

When it rains, it pours –

Requests Flood In For District's Stormwater Management Expertise



Like runoff from a storm, it's simply a natural consequence: the District's reputation as a leader in stormwater management is prompting a growing number of requests for its expertise.

"Our primary efforts with stormwater management have always been focused here in Westmoreland County, and developers and municipal officials traditionally make up the bulk of our clients," explained Greg Phillips, Westmoreland Conservation District manager/CEO. "But, for the past year or so, in addition to that regular work, we also have been getting at least two or three calls a week, asking for stormwater help, from organizations that are either outside Westmoreland County, outside the audiences we traditionally serve, or both. We've had organizations in Allegheny, Butler, Lawrence, and as far away as Luzerne County (Greater Wilkes-Barre, Hazleton and Pittston areas) in north-eastern Pennsylvania call and ask if our staff can come and advise them on how to manage stormwater."

The deluge is due to the fact that the Westmoreland Conservation District has one of the most established and well-respected stormwater management programs in Pennsylvania. In fact, it was the first such program to be created in the state when, in 1987, the District's Board of Directors identified the need



Jim Pillsbury gave nearly 50 presentations on stormwater throughout Pennsylvania last year. One of Jim's most recent presentations was to some 200 people at a statewide training event sponsored by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

for a dedicated stormwater management effort to address the urbanization and growth trends in the region.

In 1988, Jim Pillsbury joined the District's stormwater program as hydraulic engineer and, over the past 19 years, he has built a high level of credibility and respect for his expertise and practical guidance. So it's no surprise that Jim currently is the District's greatest in-demand speaker. Last year, he was on the road from Pittsburgh to Harrisburg an average of four days a month, talking about stormwater management to specialized audiences that included more than 540 land surveyors, township solicitors, architects, utility companies, contractors, municipal employees, landscape architects, engineers, lawyers, and builders.

The increased demand for stormwater information is being driven by a combination of factors. One is the guidelines recently issued by the state that encourage a new way of thinking

about managing stormwater – innovative approaches that focus more on infiltration (letting the stormwater soak into the ground) than on mere retention (simply capturing and temporarily holding the water in a detention pond). Another is the growing realization of the benefits of good stormwater management, from improved water quality to less need for communities to raise taxes to build new storm sewer infrastructure.

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Find the Keys...

The three winners of our "Find the Keys" contest in the Spring 2007 issue of Landmarks are: caller #3, Glenn Williams of Jeannette; caller #12, Eleanor Quigley of North Huntingdon; and caller #18, Louis Diamond of Masontown.

Congratulations!

And thanks to everyone who participated in this very popular contest over the years. Hard to believe, but we've been running it in Landmarks for over 10 years!

Since our very first contest in the spring of 1997, we've had a total of 27 contests, and more than 500 people calling in to tell our Receptionist

Joanne Kitsko where the various items were hidden.

The hidden items always tied to the theme of our annual report, and over the years, we've hidden (and you've found) a fiddle, a compass, a magnifying glass, cottage and car keys, a windmill, an artist's brush, and a soup spoon.

More than 80 winners (determined by what number caller they were) have received various conservation-related items - mugs, hats, shirts, and so on.

We hope you've enjoyed this column as much as we've enjoyed running it.

Watch for something new next year in Landmarks!

Hidden In Plain View

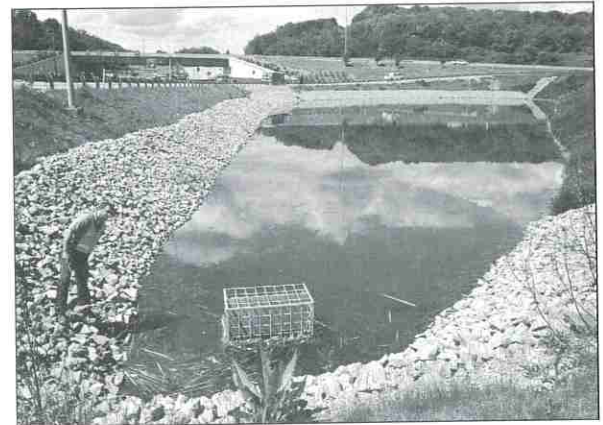
Conservation practices are all around us - cleaning the water, protecting the soil, preventing flooding, and bringing about a variety of benefits that make life a little better.

But you may not realize that any of this is happening, because many of these important conservation places aren't marked with signs or noted on maps. In fact, they often blend so naturally with the environment that they essentially are 'hidden in plain view.'

One of these often-overlooked places is at the intersection of Routes 22 and 66 (see photo above).

This interchange is called a SPUI - a Single Point Urban Interchange. It is the first of its kind to be built east of the Mississippi River, and it is important from a conservation standpoint because it uses less land than a traditional cloverleaf. That means there was less need to move earth, and so less chance for erosion and dirt to end up in nearby waterways.

This interchange also is worth noting because of the work done here to capture and clean the rain and melting snow and ice that runs off all of this highway pavement.



Stormwater pond at Route 66/22 interchange

You'll notice that there are wetlands in three of the four grassy "corners" of the SPU Interchange (the areas along the ramps). These act as natural treatment areas for this water runoff.

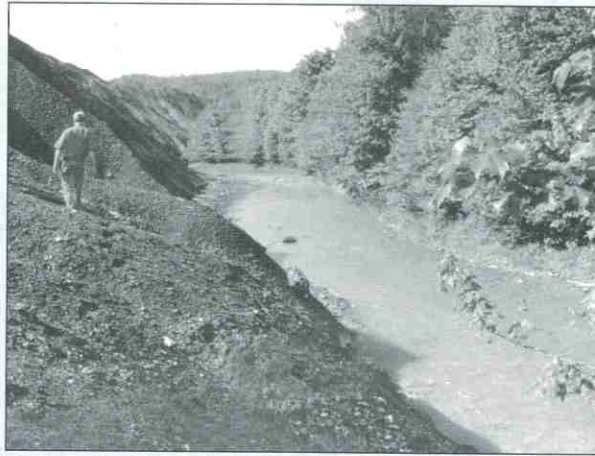
The wetland next to the Route 22 eastbound ramp is special because it is designed to stay wet most of the time (unlike the other wetland areas at this interchange, which slowly release their water). A wet pond like this one contains a large number of biological elements, which are important for enhancing water quality.

The quality of the water here is especially critical because it will flow into Beaver Run, which is the source of drinking water for some 50,000 Westmoreland County homes and businesses.

Update: Public Input Gathered on How to Use Funding for Abandoned Coal Mine Cleanup

As you may have heard, Pennsylvania is poised to receive more than \$1.4 billion in federal funds over the next 15 years to fix the water and land pollution problems that have plagued our environment for so many decades – long after the coal-mining operations that created them ceased.

Ten public meetings have been held throughout Pennsylvania's coal regions since the federal money was appropriated last December to gather recommendations on how the funds should be used. Among the ideas discussed were ways to direct more money toward fixing acid mine drainage problems. Under the revised law that made the cleanup funds available (the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act), Pennsylvania now has the option to set aside an even greater amount of its annual grants to address water qual-



Coal refuse piles can contribute to water pollution.

ity problems stemming from abandoned coal mines.

