

Long-Range Plan Reaches Out & Re-Energizes

by Paul Heyworth

Long range plans are only as good as their builders and applicators. The Westmoreland Conservation District has been fortunate to have both quality dreamers and the implementers.

The third plan in the District's history will soon go to the printer. The construction of the document spanned two years and the application could take around five more.

After board directors, staff members, volunteers and others in the community gave their voluminous and constructive input, Karen Jurkovic organized and wrote the plan.

The result may surprise some, but definitely please most. The overall impact will be to strengthen the old objectives and goals, but give vision to new directions which will permit the District to evolve with need and demand.

Conservation or environmental master plans are tools designed to improve the quality of our lives. They lie at the base of coordinated, proactive response. They inspire and nag. They motivate and agitate us to get the job done.

To this end, the Westmoreland Conservation District's Long Range Plan is a winner ... as everyone will soon find out.

Oh yes, and it must be reported that Greg Phillips and his staff got a sneak preview of the document and they claim that by the time it is printed, most of the work will be accomplished.

Don't believe them.



WCD staff Joanne Kitsko (l) and Lori Whalen enjoy the new collage honoring Ann Rudd Saxman.

Nature Park Making Steady Progress

by Karen Jurkovic

Winter hasn't deterred the District from continuing its efforts to revitalize the Ann Rudd Saxman Nature Park. Here are just a few of the new steps taken since our last project report in *Landmarks*—

- Committee members met in late November, and expressed the need for a document outlining the guiding philosophy and management plan for the park. A draft of this document has been started and circulated among committee members for comment.

- AmeriCorps began to survey the entrance and existing trail system throughout the park.

- A beautiful, framed collage honoring Ann Saxman was donated in January by Carol Pollock (see photo above). The collage includes a copy of the precedent-setting, nationally acclaimed Directory of Environmental Information that Ann

envisioned and edited in 1972 ... newspaper articles and a program from the park's rededication in Ann's honor last July ... and other tributes to this foresighted and remarkable woman.

The collage was designed and framed by Carol's daughter-in-law, Renie Pollock, who owns Style & Substance Gallery at Greengate Mall. It hangs in the hallway of Donohoe Center, near the glass doors overlooking Nature Park.

- The Greensburg Garden and Civic Center agreed to design, plant, and maintain the area around Ann's memorial.

- Having Nature Park in the District's backyard gives us a natural environment where we can teach conservation — including forestry, water quality, and wildlife issues. By developing a series of conservation demonstration areas on the

Westmoreland Conservation District

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COOKBOOK AVAILABLE

The District's new cookbook, "Naturally Delicious," features more than 225 favorite recipes that are sure to please your family's tastebuds.

Menu selections include Appetizers; Beverages; Soups; Salads and Vegetables; Main Dishes and Casseroles; Meat; Poultry and Seafood; Breads and Rolls; Pies, Pastry and Desserts; and Cakes, Cookies, and Candy. All are easy to follow, and most require no special ingredients.

Contributors include the staff of the Westmoreland Conservation District, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Economic and Community Development, and Penn's Corner Resource Conservation and Development, along with their friends, family, and other members of our community.

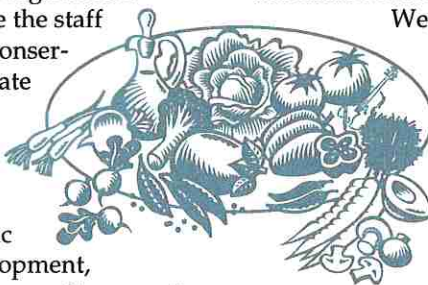
The cookbook also includes a special section of handy information for any cook — tips for baking perfect bread; measurements and equivalency charts; uses for different herbs and spices; and helpful hints that range from how to use your microwave to soften brown sugar to what to substitute if you're out of cornstarch.

The recipes and 16-page information section are collected in a convenient three-ring binder that makes it easy to add pages of notes or your own favorite recipes.

