

## FRANKLIN REGIONAL REIGNS AT DISTRICT AND STATE ENVIROTHONS

by Tony Quadro

Five Franklin Regional High School students placed first in the Westmoreland County Envirothon Competition held at Twin Lakes County Park on May 2nd.

The team of Edward Stones, Jack Straite, Susan Bach, Tom Graham, and Brooke Merrell competed against five other teams including: Hempfield Area, Jeannette, Mount Pleasant Area, and Derry Area High Schools, and Central Westmoreland Vocational Technical School.

The Envirothon's main objective is to cultivate a desire to learn about our environment through competitive events. Students compete against each other in aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, and this year's current event; prime farmland.

The event is sponsored by the Westmoreland Conservation District in cooperation with the Westmoreland County Department of Parks and Recreation, PA Bureau of Forestry, PA Game Commission, and the U.S.D.A., Soil Conservation Service.



Photo - Tom Keller

1988 Westmoreland Conservation District Envirothon Winners, the Franklin Regional High School Team, left to right: Edward Stones, Brooke Merrill, Susan Bach, Jack Straite, Tom Graham and Tom Pearson, team advisor.

By winning the county competition, Franklin Regional had qualified to compete in the State Meet that was held at Reed's Gap State Park on June 23rd & 24th. Franklin Regional's team placed second at Reed's Gap against 37 other

teams. This is the third time in as many years that Westmoreland County's team has placed first or second statewide. Congratulations to an extraordinary team!

## Local Scout Organizes Seedling Planting

by Kathleen Fritz

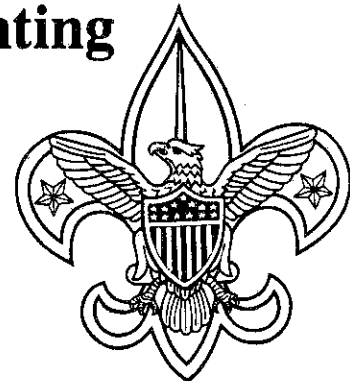
Mike Clark, Senior Patrol Leader, Norvelt Scout Troop #472 worked with the District this Spring to complete a service project for his Eagle Scout badge. The project involved planting 3,000 hardwood and conifer seedlings. The District acquired the seedlings from Dennis Neideigh, Wildlife Conservation Officer, Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Troop #472, under Mike's direction, planted 2,000 seedlings for wildlife habitat improvement on the Greensburg Sportsmen's Association property near Mutual. They also planted 1,000 seed-

lings at the Fox Farm in New Stanton to help promote the Conservation Reserve Program. Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District, advised the scouts on planting procedures.

Members of Troop #472 who participated in the project were: Mike Tlumac, Jason Frye, Greg Frye, Jimmy Drexler, Mike Fligger, Neil Bossard, Mat Gross, Randy Miller, John Mondoch, Robby Sosko, John Miller, Brian Ervan, and Rennie Rinier.

A special thanks to Tom Fitzgerald, Bureau of Forestry, for supplying the



planting bars, Chuck Waugaman, Greensburg Sportsmen's Association for his cooperation and especially Dennis Neideigh for acquiring the seedlings.



## District Staff Expands

by Greg Phillips

This Spring, we welcomed Jim Pillsbury, Hydraulic Engineer, to our staff. Jim, originally from Delaware County, attended Penn State University for four years, graduating in May with a BS in Civil Engineering. At Penn State his studies emphasized hydraulics, hydrology, urban hydrology, stormwater modeling and design of stormwater and erosion control facilities.

Jim's responsibilities with the District include reviewing stormwater management and soil erosion control plans as well as assisting landowners, municipalities, and organizations with stormwater complaints, drainage problems, streambank stabilization, pond construction and many other conservation related problems.

## District Conservationist to Take Part in Leadership Program

by Greg Phillips

Wesley Gordon has been selected by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) to participate in his Agency's Leadership Development Program. The program provides leadership training through exposure to various work environments.

Wes's assignments include a three week internship with the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) in Washington, D.C. While with NACD, he will work under the supervision of their Executive Vice President, Ernest Shea. Wes will also serve as Acting Area Conservationist in the SCS office in State College for two weeks.