Pennsylvania is the only state receiving funds from SMCRA to ask for public input in how the money should be used.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the agency that held the public meetings, plans to create focus groups as the next step in the

process of determining how best to use the funding. Bruce Golden, regional coordinator, Western PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, estimated that this “probably will take many more months, as there’s still much to be done on the state level.” However, the first of the funding arrived in Pennsylvania in October. “Pennsylvania saw a modest increase in funding (around \$30 million, up from \$22 million) starting in the federal fiscal year that began in October,” Bruce explained.

“However, it will take several years for the allocations to fully ramp up to the \$100 million level. That’s why there’s time to fully implement the necessary changes.”

Nearly \$15 million worth of high-priority projects in our county have been identified by the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation.

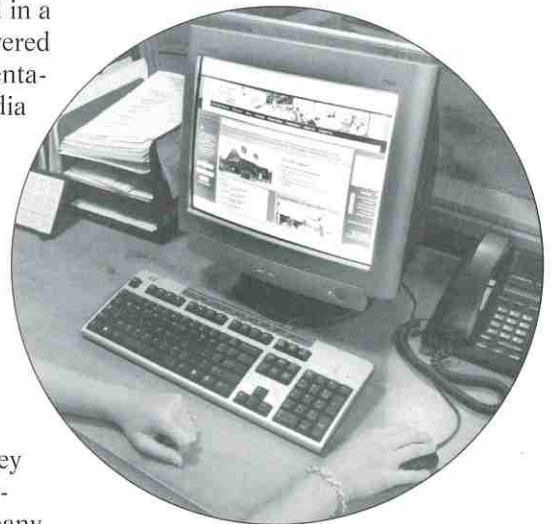
www.wcdpa.com

Have you visited the District’s website lately? It has a brand new look and more information than ever before – copies of entire publications (like the District’s new stormwater manual, and back issues of *Landmarks*)...an interactive calendar with dates you can click on to find out what’s happening in the conservation arena...links to frequently used forms...a photo gallery...and the latest District news releases.

The District has had a website since about 2001, but its evolution as a major communication vehicle began in late 2004, when our Communications Advisory Committee made recommendations to expand the website’s capabilities. That recommendation was followed in early 2005 with the hiring of Mark Jackson as Visual Communications Specialist, and a trip he and board members Connie Donovan and Ron Rohall made to the National Association of Conservation Districts

conference where they participated in a communications seminar. “We covered print communications, and representatives from WestWise and AegisMedia talked about website design and function,” Mark Jackson explained. “These companies had recently worked with the Spokane (Washington) Conservation District to create a website that had great depth of information, appealing visual design and easy navigation, and we all were very impressed with what they had done. It was clear that they understood the work that conservation districts do, and that the company

continued on page 4



We are continually refining the website, and welcome your input.

If you have any comments, ideas, or suggestions you’d like to share, please send them to Mark Jackson at mark@wcdpa.com.

also had a fantastic ability to create the “wiring” – the internal navigation and linking that a website has to have – to guarantee that people get to the information they’re looking for, no matter where they are on the site or how they enter it.”

With Board approval in late 2005, Westwise and AegisMedia were retained as consultants to help guide and advise the District on how to create the kind of website it needed...and to do the programming necessary to actually create the site and make it function so it could be updated easily.

Mark, Administrative Assistant Sandy Dzendzel, and Communications Consultant Karen Jurkovic have been working with District technical staff on content – and have created foundational pages on the District’s many programs and services. All three also learned how to add, change, or remove information from the website. “This team approach has been really helpful in keeping the site up-to-date,” Mark said. “We can add news releases as soon as they’re issued, copies of publications as soon as they are printed, and notices of upcoming events as soon as the details are finalized.”

Whether or not the Internet is your preferred way to get information, there is no doubt that it is becoming an increasingly popular choice. A survey released last year by the Pew Internet & American Life Project showed that in December 2005, 44% of the adult population in America was online on a typical day. “We felt that the District had to create a communications vehicle that could reach out to this audience with information about our programs, services, and conservation,” said Greg Phillips, District manager/CEO.

The new site quietly went “live” in April. After waiting a few months to make sure it was working well, the District is now beginning to more openly market the site.

“We still have much more content that we want to add,” Mark said. So check it out at www.wcdpa.com. And visit often. There’s sure to be something new.

County Growing Greener Program – *Mill Creek Improvement*



Mill Creek’s six-foot-high, almost-vertical banks of soft loamy soil meant this site was extremely vulnerable to erosion, with the loose soil polluting the stream and degrading water quality from this point on. Improvement work included re-grading the streambanks (shown in process here) to reduce the severity of their slope.

One of Westmoreland County’s natural treasures, Mill Creek, recently got even better after some much-needed improvements to stabilize its streambank and slow the amount of sediment entering this exceptional waterway.

This important tributary of the Loyalhanna Creek that supplies drinking water for some residents of Ligonier Township and affects water quality in Latrobe, New Alexandria, and communities downstream, was identified by the Westmoreland County Commissioners last fall as one of 21 separate conservation projects to be funded under the state’s Growing Greener II County Environmental Initiative. It is the first stream-stabilization project to be completed under that initiative, which also includes funding for new trails and recreation areas, farmland and open space preservation, and other projects to improve the quality of life in Westmoreland County.

Mill Creek is one of the last remaining high-quality recreational resources in the Ligonier Valley, according to an extensive report prepared in 2004 by

the Forbes Trail Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

The group’s 2004 conservation plan for the watershed identified the creek’s outstanding qualities – its pristine beginnings in Laurel Mountain and the fact that it is a viable fishery for nearly its entire length. “Mill Creek is one of the last remaining high-quality recreational resources in the Ligonier Valley,” the report determined.

Trout Unlimited also noted Mill Creek’s few but significant trouble spots, including the site where Hannas Run enters the stream just below the community of Oak Grove. Here, the report said, bank erosion is perhaps “the most severe of any area in the entire watershed,” and deemed this site the “number one priority” for remediation.

When the flow of Hannas Run struck the eastern side of Mill Creek, there wasn’t much to stop it. The lack of streamside trees and vegetation, along with Mill Creek’s six-foot-high, almost-vertical banks of soft, loamy soil meant this site was extremely vulnerable to erosion, with the loose soil polluting the stream and degrading water quality

s Benefit Communities Downstream



The nearly completed project features re-graded streambanks; logs, stone, and tree roots added to slow the force of the water; and new grass planted to stabilize the bank.

from this point on. The severe erosion from this site was carried downstream, and was a major contributor to the high volume of sediment that regularly builds up where Mill Creek crosses Route 30, just west of Ligonier – an area that frequently has to be dredged to prevent flooding.

To solve the problem, the Westmoreland Conservation District, the Forbes Trail Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Loyalhanna Watershed Association, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Youth Conservation Corps, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Outside In, the Boys Brigade Camp Association, and the local landowners joined forces and took a cue from nature. “A large log had fallen into the stream against the east bank of Mill Creek and was helping to deflect the force of Hannas Run. So we added eight more like it – configuring these nine logs in groups of three, and anchoring them at an angle that would deflect the flow of the water from Hannas Run,” explained Rob Cronauer, watershed specialist for the Westmoreland Conservation District. This is one of the first times this

“log deflector” approach has been used to improve a stream in Westmoreland County.

The remediation team also added a large mass of tree roots and 100 tons of stone to take the force of the water flowing in from Hannas Run, and planted 100 live willow branch cuttings to help stabilize the vulnerable, 200-foot section of Mill Creek’s streambank, which they also re-graded to reduce the severity of its slope.

