

# Award Winners

(Continued from Page A1)

tices that ensure the agricultural viability of the land and the health of nearby waterways. The Buchers are actively involved with public and private organizations in conservation education, water quality monitoring, and streamside improvement projects.

- **Watershed Protection Award** — Swatara Creek Watershed Association. Founded in 1970, the Swatara Creek Watershed Association monitors water quality along the Swatara Creek and its six major tributaries in Lebanon, Berks, Dauphin, and Schuylkill counties. The association has worked with various state, federal, and local agencies on many stream and wetland restoration and awareness projects, including an annual two-day canoe and river cleanup. They have also developed a Swatara Creek Rivers Conservation Plan, a long-term management approach for the watershed.

- **Special Conservation Service Award** — Harry Meyer, Allegheny County. Meyer serves as an associate director with the Washington, Beaver, Lawrence, and Westmoreland county conservation districts, and has worked with many conservation districts since 1955. Now retired, Meyer was an employee of various state agencies for 32 years and worked with landowners and conservation districts throughout western Pennsylvania in erosion and sediment control, land reclamation, and groundwater preservation programs. Meyer lives on a farm in McDonald, Washington County, where he was born and continues to operate his orchard.

- **Ann Rudd Saxman Conservation Volunteer Award** — W. Ray Ketner, Berks County. A lifelong resident of Berks County, Ketner is chair of the Berks Conservation District Board and a retiree of the Pennsylvania Game Commission. He is an active participant in state and national conservation district association events and helps to coordinate local district programs such as the Don Hartman Conservation Leadership School, the county Envirothon, and the annual seedling sale. Ketner is a retired Army major who served in the Battle of Normandy during World War II.

- **Conservation Organization of the Year Award** — Brokenstraw Fish and Game Club, Warren County. The club works with public and private agencies throughout the year in conservation education and hunting safety programs. The club also conducts the Warren County Youth Conservation Camp, a three-day camp for boys and girls between the ages of 12-14. Participants learn about wildlife and aquatic ecosystems, water quality, hunting and boating safety, and astronomy.

- **Media Conservation Award** — Grant Heilman Photography, Lancaster County. For more than 25 years, Grant Heilman Photography has worked with the Lancaster Conservation District, providing stock and custom photography. Recently, the firm assisted in the district's watershed awareness campaign and in capturing images for soil stewardship and farm cooperator awards. The firm's president, Sonia Wasco, has donated hundreds of volunteer hours as an associate director with the district as and co-director of the Lancaster County Youth Con-

servation School. Grant Heilman Photography is recognized nationally as a premier firm in agricultural, natural science, horticulture and wildlife photography.

- **Conservation Educator of the Year Award** — James A. Edwards, Bucks County. Edwards is an environmental studies and biology teacher at Neshaminy High School in Langhorne an adviser to the school's Environmental Action Club. Edwards and his students have participated in Earth Week programs, recycling projects, habitat activities, water quality monitoring, and stream-bank stabilization projects at local environmental centers and within their community.

- **M.K. Goddard Forest Resource Management Award** — Robert Long, Cambria County. Robert Long and his family operate George Long and Sons Lumber Company in Patton, Cambria County. As a professional forester, Long prepared and implemented a management plan, enhancing wildlife habitat and the water quality of nearby waterways. The woodlot contains broad ecological diversity which the Long's share with their community; most of their properties are open for public use.

- **William Lange Urban Conservation Award** — R. Jeanne Sonntag, Lancaster County. Sonntag is a former Lancaster Conservation District public director and worked with the district for more than nine years. She also served as chairman of the Lancaster County Planning Commission Water Resource Task Force. Among her other achievements, Sonntag was instrumental in raising funds for the Shuts Environmental Center in Lancaster and for initiating a yearly legislative breakfast tour between elected officials and state and local conservation district representatives.

- **Legislator Recognition Award** — Gary Haluska, Cambria County. Haluska has been an invaluable advocate for the Cambria Conservation District. He has helped to secure funding for district programs, such as those which address acid mine drainage and other point sources of pollution in local waterways, and in preserving recreational opportunities without compromising the environment. Haluska is also a dedicated community volunteer, working with local firefighter associations, sports booster organizations, and tourism initiatives.

- **Erosion and Sedimentation Pollution Control Award** — RNS Services, Cambria County. RNS mines, transports, and recycles coal refuse and fly ash. They have been involved with numerous abandoned mine reclamation projects in Cambria, Indiana and Somerset counties. RNS has worked with the Cambria Conservation District and local farmers, using fly ash as a soil substitute in barnyards and feedlots to help prevent nutrient and sediment runoff into nearby waterways. RNS also works with local organizations in other abandoned mine drain abatement and wetlands restoration initiatives.

