by Bill Paxton of Latrobe, may be the first of its kind submitted in the state. This tree, which is a cross between a black oak and a red oak, is near the Shirey Cemetery on White School Road. It measured 53" in diameter and 70' in height.

An osage orange tree, *Maclura pomifera*, measuring 42" in diameter and 56' in height was found near route 130 in the Seton Hill area. These are the usually small trees seen along roadsides that have the large green balls in the fall.

The largest white oak, *Quercus alba*, tree found to date is at the intersection of route 22 and Old School Road in Murrysville. This tree measured a massive 66" diameter and 75' in height with a 106' crown spread. This may be the oldest tree in the county at 300 years plus.

By far the largest tulip poplar, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, was found on the Manon property in Ligonier Township. This tree measured 61" in diameter and a whopping 138' in height; the tallest tree in the county. Unfortunately, this tree was the victim of one of the recent thunderstorms and blew down. Hopefully one of its offspring will attain an even greater height someday.

More than 25 new trees have been added to the list over the past several months. If you know of a very large tree or a tree of historical significance, or an unusual tree, call us at the District office and nominate it for Tree of Distinction recognition.

Correction: In the last issue of Landmarks, we incorrectly printed the phone number of our advertiser, Roth, Moore, & Associates. Their correct phone number is (412) 829-4676, and their fax is (412) 829-6515. We apologize for the error.

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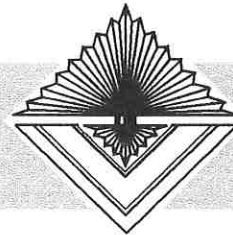
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News 'n Notes...

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



Holly Dugan

THE DISTRICT is always looking for growth opportunities for our employees. For example, nutrient management specialist/conservation planner, Holly Dugan, will take a leave of absence to teach environmental education at the Y.M.C.A. of the Rockies in Winter Park, Colorado. The course features experiential education including water ecology, beaver ecology, and challenge courses. The two month session runs from Aug. 31 until Oct. 30.

THE DEP, Division of Waterways, Wetlands & Erosion Control will be holding its annual Chapter 102 (Erosion Control)/NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System)/105 (Stream Encroachment) training session in Williamsport, PA on Sept. 15-17. Kathy Fritz, Jim Pillsbury, and Craig Barras, will be attending.



THE DISTRICT HOSTED a half-day, educational seminar for farmland owners June 30 at Donohoe Center. Thirty farmers listened to presenters from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)-Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)-Bureau of Forestry, the Westmoreland County Farmland Preservation Program, and the Westmoreland Conservation District. The sessions included woodlot management, farmland water management, nutrient management, conservation planning, farmland preservation, and the proper storage & disposal of milk house water. District Director, Keith Walters, who has a dairy farm in Slickville, was the Chairman of the organizing committee.

THREE INTERNS WORKED at the Westmoreland Conservation District this summer. Jennifer Lenhart, J.R. Myers, and Chris Youngbauer gained valuable on-the-job experience.

Jennifer updated the Conservation Directory, created a computer display for the County Fair, and wrote an article for and helped plan the fall issue of "Landmarks." The senior is majoring in public

relations and advertising at Penn State University. "This internship has introduced me to many of the things I will be doing in public relations," Jennifer said.

J.R. spent most of his time outside landscaping, working on trail development and observing professionals. "It gave me a chance to look at different job possibilities and organizations," J.R. said. He is planning to graduate from Penn State in May 2001 with a BA in Landscape Architecture.

Chris completed her second summer surveying, doing inspections, and helping out many of our staff members. She is a senior at Penn State, planning to graduate next May with a degree in Civil Engineering, and a minor in Environmental Engineering.

ON APRIL 17, 1997, the Pennsylvania General Assembly approved House Bill 67-the Transportation Revenue Bill. Governor Ridge promptly signed the bill into law as Act 3 of 1997. Included in the law is a new Section 9106 of the Motor Vehicle Code creating a \$5 million annual, non-lapsing appropriation earmarked for "Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance." The goal is the safe, efficient and environmentally sound maintenance of dirt and gravel roads with the mitigation of sediment pollution to waterways.

The law identifies as top priority, previously recognized pollution 'trouble' spots and dirt and gravel roads within watersheds designated as Exceptional Value (EV) or High Quality Waters (HQ). Each county will be apportioned an amount of money based on surveys done by Trout Unlimited. This money will be awarded to municipalities and other public agencies that have been certified at a two-day workshop, have dirt and/or gravel roads that are causing sediment pollution to an EV or HQ stream, and have their grant applications approved by the 4-member Quality Assurance Board (QAB) that oversees the program in each county.

The District recently hosted representatives of 11 different municipalities from Westmoreland and Allegheny Counties to the certification workshop which covered erosion control and other maintenance strategies. These municipalities are now eligible to receive grants from the Conservation District.

