

DISTRICT ANSWERS CALL...

This special edition of "Landmarks" is devoted to conservation education. During the last few months, District Directors, staff and volunteers have made an all-out attempt to broaden the scope of our educational activities. We are responding to the call heard loud and clear before, during and after the Long Range Planning process — to give education high priority. Those giving input linked the need for enhanced education to the success of other endeavors. This issue outlines what is happening in conservation education locally and globally.

We thought it would be rewarding to touch base with some of the people working on the frontlines of conservation education. Authors you will meet in this issue are Terry Kromel, Education Coordinator at Powdermill Nature Center in Rector, Tom Benevento, Murrsville artist and naturalist, and Bonnie Wenk, former county associate director. Kromel has accomplished a great deal in Rector and Benevento has donated his artwork and is helping clean-up Turtle Creek. Benevento is currently working with Guatemalans to reforest eroding areas. Wenk, free-lance writer, is now working for the Peace Corps in Jamaica. In addition, District staffers Tony Quadro and Betty Reefer contributed articles to this special edition. Associate Director Tom Keller's article on watersheds is also featured.

This issue says: "We heard the call and these are the approaches being taken here and around the world."

That doesn't mean we aren't open to new ideas. The district is working toward establishing an education coordinator. We are developing a public relations program and district brochure. All this is taking place in addition to our on-going efforts which range from an envirothon for high school students to establishing a wetlands education area near New Stanton. We conduct seminars, ranging from forestry to abandon mine reclamation. And that's just for starters. Obviously, we must increase our education investment if people are to value conservation and become involved in local activities.

But, as we all have learned, education is expensive. Conservationists know the investment must go beyond tax money. It must come from the private sector. That's why we established the Pennsylvania Conservation Partnership through the resource magazine. That's why we set up the Penn's Corner Endowment Trust Fund. That's why we have received excellent support from project sponsors like Peoples Natural Gas, the Mellon and McKenna Foundations, and West Penn Power. All have helped the education movement in meaningful ways.

The district hopes this issue inspires people to participate in the educational outreach of the conservation movement. We are all students and teachers. We all have the same goal.... a higher quality of life.

Yours in Conservation,



Gregory M. Phillips
District Manager

Powdermill



AN ADVENTURE — IN — LEARNING

by Terri Kromel

Education Coordinator, Powdermill Nature Reserve



Powdermill Nature Reserve, located four miles south of Rector, is the biological field station of The Carnegie Museum of Natural History. Over 2,000 acres of woodlands, stream, fields, ponds and thickets can be found here. The reserve serves as a research and education center.

In the early 1950's, Dr. M. Graham Netting, then Director of The Carnegie Museum of Natural History, saw the need for a field station for long-term studies of natural populations - their life history, behavior and ecological relationships. With the generous support of General and Mrs. Richard K. Mellon and Mr. and Mrs. Alan M. Scaife, purchase funds made possible the assembly of the first tracts of land for the Reserve, named for Powdermill Run which traverses the property.

Research plays an important role at the Reserve. A bird-banding program takes advantage of Powdermill's wide variety of habitats which attract a great diversity of migratory songbirds. Birds are caught in mist nets, banded with numbered aluminum bands, weighed, measured, aged, sexed and released. Knowledge is gained about longevity of wild bird populations, differences between sexes and age groups in migration behavior, bird life cycles, and weight and plumage changes.

Research on eighteen species of mammals, from red fox to masked shrews, observes population density, survival, reproductive activity and growth. Radiotelemetry is used in understanding behavioral thermogenesis in small mammals.

Other research subjects include amphibian

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Phone: 412-837-5271 Fax: 412-837-4127

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Lorrie Stouffer, *Editor*
Paul Heyworth, *Technical Consultant*
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Letters to the Editor

To Gregory M. Phillips, District Manager

Dear Mr. Phillips,
I want to thank you for your interest and assistance in helping me with my request. It's not often someone who comes in off the street can find such an immediate wealth of information. Thank you so much again.