The training promises to be of great value to Wes, the SCS and the District as he shares his experiences with us. Congratulations from everyone at the District!

## Woodland Committee Meets to Chart Course

by Tony Quadro

On Friday, June 10, a committee composed of Tony Quadro, Westmoreland Conservation District, Eric Oesterling, Penn State Extension, Lysle Sherwin, Loyalhanna Watershed Association, Tom Fitzgerald, PA Bureau of Forestry, local Consulting Foresters, and Tree Farmers met to discuss the formation of a County Woodland Owner's Association.

Mr. Neil Kinneer, the Westmoreland Conservation District's 1987 Outstanding Woodland Manager, stated, "An association such as this would be a good thing for the County's woodland owners. It would be beneficial to see

how others are managing their land."

"We need to select current issues of interest to forest owners as topics of discussion for meetings," stated Mr. Sherwin. "The Woodland Owners' Association should function as both an educational and social organization."

The objectives of the organization are to educate forestland owners, to help find solutions to forest management problems, and to be recognized as the voice of private forestland owners. A meeting is currently being planned for sometime in October. Please call the District office at 837-5271 if you would like to receive notice of this meeting.

Photo - Tom Keller



Westmoreland Conservation District's 1987 Outstanding Woodland Managers, Neil and Brian Kinneer accept award from Tony Quadro, District Environmental Control Officer. Left to right: Thomas Fitzgerald, Bureau of Forestry, Tony Quadro, Neil Kinneer, Brian Kinneer.

## Be a Landmarks Sponsor!

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Conservation in the  
1985 Farm Bill

# Conservation Provisions

United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

## Conservation and the Farm Bill

by Wes Gordon

For the first time, a farmer's soil conservation activity is linked to his/her eligibility to receive farm program benefits. Under the 1985 Farm Bill, farmers who farm highly erodible fields must carry out an approved conservation plan to continue receiving United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) farm program benefits.

Here are the provisions of the Farm Bill that are responsible for this new approach.

**Swampbuster** applies if you convert naturally occurring wetland and use it to produce agricultural commodities after December 23, 1985 (the date the farm bill was signed). Swampbusters lose USDA program benefits the year in which such commodities are produced.

**Sodbuster** applies to highly erodible fields that were not used for crop production during the period 1981-1985. If you plant annual crops on this land, you must have a conservation system approved by the local conservation district in order to remain eligible for USDA program benefits.

**Conservation Compliance** or managing your land in keeping with an approved conservation plan applies to highly erodible fields on which annual crops were grown at least once during the years 1981-1985. To remain eligible for certain USDA program benefits, you must develop and be actively applying a locally approved conservation plan for those highly erodible fields by January 1, 1990. These plans are to be fully implemented by January 1, 1995.

**Conservation Reserve** allows for the highly erodible cropland to be retired from production under 10-year contracts. You receive annual rental payments each of the 10 years and half the cost of establishing permanent grasses, legumes, trees, windbreaks, or wildlife plantings on your highly erodible cropland. **The next sign-up period begins July 18, 1988 and extends until August 5, 1988. Contact the Greensburg Soil Conservation Service (SCS) or Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS) office at 834-3970 or 834-0830.**

### USDA Programs Affected

You must farm according to your conservation plan on highly erodible land to remain eligible for benefits in the following programs:

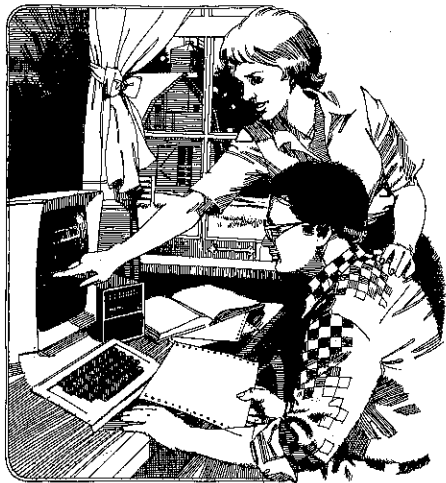
- Wheat, cotton, feed grain, and rice payments
- Commodity loans
- Farm storage facility loans
- Conservation Reserve Program annual payments
- Dairy indemnity payments
- Storage payments
- Wool and mohair payments
- Crop insurance
- Farmers Home Administration loans

Remember, the loss of eligibility applies to all the land you farm, not just to specific erodible or wetlands fields.