District staff and QAB members have already met with some townships and plan to meet with others on this program.

PROGRAMS

THE PROJECT to clean up the mine drainage in Monastery Run in Latrobe is making good progress.

Construction of the two remaining wetlands that serve as passive treatment areas will be complete soon. Wetland #1 should be complete by mid-October, and Wetland #2 by late August. The other wetland-#3-was completed and began working at the end of last summer. It is effectively removing about 200 pounds per day of the polluting iron oxide

from the stream.

When the other two wetlands begin working, they should clean-up about 6,000 feet of Monastery Run.

DISTRICT BOARD AND STAFF

DISTRICT EROSION Control Specialist, Craig Barras is currently attending the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) at the University of Pittsburgh in Oakland. He is pursuing a Masters Degree in Public Administration, specializing in Environmental Management. He hopes to complete the program by Spring of 2000.



NORTHERN PIKE (*Esox lucius*), Brown Trout (*Salmo trutta*) and many other fish species were recently discovered in seven receiving streams heavily impacted by *net alkaline mine discharges* during fish surveys conducted by WPCAMR Watershed Coordinator Bob Ventorini (e-mail: minewater@aol.com). These streams are all located in the Youghiogheny River watershed and, because of deep mine inputs affiliated with the Pittsburgh Coal Seam, have a considerable amount of dissolved and suspended iron. Bob is currently working on a Master of Science Degree in Biology at California University of PA. His thesis is entitled "Correlation between ionic concentration and fish and microinvertebrate community structure in seven southwestern Pennsylvania streams receiving net alkaline deep mine discharges." Bob has won first place for presentations of his research for both the Annual Meeting of the *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania University Biologists* and the 54th Annual Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference. He will be recognized by the *American Fisheries Society* at next year's Fish and Wildlife Conference in New Hampshire.

CONSERVATION CONNECTIONS



JACOBS CREEK is now an official part of the watershed network in place in Westmoreland County following its first meeting June 22. The reformed Watershed Association has been trying to develop support and get input from interested parties. The watershed was reformed because of increasing concern about the sediment in the new flood control channel in Scottdale, and the need to address the issue before it spreads to other areas. These activities are being coordinated by Michael Barrick, Scottdale Boro.

Flowers, Flowers, Everywhere



Volunteers work to add colorful accents to Route 30.

Six thousand flowers! That is how many annual bloomers volunteers planted at the county's latest highway beautification project at the intersection of Route 30 and Greengate Road in Hempfield Township near the Gabriel's Plaza.

Members of the Greensburg Jaycees, Hempfield Rotary, and the Penn State Master Gardener Program joined representatives from Adelphoi Village and the Westmoreland Conservation District for the May 30th "plant-a-thon" of celosia, coleus, and canna lilies.

Major sponsors of the project are:

Adam Eidemiller, Inc., the City of Greensburg, Hempfield Township, WALMART, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the Westmoreland Conservation District. The Greensburg Jaycees and Hempfield Rotary will take care of maintaining the new floral beds.

Other sites identified for future beautification projects include: the intersection of Rtes. 982 and 30; the intersection of Rtes. 119 and 30; the corridor of Rte. 22 between Rtes. 66 and 119; Rte 119 south of I-70; and I-70 at either the Monessen or Belle Vernon exit.

Westmoreland Conservation District

50th Anniversary Celebration Plans Underway

Several events are being planned throughout 1999 marking the 50th anniversary celebration of the Westmoreland Conservation District. Committees have been organized and assigned to formulate and coordinate plans for various events throughout the year, and many exciting and unique ideas have already begun to surface for this milestone celebration.

Events now in the planning stage include a Conservation Summit, an Arbor Day planting, a fall barbecue and Conservation/Education Center dedication, and a special annual awards banquet.

Coinciding with the major events mentioned, will be happenings such as preserving a time capsule containing memorable documents, photos and various artifacts; and a time-line wall display at Donohoe Center commemorating the 50th anniversary celebration year.

'Find The Compass Winners' Set; Contest Continues

The last issue of *Landmarks* launched a new contest based on the new theme of our recently issued annual report: "Road Map to the Future." Scott Wolber of Delmont, Marty Kuzmowski of Greensburg, and Mark Kimmel of Dillsburg were the 4th, 9th, and 14th callers to correctly locate the compass in last months issue.

They all won a map of South-western Pennsylvania Trout Waters.

The contest is continued in this issue where a much smaller version of the compass shown here will be hidden. Callers 3, 5, and 12 will win the popular map.



LANDMARKS

The Official Newsletter of the Westmoreland Conservation District

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

Winner, National Association of Conservation Districts, 1997 Communications Competition

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