Sincerely,
Joseph Paul Barauskas III, Greensburg

To Betty J. Reefer, Farmland Preservation Specialist

Dear Betty,
This is to express my thanks to you for all the help you were to my dad during the process of completing the Land Preservation Easement Purchase. ...We are looking forward to your visits, and hope all of your closings will be as professional and pleasantly arranged. *Best wishes for future success,*
Nancy Stoner, Ruffsdale

To James W. Pillsbury, Hydraulic Engineer

Dear Jim,
Thank you so much for your interest and informative talk on the wetlands. We enjoyed your video, talk and hand-outs. I know everyone learned a lot and hopefully appreciates the wetlands more now. Thank you for your time and help. I really appreciated it!
Sincerely,
Natalie Debich, Greensburg

Powdermill: A Learning Adventure Continued from page 1

and reptile abundance, plant systematics and ecology, aquatic ecology, taxonomy of aquatic insects and the effects of gypsy moths.

In 1989, Powdermill hired an education coordinator to develop, implement and publicize educational activities for local schools. These activities are offered through field trips to the Florence Lockhart Nimick Nature Center. The goal of this program is to build awareness, knowledge and stewardship towards our natural resources. Environmentally responsible citizens are our ultimate goal.

Field trips are facilitated by the education staff for grades K-12. A complete series of hands-on activities is available for these students. Here are some examples of activities

students may participate in. Grades K-1 will discover the wonders of the forest by using their senses to investigate. Hearing, smelling, touching and observing animals, plants and their habitats is a big part of the activity. Grades 2-4 begin to build on their basic awareness and increase their knowledge about animals and plants. They participate in hands-on activities dealing with animal adaptations and habitats. Grades 5-6 explore plant and aquatic communities. They will begin to understand how all animals and plants depend on and need each other for survival. They also become involved in discussions on human effects on the environment and what they can do to protect our natural resources from unnecessary harm.

Finally, Grades 7-12 participate in a variety of activities including soil, stream and forest investigations, and animal studies. These activities are based on the process approach. These investigations encourage students to observe their surroundings and to collect, record and interpret data. Facts and figures are collected as a means toward gaining a deeper understanding, not as an end in themselves. The questions and discussions are designed to elicit maximum response and involvement from the students and to eliminate lecturing and show-and-tell activities. Each lesson provides a framework which leads students to an understanding of environmental relationships. A knowledge of these relationships provides the basis for better understanding of environmental problems and their possible solutions.

All-day or half-day field trips can be scheduled to the Nimick Nature Center. An all-day field trip consists of two activities and a lunch break, and a half-day includes one activity. Activities last from 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 hours each depending on the grade level. We are able to accommodate 30 students/activity, and will assist with details for alternating larger groups with other nearby sites. Field trips can be scheduled throughout the school year (even during winter), and there is a small fee for these



Students from University School, Indiana University of Pennsylvania on a visit to Powdermill Nature Reserve enjoy a learning center program with Terri Kromel, Education Coordinator.

naturalist led programs. Organized civic groups may also take advantage of these educational programs year-round. Boy scouts, girl scouts, church groups, youth groups, garden clubs and others have visited for an activity as described above, or for nature hikes and tours of our herb garden. We try to meet the needs of individual groups and have even written special activities to meet girl scout wildlife and ecology badge requirements.

During each season of the year, Powdermill offers a series of free nature programs that are open to the public to attend. The programs cover a wide variety of nature topics, and may include guided hikes, demonstrations, wildflower walks, night hikes, lectures on birds, mammals, insects, reptiles, and amphibians, gardening technique programs, and others dealing with the research programs at Powdermill. You may call us and request a schedule of our public nature programs.

During the summer, children may also take part in a week-long program called "Adventures at Powdermill". Adventures involve children in hands-on investigations emphasizing adaptations, habitats, and interrelationships of plants and animals of the forest, field and stream. The program runs Monday-Friday 9:30-2:30 at the nature center. Children take part in nature printing, stream studies, games and crafts, view the mammal and bird-banding research programs, and enjoy many other nature activities and hikes. It's a great opportunity to introduce children to the natural world.

