

## Wetlands Proving Worth



Once common to Westmoreland County, wetlands have become few and far between such as this one near Youngwood.

Photo - Tom Keller

by Tom Keller

Our wetlands, once commonly thought of as valueless wasteland or swampy areas harboring mosquitos and snakes, are now recognized as an extremely valuable natural resource. But wetlands may soon be just a memory because they are disappearing to development and agriculture at an astonishing rate. Pennsylvania has lost 28,000 acres of wetlands between 1956 and 1979.

The wetland environment provides benefits to both man and wildlife in many ways never before associated with these "swampy wastelands." Wetlands are a haven for fish, ducks, geese, muskrat and other furbearers. They are used as feeding grounds and nurseries by many species of both fish and bird. Wetlands also provide food and cover for white-tailed deer and black bear in forested areas.

Wetlands improve water quality by removing and retaining nutrients, by

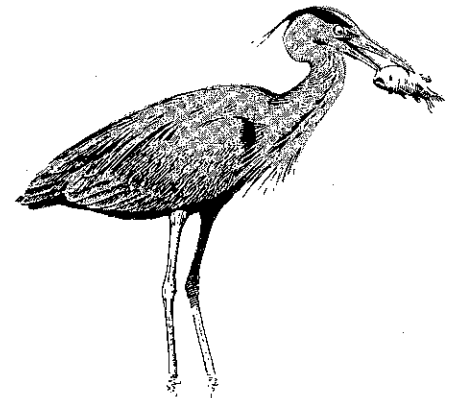
processing chemical and organic wastes and reducing sediment loads to streams.

Flood protection is another valued asset of wetlands. Trees and other wetland vegetation provide resistance to flood water and decrease the amount of erosion. Flood waters slowed by resistance and temporarily stored, minimize flood damage to bordering croplands and property.

Wetlands are the most productive natural areas on earth. They provide timber, fish, shell fish, wildlife, blueberries and peat moss.

In addition to the environmental benefits described above, wetlands offer unspoiled, open space for the aesthetic enjoyment of nature as well as activities such as hiking, fishing, hunting, photography, and environmental education.

\*Look for how you can help to save valuable wetlands in the next issue of "Landmarks".



# Special Projects Funded

by Greg Phillips

The State Conservation Commission recently approved three special projects that were submitted by the Westmoreland Conservation District. The projects include: Urban Stormwater Analysis, the production of a Landowner Reclamation Program (LRP) publicity piece and the computerization of several District Inspection forms.

The Stormwater Project will involve the sampling and analysis of runoff from an urbanized watershed. Special emphasis will be given to identifying pesticides, herbicides, and insecticides used for lawn care. The sampling and analytical work may be subcontracted out to a local consultant engineering firm. The District will compile a final report and publicize the findings.

The publicity piece for the LRP will be a brochure that explains the new program to potential participants. The

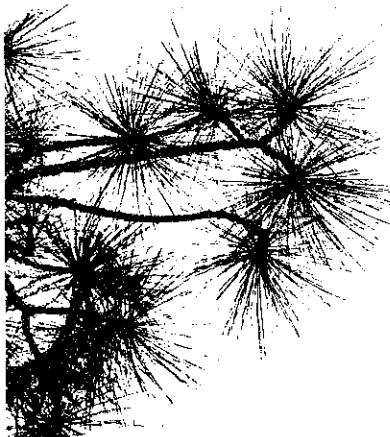
program permits property owners to work with the District to utilize forfeited bond money to reclaim abandoned mine land.

The computerization project is a joint venture that involves Westmoreland, Washington and Wyoming Counties. Several forms that are used in the District's Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control Program will be computerized. The end result will be that the District's Environmental Control Officer will be able to enter data into a portable computer at the site of an earth disturbance, download the data into the office computer and send periodic reports to Harrisburg by phone.

The projects, to be undertaken in the spring, will receive full funding from the State Conservation Commission.