James Schmidt, who with his wife, Twila, owns a cottage along Mill Creek, observed the work in progress. “On a Thursday morning, [the work group] converged in the vicinity of our backyard. When they left on Friday, it was a new place. It was a tremendous accomplishment in a short amount of time. We are grateful to all who worked there, and for the funds that helped to make this project a success,” he wrote in a letter

to Westmoreland County Commission Chairman Tom Balya.

This fall, the work group put the finishing touches on the job by planting 25 six-foot-high young trees to bring even more stability to the streambank.

The Westmoreland County Board of Commissioners, working with the Westmoreland Conservation District last fall, identified five other water-quality projects to be done for streams in the county – in Allegheny Township, New Kensington, Mount Pleasant Township, Derry Township, and Donegal Township. “The projects we identified for funding in Westmoreland County address many of the concerns our residents told us were important to them when we did the county’s comprehensive plan,” said Commission Chairman Tom Balya, who also serves on the Board of Directors of the Westmoreland Conservation District. “These improvements will benefit all of us – our quality of life, our environment and our economy.”

Growing Greener II is the single largest environmental investment in Pennsylvania’s history. No new taxes or fees have been needed to fund this important initiative.



Twenty-five trees were planted in the final phase of the project.



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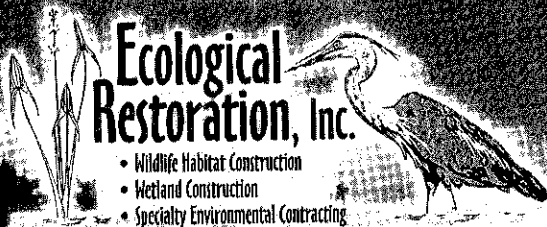
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New swale for GreenForge building.

When thunderstorms unleashed as much as 4.5" of rain on July 5, one of the newest stormwater infiltration measures at GreenForge got its first real test.

At the height of the storm, District Manager Greg Phillips happened to be driving past the building and stopped to snap the photo above with his cell phone. It showed that the new 100-foot-long "bioinfiltration swale" created near GreenForge's main entrance off Donohoe Road was doing just what it was supposed to do: capturing the water from the 750-square-foot section of metal roof where GreenForge's solar panels are located.

"In spite of the extremely heavy rain, the runoff water never did fill up the entire swale," explained Jim Pillsbury, the District's hydraulic engineer. And, in time, the water that did collect in this bowl-shaped trough slowly sunk into the ground, recharging the groundwater supply and reducing the amount of surface runoff.

"The design of this bioinfiltration swale is exactly the same stormwater-management practice that we explained on the poster we created several years ago for local municipal officials and designers," Jim said. The swale was built by first laying down crushed stone (to provide drainage); topping that with a

special mix of topsoil, sand and organic material added to counteract our naturally clay soils; and then planting flowers and small shrubs.

This innovative swale, along with other stormwater-management innovations installed at GreenForge such as the green roof, the forebay/rock waterway/detention pond, native landscaping, and permeable parking areas have significantly reduced (or eliminated) the amount of stormwater that the GreenForge building adds to the storm sewer system.

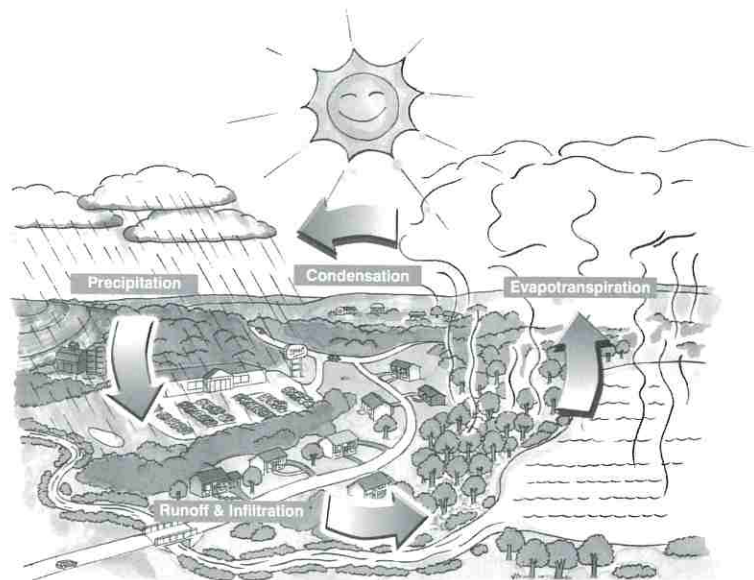
For more information, contact Jim Pillsbury or Kathy Hamilton at 724-837-5271.

On average, Westmoreland County receives 40 inches of rain each year.

If that rain falls on a natural landscape – such as a lawn, or a garden, or a forest – about 10 inches of the total rainfall soaks into the ground. About 20 inches is captured in the top layer of the ground and is lifted back into the sky by plants (evapotranspiration). And the remaining 10 inches "runs off," traveling across the surface of the ground until it finds its way into nearby streams or waterways.

If that same 40 inches of rain falls on land that has been developed with hard, impervious surfaces – such as building roofs, parking lots, or roadways – only about 5 inches of it finds a place to soak in...only 10 inches returns to the sky through evapotranspiration...and a full 25 inches runs off.

Good stormwater management practices such as bioinfiltration swales significantly reduce the amount of runoff in and around developed areas. This



saves taxpayers money because it reduces the burden on our infrastructure and it improves water quality because, when water infiltrates into the ground, the plants and soil act like filters to remove some of the pollutants that the water carries (such as motor oil from parking lots).

2008 Education Calendar

Please note: Events are subject to change. Please call or email the contact person listed if you are interested in attending an event.

JANUARY

Southwestern PA Tillage Conference

Wednesday, January 23

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

Giannilli's II, Route 30, Greensburg

The benefits and practical considerations of reducing the amount of plowing done to a field before planting will be featured at this year's tillage conference. Dr. Ron Hammond, field crop entomology extension specialist at Ohio State University, will present the keynote address on "Slugs and Other Insect Control Measures" that are needed for no-till crops. Jim Hoorman, extension educator at Ohio State University, will speak about "Cover Crops and Manure." The conference also features other speakers, a panel discussion with area farmers, breakout group discussions, and a vendor show.

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

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Bobbi at 724-853-5555, extension 116 or bobbi.bailey@pa.usda.gov by January 16. \$25, includes lunch.

Construction Site Inspectors' Workshop

Friday, January 25

7:30 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Westmoreland Conservation District, Greensburg

This workshop is designed for municipal officials, engineering inspectors, and anyone interested in learning more about erosion controls on the job site. Presentations will explore the proper ways to install and maintain erosion controls, the rules and regulations of Chapter 102, and how local governments can enforce these policies. The Westmoreland Conservation District's Erosion Control Specialists Chris Droste and Nicole Bossart, and Hydraulic Engineer, Jim Pillsbury, will facilitate the program.

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210 or christie@wcdpa.com by January 18. \$30, includes breakfast.

FEBRUARY - MARCH

Drinking Water Clinic

Wednesday, February 20

Times and locations to be announced.

This workshop 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.

For more information, contact Dana at 724-837-1402 or def18@psu.edu.