The Nimick Nature Center offers families and individuals several hours of peaceful visitation. If you'd like to spend some time walking our 3/4 mile network of trails, looking through our butterfly and herb gardens, or viewing the natural history, research and archaeology exhibits at the center you may stop by during our summer hours. In June, July and August we are open Wednesday-Saturday 9:00-4:00, and Sunday 10:00-5:00.

When you visit the nature center during summer 1993, take the time to appreciate the beauty and diversity of our natural world. Spend some time looking at, listening to and smelling the wonders of nature. The need to educate others about our natural resources is tremendous. Powdermill offers a unique opportunity to combine research with education. We attempt to educate and guide adults and children in becoming stewards of the environment through our programming and by setting good examples for the public. Please join us for a program or come hike on your own and enjoy another beautiful section of the Laurel Highlands. To receive a program brochure, or schedule a field trip, please call Terri Kromel, Powdermill's Education Coordinator at 412-593-6105, Monday-Friday 8:00-4:00. ■

On the Road: From Guatemala to Texas

Ecology minded Tom Benevento from Murrysville, Westmoreland County is helping the people of Guatemala in Central America to reforest the land they love...



Artwork by Tom Benevento

Old Herman Machán steps out of his room into the awakening morning. The sky is still slate blue with fading stars. He looks up to the eastern sky and makes a blessing and bows. He walks to his kitchen made of adobe mud to build the day's fire for cooking tortillas and beans. He brushes last night's ashes aside and then makes a blessing to the fire. He says to me, "Firewood is filled with life and it offers itself to us so that we can have life. Fire is like our brother." He tries to use as little wood as possible.

I picked corn one day with Jose Santiago, an indigenous peasant farmer. Before beginning to work he went off to the side and knelt in the soft earth and prayed. While we picked dried corn I noticed that if a kernel fell to the ground, Jose would pick it up and put it in his pocket. He would look up at me and smile.

These are just a couple examples of the wisdom and attitude at the heart of the indigenous people I work with in the highlands of Guatemala. The earth and its elements are seen as life-giving and respected. The ordinary movements of the

continued on page 4

Bonnie Wenk, a former Westmoreland Conservation District Associate Director, reports on conservation activities in Texas. Bonnie is now working with the Peace Corps in Jamaica.

A group of water-monitoring volunteers huddled over a bucket, filling sample bottles. One of the cowboy-hatted participants glanced up and saw, not 25 feet away, a great blue heron surveying the activities. Testing ceased immediately while everyone took a long look at the bird. After the unexpected and pleasurable diversion, it was back to testing the lake's water.

These serendipitous discoveries while water monitoring are part of what makes the Texas Watch program especially interesting to volunteers. The Watch, initiated two years ago, is under the umbrella of the Texas Water Commission, and it is currently being incorporated into the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

The monitoring program has provided accurate water quality information the state could not have otherwise afforded.

"We have 80 groups, about 1,500 people, involved in monitoring 150 sites statewide,"

Dave Buzan, Coordinator of Texas Watch, says. "They have provided valuable reconnaissance and information from places we didn't know anything about."

While testing water, participants are asked to observe other activities around the site, noting flora, fauna and any changes in the habitat. Volunteers have reported fish kills, leaking sewer and water lines and illegal trash dumps, too.

Monitors must attend initial training on testing, monitoring, and documentation. The findings are given to the Texas Watch office where the information is put on a computer program, GIS (Geographic Information System) for future use.

This Texas experience reveals how fortunate the Westmoreland Conservation District is to have the GIS program in their office. The diverse data which can be accessed rapidly helps community leaders make balanced environmental and land use decisions intelligently and quickly. ■

day in relation to the natural world are sacred.

