Greene County
CONSERVATION DISTRICT
Newsletter
Vol. 0000 Month, Day, 2006

Conservation District Honors Six

photo taken by anybody

Honors from left to right First Name, Last Name,

The Greene County Conservation District honored six people during its 2005 Annual Awards Luncheon in November. Receiving awards were District Board Chairman J. Robert Rice-40 years of service on the District Board, Robert Brown-2005Outstanding ForestConservationist, Larry hall 2005 Outstanding Cooperator, John Burnham-Special Recognition Award, District Administrative Assistant Becky Salosky-25 years of Service, and District Assistant Manager and Watershed Specialist Lisa Bennett-5 years of service on the District Staff. The Catered Luncheon was held at the Greene ARC banquet facility and featured a speaking program including the Greene County Commissioner Chairman and representative form the offices of the U.S. Congressman Murtha, State Senator J. Barry Stout and State Representative H. William DeWeese. Additional commentary and award presentations were made by District Manager Martin Niverth, NRCS District Conservationist Susan Funka-Petery and DCNR Forester Bill Wentzel.

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Greene Celebrates 50 Years in Conservation

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Becky Salosky, Fiscal Officer

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Susan Funka-Petery, Supervisory District Conservationist

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the existence of the Greene County Conservation District. In Pennsylvania, Conservation Districts were created in 1945 with the passage of Act 217, better known as Conservation District Law. Act 217 was created in response to a national concern over the rapid depletion of our natural resource base by environmentally harmful industrial and agricultural practices. It was understood at that time that soil erosion and the degradation of our water quality, if unchecked, would one day make it impossible to sustain our national economy.

The Greene County Conservation District was created on February 28, 1956. It consists of 7 volunteer board members appointed by the County Commissioners from a list of nominees presented by various local groups (Nominating Organizations) concerned with the county and its environment. Full time employees of the Greene County Conservation District are county employees, and share the standard county obligations and benefits. Although created without a full-time staff, the Greene County Conservation District currently employs a District Manager (Martin A. Niverth), an Assistant Manager / Watershed Specialist (Lisa Bennett), an Agricultural Manager (Bob Andrew), an Environmental Resource Specialist (Jennifer Doerr), an Administrative Assistant (Becky Salosky), and a West Nile Virus Monitor (Terri Davin). Of course, through its 50 years, the Greene County Conservation District has grown from the provision of soil and water conservation information to local farmers to the provision of a magnitude of different educational and technical programs to a universal audience.

The Conservation District is a valuable public tool that, at its best, is utilized to inform and educate the citizenry about local environmental concerns and offer assistance in their treatment. It is one of the best examples of the representative government that runs our nation and, like our national government, works best from the bottom up. The real effectiveness of a Conservation District can be discovered when the general public takes ownership of its environment, recognizes the huge benefits to be gained from properly treating it, and understands that the best plans are formed by giving everyone a chance to sit at the table. Later articles this year will better describe our office, what we're doing, what we think is important, and who we're working with. In the meantime, please give some thought about our county and how it can be a better place. We need your input and are never too busy to listen.

CONSERVATION LEADERSHIP SCHOOL SCHOLARSHIP

Penn State will be hosting the Conservation Leadership School at the end of June and the beginning of July. There are two different week long sessions where students are in a classroom environment that is moved outdoors. Students will explore forests, fields, streams, and lakes and will have the opportunity to go canoeing, hiking, bird watching, fishing, and do

other recreational activities. For more information go to: http://conferences.cas.psu.edu/2006%20pdf/faxCLS2006.pdf . The Greene County Conservation District is offering one full scholarship courtesy of Foundation Coal to this school. The cost is $495.00 for one week long session. Two sessions will be offered, June 25 – July 1 and July 9 – July 15. The student may choose which week he/she would like to attend. Students must be from the ages of 15-18 and have completed their freshman year. To apply for this scholarship, students must submit a typed essay of 500-1000 words giving a brief background about themselves, why they feel they are the best recipient for the scholarship, and how this school experience will benefit them with what they plan to do in the future. Please have these essays turned in by June 9, 2006. Students may mail, fax, or email their letter to the Conservation District. Please send all essays to the Greene County Conservation District at 93 East High Street, Room 215, Waynesburg, PA 15370 or email to lbennett@co.greene.pa.us. In the email subject please write "Conservation Leadership Scholarship."