- **Annual Report of the Year** — Award Adams County Conservation District. This award is presented to the conservation district that submits the most informative, concise, readable, and attractive annual report. Each district's annual report is judged by representatives of the State Conservation Commission, Department of Environmental Protection, Natural Resource Conservation Service,

and the PACD. Second place was awarded to the Berks Conservation District. Snyder Conservation District captured third place.

- **County Commissioner District Director of the Year Award** — Randy Degenkolb, Indiana County. This award, which will be presented at the annual meeting of the Pennsylvania Association of County Commissioners, is given to a county commissioner member of a conservation district board who has made an outstanding contribution to the advancement of conservation districts at the local, state, and national levels.

Each year, PACD also hosts a poster contest for school children in grades K-12. The PACD Auxiliary sponsors the poster contest. The winning entries are sent to the National Association of Conservation Districts' poster contest for judging on a national level. This year's winners are: Brigid Duggan, Cumberland County, kindergarten to first grade division; Melina Webb, Bradford County, second to third grade division; Felicia Koscheck, Greene County, fourth to sixth grade division; James Lincke, Delaware County, seventh to ninth grade division; and Anna Spoor, Delaware County, 10th to 12th grade division.

The PACD Auxiliary also presented its annual scholarship award to Sean C. Sweeney of Newmanstown, Lebanon County. Sean is a student at Penn State University, majoring in agriculture and bioengineering.

For more information on the awards, visit PACD's Website at <http://www.pacd.org>.

**Farmers Honored With Clean Water Farm Award** DEP and the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Inc. (PACD) are honoring two farms in the Chesapeake Bay watershed that have excelled in water-quality protection.

"These awards celebrate our farmers who are at the forefront in pursuing better farm-management practices and working hard to protect local stream, groundwater and soil resources," DEP Secretary David E. Hess said. "Good stewards make good neighbors, and our

neighbors downstream in the Chesapeake Bay appreciate their efforts."

The Pennsylvania Chesapeake Bay Clean Water Farm Awards highlight the positive practices farmers are using in the watershed to help protect water quality, and to spread the word to other farmers about the benefits of water-quality protection.

"The efforts of these farmers complement Gov. Tom Ridge's 'Growing Greener' program by helping to protect and restore waterways that are part of larger watersheds," Hess said.

The award recipients are from Lebanon and Luzerne counties. They were recognized at the PACD annual Conservation Awards Program in State College, Centre County.

Farmers must meet criteria regarding soil testing, manure testing, nutrient management, pesticide management and conservation practices. They are nominated by county conservation districts.

Farmers who demonstrate outstanding farm management receive a large "Clean Water Farm Award" sign to erect on their property, demonstrating their commitment to protecting local and Chesapeake Bay water quality.

Recipients are:

- **Lebanon County** — Charles and Marlene Bomgardner of North Annville Township. The Bomgardners manage 177 acres of cropland, and an additional two acres of pasture on their Lebanon County farm. Crops produced include corn, alfalfa, soybeans, wheat and barley. They also raise hogs (300) and replacement heifers (50).

The Bomgardner Farm is preserved under the Lebanon County Agricultural Land Preservation Program. As part of the program requirements, the Bomgardners implement a soil-conservation plan that calls for conservation practices, including contour strip cropping, minimum tillage, no-till corn farming, cover cropping and grass waterways.

In addition to the plan requirements, the Bomgardners have voluntarily taken measures to help protect water quality. They have fenced off a spring near their farm's exercise lot

and allowed the area to grow into a vegetated buffer and stabilized a walkway built above the spring to help prevent water contamination. The Bomgardners also chose to adopt an Act 6 nutrient-management plan for their farm, although their farm is not considered a Concentrated Animal Operation (CAO), and is not required to have a nutrient-management plan; and

- **Luzerne County** — Mark Verbyla of Sweet Valley — Verbyla manages a 120-acre dairy farm with 65 Holstein cows and 55 replacement animals. He also grows silage, oats and hay.

The headwaters of Huntington Creek flow directly through the Verbyla Farm, and, in recent years, significant steps have been taken to improve water quality in the creek. In 1997, Verbyla voluntarily developed a nutrient-management plan. The plan is followed to ensure the proper applications and use of manure and waste nutrients, and has drastically improved the quality of Huntington Creek, as well as Verbyla's farming operations.

"The nutrient-management plan has made a 100 percent improvement on the well-being of the cows and the health of the stream running through the farm," Verbyla said. "Basically, the plan has changed the whole appearance of the farm. The cows aren't in the mud anymore, the water is protected by a buffer zone, and the farm just looks better."

The farm features two dairy cattle exercise lots, between the barn and Huntington Creek. A buffer strip has been installed between the lots and the creek to filter any excess nutrients that may leave the lot. Verbyla also has installed roof runoff-control devices to divert clean water away from the exercise lots. He has installed additional water-control structures and constructed a stone-centered walkway to carry water to the filter area.

Another device critical to protecting water quality is the farm's milkhous waste system that collects water used for dairy farm procedures and discharges it into a manure spreader to be spread onto the fields.

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