

Conference Honors Protection, Conservation Partnerships

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VALLEY FORGE (Chester Co.) — This week the State Conservation Commission and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Inc. (PACD) conducted a joint conference to bring together experts, convene committees, disseminate information and reports, and give out awards for outstanding efforts in conservation for the past year.

Hosted by Bucks, Chester, Delaware, and Montgomery conservation districts, the 53rd joint annual conference convened at the Hilton Valley Forge.

The event featured workshops and sessions which addressed issues such as PennDOT's erosion and sediment control program, planning tools for storm water management, geographic information system (GIS), stream corridor restoration, watershed improvement projects, funding opportunities, and an update on education and youth developments.

A report from the PACD Rural and Urban Land Use Committee provided an overview of the various programs under PACD. Berks County Conservation District Director Lyn Moser gave an update on "Transfer of Development Rights" (TDR) which saved a farm from development in Washington Township, Berks County.

Although 13 TDRs were already enacted on farms that were sold, the township decided not to enforce their own ordinances, said Moser.

"We sued twice, but decided it was a disheartening way to manage, so we came up with the idea of partnerships," said Moser. "It's a good program if you have the support of the supervisors."

After developing partnerships, however, with the Berks County Community Foundation and the Berks County Preservation Board, local developers, and local environmental groups, a farm with an approved development plan was actually saved from development.

"We were able to show the developer that he can cash out with groups throwing money into the pot and by showing him the advantage of capital gains," said Moser.

"We want to show people that you don't have to give up," she said. The farm will continue to stay in agricultural use.

Another topic, the CleanWays program, is an active, growing conservation organization. Under CleanWays, local busi-

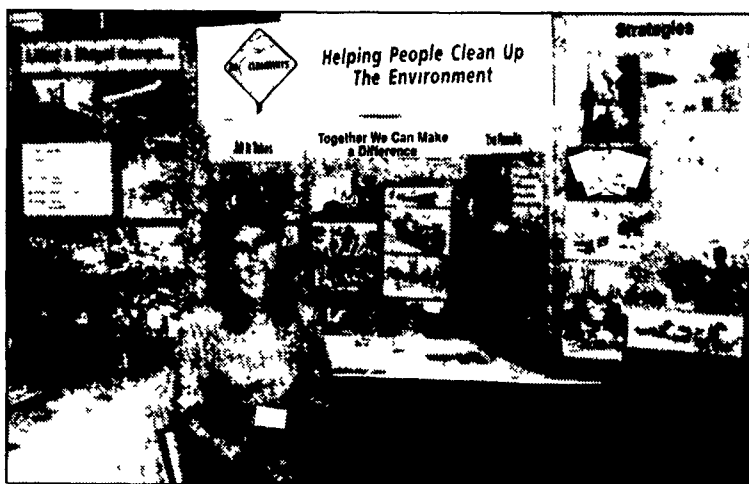
nesses donate trucks, landfills donate free dumping, and local volunteers are mobilized to clean up trash. Thirteen Pennsylvania counties host the program begun in 1989. To date, 110 illegal dump sites, 100 littered roads, three trails, one park, and one waterway have been "adopted" through Pennsylvania CleanWays.

The organization also publishes a newsletter highlighting cleanup and recycling activities. A booklet, videos, an education activity book for schoolchildren and a display board are available

of this citizen participation, a rezoning law detrimental to agriculture was stopped.

During the meeting, Cumberland County's open space preservation plan and Sen. Jim Gerlach's Senate Bill 300, a proposed amendment to the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code to encourage farm preservation, revitalize urban centers, and facilitate the viability of ag operations were briefly discussed.

Meeting participants also decided that conservation districts have a responsibility to educate the public about ag security



Sue Snyder recently began working for CleanWays, a group organized to remove trash, facilitate recycling, and educate the public. Begun in 1989, the group mobilizes local citizens and business to protect, restore, and maintain the outdoors. "When you get the volunteers involved, they have a sense of stewardship and ownership and keep an eye on it," said Snyder.

Root wads have become an option to eliminate undercut banks and reestablish a creek bank "the way nature would have it," said Wood. The bottom 15-17 feet of a tree is taken and placed in a stream bank with ballast on top for security.

According to Wood, no single answer will preserve every creek bank. Instead a combination of different techniques should be used to preserve a bank.

For instance, instead of completely avoiding using excavation in a stream, Wood believes that by getting an excavator in and out of the stream, the sediment damage is far less detrimental than a year of allowing the bank to continue to fall in. "All disciplines should be involved," said Wood.

During the awards luncheon, individuals, businesses, and conservation districts were honored for outstanding conservation efforts.