Engineers' Workshop

This same event is held twice: Thursday, March 13* and Friday, March 14*

8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Giannilli's II, Route 30, Greensburg

Engineers, municipal officials, and others who design, review, or build stormwater systems and erosion controls will benefit from this

workshop where they can:

- learn about urban stormwater retrofit practices for water-quality improvement and volume-control,
- participate in a practical, stormwater-retrofit exercise and in an exercise on completing NPDES forms,
- have a chance to talk with vendors about the latest stormwater and erosion-control products, and
- receive the most-recent copy of the NPDES permit form.

** The complete workshop is only one day long, but it will be offered twice, on two consecutive days. Participants can choose the day that best suits their schedule.*

Space is limited and registration is required. Contact Christie at 724-837-5271 ext. 210 or christie@wcdpa.com by March 6. \$50.

Stormwater Management for Homeowners

Thursday, March 27

7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Westmoreland Conservation District, Greensburg

Event information to be announced

Forestry and Wildlife Conference

Saturday, March 29

8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Four Points by Sheraton, Greensburg

Experts from Conservation Districts, Penn State University, and Pennsylvania's Bureau of Forestry and Game Commission will present information on managing land for timber, wildlife and recreation.

More information to be announced.

APRIL - MAY

Earth Day

Saturday, April 19

12 noon - 4:00 p.m.

Latrobe

This year's theme is "Greening Your Footprints," and the focus is on energy efficiency for your home and business. The event features live shows, animals, and children's activities.

More information to be announced.

Envirothon

Monday, May 5

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

Twin Lakes Park, Greensburg

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 this year's special issue, "recreational impacts on the natural environment." Free

Pond Management Workshop

Saturday, May 10

Times and locations to be announced.

This workshop will cover pond construction, water quality concerns; maintenance; permits; plant, weed, and algae identification and control; and fisheries management.

For more information, contact Dana at 724-837-1402 or def18@psu.edu.

Westmoreland Enrichment Classes Wins Envirothon – Again!



Students from the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes (a group of home school students based in Norwin) won the 2007 Westmoreland County Envirothon.

This is the third year in a row that the Westmoreland Enrichment Classes has captured first place in this academic competition in which teams of ninth- to twelfth-grade students vie against each other in outdoor situations that test their knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and an annual current issue, which this year was alternative energy.

The Westmoreland Enrichment Classes team of Faith Hipple, Heather Holbein, Matthew Holbein, Naomi Westerman, and Evan Zajdel bested 105 other students representing 11 Westmoreland County high schools in the day-long Envirothon, held on May 7 at Mammoth Park.

The Enrichment Classes team next went on to represent Westmoreland County in the Pennsylvania State Envirothon, which was held on May 21 and 22 at Penn State University, in University Park. Out of 66 teams in that competition, the Enrichment Classes came in ninth overall, and eleventh in the oral competition.

Both second and third place in the Westmoreland County Envirothon were captured by Franklin Regional High School, which brought two teams. The Franklin Regional team of Kevin Baldasare, Alex Fontaine, Tim Forrester, Kevin Iacovino, and Amy Kerschner took second place...and the Franklin Regional team of Zach Flynn, Benjy Lombard, Sean McHugh, Matt O'Brien, and Chris Slatosky took third place.

Also competing on the county level were teams from Burrell, Derry Area Senior, Greensburg Central Catholic, Greensburg Salem, Kiski Area, The Kiski School, Mount Pleasant Area, Norwin Senior, Southmoreland, and Yough Senior high schools.

The Westmoreland Conservation District has sponsored the yearly county competition since 1986. Assisting the District in hosting this year's Envirothon were: The Pennsylvania Game Commission; the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry; the Natural Resources Conservation Service; Penn State Cooperative Extension, Westmoreland County; the Westmoreland County Bureau of Parks and Recreation; Carnegie Museum of Natural History's Powdermill Nature Reserve; and Westmoreland Cleanways.

Major corporate underwriters of the 2007 Westmoreland County Envirothon are Cleveland Brothers CAT, Giant Eagle, and Sony Technology Center.

Congratulations and best wishes to Tom Pearson, who retired from teaching this past spring.

Tom taught for 39 years in the Franklin Regional School District, and has the distinction of preparing more students for the Westmoreland County Envirothon than any other educator.



Since the competition began in our county in 1986, Tom has shared his infectious love of the natural world with upwards of 200 young men and women, helping them develop a deep understanding of their relationship with nature and leading them to more Envirothon victories than any other school has been able to achieve.

Franklin Regional has done consistently well in every Envirothon competition and, more often than not, placed among the top teams – on the county, state, and even national level. In 1992, Tom's Franklin Regional team was named second in the nation.

"The Envirothon is a wonderful experience," the ever-energetic Tom said. "Not only do the kids learn a lot, but the teachers do, too. I didn't know much about soils before I started working with this program, for instance, and now I've learned a tremendous amount. I'm so glad that the Conservation District has hosted it all these years."

Before going off to enjoy his retirement (which so far has included a dragonfly symposium, a retreat on fall warblers, and numerous walks in the woods), Tom took time to carefully pack up his wealth of Envirothon materials, readying them to be handed over to the next Franklin Regional coach.



Tom recently presented District Manager Greg Phillips with the beautiful James M. Krom print entitled "Heritage," that the Franklin Regional Envirothon team received in 1992 when they placed second in the nation.

The print shows one generation teaching the next to be responsible harvesters and caretakers of our living heritage.

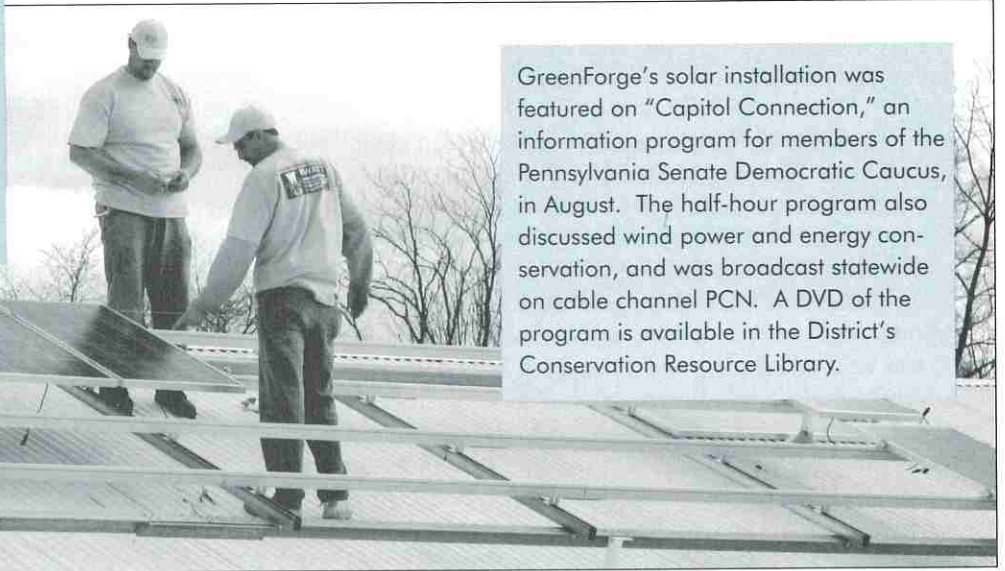
GreenForge

Update

The summer months have allowed us to concentrate our rehabilitation work at GreenForge on many of the outdoor aspects of the building. We've added some innovative and exciting things – solar panels, native landscaping, innovative stabilizers for slopes, and creative ways to manage stormwater.