Commissioners Create Ag Preservation

On October 20, 2005, the Greene County Board of Commissioners took an important step toward the recognition of agriculture as a land use deserving of attention and preservation in the future of Greene County by creating a Farmland Preservation Board. The PA State Agricultural Land Preservation Board followed with approval of the Greene County program on December 15, 2005. The seven member board will act as the voice of farmers in the planning and development process, and they will serve as the vehicle through which the purchase of agricultural land easements and the establishment of agricultural exclusionary zones will occur. Appointed to the board were James Willis, Mike Mawhinney, Bill Cree III, Carl Biddle, Roger Stalnaker, Charles Day, and Dennis Householder. Assistance to the new board in obtaining state recognition and funding for easement purchase was provided by Bob Andrew and Jennifer Doerr of the Greene County Conservation District. They continue their organizational efforts aimed toward providing permanent administrative assistance for the Farmland Preservation Board, and creating a governmental interface which will guarantee that Greene's farm community has a voice in land use planning for the future.

Some Simple But Overlooked Spring Routines

Springtime is here and it is time to get our yards and gardens in shape for the upcoming season. Everyone looks over their homes and landscapes and prepare their spring to-do lists. While you are compiling this list don't forget the couple of important items that should be on your list, your water supply and septic system.

One of the most important items to check for maintenance is your water well or spring that is used for your drinking supply. Many homeowners think to check the gutters, shingles and paint on our homes, but how many of you overlook the maintenance of your water supply? There are just a few steps to take to insure a safe drinking water supply for your family. One simple thing to do once a year is to take a sample of your drinking water to a certified laboratory to check for total coliform bacteria that could lead to potential health problems. This test is inexpensive and simple to do. This should be done at least once a year. Every three years you should test your water supply for pH and total dissolved solids (TDS) this should also be conducted by a certified laboratory as well. This test will give an indication as to whether or not your water supply will need further testing for possible contaminants. This test too is somewhat inexpensive and is a potential for more extensive testing if needed. These routine tests should not change over time or vary. If you notice a color change, taste, or odor that is unusual or changed or if you have your well or spring serviced, you should immediately have your water tested as noted above. Take note of the landscape area around your water well or spring and note any changes such as items near your well. Items such as oil containers, pesticides, piled debris can jeopardize your water supply. Store and use these items well away from your water supply. You should never use chemicals such as fertilizers, pesticides or herbicides near your water supply, be it a well or spring. Wells should be capped approximately one foot above the ground surface to insure that surface water and contaminants cannot infiltrate your well. Take care not to damage your well cap while mowing or trimming near the well, a damaged well cap will allow possible contaminants to infiltrate your drinking water supply. Springs should be sealed to keep out insects, small mammals and other contaminants. Keep your records up to date and in a

safe place. Your construction report, maintenance records and water testing reports should be kept in a safe place.

What goes in must come out. Now that we have taken a look at our drinking water now we need to look at our waste water system. Remember that a family of four needs to have their septic tanks pumped at least every three years. Take a look at your leach bed also is it usually wet and has an odor. If so maybe it is time to have your septic system maintained or replaced. Some easy ways to avoid a malfunctioning septic system is to just take note of what goes into your system. You should never dispose of greases via your septic system. These greases leave an impermeable layer in your leach bed that will not allow the water to infiltrate into the surrounding soil and will render your system useless. Also be careful of the chemicals that you put down the drain. Many cleaners and chemicals may kill the valuable bacteria in your system that makes it function properly. Try to spread out your laundry

Should I Sell All My Timber?

By Bill Wentzel, Service Forester for Greene and Washington Counties

This is a question a forest landowner may be faced with sooner or later. All too often decisions on selling timer are hastily made and are based on inadequate information. The first step is to seek the guidance and advice of a professional forester. A forester can help in coming up with an inventor of what your woodland contains and then help steer you in the right direction.

Many times a timer buyer will offer you a lump sum price to cut all the trees down to a certain size-say 14 inches in diameter. You may be tempted to go along with this idea if the price sounds good. However, cutting all the trees may not be the best thing to do in the long run both for the woods and for your pocket book. Several examples may help to clarify this point: 1. At age 50 red oak tree may be 14 inches in diameter, contain 100 board feet of merchantable volume, and have approximate value of $40.00. If left to grow another 10 years, both its volume and value could more than double to 250 board and $104.00. So it would behoove you as a woodland owner to hold on to the better quality14-inch tree for a longer period of time. 2. A landowner in Greene County was offered $10,000 to have all the trees in her woodland cut. Not being satisfied with this arrangement, she hired a private consulting forester who marked only the trees which were mature and ready for harvest. In the end she received $20,000 for only the marked trees. She now has a good stand of timer left which will probably be ready for another harvest in 15 to 20 years. If all the trees had been cut, she could not have reasonably expected to harvest trees again for another 50 years or more.