To receive your copy of "Naturally Delicious," complete the coupon below, make your check payable to Westmoreland Conservation District for \$10.50, plus \$3.00 shipping and handling, and mail both to: "Naturally Delicious,"

Westmoreland Conservation District, Donohoe Center, RD #12 Box 202-B, Greensburg, PA 15601. You can save the shipping and handling costs by purchasing "Naturally Delicious" at the District office which is on Donohoe Road

about 1 mile from Westmoreland Mall. Proceeds from the cookbook will be used to develop a series of outdoor demonstration areas on the grounds of Donohoe Center. These demonstration areas will be available to the public free-of-charge, and will show how to use materials and techniques for effective conservation — such as controlling the runoff of rain water to prevent erosion.



"Naturally Delicious" Cookbook Order Form

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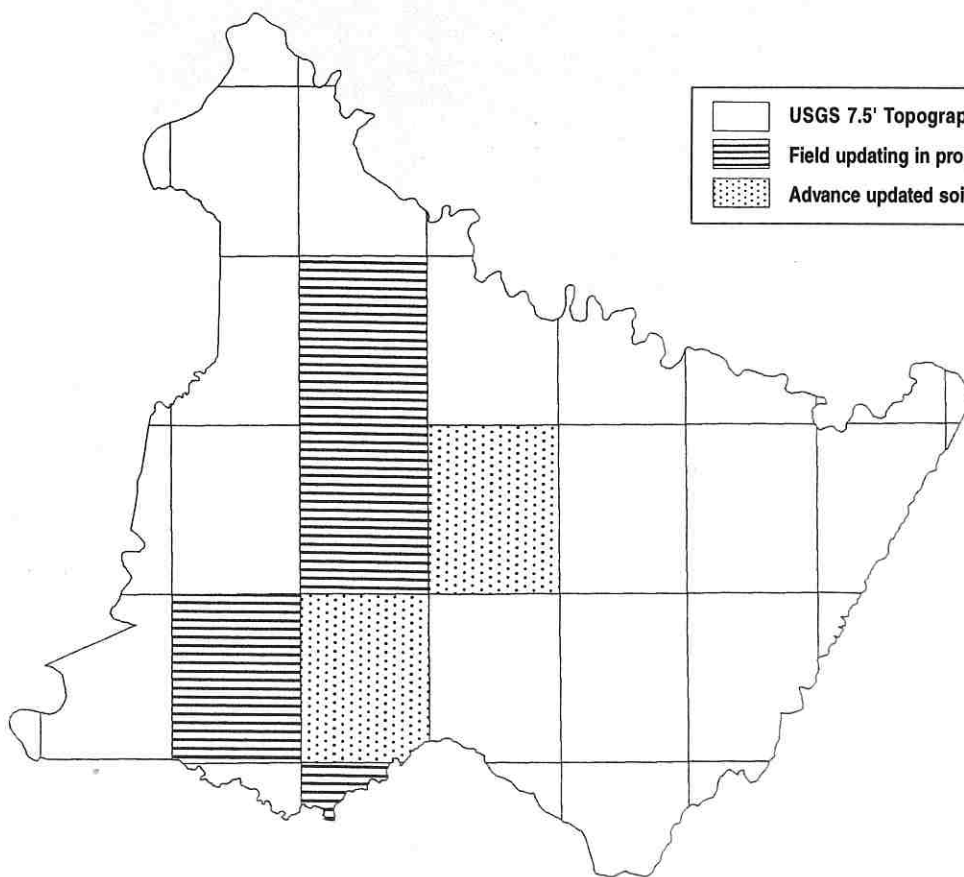


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THANK YOU!!!

Ellen Fleissner of Greensburg was the winner of a free copy of "Naturally Delicious." Ellen's name was drawn at random from those who answered our call for recipes in the last issue of Landmarks. Congratulations, Ellen, and happy cooking!