GreenForge's solar arrays were manufactured from silicon by Solar Power Industries, a company based in Rostraver Township. A mineral called "quartzite" is used to produce silicon. Pennsylvania has one of the biggest reserves of quartzite in the United States.



GreenForge's solar installation was featured on "Capitol Connection," an information program for members of the Pennsylvania Senate Democratic Caucus, in August. The half-hour program also discussed wind power and energy conservation, and was broadcast statewide on cable channel PCN. A DVD of the program is available in the District's Conservation Resource Library.

Solar array installed

In late April, one of the largest photovoltaic "solar power" installations in Westmoreland County was installed on a section of the GreenForge roof by RC WATT, a leading full service power systems dealer for southwestern PA.

Two solar arrays – each made up of 18 individual 100-watt photovoltaic cells that are essentially the same as the cells used in home walkway path lights – now capture the sun's radiant energy. The energy moves through a series of switches, inverters, and panels, and becomes electricity that can be used at the building to light lights, run computers, and power other electric items.

The solar arrays are expected to produce an average of 11,000 watt hours of power a day over the course of a year. To put this amount in some context: If it were produced in a residential situation, it would cover much of the energy needs of a small family living in an Energy Star-rated home.

Because the 23,000-square-foot GreenForge building uses more electricity than the solar arrays produce during the

sunny periods of the day, the advantage of this installation has been in its ability to reduce how much power the building has to buy from the electric utility company. Based on the area's residential rate for electricity, this amount equates to a savings of about \$1 per day. And while that doesn't seem like much now, events in the next few years may increase the financial benefit of solar. For instance: Once the price caps come off electric rates in less than three years, some people estimate that the amount utilities pay installations such as GreenForge for their solar and other renewable energy will increase dramatically.* At the same time, the price consumers pay for electricity most likely will escalate and, experts say, significant spikes in the price of electricity are possible. This will make solar more competitive.

Beyond price, a real advantage of using solar to create electricity is that it is very easy on the environment. Solar arrays produce no air or water pollution, and tap into a widely available energy source – the sun. Even though it may not seem like it, here in the Pittsburgh region of Pennsylvania, we receive a fair amount of sun energy. In fact, our annual



GreenForge is the latest building to be added to a growing “conservation campus” along the Donohoe Road in Greensburg that includes Donohoe Center, the Westmoreland County Public Works building, and the Westmoreland Conservation District headquarters.

GreenForge was originally built in the 1980s and had been vacant for three years when the Westmoreland Conservation District and a group of partners began to bring it back to useable space by installing green building practices and sustainable energy technologies.

GreenForge’s purpose is to demonstrate practical, effective conservation approaches and to provide low-cost office space for conservation, agricultural, and rural development organizations. Current tenants include the US Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development agency, which works to maintain infrastructure in rural areas; the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, which works to clean up land and water damaged by past coal-mining practices in 24 counties in western Pennsylvania; and Westmoreland Cleanways, an organization that fights litter and illegal dumping and promotes recycling. Some 500 square feet of space still is available for rent.

average is not significantly much different than the amount they get in Tampa, Florida. The solar industry calculates the amount of sun energy a particular place receives by measuring how many hours 1,000 watts of energy falls in a square meter of space. Here near Pittsburgh, that yearly average number is 4.16 hours a day. In Tampa Florida it’s 5.3.

Also, the solar cells are very sensitive to light. They can capture energy even in cloudy conditions and activate on as little as 6 watts, which is about how much light a home night light gives off.

On the outside of GreenForge, a meter donated by RC WATT keeps track of how many kilowatt-hours of electricity the arrays have produced since the meter was installed on May 30. A special meter inside the building officially tracks how much power the solar arrays produce each day and how much carbon dioxide emissions may have been reduced because the arrays (and not fossil fuels) were used to produce the electricity.

**If the solar arrays at GreenForge produce more electricity than the building needs, the excess power is routed to the local electric company’s power grid and the utility compensates GreenForge for it.*

Native plants added to landscape

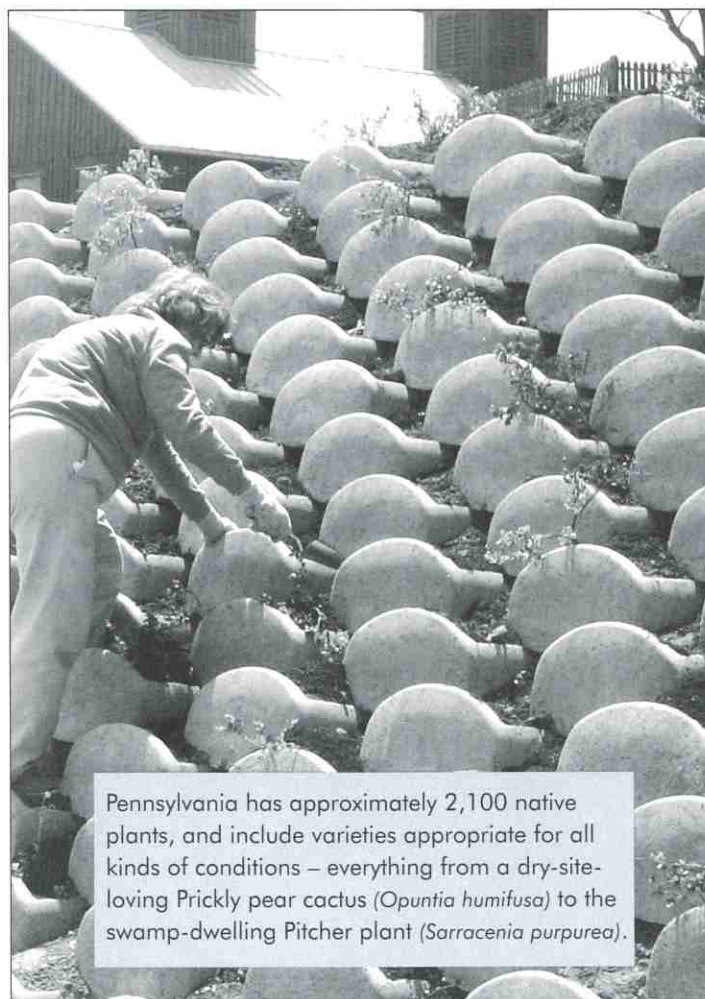
On Saturday, May 19, members of the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County and other conservation-minded volunteers helped to plant a large variety of Pennsylvania-native plants around the building.

On that day and several others, a total of more than 250 woody ornamental shrubs, ground covers, and perennials were planted around the unique fiberglass-domed entrance to GreenForge, and along a 100-foot-wide slope facing that entrance that was especially designed to minimize erosion (see next section).

Pennsylvania-native plants – technically defined as those that occurred within the state before settlement by Europeans – are a good choice for this location and for home landscapes as well because they are perfectly adapted for our region’s soil, climate, and conditions. They tend to be vigorous and

healthy, so they don’t need a lot of fertilizer or pest controls, and they don’t need to be watered as often as non-native species.

At GreenForge, native species of rhododendron, hydrangea, potentilla, viburnum, bayberry, holly, and low bush blueberry were planted to provide a variety of textures, spring blooms, and seasonal interest.



Pennsylvania has approximately 2,100 native plants, and include varieties appropriate for all kinds of conditions – everything from a dry-site-loving Prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) to the swamp-dwelling Pitcher plant (*Sarracenia purpurea*).