This way of life and the environment that supports it is being faced with many changes, often from outside influences. International timber companies, local and foreign export agribusiness, and the need for firewood accelerate one of Guatemala's most critical environmental concerns: deforestation. Nearly 65% of the country's original forest coverage has been cleared, mostly within the last 30 years. For every 100 trees cut it is estimated that only 7 are replanted. This brings with it habitat loss for many unique plant and animal species, severe soil erosion and a receding water table. Areas of Guatemala that were once moist and forested have become nearly desertlike.

Deforestation has far reaching effects not only for the Guatemalan people but even for our own area of Westmoreland County. Migratory song birds that we enjoy in the warm months rely on the dense forests of Guatemala and Central America for winter habitat. Also, global climatic patterns are thought to be affected by increased deforestation in the tropical regions. For the Guatemalans and the country's wildlife the effects are more severe. As the quality and health of the environment drops so does the quality of life. Water, and soil for growing food are becoming more scarce.

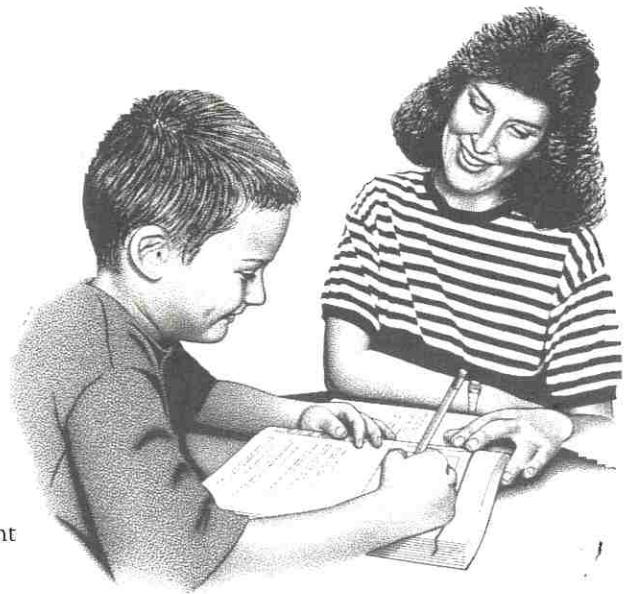
With this in mind there are many local and international organizations springing up to search for environmental solutions such as ASECSA, Greenpeace, Altertec and local parishes. Within the nearly two years I have been working in Guatemala I have seen many signs of hope. The desire to restore the environment has been swelling. The indigenous villagers that I live with have planted nearly 20,000 trees this year and have begun the construction of several tree nurseries. The villagers are also involved in the construction of fuel-efficient wood cook stoves called "chefinas" that save more than 2/3 the amount of wood ordinarily needed.

Last night we held a meeting with twelve leaders from the surrounding mountain villages to discuss the need for reforestation and tree nursery preparation. The villagers, some without shoes, returned home by foot through the darkness and rain, some walking more than an hour up into the mountains.

It is the commitment of villagers like these and the perspective of people like Herman Machán and José Santiago — a lifestyle of humility grounded in the sacredness of all life — that I believe offers a lasting hope for Guatemala, and perhaps the rest of the world. ■

Peoples Gas: Helping to Keep the Flame Alive in Education

by the
Public Relations Department
Peoples Natural Gas



The Peoples Natural Gas Company has long supported education as a part of its business. "Much of the focus during the early years of the Company's educational effort was on cooking and the use of natural gas in industrial and commercial applications," explains Elmore Lockley, Manager of Public Relations Programs. "In the early seventies we started to focus on supply and demand, pricing and conservation. Today, we are committed to discussing energy and the environment, introducing new technological advances in the gas industry, and helping teachers and parents cope with today's social environment. We believe in helping to train and educate students so they can be a part of the highly trained workforce that is needed today and beyond the year 2000 to keep western Pennsylvania economically competitive." We accomplish this by:

Teachers Advisory Panel—provides schools with the necessary materials and resources to enhance learning. Production of and purchase of videos, teaching kits, classroom materials, as well as suggestions for teacher in-service day programs.