This short article cannot possibly cover all the things to consider when selling timer. But if you pause to think for a moment, your woodlands are of considerable value to you. Selling trees should receive some very important consideration on your part. If you live in southwestern Pennsylvania and need guidance in selling your timer, managing your woodlot, or want a list of private consulting foresters, call the Forbes Forest District Office in Laughlintown at 724-238-1200 or email us at fd04@state.pa.us.

Timber Harvesting And Soil Erosion

By Bill Wentzel, Service Forester for Greene and Washington Counties

Recently I drove by a timer harvesting operation on a tract of privately owned land. I noticed that logging machinery had dragged logs through a portion of a small stream. Also several main skid roads (log drag ways) were deeply rutted and were located almost straight up and down a steep slope. No provisions were made to drain rain water off of the roads. During a rainy, wet period much soil in the form of sediment was being washed from these poorly planned and maintained skid roads into a nearby larger creek. Did you know that soil sediment is the biggest polluter of our streams in Pennsylvania? According to the Natural Resources Conservation Service normal geologic erosion in an undisturbed Pennsylvania woodland varies from .05 to .10 tons of soil loss per acre every year. However, soil loss from inadequate skid roads and trails such as those described above can be as high as 200 tons per acres annually. This excessive, unnecessary, and something many people may not know, it is a violation of the Pennsylvania Clean Stream Law! The landowner and the logging contractor previously mentioned are now subject to a $2,500 fine!

When timber cutting operations are conducted on forest land, it is the responsibility of the landowner and the operator to take whatever precautions are necessary to prevent excessive and accelerated soil erosion and the resulting sedimentation of the commonwealth waters. Improper location, drainage, and maintenance of haul roads, and skid roads and trails are the major cause of erosion in woodlands. In addition to causing delays in an operation due to breakdowns of equipment and more maintenance time required.

Following are some guidelines which will help to prevent accelerated erosion during and after a timber harvesting operation:
1. Keep skid and haul road grades as low as possible, preferably less than 10 percent except for short distances.
2. Allow for an adequate vegetative filter strip between the roads and streams.
3. Install adequate spaced pipes or culverts in haul and skid roads for drainage purposes.
4. Install adequate spaced waterbars (ditches) in skid trails to prevent rain water from washing them out.
5. At completion of the harvest operation, grade roads and trails to remove ruts, remove culverts and replace with water bars, and clear out ditches. Revegetate and mulch road surfaces and log landing areas where needed.

These are just some key points. More detailed information and assistance is available from the Bureau of Forestry or the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Remember, everyone engaged in timber harvesting must develop, implement, and maintain an effective soil erosion and sedimentation control plan.

TRASH TALK

by Lisa Bennett

Over the past 2 years the Conservation District has been diligently trying to spread the message that the illegal dumps in our community are not only affecting our landscapes by visually impacting our scenic splendor of Greene County but also impacting our natural resources as well. We have been working in partnership with PA CleanWays of Greene County in riding the Dunkard Creek Watershed of numerous illegal dumps by working with the local municipalities, Greene County Prison and other organizations to physically clean up illegal dumps scattered throughout the watershed. Over the past two years we have collaboratively made a effort to improve seven illegal dumps located in Perry and Dunkard Townships on Van Druff Road, Brooks Hollow Road, Wilson Road, Church Hill Road, Big Shannon Run-2 sites, Plant Road and near the swinging bridge on Dunkard Creek. Over 168 tons of illegal trash, 989 tires were removed and 53 miles of road in Perry Twp and 9 miles of road in Dunkard Twp were cleaned. With over 1178 volunteer hours acquired by various agencies and organizations we believe we are making a difference. This spring we are working in Wayne Township on Bulldog Run, Phillips Ridge Road, King Sisters Hill Road and King Hill Road.

Illegal dumpsites not only have negative impacts on our surrounding landscapes but also could pose negative impacts to our environment by introducing toxins into the landscapes directly. Common sense tells a person that concentrated areas of illegal trash can lead to non point source pollution that will ultimately invade the soils, surface water and groundwater. We send our trash to landfills that are lined for a reason and that reason is to stop harmful contaminants from entering the surrounding landscape and water systems.