## Conservation and the Farm Bill *continued*

The Soil Conservation Service has estimated that 95% of cropland in Westmoreland County is highly erodible land. As defined by the Bill, a soil is highly erodible if it has the inherent potential to erode eight times the rate at which the soil can naturally replenish itself to maintain continued productivity. Present cropping patterns and conservation practices are not considered in making this determination.

To be considered a highly erodible field, one-third or more of a field must be highly erodible, or the highly erodible area must be 50 acres or more. The Westmoreland County Soil Survey is used as the primary tool to determine highly erodible land. A list of mapping units based on national criteria has been utilized to make these determinations.



### Assistance Available to You

Several federal, state, and local agencies have responsibilities for carrying out the conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill. The Bill assigns roles and duties to each of the following agencies:

**Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service (ASCS)** determines if applicants for USDA programs are producing agricultural commodities on a field that SCS has determined to be predominantly highly erodible land or converted wetland. ASCS also determines the boundaries of fields that include highly erodible lands or wetlands. ASCS identifies fields that were used to produce at least one crop during 1981-1985 and fields that were part of set-aside or diversion programs. Local ASCS offices also determine if the conversion of a particular wetland was commenced before December 23, 1985.

**Soil Conservation Service (SCS)** helps producers determine if their cropland or potential cropland is highly erodible, wetland, artificially induced wetland, wetland on which the conversion would result in minimal effect, or converted wetland. SCS field staff help producers prepare conservation plans and install appropriate conservation systems.

**Westmoreland Conservation District** approves conservation plans for land to be entered into the Conservation Reserve Program and for highly erodible cropland affected by the Sodbuster and Conservation Compliance provisions.

Nearly all farmers in Westmoreland County have been notified about highly erodible land on their farm. As a farmer your next step, if you want to remain eligible for program benefits, is to contact your SCS field office.

If a conservation plan exists for your farm, it should be reviewed together with SCS personnel and updated to make it current with your present farming practices. If you do not have a plan, an SCS conservationist will outline and discuss the different ways you can accomplish your goals and help you determine the effects on your total operation before you make the decisions.

Decisions are needed on both the use of the land and its treatment. When you make a decision on land use, you will need to consider how to treat each field to get the desired results. These treatments are known as conservation practices. Usually several practices are used in combination to solve resource problems, resulting in a resource management system.

For example, on some cropland, the practices may be fertilizing and liming, crop rotation, and a form of crop residue management, such as no-till. On sloping cropland, you may need the additional resource protection of strip-cropping, or grassed waterways. These are the most common practices used in Westmoreland County.

You make the decisions. The SCS conservationist can give many good alternatives and make some economic comparisons, but you must decide what you want to do, when, and how. Consider your available time, equipment, and economic situation.

The SCS conservationist can help you understand these conservation practices, how they fit together in a resource management system, and what is necessary to provide the maintenance for continued effectiveness in the future. He/she will record your decisions and other suggestions in your plan and will help you in scheduling and applying planned conservation. This plan will provide a guide for you for the next several years. It can be modified as your goals and objectives change.

As your local conservation agencies, we are committed to helping Westmoreland County's farmers protect the land, safeguard water quality, enhance wildlife habitat, and strengthen the economy.



# Timber Loss From Gypsy Moth Defoliation

by Lee Musselman

Will I lose trees because of Gypsy moth defoliation? Should I spray? How can I predict what my losses will be? Should I sell?

These are questions most frequently asked by woodland owners who are concerned about Gypsy moth defoliation and resultant tree mortality. Although there are no hard and fast rules, there are some general conclusions about managing timber in high-risk areas.

In any area where Gypsy moth defoliation is severe, timber mortality will occur. The amount of timber loss seems to be tied to various interrelated environmental factors. For example, a severe defoliation coupled with a dry summer puts added stress on trees, and mortality is generally high.