STATUS OF SOIL SURVEY IN WESTMORELAND COUNTY AS OF 3/1/97



County Land Survey, A Useful Tool

by Alex Dado

Now that we have officially begun to update the Westmoreland County soil survey, I am frequently asked "Why do we have a soil survey?" or "What is it good for?" The answer to those questions lies in the fact that the soil survey contains more than just information about soil. Actually, it is a land survey, not a soil survey, because it contains much information about the land, not just what is beneath its surface.

The first soil surveys began in Westmoreland County in 1927 as part of a general survey of southwestern Pennsylvania. In 1935, a demonstration soil survey was done in the Beaver Run watershed. The first county-wide survey began in 1954, with the majority of the fieldwork completed between 1957 and 1962, when five soil scientists were working in the county. The survey was issued in November of 1968. In that time period, the surveys were used for mainly agricultural purposes.

Flash forward to 1997. The soil survey is now 28 years old, although most of the information in it is really 35 or more years old. Now, while agriculture is still a major use of the soil survey, engineers, tax assessors, land use planners, and prospective land purchasers are all turning to the information in the soil survey.

Engineers and land use planners use the soil survey to determine soil and land characteristics that would affect development, such as percent slope of the land, soil depth to hard bedrock, soil depth to the seasonal water table, suitability for compaction, and presence of special hazards, such the tendency of the Upshur soil series to give way in landslides.

Prospective land purchasers can use the soil survey to learn about a parcel of land without ever visiting it, and it enables them to compare different tracts of land based on the uses that they plan for them.

The soil survey has an official use in the ranking system of the statewide Farmland Preservation Program. Under the system, farms are prioritized based upon a number of factors, and the soil types on the farm account for a significant portion.

As you can see, the soil survey is a very useful reference book for farmers, engineers, and natural resource managers. Having our survey updated, and digitized, or put on a computer format, will only increase its value and usefulness to the residents of Westmoreland County.

Local Farmers Recognized For Conservation Practices

by Wes Gordon

The Keenans are definitely a "stable family," who know what barnyard stabilization is all about.

Welty Keenan, his wife Joanne, and son Curt were recently awarded the 1996 Conservation Farm of the Year by the District for their consistent and progressive conservation practices at their Green Hill Farm.

One of the major projects for which they were recognized was their barnyard stabilization project. This project was implemented through the technical assistance of the District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

One of the first farms to install a manure storage facility many years ago, the Keenans have always been on the cutting edge of conservation. The Keenans have been farming for 40 years, starting with sheep and more recently switching to dairy cows. Their herd of 100 cows, with 34 milkers, produces nearly 300 gallons of milk a day.



(l-r) The father and son team of Welty and Curt Keenan on their farm in Hecla.

Agency's Middle Name Provides Focus

by John Lohr

The middle name of this game is service — the Farm Service Agency (FSA), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture, administers farm commodity, crop insurance, and conservation programs in addition to making farm ownership and operating loans. FSA programs are primarily directed by agriculture producers to serve producers.

Currently William Ebert, Richard Love and Raymond Conrad serve on the farmer-elected committee that supervises the operation of FSA in Westmoreland County.

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) was established in the 1996 Farm Bill to provide a single, voluntary conservation program for farmers

who face serious threats to soil, water, and related natural resources. FSA will help set the program's policies, priorities, and guidelines.

FSA also administers the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The CRP targets fragile farmland by encouraging farmers to stop growing crops on lands designated as "highly erodible" or environmentally sensitive by soil conservationists. CRP aims to reduce soil erosion, protect the ability to produce food and fiber, reduce sedimentation in streams and lakes, improve water quality, enhance wetland areas, and foster wildlife habitat. Farmers plant these CRP lands in grass or trees and receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract.

In the aftermath of a natural disaster,

FSA provides emergency conservation and emergency assistance programs to farmers. To help rehabilitate the farmland damaged by a natural disaster, FSA assists farmers with cost-sharing to carry out approved practices under the Emergency Conservation Program.

