

## Franklin Regional Places Second In State Competition



Photo - Greg Phillips

Franklin Regional High School's Envir-Olympic Team - left to right: Edward Stones, Susan Bach, Brooke Merrell, Jack Straite, Tom Graham

### ENVIR OLYMPICS

by Tom Keller

Five Franklin Regional High School students placed second in the PA State Envir-Olympics held at Reed's Gap State Park, Mifflin County on June 20th.

Arthur Davis, Secretary of the Department of Environmental Resources, presented medallions to Edward Stones, Jack Straite, Susan Bach, Tom Graham and Brooke Merrell. Tom Pearson, team advisor and Sloan Elementary School teacher, said, "We expected the competition to be tough, but the team was well prepared."

Franklin Regional was one of 34 county teams participating in the competition. To qualify for the state Envir-Olympics, they defeated the defending Derry team at the second annual Westmoreland Conservation District Envir-Olympics competition held at Twin Lakes County Park on May 4th. Other teams entering the event were: Hempfield Area, Latrobe Area, and Central Westmoreland Vocational Technical High Schools.

The District staff and Board of Directors would like to express their appreciation to the following organizations and their personnel for their efforts to make the local Envir-Olympics a great success: Wes Gordon, Soil Conservation Service, Thomas Fitzgerald, Bureau of Forestry, Frank Plewa,

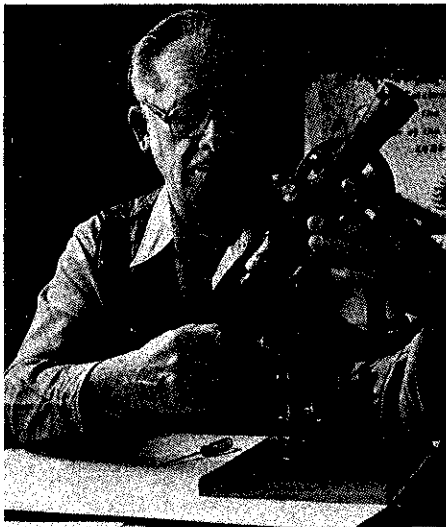
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Don Elliot and Jay Tarara, Bureau of Water Quality and Dennis Neideigh, PA Game Commission. Malcolm Sias and Ed Rhodes, Westmoreland County Parks and Recreation, provided refreshments and T-shirts for all participants. Earl Shriver, Beaver County, presented an entertaining and educational talk on birds-of-prey. Raptors on display included a golden eagle, a great horned owl and a goshawk.

Hopefully, the Envir-Olympics will continue to grow and many more students will have a chance to participate in this educational program.

## Meet Some Of Westmoreland's Conservation Team



**Kathleen Fritz - District Secretary**  
Kathy handles District and Soil Conservation Service clerical matters. In addition to typing correspondence and farm conservation plans, she also performs a variety of other office related duties including computer operation.



**Joseph Obenski - USDA, Soil Conservation Service, Soil Conservation Technician**  
Joe assists landowners with the layout and installation of conservation practices. He also serves as an inspector and surveyor on Resource Conservation Development and Rural Abandoned Mine Projects.