Unique slope-stabilization demonstrations created

Although not as pretty as the plants, the creation of the slope itself – another significant warm-weather accomplishment – is interesting for its unique design and ability to prevent erosion.

Instead of digging the standard 10 feet into this hillside and installing anchoring material to hold the retaining wall in place, the Westmoreland Conservation District staff chose



to anchor part of this slope with 11 individual, 12-foot-long galvanized-steel rods drilled into the hillside, much the same way companies anchor home-basement walls.

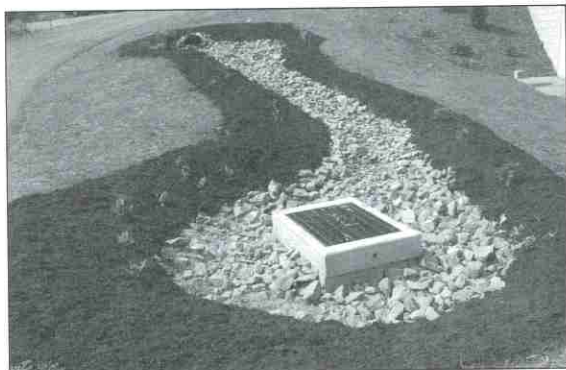
This approach required digging only two feet into the slope and so reduced the amount of soil that was disturbed. “We prevented about 300 cubic yards of

soil from being disturbed and that’s important because less disturbance means less chance of erosion and more chance for rainwater to infiltrate into the ground instead of just running off the surface,” explained Kathy Hamilton, registered landscape architect and stormwater technician with the District.

The other half of the slope has been faced with a series of heavy, concrete “pockets” into which low-growing and spreading plants are being tucked. The 110-pound weight of these “pockets,” produced by R.I. Lampus Co. of Springdale, keeps them in place and helps to retain the hillside (see photo to right). Once the plants are established, the pockets will become less visible.

Stormwater management features installed

Two stormwater best-management practices were installed on opposite sides of the GreenForge building. On the western side, parallel to Donohoe Road, a bioinfiltration swale (see story on page 7) was created to control the runoff



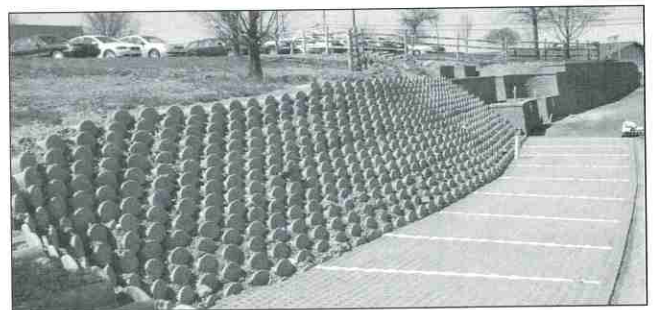
from the section of roof where the solar panels are located. And on the eastern side of the building, an application that combines a forebay, rock waterway, and detention pond was installed to capture water from the driveway that links the District’s building to GreenForge, and from the remaining portion of traditional roof on GreenForge (see photo in previous column).

The forebay, a small pool located at the highest point on the slope, traps sediment and any debris that the stormwater might be carrying (such as litter from the driveway) and so helps to clean the water. The rock waterway helps to slow down the force of the water as it travels down the slope, and the detention pond at the bottom is a place for water to collect. Some of the water from the detention pond infiltrates into the ground, and some is slowly released.

Another way stormwater runoff is being minimized at GreenForge is through the use of permeable pavers to create some of the additional parking spaces needed for the building. Seventeen spaces were created this way, effectively meeting the needs of the tenants while creating no runoff at all (see photo below).

All of the new conservation additions to GreenForge not only perform functions important to the daily operation of the building, but they also are important teaching tools, and will be used as models and demonstrations in the District’s education and outreach programs.

Congratulations!



Our GreenForge project won an Award of Honor in the Hardscapes category from the National Concrete Masonry Association.

GreenForge was selected for the award from a field of 86 entrants, and honored for its innovative use of:

- permeable concrete pavers, made of 60% recycled material, used to create parking spaces and capture stormwater;
- heavy, concrete “pockets” used to create a vegetative wall and stabilize a hillside; and
- retaining wall units used to create a vertical, eight-foot high wall that minimized earthmoving and saved several mature trees in the arboretum.

GreenForge’s winning practices will be featured in the February 2008 annual Design Awards issue of Concrete Masonry Designs, and the award also will be presented that month at the NCMA banquet in Denver, Colorado.

Fundraising update

Three special events were held this summer to introduce area legislators and other individuals to GreenForge.

Over a light breakfast, attendees learned about the background, new purpose, and current rehab status of the building, and then went on a tour of the facility.

These breakfasts have been helpful in our fundraising efforts, which to-date, have secured a little more than half of the \$2.1 million in funds needed to finish GreenForge.

Individuals interested in helping to financially support this premier conservation project are urged to complete the donor card (to the right) and return it to the District.



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February 2007 – September 2007

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(\$10,000 and above)

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GreenForge

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Amount enclosed _____ and/or

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(Please note: pledges will be invoiced in two installments: the first issued upon receipt of this pledge card, and the second six months later.)

*Donors at the Partner level and above will receive permanent, public recognition.

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People In The News

Recent Appointments

Water Quality Educator **Dana Rizzo** recently re-formed the Water Quality Advisory Committee. Members include: **Michael Barrick**, permit coordinator, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation and president of Jacobs Creek Watershed Association; **Mike Bazley**, sheep farmer and former Cooperative Extension executive board president; **Todd Burd**, orchard owner and public health physician; **M. Curtis Fontaine, P.E.**, operations manager – engineering, Municipal Authority of Westmoreland County and president, board of directors, Westmoreland Cleanways; **Barbara McMillen**, area specialist, USDA Rural Development; **Larry Myers**, executive director, Pennsylvania Resources Council, Inc. and board member of the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association; **Ron Rohall**, chairman of the Ohio Basin Regional Water Resources Committee, and member of the Pennsylvania Sustainable Forestry Initiative Implementation Committee; and **John Turack**, extension educator, community and economic development, Penn State Cooperative Extension and Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County.



In June, **John Turack** was named community and economic development educator, a position shared by the Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County and Penn State Cooperative Extension.

John most recently was a Main Street program manager for Blairsville, and an elected supervisor in Washington Township.

He is an associate director of the Westmoreland Conservation District.

John has an office in Donohoe Center, and can be reached there during normal business hours at 724-837-1402.

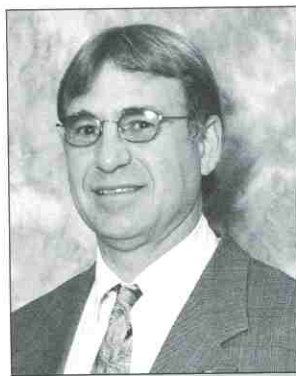


The Natural Resources Conservation Service added **Arthur (AJ) Hawkins** as natural resource specialist.

AJ, a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University, is responsible for land surveying, project design, and provides technical assistance for EQIP, CREP, and all NRCS programs. His previous experience includes work for the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington DC, the Allegheny County Cooperative Extension Office, and the Washington County Cooperative Extension Office.

AJ works in Donohoe Center and can be reached during normal business hours at 724-853-5555, option 3.