In 1996, FSA enrolled more than 700 farms and more than 90 percent of the county's eligible cropland into the Production Flexibility Program. This program guarantees the farmer an annual market transition payment for up to seven years in exchange for the farmer's compliance with a USDA-approved conservation system on all his land.

DETENTION POND, AN URBAN OASIS

by Jim Pillsbury

A brilliant flash of red on black signals the departure of the red-winged blackbird from her nest. The bird rises, wheels, and goes off in search of food for her young. Not too far away, a mother duck and some fuzzy, yellow ducklings dabble in the shallow water. A few yards back in the cattails, a chubby muskrat munches a root, his bright eyes watching for danger. The only thing he sees, however, is his neighbor the raccoon meandering along in search of a tidbit.

Where does this bucolic scene occur? Is this a page from the annals of rural America? More likely, in Westmoreland County, the setting is a detention pond. Designed at the outlet end of storm drain systems to hold back flooding, detention ponds are often perceived as a dumping place, or a sewer, or a weedy, buggy swamp. The reality is far different from the perception for a well-designed and properly built pond.

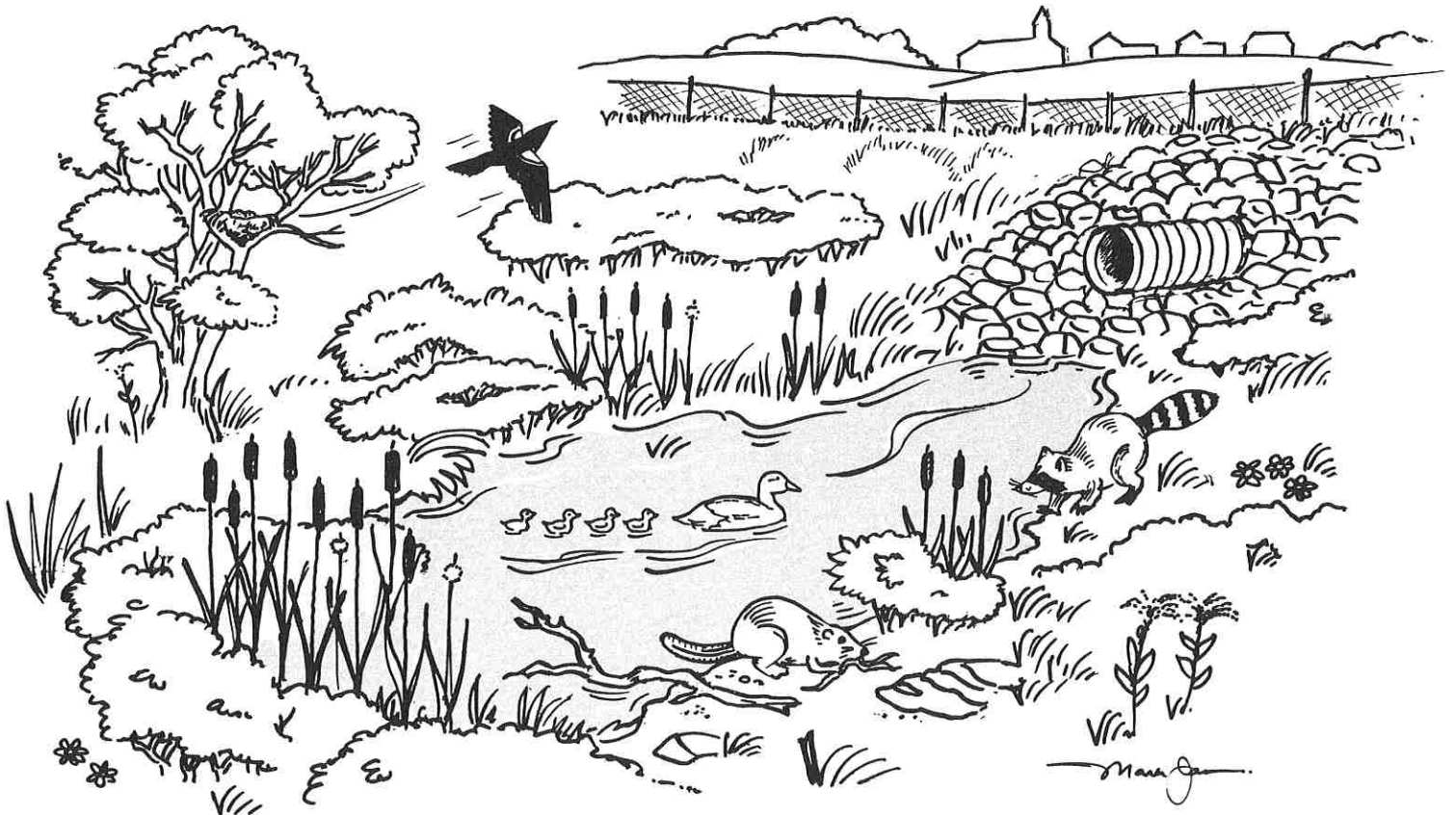
One common myth about detention ponds is that they attract mosquitoes. It is true that mosquitoes, and other insects, breed in stagnant water. But if you are bug-bit in your backyard, the culprit may be much closer—your roof gutters, or those old snow tires behind your neighbor's garage. Mosquitoes do not fly very far in search of food. Moreover, in a natural, balanced system, their predators gobble them up—which is exactly what the birds living by a detention pond will do!