Large timber on good growing sites seems to be most affected. In fact, any timber growing on good bottomland sites seems to suffer higher mortality than slower-growing timber on poorer sites, such as ridge tops. It is assumed that the trees growing on poor sites have been subjected to various stresses over time and thus are able to tolerate the additional stress of defoliation.

In general, it does not pay a landowner to spray large areas of timber for Gypsy moth control unless the timber is of high value, especially if it is to be harvested within a few years of defoliation. If you have a few high-value shade trees around a home, these

too should be protected.

Do not make a thinning or intermediate harvest cut (selection, diameter limit, etc.) in a stand of timber, regardless of its value, if it is in danger of being defoliated in the next few years. It is better to let mortality occur in this situation and then treat the stand, removing the dead trees. If sold within one or two years after dying, the timber will lose very little value. In a mature stand that is ready for harvest, it is probably best to sell before the defoliation occurs.

For additional information, contact the Westmoreland Conservation District or your local District Forester.

## Summer Addition to the Conservation Team

by Greg Phillips

A big thank you from everyone at the District and SCS to Kelly Sofaly, Student Intern, for volunteering to assist us with our soil and water conservation activities. She will also participate in the District's Urban Stormwater Runoff/Infiltration Analysis Project this Summer and Fall.

Kelly, a senior with highest honors at California University of Pennsylvania, is majoring in Environmental Resources and wants to work in the conservation field some day.

## 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.

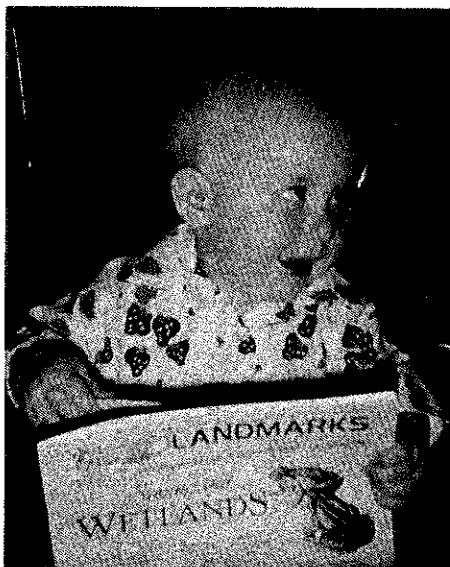
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Brandi Allison of Turkey Inn Road, Ligonier, PA, daughter of Michael and Kathy Allison enjoys an issue of "Landmarks."

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# Watch for Westmoreland's New Lake!

by Wes Gordon

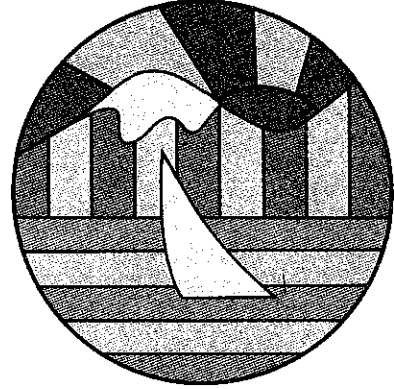
Ground breaking for the construction of a fifteen acre lake at Northmoreland County Park is close at hand. The cooperative effort, which involves many levels of government, will result in a fifteen acre recreation lake development at the County Park located in Allegheny Township.

Park planners with the Westmoreland County Department of Parks and Roads have long realized the need for additional water-based recreation facilities at Northmoreland. As early as 1981 investigations began toward the creation of such a facility.

The engineering staff of Soil Conservation Service designed the earth dam structure in 1985. At about the same time, SCS and County Park staff cooperated with other agencies to prepare an Environmental Assessment of the proposed project. The County was able to obtain some funds from the Pennsylvania Department of Community Affairs through a recreation grant.

The Westmoreland County Commissioners decided in the late fall of 1987 to provide funds for the remainder of the construction cost.

Construction is expected to begin in late July or early August and will take two construction seasons to complete. The Pennsylvania Fish Commission has indicated a willingness to add Northmoreland Lake to its regular trout stocking program. The lake will then provide the only public fishing in the northwest part of the County. With fishing, boating, and other activities, Northmoreland Lake promises to be a valued addition to the County and will bring enjoyment to area residents for years to come.



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