Honors



Westmoreland Conservation District Vice Chairman **Ron Rohall** received two distinguished state awards at a ceremony on July 17 in Scranton.

Ron received the Conservation Leadership Award, the highest recognition

of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission; and one of only two annual awards, the Ann Rudd Saxman Conservation District Director Excellence Award, from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts.

Both awards were given for his outstanding service to conservation, which included a leadership role in an effort that recently earmarked more than \$1.4 billion in funds to Pennsylvania to help clean up the pollution, safety hazards, and other damaging legacies left in our communities by abandoned coal mine operations (see page 3). Pennsylvania has the most abandoned mine land in the nation – 250,000 acres. In Westmoreland County, about one out of every ten streams is impaired with drainage from abandoned coal mines. More than 100 coal-refuse piles still loom over our landscape.



Ron worked tirelessly to secure funding for abandoned mine cleanup for almost four years and, in fact, launched the statewide effort at a meeting in Greensburg at the Westmoreland Conservation District headquarters. Because the effort required lobbying Congress to pass legislation, Ron and his Pennsylvania partners also enlisted the support of conservation district officials from 18 other states and from the National Association of Conservation Districts.

In presenting the excellence award to Ron, PACD President Victor Cappucci stated, “Ron is one of the most dedicated conservationists I know. His work on the state and national level shows his commitment to sound resource conservation policy and his desire to help his fellow man.”

Ron was elected to the Westmoreland Conservation District Board of Directors in 1993, and he has served as vice chairman of the organization since 1999.

Transitions



Harold Grey, a long-time friend of the Westmoreland Conservation District, died July 13 from injuries he sustained in a tractor accident on his property. Only about two weeks before, Harold and his wife, Carol Pollock, had spent a morning at the District's GreenForge building, planting clumps of daylilies that they had raised and donated to the project into the bioinfiltration swale (see page 7).

That generosity was typical of Harold and the commitment he had to the landscape and conservation. Over the years, he volunteered his time and expertise to a number of conservation initiatives, such as helping to establish guidelines for the management of the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park. And he often did the hands-on digging and planting of public areas such as the Ann Rudd Saxman memorial on the Donohoe Center campus. As an employer, one of the perks he gave his employees was a membership in the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

Dale K. Earl, current president of Fahringer, McCarty, Grey, Inc., a firm of landscape architects and engineers that Harold helped to found, shared these memories of his former boss and decades-long friend....

"Harold grew up on a farm in Michigan where he first developed his love of

nature. The war interrupted that maturation process, but Harold rekindled that interest in the landscape architecture program at Michigan State. He developed a singular interest in plants while he worked his first job in New Philadelphia, Ohio with the Department of Highways.

"After coming to Pittsburgh to work for Community Planning Services, later to be called Fahringer, McCarty, Grey, he worked on many master plans that respected and protected unique areas of environmental interest long before that became popular. In the 1950s and 1960s, Harold was creating slope maps to avoid areas of steep land. Today most ordinances have such requirements. Protecting stands of mature trees to enhance a community development, or preserving a hillside of trillium was always paramount to Harold.

"On a project in Fox Chapel, Harold successfully argued that the road standards should be compromised to save a 42-inch oak, and was successful in keeping that tree.

"Harold also worked on many of the lands that we know today as state parks – Moraine, Presque Isle, McConnells Mill, and Prince Gallitzin. His designs

conserved many areas of public lands that future generations will use as outdoor laboratories and will remain to become yardsticks of our impacts on land.

"One of the favorite stories about Harold told frequently at the company he helped to found, was about a canoe trip on the Allegheny River from Olean, NY to Pittsburgh (before Kinzua). Harold upset on that float trip several times, but identified for the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy several islands that were later purchased and remain conserved for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians."

Harold's legacy also includes many neighborhoods and parks in eastern Allegheny County, as well as the Wimmerton residential plan in Unity Township.

Harold is survived by his wife, Carol Pollock, who shares his passion for plants and the environment, and a large family that extends three generations.



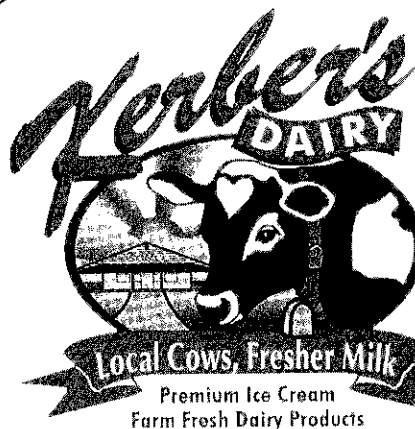
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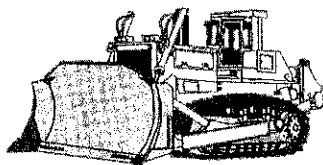
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A Joyous Reunion



More than 100 Lauffer family members returned to their ancestor Peter Lauffer's barn.

In August 2006, a man we had never seen before walked into the District office, stopped just inside the main room and silently looked the whole place over – floor to ceiling, wall to wall.

After a few minutes, he approached our receptionist, Joanne Kitsko, with questions about where the barn had come from, and what its history was. Her answers convinced him: the barn that he was standing in, the District offices and education center, is the barn he had been looking for – the barn that once belonged to his great-great-grandfather, Peter Lauffer.

About a week later, this visitor, John Lauffer, returned with his sister Shirley Lauffer Gosnell and her husband, Bob, to meet with Greg Phillips and other District staff members to talk more about the barn.

We learned from these Lauffer descendants that their great-great-grandfather, Peter Lauffer (1827-1886), had purchased a farm in Penn Township as a young man. The farm contained about 138 acres and, according to the family history, “was in a rather poor state of cultivation.” In fact, Peter’s neighbors and friends frequently told him that he could not make a living on such poor land. Peter, however, “had the courage” according to the family

history, “went to work with a will, and soon made it a success, bringing into evidence his ability as a businessman and farmer.” (We don’t know for sure if he used any agricultural conservation methods, but his success might imply that he did!)

The family is able to substantiate that Peter erected a large brick house on this farm in 1873, although they cannot say with certainty whether he also built the barn or whether it was already on the property when he bought it. They do know that he used the barn during his lifetime.

On August 19, 2007, almost exactly one year after John, Shirley, and Bob paid their first visit to the District, the Lauffers celebrated their family reunion in the barn that once belonged to their relative, Peter.

More than 100 family members came for the event – about double the usual attendance – and voted to purchase a bronze marker for the barn, telling of its history and their family’s connection to it. The marker is being written and designed and is scheduled to be cast and installed in time for the Lauffers’ 2008 reunion, which also will be held at the barn.

Special thanks to Joanne Kitsko for help in writing this story.



NATURALLY
Delicious

by Karen Barnhart

Here’s another favorite from the family cookbook.

SPAGHETTI SQUASH PRIMAVERA

- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 1/2 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
- 1/4 cup finely chopped red onion
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced carrot
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced red bell pepper
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced green bell pepper
- 1 can (14 1/2-oz.) Italian-style stewed tomatoes
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced yellow squash
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced zucchini
- 1/2 cup whole kernel corn
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano leaves
- 1/8 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
- 1 spaghetti squash (about 2 pounds)
- 4 teaspoons grated Parmesan cheese (optional)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

Heat oil in skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add garlic. Cook and stir 3 minutes. Add onion, carrot and peppers. Cook and stir 3 minutes. Add tomatoes, yellow squash, zucchini, corn, oregano and thyme. Cook 5 minutes or until heated through, stirring occasionally.