Some folks are disturbed by the brushy, overgrown condition of a detention pond. The reality of ponds is, however, that a 'golf-course' pond—one with short, mowed grass clean down to the water's edge—has little or no value for wildlife. Most wild animals and birds like shelter, both from predators and from bad weather. A mowed, clean-cut pond area provides about as much shelter as the parking lot at the Mall! Far better for

birds and animals is the cool shade in summer and the warm, cozy windbreak in the winter that cattails and other detention pond growth provides. For a properly designed pond, this vegetation does not affect the pond's primary purpose—detention—at all. The only real trimming necessary is to keep bushes and trees from growing on the dam.

"There's rats in that pond," a man confidently affirmed to me one day. "Biggest rats I ever saw. They scare my little dog." I searched diligently for these vicious brutes, but all I found were muskrats. Quiet, shy, and vegetarians, these creatures are probably related more closely to beavers than anything else.

In some situations, a dry, grassy detention pond is necessary. But if your friendly neighborhood detention pond looks a little wet, and a little unkempt, just relax! Get out your bird book, your camera, and the binoculars, and enjoy the little piece of nature in your own backyard.



Students and the Environment

Over the past 11 years, the Envirothon has reached students in nearly every Westmoreland County senior high school, giving them the chance to learn more about our natural world and our relationship to it. Several of those students have since gone on to careers in the conservation field, including Virgil Wilford, from the 1986 Derry team who now works for the Natural Resources and Conservation Service in Ebensburg. Many others have developed a deeper respect for the environment which, in turn, influences their careers and daily lives.



Envirothon

by Tony Quadro



1996 Westmoreland County Envirothon champions, the Franklin Regional High School team.

The 1997 Envirothon is scheduled for May 5 at Twin Lakes Park. This is the eleventh year the District has sponsored this exciting academic competition for high school students, and it has the potential to be the most successful one yet, with 11 area schools already scheduled to participate.

Students have been preparing for the competition for months by studying aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, as well as this year's current conservation issue, pesticides. In the competition, they will be challenged to work as a team to develop creative solutions to a variety of environmental problems in these categories.

The Envirothon team that wins the Westmoreland County competition has frequently gone on to take high honors in the Envirothon's state and national competitions as well. In 10 years of competition, Westmoreland County teams have won the state championship three times . . . placed among the top three

teams in the state seven times . . . and competed nationally twice, placing in the top five both times. Those honors were achieved by teams from Franklin Regional and Derry Area high schools.

A number of cooperating agencies help us host the Envirothon, including: the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Carnegie Museum's Powdermill Nature Reserve.