Film and Literature Libraries—films, slides, videos, coloring books, posters, teaching kits, and booklets. Offered to educators, free of charge, for use within the classroom. Topics covered include energy, natural gas supply and rates, economics, home economics, conservation, appliances, parenting, after school safety, drug and alcohol abuse, resume writing, careers, hypothermia, and more!

"Energy Educator"—quarterly newsletter that alerts teachers to new programs, activities in the gas industry and at Peoples Gas, and classroom materials offered free or for a small fee.



Energy Mini-Grant Awards—encourage teachers to develop creative new energy projects for use within the classroom. Teachers are eligible to receive up to \$150 for implementation of their hands-on activity.

Higher Education Publications—encourage students to continue their education beyond high school. Copies of the "Family Guide to College Costs in Pennsylvania" and the "Family Guide to Post-secondary Career School Costs in Pennsylvania" are available to local high school students. These booklets outline the financial aid available, as well as lists accredited schools within Pennsylvania and their tuition and fees. "Family Guide to African-American College Costs" is also available in limited supply.

Social Issues—three videos were produced last year directed towards parents and teachers entitled, 'Students at Risk', 'Tutoring Your Child', and 'Parent/Teacher Conferences'.

Says Lockley, "All of these educational programs reaffirm Peoples' commitment to its present and future consumers and to the communities it serves. We're helping to keep the flame alive in education!" ■

Animal Inns: Homes for Wildlife

Over the last two decades, scientists have become increasingly aware of the crucial role of snags and downed dead trees as wildlife habitat. These trees provide homes for diverse wildlife species, from fish to birds to furbearers. A nationwide education campaign called Animal Inn is designed to spread the simple message that "There's Life in Dead Trees."

Animal Inn is targeted at timber land owners, campers, firewood cutters, loggers and the general public to educate them about the value of dead, dying and down trees in the forest, and to encourage the conservation of these Animal Inns for wildlife habitat. The program is part of a national effort that involves the National Association of State Foresters, the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, the American Forest and Paper Association, the National Woodland Owners Association, the USDA Forest Service and Extension Service and the Bureau of Land Management.

Animal Inn is:

- A tool to be used as one solution to the problem of inadvertent removal of dead, dying and hollow trees for wildlife and fish habitat.
- Focused only on certain standing and dead, dying and hollow trees in terrestrial and aquatic habitats.
- A tool to help increase awareness of the value of dead, dying and hollow trees to fish and wildlife.
- An information program targeted to specific audiences, including woodcutters, campers and kids.
- A tool to meet existing policy and direction regarding dead, dying and hollow tree management for fish and wildlife habitat.
- A delicate balance between wildlife and fish habitat needs and safety for workers and recreationists.
- A simple; consistent message: "There's Life in Dead Trees."



Animal Inn is not:

- A program that broadly specifies the amount of dead, dying and hollow tree habitat to be retained.
- Restricted to public lands only - it may be voluntarily applied to private lands as well.
- A program about the benefits of timber harvest to wildlife and fish habitat management.
- A program to restrict timber management activities.
- A regulatory program.
- Intended to replace or duplicate existing environmental education programs, such as Project WILD or Project Learning Tree (PLT).
- Intended to jeopardize the health or safety of forest workers or users in any way.

The program's goals are consistent with the multiple-use philosophy that embraces the principles of forest stewardship. SWCDs and RC&Ds, working with state foresters and the other aforementioned organizations, have an opportunity to educate landowners and the public about the value of dead, dying and hollow trees as wildlife shelters.

According to the National Association of State Foresters, member of Animal Inn Steering Committee, the program has developed a number of products and resources to help spread the word. For a sample packet of material and an information/order form, please send \$3 to:

Animal Inn, PO Box 5065, Bend, Oregon 97708-5065

WATERSHED Approach Effective

by Tom Keller

Watersheds are everywhere, but watershed associations are not. Watershed associations are people - local residents - school teachers, store owners, students, truck drivers and many, many others - joining together to help effectively manage the abundant water supply. Local people care more about their watershed and can accomplish much more than an individual or organization working alone.

Watershed associations work with many groups with the local community, county government, state and federal government to solve problems, secure funding and provide input.