Remember, that when you add trash to landscapes, which are usually found within reach of a nearby stream, the trash does not disappear overnight. Of course, unless there is a heavy rainfall and flooding occurs which washes the trash into nearby streams and not only clogs up our streams but also pollutes our waterways and destroys wildlife. Years later you will be able to find the trash that was disposed of improperly located in the same area. As rainfall and snow melt cover these areas, the water infiltrates the trash that is left behind and leaches out many different compounds both organic and inorganic that are harmful to the environment as well as public health. As a result of this infiltration of water, the leachate that filters from these sites contain high concentrations of various bacteria, viruses, metals, nutrients and chemical compounds. These compounds can find their way to local waterways and groundwater that can be linked to personal drinking water wells and result in contamination.

Some people think that the out-of-sight out-of- mind mentality is one that seems to work for proper disposal of trash. We do not live in a society that feels that garbage in the streets piled three feet high is acceptable, why do we think that tossing garbage over a road bank on a desolate country road is? And why do we ignore the practice? Not only is household waste a danger to the surrounding landscape but also yard clippings and trimmings may pose potential harm to livestock that may be within reach of the discarded items. Many different shrubbery and tree waste can be harmful to livestock if ingested by the animals. Items such as batteries can kill livestock, the acid in the batteries are somewhat satisfying to the pallet of our common livestock. Once ingested by the animal, it will poison or kill. Cans and bottles can damage hooves and household waste draws in many rodents that pose the potential of disease as well.

When I look at an illegal dumpsite I see deer carcasses in huge quantities, old building materials that are covered in lead paint and processed with arsenic, shingles with asbestos, batteries containing lead, household cleaners, old paint, air conditioners, refrigerators, car parts covered in grease and oils, electronic parts containing mercury and on and on. I am quite certain that if I were to make a delicious stew with these components no one in their right mind would want to smell it, let alone taste it. So why are we risking our water supply by letting this practice go on?

Please do not use our beautiful county as dumping grounds. Disposal is important not only environmentally but socially and important for our physical health. Many people think that the items in illegal dumps are not harmful to the environment or our physical health and in some cases they are right. But, illegal trash dumps are a visual pollutant that decrease property values, mar the landscape, causes lack in community pride and lead to public health problems.

Our state and country have developed laws and regulations that are to protect us. We need to remember that when it is hard to dispose of something and the waste haulers won't take it, obviously there is a reason that the item cannot go to a residual waste landfill. Special precautions are made to protect our health and environment.

Please help us educate the people in our communities and pass the word on that we don't want to live in communities riddle with illegal trash and it is potentially harmful to our children and ourselves.

No-Till Seeding Demonstration Project

By Bob Andrew

The Greene County Conservation District board of directors authorized, at their December 2005 meeting, to sponsor a no-till grass seeding demonstration project for the 2006 growing season. The site to be used for this project is a 12-acre field situated between the Jefferson Road (Rt. 188) and the South Fork of Ten Mile Creek. This parcel is under a long-term lease agreement with RM Manufacturing.

Two basic goals are hoped to be accomplished are: Show that no-till will drastically reduce erosion and demonstrate that financial savings of production expenses can be realized through no-till.

The Conservation District's involvement is hinged on the successful awarding of a WREN Grant to finance the planting according to accepted practices. Grant notification will be given in April 2006.

It is the hope of the District that farmers will observe the no-till process from planting to harvesting a crop in 2007.

PASA

The Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) is announcing its Farm to Chef Program. PASA will be working with farmers and chefs in western Pennsylvania over the next three years to establish new relationships between the two groups. These relationships may result in approximately $350,000 in new product sales.

Over the next three years PASA will be hosting field days, workshops and local food dinners where farmers and chefs will have an opportunity to meet and work together. These events will provide both farmers and chefs with answers to product availability, quality control, ordering, delivery and billing questions. Project participants will also receive on-going technical assistance. If you are interested in selling your farm products to a restaurant or buying food from an area farm, please contact Julie Speicher at
412-697-0411 or
julie@pasafarming.org
for more information.

PA CREP Pennsylvania's Ohio River Watershed Region

District Staff Added in 2005

The Greene County Conservation District added two new staff members effective on May 2, 2005. New District Manager, Martin Niverth, a degreed biologist with 17 years experience in project management in environmental construction, is actually doing his second stint as Greene's District Manager. Martin previously occupied this position for 5 years from 1983 to1988 before touring the United States with an environmental contractor and completing projects for government agencies, major corporations,and municipalities. With Greene Countylocated between two areas of major urban expansion, his contribution of construction expertise and dedication to conservation will serve to ensure a wise approach to future land use in the county. Bob Andrew, the Conservation District's other new employee, is the new and first Agricultural Manager. Bob will oversee Greene's new autonomous role in ACT and Nutrient Management, and his Penn State degree in Animal Industry and Nutrition combined with a local farming background will serve the District well. An added bonus is the fact that Bob previously served a term as a Greene County Commissioner and, as such, brings valuable insight to the process of local government and the means by which the District can successfully navigate these waters. These new additions also reflect the fact that in Greene County conservation is a legitimate and popular concern. Our Conservation District has more responsibility and interface in the county life than at any time in its history. With due diligence and a little luck, Greene County will preserve its rural integrity and agricultural presence in the years to come, and the presence of dedicated and experience local staff should serve to see this through.