Corporate contributors play a significant role in generously providing the financial support needed to host this important environmental competition. 1997 Envirothon sponsors are: Beckwith Machinery Company, Murrysville; Innovative Environmental Services, Latrobe; Waste Management of Laurel Valley, Scottdale; and SuperValu Pittsburgh Division, New Stanton.

Westmoreland County High Schools Scheduled To Participate In This Year's Envirothon

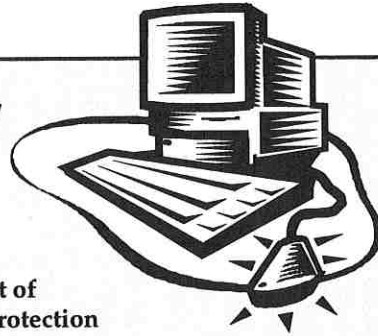
Belle Vernon
Burrell
Derry Area
Franklin Regional
Greensburg Salem
Hempfield Area

Kiski Area
Ligonier Valley
Mt. Pleasant
Norwin
Yough



We've Gone High Tech!

by Lorrie Stouffer



In an on-going effort to keep in touch with the latest conservation techniques, the District has delved into the Internet - the information highway of the future. Our choice of an on-ramp is currently America On-Line, and anyone can e-mail us at wcd202B@aol.com.

We have been able to utilize this tool to research various websites providing conservation, mapping, grants and funding information, and have supplied District information to agencies to publish on their websites.

Our goal is to publish our own website in the near future and expand our ability to communicate with our customers. Some other websites which may be of interest follow.

STATE AGENCIES

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us>
State parks, forests, rivers, greenways, heritage areas, and state resources.

Department of Environmental Protection

<http://www.dep.state.pa.us>

Environmental education, financial and technical assistance programs, and state environmental agency news. For local information--including information about our District--access the "County Notebook" page and look under Westmoreland.

Pennsylvania Alliance for Environmental Education

<http://www.pae.state.pa.us>

Membership information, conference updates, regional activities and resources.

Farm Bureau

<http://www.fb.com>

Farm fun, facts, and State Connect.

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Department of Agriculture

<http://www.usda.gov>

News and information about this department.

National Wildlife Federation

<http://www.nwf.org/nwf>

Educational resources, including Naturescope and Ranger Rick, federation programs and news.

EnviroLink Network

<http://www.envirolink.org/earthday/>
Earth Day events listed worldwide, by US state, and by date.

Voice of Agriculture

<http://www.fb.com/agconn.shtml>
Alphabetical index of ag-related links for farmers, ranchers, and rural America.

OTHER

The Jack Murtha

Conservation Connection

<http://www.house.gov/murtha/conserv.htm>

Information on parks, lakes, recreation areas, mountains, streams, rivers and conservation efforts throughout the 12th Congressional District.

SPRING WARDROBE SALE!

Spruce up your wardrobe and support conservation education at the same time.

Brand new spring jackets and summer hats, featuring the Westmoreland Conservation District logo, are now available for purchase.

Both are forest green, with white WCD logos, and made in America. The jacket features a quilted lining and two pockets. It runs a bit small, so you may want to order up one size. The hat is a ball-cap style, and made primarily of mesh material so it will be cool to wear.

Use this form to place your order, and mail it with your check (made out to Westmoreland Conservation District) to:

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You can save shipping and handling costs by making your purchase at the District Office on Donohoe Road about 1 mile from Westmoreland Mall. The office is open Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

ORDER FORM

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-HATS-

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Your Name _____

Address _____

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Daytime telephone number _____

Satellite Conference On Strategic Planning For Agriculture

by Betty Reefer

Farmland preservation is only one of the tools you need in your toolbox for protecting the land and the agriculture industry. Recent meetings with USDA agencies, Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, Westmoreland County Farmland Preservation, and the Westmoreland Conservation District have helped identify areas where each may be a key player in keeping farming viable in this county.

