

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

February 16, 2005

Some of the highlights of the last three months work are listed below:

## 2005 CONSERVATION TILLAGE CONFERENCE

The Tri-State Tillage conference was held as scheduled on January 25, 2005. A total of 136 of the 145 people who pre-registered attended the conference. The financial report showed a net loss of \$60 for the whole event, not counting Dianna's time spent on the project. I was not able to attend due to a conflict with a training session.

## HUNTING AND FISHING MUSEUM

The Allegheny Wild & Scenic Complex grant of \$20,000 funded by the US Forest Service was due to expire on November 30, 2004. I secured a one year extension of the grant on behalf of The H&F Museum board. I also initiated a more detailed survey of the parking lot and boat launch area to assist the museum develop an engineering plan and contract out the improvements. This grant funds part of the infrastructure on the island which will most likely be spent on upgrading the parking lot and landscaping between the office and the boat launch. NRCS engineering personnel completed work on the design and the design package has been turned over to the Museum Board so that the work may be contracted out as soon as weather permits.

## FRYBURG WATER QUALITY PROJECT

I met with the Fryburg water quality project committee to review the grant proposal and project budget developed by former coordinator, Harvey Pinkerton. I have assisted the Washington Township Municipal Authority in developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit and award contracts for engineering services needed for the project. The first public meeting discussing the project is scheduled for February 23, 2005

## TIONESTA VISITORS CENTER

Tionesta Borough is working with a private engineer to develop standards and specifications for the contract work to be awarded at the Visitor Center, and the oversight to be provided by the engineering firm during the project.

## PROJECT GRASS

During the second year of this Growing Greener grant, nine projects totaling \$53,802.78 were completed as of July 1, 2004, the end of the states fiscal year. This leaves us a total of \$75,436.75 in grant funds available for the final year of the contract. This grant will be completed by June 30, 2005.

I am working closely with NW Project Grass to assist them in planning and hosting the 2005 Project Grass State Grazing Conference to be held sometime in the fall of this year in Crawford and Venango Counties.

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## DRY HYDRANTS

Penn Soil is administering the Statewide Grant of \$ 284,000 to install a minimum of 40 new dry hydrants in each council across the state. A total of 285 dry hydrant kits have been purchased and distributed to the nine RC&D's in PA to date. Nine hydrant installations have been reported completed as of this date.

I have also received approval on a budget revision from the USFS to reallocate some of the grant administrative expense from personnel costs to contractual expense to pay a flat fee to a council for each installed dry hydrant. Councils were given a choice as to how they wanted to earn the \$5000 administration expense. Four councils opted to stay with administrative expenses and the other five opted for the service contract. Contracts have been developed for signature of the Penn Soil Conservancy Charitable Trust, the administrator of the grant. A total of \$96,926.05 has been spent to date on this project.

## VALUE ADDED SMALL SCALE DAIRY PROCESSING PROJECT

Over 100 people from across the state attended the day long Value Added Dairy Processing educational program I put together for this project. The program called **MAKE SOMETHING MORE FROM YOUR MILK** was held on February 3, 2005 as part of a pre-conference workshop at the PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA) annual Farming For The Future Conference held at the Penn Stater Conference Center in State College. The program featured expert speakers that explained the requirements of processing dairy products on the farm, business planning, marketing, and six farmers actually processing or marketing dairy products from the farm including raw milk, on farm bottling, cheese making, yogurt, and ice cream.

RC&D gained a lot of attention from this one day program. PARC&D was listed as a silver key sponsor of the conference in exchange for my work pulling this program together. I was listed as a conference planning committee member and the program page devoted to this program noted the mission of RC&D and stated that this seminar was a collaboration of PASA and RC&D.

I was able to arrange for three camera crews to be present to videotape the majority of the proceedings, so that we could capture the presentations for use in preparing a value added dairy video or other educational programs. One crew was provided by the PA Department of Agriculture at my request, and the other two were provided by Vision Media Group of Meadville at a cost of \$1600 dollars.

The next phase of this project will include raising sufficient funding from all interested parties to complete the editing and compilation of the videotaped presentations into a finished end product which can be used all across the state for educational programs. Beyond that, we need to address what it will take to move this project from the awareness level to the making it happen stage.

## TRAINING

Along with three other new RC&D Coordinators in PA, I attended a three day training session covering the Area Planning Process in which groups of RC&D Coordinators used real life information from the Prairieland RC&D in Nebraska to develop a sample Area Plan. This training

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was designed to familiarize new RC&D Coordinators with the Area Planning Process to better prepare us for assisting their respective RC&D Councils.

## BIODIESEL PROJECT

I have assisted Penn Soil RC&D in modifying this grant proposal under a new notice of funding availability offered by the USDA and U.S. Department of Energy. We used the original grant proposal to expand the project statewide and request \$272,000 of federal funding to demonstrate the feasibility of local production of biodiesel fuel from waste vegetable oil. The pre-application proposal was limited to 3 pages and was due February 15<sup>th</sup>. All proposals will be evaluated within 45 days and the highest rated proposals will be invited to re-submit the full proposal for further consideration. Notice of successful grant awards is expected to occur in August of this year.

## UPPER ALLEGHENY COMMUNITY OUTREACH PROJECT

As directed by the Council, I continued to work with Congressman Peterson's office, Clarion County Economic Development Corporation, and the office of The Oil Region Alliance of Business, Industry, and Tourism to pursue a three way Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) solidifying the working relationship between all parties concerned with supporting this pilot project to assist municipalities.

A suitable MoU has been developed which protects Penn Soil RC&D's interests and solidifies a partnership approach to supporting this pilot project. Penn Soil RC&D will be invoicing Oil Region Alliance at the beginning of every month for grant funds to support the position of Municipal Outreach Coordinator. In addition, an agreement with Oil Region Alliance to costshare this fulltime position, provide employee benefits, provide payroll administration, and share the hours worked will ultimately reduce the cost to Penn Soil RC&D, so that the life of the pilot project is extended by six months to a year. This arrangement is advantageous to all parties for the duration of the pilot project and can be evaluated periodically to determine if the arrangement still meets everybody's needs. This arrangement represents a conservative, but productive approach to this pilot project which we are attempting to take on after it was already set in motion.

## CHANDLER'S VALLEY DAM

In cooperation with Penn Soil RC&D, NRCS completed a design for repairing the erosion around the dam abutments caused by the flooding of spring/summer, 2004. This structure built across Jackson Run in Warren County by the WPA during the 1930's needs about \$10,000 worth of construction to make necessary repairs stabilizing this historic structure and to prevent a re-occurrence. I will be working with the Chandler's Valley Community Association to try to secure the necessary funding to complete the project.

Respectfully submitted,

Wesley W. Ramsey  
RC&D Coordinator