## Make Plans for Spring Seedlings

by Tony Quadro



Now is the time to order your seedlings for the 1988 planting season. Call the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Resources, Bureau

of Forestry at (412) 238-9533.

Landowners can purchase tree seedlings for wood products and watershed protection. Evergreens are available for \$50.00 per thousand, \$75.00 per thousand for improved stock. Hardwoods are available for \$75.00 per thousand, \$100.00 per thousand for improved stock. Orders are processed on a first come, first serve basis, so order now.

Several other local organizations also have seedling sales. They are: the Loyahanna Watershed Association, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, and the Central Westmoreland Vo-Tech School. Contact the Conservation District for information regarding seedling sales.

## Penn's Corner RC&D Briefs

The Forestry Committee met recently to review progress on the 1987 Forestry Plan of Work. Tony Quadro stated that most of the inventory work for Fuelwood Utilization project is completed. The committee hired Mike Rivard, consultant forester, to assist with the marketing analysis portion of the plan.

The Westmoreland County Commissioners have announced that they will proceed with the water-based recreation project at Northmoreland Park Lake without RC&D funding. The \$630,000 structure is to be funded from county capital improvement bonds and an RIRA grant from the PA Department of Community Affairs.



Photo - Tom Keller

Left to Right: William Kelley, County Agent, Westmd. County Cooperative Extension Service; Boyd Wolff, Pa. Secretary of Agriculture; Charles Kaylor, President, Greensburg Kiwanis

## Ag Secretary Addresses Farm-City Gathering

by Greg Phillips

The Honorable Boyd Wolff, Secretary, PA Department of Agriculture, was the featured speaker at the Farm-City Night held recently at the Mountain View Inn, Greensburg. Secretary Wolff, a native son of Westmoreland County, detailed the varied responsibilities of his office and discussed the impacts of the recently approved Farmland Referendum. The referendum approved the sale of state bonds to raise \$100,000,000 for a farmland preservation program.

Approximately 180 people attended the event which serves to bring the area farmers and local business leaders together for an evening of exchange and socializing. Charles Kaylor, President, Greensburg Kiwanis Club, presided over the meeting.

Farm-City Night was sponsored by the Greensburg Kiwanis Club in cooperation with the Westmoreland County Agri-Business Council and Westmoreland County Cooperative Extension Service.

# What is "The Second RCA Appraisal?"

by Greg Phillips

It is a U.S. Department of Agriculture document that examines the condition of the nation's soil, water and related resources.

Under current methods of management, the United States is not maintaining the productive capacity of extensive acreages of land. Erosion, salinization, reduced range vegetation and conversion of prime land to non-agricultural uses are all cause for concern in some areas.

Among some of the conclusions: a total of about 1.5 million acres of agricultural land are converted to all non-agricultural uses annually; almost

half the wetland acreage that existed when the first settlers came to America has been lost to other uses; acid deposition (acid rain) contributes to acidity in lakes and is suspected to be one of the factors causing the decline of forest productivity in the Eastern United States; and water erosion and runoff from agricultural land cost the nation from \$3.2 to \$13 billion annually.

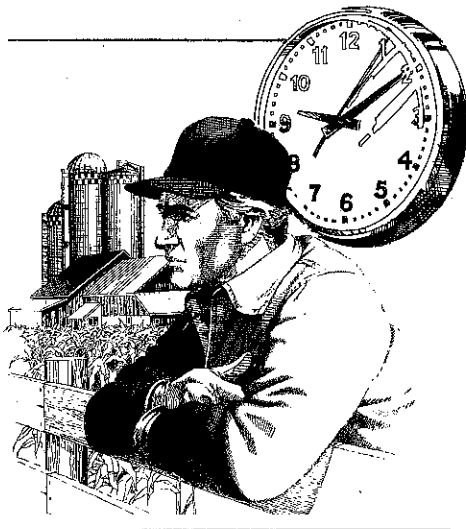
Copies of a summary of "The Second RCA Appraisal" are available from the Westmoreland Conservation District.