Strategic planning for the future of agriculture is becoming the new buzz in Pennsylvania. Westmoreland County is on board in helping farmers find new ways to add value and sustainability to their agriculture operations.

"Cooperating for Sustainability," a satellite teleconference, was presented at Donohoe Center on April 2. The conference was sponsored by the Northeastern Center for Sustainable Agriculture Education and Research (NE SARE), the

Cornell Cooperative Enterprise Program, and the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture.

"Cooperating for Sustainability" is a way to help farmers and planners meet



many challenges faced in agriculture today. Producers across the nation are actively reinventing the concept of

cooperation to discover new, efficient ways to increase profitability. This broadcast program is a regional project developed to provide training for cooperative organization advisors and leaders. It takes a close look at three new cooperatives in the Northeast and investigates key components involved with their successes and failures.

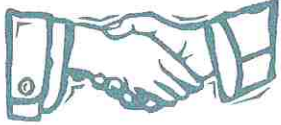
Highlights of the program include:

- understanding the role of advisors
- adopting cost-cutting practices
- developing marketing strategies
- adding value to farm products.

This teleconference is a 'first step' in a new direction for county agencies and farmers interested in agricultural development. Keeping agriculture as a number one industry in this county is a task that we all need to help support.

News 'n Notes...

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH



District staff took their message on the road in late February for a special meeting of the Murrysville Council and Planning Commission.

Greg Phillips presented the overview of District activities as well as specific information on forestry and GIS; Jim Pillsbury presented stormwater information; Craig Barras, erosion and sediment pollution control; Holly Dugan, nutrient management; Betty Reefer, farmland preservation; and Mark Killar, abandoned mine cleanup.

The purpose of the presentations was to detail what the District does and to show specifically how we can help Murrysville, a community along the Route 22 corridor that is intensely feeling the pressures of urbanization and wrestling with the difficult question of how to manage a growing population's needs for goods and services with the desire to retain open space, heritage, and quality of life.

The community is currently in the process of developing a comprehensive plan for its future, and the District will be an integral part of helping them implement that plan.



WCD Chairman Roy Houston received a very complementary letter from Murrysville Planning Commission Chairperson Robert Mitall, in which he said that our presentation "solidified (the Planning Commission's) view that the public investment in programs and staff has borne many benefits," and that "additional support would greatly enhance the wonderful performance of the District."

The premier issue of our new Nutrient Management newsletter, The Conservation Advantage, was recently printed and distributed. Thanks to all of you who gave us positive feedback on our efforts...and for your understanding of the "growing pains" that sometimes come with starting a new venture.

One of those "growing pains" made itself known in our first issue, when we included an incorrect number for the farms preserved through the Farmland Preservation Program. The correct number, for the state of Pennsylvania as of March 1997, is 728 farms, totaling 91,593 acres.



The District hosted the Department of Environmental Protection's semi-annual Southwestern Regional Roundtable Meeting at Donohoe Center on Tuesday, March 25. Nearly 50 people attended, including the new chief of the Bureau of Water Quality Protection, Cedric Karper.

The day-long meeting included a number of important discussions related to two of the District's primary activities — erosion control and stream encroachment.

Our Program Specialist/Forester, Tony Quadro, gave a presentation in mid-March to some 35 people at a meeting of the Westmoreland County Association of Township Supervisors. A major item of discussion was the District's Cooperative Partnership Agreements. These are signed statements of mutual intent between the District and individual Westmoreland County municipalities that help guarantee that the District is notified before any major earthmoving activity occurs. This advance notice gives us the opportunity to work with the parties involved to develop a site plan that will be effective in controlling erosion and stormwater runoff.



FRIENDS AND COLLEAGUES

Don Hyatt, waterways conservation officer for the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, retired early this year.

Don was a great friend to the District who assisted us in reviewing many earthmoving sites and logging jobs. His "tough but fair" approach was always appreciated and it proved to be a great help in getting compliance on the more problem-type sites.

We wish Don the best of luck and happiness in his retirement! And we look forward to having an equally pleasant working relationship with his replacement, Jim Vatter.