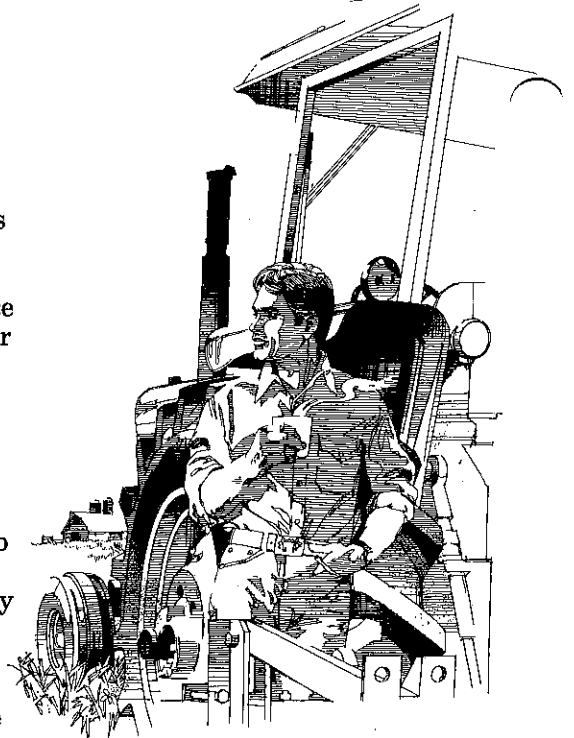
## Prime Farmland Underfoot

by Wes Gordon

Does part of your lawn or garden grow better plants even though you treat the entire area the same? Most farmers will tell you that a certain field or portion of a field will produce better crops given the same management. The reason for this can probably be found by looking below the surface — to the soil itself. Soils can differ greatly and some soils are just naturally more productive than others.

Land that is best suited to producing food, fiber, forage and oil-seed crops is considered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be prime farmland. To qualify as prime, a soil must have a naturally adequate supply of moisture, favorable soil temperature, acceptable permeability rate, and a good natural pH level prior to the addition of soil amendments. In addition, land must also be free of flooding, not too steep, with no serious soil erosion hazards and be free of restrictive rock fragments in the surface layer.

With all those criteria to meet, you might be thinking we are talking about farmland in Iowa. Not entirely so! Yes, Iowa does have prime farmland but so does Southwestern Pennsylvania, including Westmoreland County. In fact, the Natural Resources Inventory for Westmoreland County estimates that 15 percent of all the land in



the County is prime farmland.

Prime farmland is capable of long term productivity if good soil and water conservation practices are used. This land is more responsive to management while requiring less energy and investment to maximize productivity. Prime farmland is truly a natural resource which requires our stewardship. It is important to identify, monitor and preserve these important farmland areas within our nation, our state and our county.

## District Hosts Successful Stormwater Seminar

by Greg Phillips

Over eighty engineers from a three county area were recently updated on stormwater management at a seminar hosted by the Westmoreland Conservation District.

The engineers in attendance heard representatives of the Soil Conservation Service discuss the revised "Urban Hydrology for Small Watersheds" (Technical Release 55). The publication is used for calculating stormwater run-off volume, peak discharges and storage for detention structures.

We wish to express our appreciation to **Bill Bowers**, State Conservation Engineer, and **Tim Murphy**, Hydraulic Engineer, for their informative presentation.

(Copies of Technical Release-55 can be obtained by calling the District office. The cost of the publication is \$20.00.)

# Fish Commission Chief Tours Abandoned Mine Sites



Impounded water and trash, abandoned mine site, Washington County, PA



Discussing the problems at hand - left to right: Keith Small, Waterways Conservation Officer, Washington County; Edward R. Miller, Executive Director, PA Fish Commission; Bernie Hoffnar, District Director, Bedford County

Photos by Mark Jackson

by *Bonnie Wenk*

Edward R. Miller, recently named Executive Director of the PA Fish Commission, saw once again how abandoned mines pollute streams and rivers when he toured mine sites in Washington County.

The tour was organized by the Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, a group of conservationists actively engaged in seeking funding for the much needed reclamation work.

"It's tough for people to live where water quality is bad, and I'm sympathetic to their plight," Miller says, looking over the edge of a vertical highwall and down into a huge pond of impounded water filled with old tires, trash and other debris.

The pollution from abandoned mine sites is not limited to Washington County; it encompasses all of the southwestern



Once an abandoned mine site, now a completed RAMP project

part of the state and extends as far north as Elk County. Over 50 percent of the pollution of our waterways is caused by mine discharges.

"We want to improve water quality and bring it back to its natural state," Miller acknowledges. "We must work together to achieve good water quality and to promote innovative conservation. Our quality of life is contingent on the wise and proper use of resources."

## Mine Subsidence Project Funded

The Department of Environmental Resources (DER) has awarded a \$348,265 contract to **Frich Construction, Inc.**, Belle Vernon, to correct an abandoned deep coal mine subsidence problem. The project will affect 11 acres near New Kensington. The area was deep mined in the early 1900's.

According to DER, the project involves 52 surface properties. The reclamation work is tentatively scheduled to begin late this summer and will be completed by February 1988.