3rd Annual Great Pennsylvania Cleanup' - Apr 22

Gov. Edward G. Rendell announced plans for the 3rd Annual Great Pennsylvania Cleanup, an ambitious statewide effort to remove litter and trash from the state's roadways, parks, riverbanks and open spaces. The featured event will take place April 22, in conjunction with Earth Day, although the entire cleanup -- with a special emphasis on important bird areas -- spans from March 1 to May 31. Groups registering to participate in the cleanup also can enter to win a weekend getaway in Pennsylvania, as well as a hybrid-powered vehicle offered as part of a national sweepstakes. The event web site contains safety information, links to other cleanup organizations, a logo that can be downloaded, T-shirt iron-on transfers and posters, and lesson plans for teachers.

For more information:
www.greatpacleanup.org

West Green Vo-Ag Partnering the District

West Greene Vo-Ag unit, under the direction of Curt Hughes, will partner with the District during the summer of 2006 to make grass plot measurements. We wish to demonstrate the amount of difference between fertilizing pasture according to soil test and using no fertilizer at all. An attempt will be made to determine through this process whether or not it is economically justified to apply fertilizer to pastures. We will let the numbers do the talking.

District Coordinates Stream Signage

A county with Greene's topography provides for an abundance of tributaries to its major streams. Indeed, orientation as to one's watershed area can be confusing to residents and visitors alike. Lisa Bennett, Watershed Specialist and Assistant Manager of the Greene County Conservation District, is on conservationist bent on removing this difficulty and replacing it with watershed recognition. Lisa believes that the important boundaries on a map are natural, not municipal, and that they are the key to watershed protection and improvement lies in the address of the watershed as a comprehensive unit.

In 2005, while spearheading a campaign with PA CleanWays of Greene County, INC to remove illegal trash dumps for the Dunkard Creek watershed, Lisa decided that signs placed on the road crossings over the watershed streams would go along way toward educating and orientating those who read them. On behalf of the Conservation District and townships within the Dunkard Creek watershed, Lisa applied for funding and, in cooperation with POWR, Penn's Corner RC&D, PENN DOT and the four townships (Perry, Wayne, Dunkard and Gilmore), 84 signs were installed over 42 stream crossings in the Dunkard Creek watershed. The project was well received by the public, and it's a sure thing that unfamiliar visitors to our rural venue consider it nothing short of a blessing!

The District would like to thank the participating townships for their assistance with this project, without their support the signs would not have been installed or received. Greene County Watershed Alliance

The Greene County Watershed Alliance (GCWA) is a non-profit, 501c3, organization dedicated to improving our watersheds for a better tomorrow. We have worked to accomplish this through grant opportunities through the PA Department of Environmental Protection, Water Resource Education Network, Canaan Valley Institute, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, Western PA Coalition of Abandoned Mines and Reclamation, and the US Environmental Protection Agency. Our accomplishments would not have been possible without our local and regional partnerships providing information and resources to assist us in furthering our mission to preserve our watersheds. We are committed to educating the public on erosion and sedimentation, and have completed a watershed assessment of the headwaters of the Ruff Creek Watershed in Washington Township. In the future we hope to be working with residents in that watershed to establish best management practices to reduce the effects of erosion along Ruff Creek stream. Our goal is to support stakeholders inthe development of local grassroots watershed organizations. Wehave worked towards this by working with the Dunkard watershed community in Dunkard and Perry Township for the formation of The Friends of Dunkard Creek. This newly formed watershed group hopes to tackle issues that affect the streams of the Dunkard watershed such as illegal dumping, logging, and poor water quality due to abandoned mines. We endeavor to restore our streams through public, private partnerships and are working towards improving the water quality with the construction of a Passive System to treat an abandoned mine discharge that will reduce the iron and aluminum load affecting Dunkard creek in Dunkard Township. Our volunteers continue to learn about watershed management, land use, and water quality through workshops sponsored by state and local agencies, as well as other non-profits in Pennsylvania and West Virginia. We hope to share with you our commitment to improve our watersheds for the future generations that will one day make Greene County their home. For more information about the GCWA, or to contact our organization you can find us at www.greenewatersheds.org