FIND THE FIDDLE

Many of you will receive the District's 1996 Annual Report along with this issue of Landmarks.

To coincide with the musical theme of the annual report — which features Vivaldi's The Four Seasons — we have hidden somewhere in this issue of Landmarks a symbol of a violin that looks like the above violin, only much, much smaller.

The first three readers who call us at 837-5271 with the correct location of this small violin symbol will win a music CD featuring The Four Seasons and three other Concertos by Vivaldi. Limit one winner per household.



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KATHY'S KIDS KORNER- Definitions Match-Up

by Jim Pillsbury

Try your hand at matching definitions
to the conservation vocabulary shown below.

Erosion	the type of permit necessary to work in a stream
Stormwater	the lead state environmental protection agency
Wetland	wearing away of earth by water
Sedimentation	black cloth staked below disturbed areas
Filter Fence	hard, blocky rocks used to line stream channels
Chapter 102	water running off land from precipitation
DEP	a unique combination of soil, plants, and water
Riprap	Harrisburg's name for erosion control regulations
Mulch	the deposition of eroded material
Encroachment	hay or straw applied to protect newly planted seed

Water Quality, Habitat and Trout: The Watershed Approach

A Summary: Acidified Streams Workshop

by Bill McCune,
Vice President, Forbes Trail Chapter of Trout Unlimited

Douglas Kepler of Damariscotta Environmental Consultants offered a detailed review of Acid Mine Drainage (AMD) and its impact on streams in Appalachia. Approaches to resolve AMD problems were discussed.

The watershed approach is the way to attack AMD. Each individual seep or discharge is addressed as a separate entity. The water chemistry and volume flows are used to size the treatment. One successful

method is the approach which involves a series of ponds and wetlands which remove the oxygen from water, treats the acidity problem with lime in an oxygen-free atmosphere, and drops out the iron, aluminum and sulfate. As water progresses through the series, it gradually clears.

Not all treatments in the past have been successful, in part due to lack of funding to maintain the systems. A possible



NATURALLY

Delicious

By Lori Whalen

French Onion Soup

4 cups thinly sliced onions
1 garlic clove, minced
1/4 cup butter or margarine
6 cups water
8 beef bouillon cubes
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
6 slices French bread (3/4-inch thick),
buttered and toasted
6 slices Swiss cheese (8- x 4-inches)

In a large covered saucepan, cook onions and garlic in butter over medium-low heat for 8-10 minutes or until tender and golden, stirring occasionally. Add water, bouillon and Worcestershire sauce; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover; simmer for 30 minutes. Ladle hot soup in six oven-proof bowls. Top each with a slice of French bread. Cut each slice of cheese in half and place over the bread. Broil until cheese melts. Serve immediately. Yield: 6 servings.

LANDMARKS

*The Official Newsletter of the
Westmoreland Conservation District*

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solution to this problem would be to sell the dredge iron and sulfate sediments to industry.

The main points to come from this workshop are: 1) a watershed approach is necessary, 2) each source of pollution is different, 3) treatment must be sized properly, and 4) funding for maintenance must be sought.



Upcoming Events

April 4

Legislative Breakfast
Donohoe Center

May 5

Envirothon
Twin Lakes Park

May 14

District Meeting
Donohoe Center

May 23

Nominating Organization Picnic
Donohoe Center

June 11

District Meeting
Donohoe Center

*Nature Park
continued from page 1*

grounds of Donohoe Center adjacent to the park, our intent is that visitors could explore both facilities – Nature Park and Donohoe Center – as a total outdoor education experience. This quarter, we began to develop a brochure explaining the complementary features of the two facilities.

In the very near future, the committee hopes to have the trail from the new entrance cut and surfaced, the large rocks put into place for the memorial area to Ann, and an information kiosk/bulletin board erected.



Before You Turn The Dirt, Come See How The Pros Do It!

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*You are invited to attend District meetings.
Call (412) 837-5271 for meeting time and location.*