

Warren County To Get 350-Acre Conservation Demonstration Site

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — At its recent meeting in Harrisburg, the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission (SCC) approved a \$458,884 purchase agreement between Warren County Conservation District and the state Department of General Services (DGS) for 350 acres of the former Warren State Hospital dairy farm operation used by the district as the Hatch Run Conservation Demonstration Area (HRCDA).

The 11-member SCC is the oversight and support agency for the state's 66 county conservation districts, and by policy requires districts to gain SCC approval before entering into contracts if the estimated project cost exceeds \$250,000.

Under a management agreement with DGS since 1997, the Warren County Conservation District has been using the HRCDA for conservation demonstration projects — ranging from timber harvest management and intensive grazing of livestock to wildlife habitat plantings and even pond building and maintenance. About 1,000 people per year have been using the site through attending educational programs offered there, according to Warren County District Manager Richard Mader. He hopes to soon double that.

The district is purchasing the land to ensure its long-term use and development by the conservation district. The payment for the property is to be financed

through the long-term sale of timber according to an approved forestry stewardship plan that provides sustainable timber harvest.

About 100 acres of the property is forested, with the majority of the remainder agricultural and several acres in a transition between cropland and forestland. The agricultural land includes a number of erosion and sedimentation control practices and a 25-acre intensive grazing demonstration area.

There are about four miles of nature trails, several four-square-acre timber harvesting demonstration plots, and several acres of wildlife and upland habitat plantings done in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Game

Commission.

"We've been doing education at Hatch Run since we started there in 1997. The whole purpose was that it would be an educational area," Mader said. "We're purchasing it because we need to have control of the property, and it will help pave the way for building an educational facility on the site and eventually our offices will be located there."

The original five-year management agreement with DGS allowed the district to follow a sustainable timber harvest plan to finance the installation of improvements for environmental education. Since 1997, timber sales on the property have generated \$200,000, with about \$75,000 spent on the improvements.

Mader said it became obvious the ideal situation would be to have the district offices located near the demonstration area. Last year, with the help of the district's state representative, the district acquired 3.5 acres of the

property for the purpose of building a conservation education center and an office complex. Development of the education center is in the planning stages. A parking lot was built using and demonstrating environmentally sensitive road maintenance techniques as espoused by the SCC Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program.

Late last year, the district began renegotiations with the DGS for the purchase of the property, located north of North Warren, east of Rt. 62, at the intersection of Hatch Run Road and Conewango Avenue in Glade Township.

The SCC approved the negotiated deal that allows the district to use \$122,500 of receipts from prior timber sales as a down payment, with the rest to be paid from timber sales realized over the next 20 years.

For more information, contact Richard Mader at (814) 563-3117.



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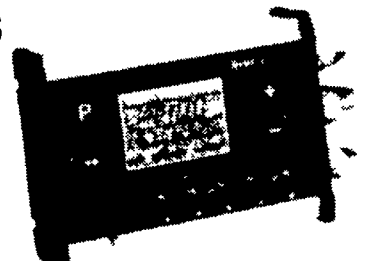
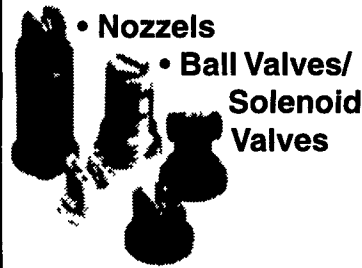


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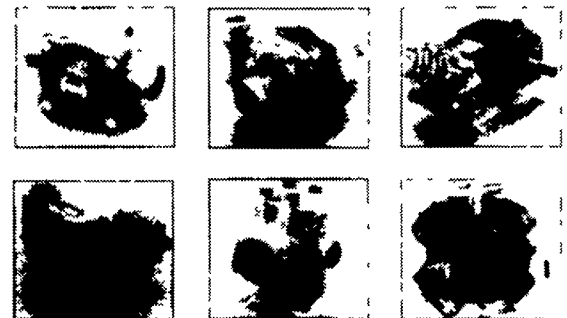
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