## Time Is Running Out!

by Wes Gordon

Under the 1985 Farm Bill, farmers who have highly erodible fields must be applying an approved conservation plan by January 1, 1990. Failure to do so will make them ineligible for many USDA farm program benefits in any year a crop is produced on such fields.

For conservation planning assistance, contact the Westmoreland Conservation District or the Greensburg Soil Conservation Service office. We are ready to help you continue to qualify for program benefits and to explain the conservation provisions of the 1985 Farm Bill.



## District Publications Receive State Awards

by Lincoln Stefl

The District recently received statewide recognition for the publication of District newsletter, "Landmarks" and the 1986 Annual Report.

"Landmarks", conceived in August of 1986 and distributed to approximately 1,400 people, was judged to be the best conservation district newsletter in Pennsylvania.

The awards were presented to Greg Phillips, District Manager, and Dianne Walters, District Director, at the State Conservation Commission/Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Director's Awards Banquet in Bucks County.

## 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please Mail Coupon to:

**Westmoreland  
Conservation District**

932 St. Clair Way, Rt. 30 East  
Greensburg, PA 15601

Published by  
**Westmoreland  
Conservation District**  
932 St. Clair Way, Rt. 30 East  
Greensburg, PA 15601  
Phone: 412-837-5271

### Board of Directors

J. ROY HOUSTON

*Chairman*

GILBERT HUTTER

*Vice Chairman*

FRANK E. SKACEL

*Treasurer*

ALEX J. SMITH

*Director*

TED SIMON

*Commissioner, Director*

DIANNE B. WALTERS

*Director*

BILL PAXTON

*Director*

PAUL ROY KEMERER

*Director*

### Associate Directors

ED CZARNECKI

PAUL HEYWORTH

MRS. ANN RUDD SAXMAN

DR. WILLIAM SHEA

MRS. GEORGE SHUPE

SCOTT CHURBOCK

MARK JACKSON

BONNIE WENK

KEITH WALTERS

TOM KELLER

### Staff

GREGORY M. PHILLIPS

*District Manager*

LINCOLN STEFL

*Administrative Secretary*

ANTHONY P. QUADRO

*Environmental Control Officer*

KATHLEEN A. FRITZ

*Secretary*

GREGORY CIRONI

*District Technician*

### U.S.D.A., Soil Conservation Service Staff

WESLEY M. GORDON

*District Conservationist*

JOE OBENSKI

*Soil Technician*

LARRY STOKUM

*Soil Technician*

# Cottonwood County's Biggest Tree

by Bonnie Wenk and Tony Quadro

A cottonwood growing along Route 982 near Smithton is the biggest known tree in Westmoreland County. The tree has a trunk diameter measuring more than 6 feet, and stands about 50 feet tall.

"It doesn't look as big as it is until you get up close," Blair Barthels of Smithton, says. He slowly draws his hand over the tree's deeply furrowed bark, and adds, "I've known about it for a long time and pass by it often. When I heard the Westmoreland Conservation District was looking for the biggest tree in the County, I thought this might be the one."

The District received 20 entries, the majority of them were white and red oaks. The second largest tree is a weeping willow near Armbrust having a diameter of five feet.

Barthel's cottonwood is estimated to be between 100 to 120 years old. The cottonwood tree, *Populus deltoides*, is related to the quaking aspens and the willows and likes moist soil. Cottonwoods are fast growing trees. A slower

growing tree that had reached this size, like an oak, would be about twice as old.

"It's a beautiful tree," Barthels says. "I'd like to see it keep growing for a long time."



Photos - Tom Keller

Tony Quadro, Coordinator of the District's "Big Tree Survey", Left, and Blair Barthels of Smithton, Survey Winner, Right, are dwarfed by the trunk of the biggest known tree in Westmoreland County.

Westmoreland  
Conservation  
District

932 St. Clair Way, Rt. 30 East  
Greensburg, PA 15601

Non Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit No. 574  
Greensburg, PA 15601