Every watershed is unique and must be organized according to its own, unique resources, needs and problems. Local citizens must meet and form their watershed association based on their unique resources, needs and problems. The Watershed Protection and Food Prevention Act places responsibility for starting watershed projects on the residents from the watershed. Information is available from the local conservation district, Cooperative Extension Service, U.S. Soil Conservation Service, State Soil Conservation Commission, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, Department of Environmental Resources, and other governmental agencies.

Watershed projects include water testing, mine acid cleanup, erosion control, fish and wildlife restoration areas, development of wetlands, cleanup and preservation of historical natural areas, (coke ovens, iron furnaces, etc.).

Most watershed associations begin with voluntary leadership with participation from local residents and direction from the various conservation organizations. Local people form an organizing committee to determine the needs and goals of their watershed. These goals include determining the geographic area of the watershed, choosing leadership, drawing up by-laws and planning events. Other goals include membership drives, fund raising events and initiating various workable projects.

For more information on watersheds and how to start a watershed association, contact your local conservation district (each county has one), the Soil Conservation Service, county commissioners and other watershed associations.

LANDMARKS

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For information on Landmarks Sponsorship Rates call the Westmoreland Conservation District at 837-5271

INVOLVE YOURSELF! JOIN US AT DISTRICT MEETINGS

The Westmoreland Conservation District is administered by a Board composed of five farmer directors, three public directors, and one County commissioner. The board convenes at least once a month to plan, prioritize, and supervise the implementation of programs. **Regular meetings are scheduled at 8:00 p.m. on the fourth Wednesday of each month, and held at the Peoples Natural Gas Company in Greensburg.**

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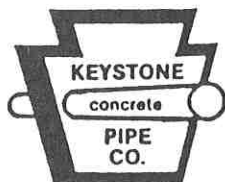
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Envirothon Leads To Professional Career



Yesterday

As a member of the 1986 Derry Area High School Enviro-Olympics Champion Team, (now called Envirothon), Virgil Wilford used his experiences to choose an environmental career.

by Virgil Wilford

In 1986, my senior year of high school, the biology teachers at Derry Area High School mentioned to me that there was going to be another natural resources contest called the Enviro-Olympics (presently called the Envirothon). I told them that I would be glad to participate in it since I had already competed in other contests sponsored by the Future Farmers of America and won various awards at the state level. Through the patience and coaching of our advisors, the Derry team won first place at the Westmoreland County level and was eligible to attend the State Enviro-Olympics. Once there, our team won first place. An impressive accomplishment for a team in their first year of competition.

September of that year found me at the Penn State-DuBois Campus enrolled in the Wildlife Technology Program (an Associate of Science Degree). My past experience in preparing and competing in the Enviro-Olympics and other contests helped me

immensely. For example, one of my first college courses was dendrology - the identification of tree species. The Enviro-Olympics and FFA Wildlife and Forestry contests familiarized me with most of the

***I highly recommend
to every
high school student
to at least try out
for their
Envirothon team.***

common tree species. That left me with more time to devote to learning other trees that I did not know. The same held true for the majority of the other forestry and wildlife courses.



Today

Virgil is working as a Soil Conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service in Cambria County, Pennsylvania, setting his sights for a better tomorrow through resource conservation.

Even if you do not plan to go to college or pursue a career in the natural resources field, I highly recommend to every high school student to at least try out for their Envirothon team. The knowledge that you will gain in preparing for the competition will stay with you, and perhaps give you a better understanding of the world around you and the problems that natural resource agencies are faced with.

Now that I am working for the Soil Conservation Service, I am able to use the general knowledge that I had gained through Envirothon preparations to help me with soil and water erosion problems on a day to day basis. Also, I get to make up the exam for Cambria County's Envirothon soils station. But it is actually very hard for me to administer the soils station because I miss the thrill and excitement of competition. My biggest regret was not having the chance to compete at the National Envirothon.

Many thanks to all of the Conservation Districts that devote untold hours to set up and administer the Envirothon. ■



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