Cut spaghetti squash lengthwise in half. Remove seeds. Cover with plastic wrap. Microwave at High for 9 minutes or until spaghetti squash separates easily into strands when tested with fork.

Cut each spaghetti squash half lengthwise in half; separate strands with fork. Spoon vegetables evenly over spaghetti squash. Top servings evenly with cheese, if desired, and parsley before serving.

Makes 4 servings.

Champion Red Oak Found in (appropriately) Charter Oak

Gil Maurer, a member of the Botanical Society of Westmoreland County and resident of the Charter Oak plan in Unity Township, alerted us to this tree – which turned out to be the biggest red oak (*Quercus rubra*) we know of in Westmoreland County.

District Forester Tony Quadro and retired Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Forester Tom Fitzgerald measured the tree in late August, and determined it was about 65 inches in diameter and 128 feet tall. They estimate it to be about 400 years old, which would mean it began life here about the time that Captain John Smith was being saved by Pocahontas. Another notable red oak, this one in

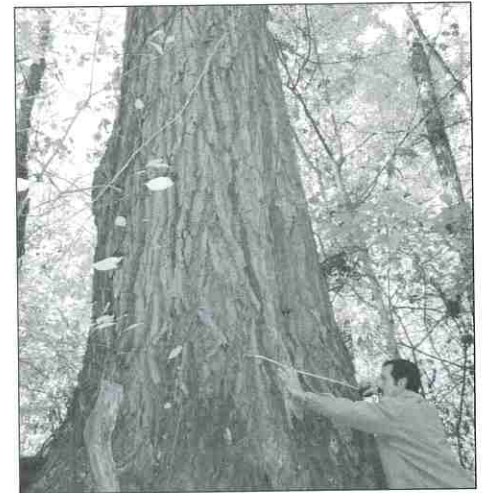
Scottsdale, also was brought to our attention by an observant local citizen, David Hebert.

When Tony measured this oak, it was 58 inches in diameter and about 93 feet tall, qualifying it as the second-largest tree of its type that we know of in Westmoreland County.

The District's "Trees of Distinction" program keeps records on trees that are outstanding because they are:

- extremely old
- historically significant
- much bigger than others of the same type, or
- growing where experts say they shouldn't grow at all.

For more information, contact Tony Quadro at 724-837-5271.



District Forester Tony Quadro measures the diameter of a 400-year-old red oak in Unity Township.

KATHY'S KIDS KORNER

by Kathy Fritz



Birds

Find each of the words listed below

- | | | |
|-----------|-------------|------------|
| Bittern | Flamingo | Oriole |
| Blackbird | Goldfinch | Owl |
| Bluebird | Gull | Pelican |
| Bluejay | Hawk | Pheasant |
| Bobolink | Heron | Robin |
| Bobwhite | Hummingbird | Sparrow |
| Cardinal | Junco | Swallow |
| Chickadee | Killdeer | Tanager |
| Condor | Loon | Woodpecker |
| Cormorant | Meadowlark | Wren |
| Cowbird | Mockingbird | |
| Eagle | Nuthatch | |

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 I A A J U N C O B B X T A Z E
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LANDMARKS

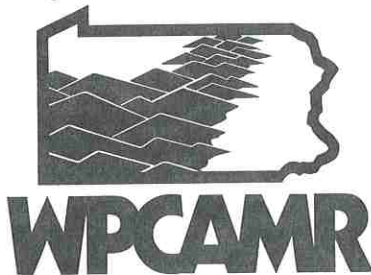
The Official Newsletter of the Westmoreland Conservation District

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"A local, state, federal and industry partnership dedicated to improving water quality and reclaiming abandoned mine lands throughout 23 counties in the bituminous coal region of Pennsylvania."



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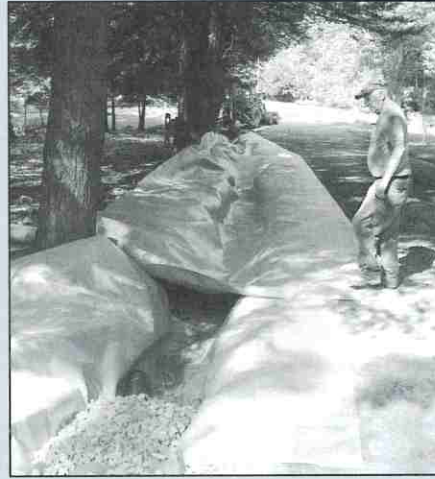
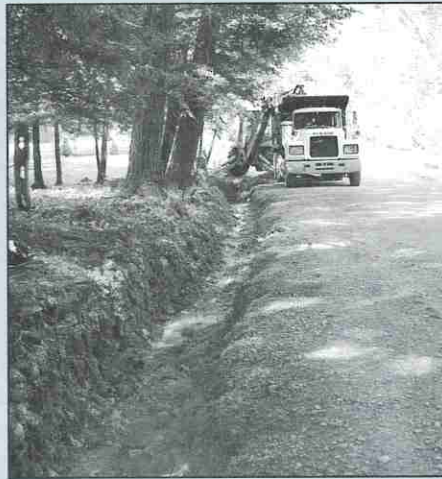
Attention Realtors –

Private water sources such as wells and springs, water-treatment systems, and septic systems can raise a lot of questions for potential home buyers.

Our water quality educator Dana Rizzo can help clear up some of the confusion.

She is available to speak to your real-estate agents on what homeowners need to know about these systems, what to look for when buying a house, and how to maintain these systems.

For more information, contact her at 724-837-1402, or df18@psu.edu.



Municipal officials in Laurel Mountain Borough recently completed their first-ever project under the “Dirt & Gravel Roads Program” to improve one of the unpaved roads in their community.

The borough repaired a 1,000-foot manmade ditch that ran along White Oak Road, the community’s main access from Route 30. The ditch, which had been designed to carry water away from Oak Road, had over the years become dangerously deep – two-to-three feet deep – and was acting as a conduit that carried eroding gravel and road material into the nearby high-quality stream, headwaters to the Loyalhanna.

With funding from the Dirt and Gravel Road Program, the borough installed a perforated pipe in the ditch, covered it in rock, then wrapped both the pipe and rock in geotextile material, and filled it in with additional rock, leaving only about a 6-inch depression – enough to carry heavy rain flows without being a hazard to vehicles.

Laurel Mountain Borough is a unique community in that all of its streets are dirt and gravel.

District Meetings

District meetings are open to the public and are held at the District’s headquarters, 218 Donohoe Road, Greensburg.

The following are upcoming District meeting dates and times. All are held on Wednesdays.

2007

November 14, 5 p.m.
December 12, 11 a.m.

2008

January 9, 11 a.m.
February 13, 11 a.m.
March 12, 11 a.m.
April 9, 5 p.m.
May 14, 5 p.m.
June 11, 5 p.m.
July 9, 5 p.m.
August 13, 5 p.m.

New Conservation Directory Available

Staff members, addresses, phone and fax numbers, and email contacts for more than 100 regional conservation organizations are listed in the new “Conservation Directory.”

The updated directory, issued in September, is available on the District’s

website, at www.wcdpa.com (click on the “Publications” tab).

A limited number of printed directories also are available free-of-charge. If you would like some, please stop by our office or give us a call at 724-837-5271.

Westmoreland Conservation District

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