# Conservancy Acquires Loyalhanna Gorge



Photos by Mark & Jill Jackson



Persistence and dedication, two traits shared by Mother Nature and the staff of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, have interacted to protect 1,275 acres surrounding the Loyalhanna Gorge. The gorge is located between the east and westbound lanes of Route 30 where the Loyalhanna Creek cuts through Chestnut Ridge.

Thousands of people enjoy the unique scenic beauty of this area year-round. The green wooded slopes provide cool relief to the summer traveler, while in winter the white snow-covered cliffs and slopes offer striking views. Easy access to the creek attracts anglers for spring fishing.

The Conservancy's effort to protect the Loyalhanna Gorge began more than 20 years ago.

During the late 60's and early 70's several properties were acquired. A major breakthrough came in 1973 when the Latrobe Construction Company donated over 570 acres. In December of 1986, after 13 years of negotiations, an agreement was reached for the acquisition of the last major property, 360 acres at the northwestern end of the gorge.

Plans have been made to involve local conservation groups, such as the Loyalhanna Watershed Association, to clear the remaining road signs from the scenic corridor. Ultimately, the Conservancy may transfer the acreage to an appropriate agency such as Westmoreland County for public park purposes.

## Introduce A Friend To Landmarks!

Do you have a friend who is interested in conservation? Perhaps they would enjoy receiving *Landmarks*, the official newsletter of the Westmoreland Conservation District. *Landmarks* is published quarterly and is available free of charge. Please use this coupon to send in his or her name and address for our mailing list.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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# Who Pays For Soil Erosion?



Photo - Greg Phillips

by Greg Phillips

Pictured above is a bridge spanning Jacks Run on Depot Street in the Borough of Youngwood. The channel near the structure was choked with sediment restricting the opening under the bridge. Floodwaters have closed the road several times during the last few years.

This spring, PennDOT crews removed in excess of 350 tons of sediment from the channel near the structure. Approximately eight days, 512 man hours, three dump trucks and two grade-alls were used to complete the job.

The bridge is located at a sharp bend in the creek at the end of a 6,000 foot channelization project. Much of the sediment load

originates from an abandoned strip mine site located directly upstream of the channelization and the bridge.

Accelerated soil erosion, similar to the condition that is occurring on the abandoned strip mine near Youngwood, causes many problems. Not only is it a loss of a valuable soil resource, it also results in deteriorated water quality and blocked stream channels. To help ensure the residents of Westmoreland County of clean streams and rivers and highly productive land, the District's Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program remains a top priority.

Who pays for soil erosion?  
*In the long run we all do!*

## Timber Harvesting Publications Available

by Tony Quadro

Two publications are now available to assist timber harvesters with developing soil erosion and sediment pollution control plans for timber harvesting operations. One is a pocket sized manual which contains charts, typicals, and sizing requirements for various erosion control devices. The other is an activities packet containing information on stream encroachment permits and sample erosion and sediment pollution control plans.

Both of these publications were developed cooperatively by the Department of Environmental Resources, the Pennsylvania State University, the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Directors, the Pennsylvania Forestry Association, and various other agencies. To receive these useful publications, call the District Office at 837-5271.

Published by

### Westmoreland Conservation District

932 St. Clair Way, Rt. 30 East  
Greensburg, PA 15601  
Phone: 412-837-5271

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# Abandoned Mine Sealed

by Tom Keller and Greg Phillips

Exploring flooded mine shafts by raft is risky, especially when young children are the explorers. But thanks to federal funding from the Rural Abandoned Mine Program (RAMP) another dangerous abandoned deep mine opening was sealed, eliminating the chance that children may be injured or killed.

The opening was located on the Paul Faletto farm, near Darragh. Faletto contacted Wes Gordon of the Greensburg Soil Conservation Service (SCS) office to express his concern for the safety of the children playing in the mine.

From an initial field investigation, SCS engineers developed a reclamation plan. Approximately \$6,000 was appropriated from RAMP for sealing, back filling, drainage and seeding. The project was completed in June by Kerber Landscaping of North Huntingdon.



Photos - Tom Keller

Greg Phillips, District Manager, and Joe Obenski, SCS, examine stone used to close the mine entrance.



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