The Goodyear Award recognized the partnership efforts between a conservation district and landowners for conservation of natural resources. This year's winner, the Lancaster County Conservation District, has grown to 19 people since its beginning in 1950. The district hosts nine active and 12 associate board members. The agriculture division has helped to add terracing, stream bank fencing, waterways, and tracts of permanent vegeta-

runoff and slow erosion, and facilities to collect and spread dairy manure under a voluntary management plan.

Numerous awards honored a volunteer, conservation organization, educator, legislator, county commissioner, and efforts made by organizations for sedimentation and pollution control, forest resource management, and urban conservation efforts.

The special conservation service award went to Abner J. Housenecht, Lancaster County. Housenecht, said to be one of the founding fathers of conservation, has put his touch on the landscape of Lancaster during his years in the USDA Soil Conservation Service, where he laid out conservation programs on dozens of county farms, which included miles of waterways, terracing, and contours.

"The 40-plus years that I worked with farmers to establish conservation practices were very rewarding," said Housenecht. He compared himself to Johnny Appleseed, spreading conservation seeds across the land.

"It was not hard to sow to the people in Lancaster County. They normally came to us," said Housenecht.

The Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Farm Awards, sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Education Office, went to Jack and Donna Coleman, Cher-



The Ron and Kathy Kline of Y-Run Farms, Bradford County, accept the Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Farm Award.

for public education through Pennsylvania CleanWays.

Meeting attendees agreed that the involvement, education, and grass-roots voice of "local people" are essential to conservation efforts.

Following Perry County's lead, Lebanon County Conservation District has gotten good feedback on the six signs on farms preserved by the Agriculture Land Preservation Board and administered by the conservation district.

In Westmoreland County, the conservation district helped arm 100 people with information on the cost of development. Because

areas.

"Once a farm is preserved, that's just the beginning. The real meat-and-potatoes comes in monitoring the legal transactions that follow. It's a very bureaucracy-intensive program," said meeting facilitator Chuck Wertz.

Also at the conference, several presenters highlighted education efforts, which include the new package, "Sustaining Penn's Woods." The program complements the national "Project Learning Tree" program. A CD ROM, classroom activities, and video educate students about forest and land use practices.

Theresa Alberici, Pennsylvania Game Commission, believes that environmental topics have an important place in the classroom.

"These are things that affect us all the time. If you live in a watershed and drink water, you have a relationship to the watershed," said Alberici. "This disputes the idea that you have to live in the forest to study the environment."

Allan Wood, NRCS state office, informed conference participants about corridor restoration measures. Branch packing, dead or live stakes, brush layering, and biotextiles provide stability needed to keep a stream bed in place in conservation efforts.

The focus is now on natural stream design, said Wood, and "using rock in strategic places to center water back into the stream to help the stream make it through the meanders."

Instead of locking a stream in place by simply shoring up the existing bends of a water body, efforts include using old photographs and records to re-create a stream and protect the banks.



The conservation efforts of Lancaster County Conservation District were recognized with the Goodyear Award. From left Steve Martin, representing Goodyear Tire and Rubber, Robert Wagner, chairman, Lancaster Conservation District, and Franklin Long, PACD president.

It's just good solid farming practices.

**Ron Kline
Winner of Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Clean
Water Farm Award**

tion across the Pennsylvania landscape.

In addition, the team has added 54 manure storage facilities and \$4.5 million in assistance to landowners from Chesapeake Bay programs. This past year the district hired its first watershed coordinator, besides holding a conservation expo for public education, sending out the "Conservation Crier" newsletter, and hosting 77 teams in the Envirothon in 1999. The district has also conducted a conservation school for 21 years.

The Conservation Farmer of the Year must not only establish but also maintain a conservation plan. Leonard and Bonnie Jo Greek, along with daughters Stormi and Stevie Anna of Ridge Hill Farm, Red Lion, took home the honor this year.

A 400-acre dairy and crop farm, Ridge Hill features contour strips of corn and hay, divisions to slow runoff, runways to filter

ry Crest dairy farm, Lancaster County; Robert Heid, Cambria County; and Ron and sons Gary and Glenn Kline and families, Y-Run Bradford County.

The Colemans, Strasburg, are perhaps best known for the "Amazing Maize Maze" which draws thousands of visitors to their farm each year. Besides taking the opportunity to teach the public about farming, the Colemans also have 3,200 feet of terraces in place on the farm, besides an environmentally-friendly manure-handling system.

Their farm consists of 70 milking cows, 250,000 broilers raised per year, and 175 acres of crop land. They began dairy farming in Lancaster County in 1987 and have had their farm management plan in place since 1988.

In 1990, the Colemans installed a liquid waste storage unit that holds 550,000 gallons of

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