

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

May 19, 2004

It has been a very interesting and educational three months since I started the job as Coordinator for Penn Soil RC&D. Some of the highlights are listed below:

## TRAINING

I attended the week long training course "RC&D CONCEPTS" in St. Louis, MO where I received a good indoctrination about the functions and possibilities with RC&D Councils. I also learned more about the roles and responsibilities of a Coordinator. The training was very helpful in orienting me to the new job responsibilities.

Dianna and I also attended a one day training session about managing a non-profit organization sponsored by Mid State RC&D that was very worthwhile. The session focused mainly on the financial responsibilities of non-profit organizations.

## FLU GAS DESULFERIZATION (FGD) DEMONSTRATION

Two additional sites were completed in Crawford County this spring. At the conclusion of the grant contract, a total of six sites on five farms were stabilized in Lawrence, Mercer, and Crawford counties. More than 1500 tons of the Rec-Lime mix was utilized in this project saving future landfill space.

Approximately 25,860 square feet of area was protected with the RecMix at an actual construction cost of \$78,856.19, figuring out to be \$3.05 cost per square foot of stabilized area. An estimate prepared by NRCS Civil Engineer, Ed Steckler, documents the cost of doing a comparable job utilizing concrete instead of the RecMix at \$4.00 per square foot of stabilized area. The final report on this grant was sent to DEP on May 17<sup>th</sup> totaling \$86,052.83 worth of expenditures.

## 2005 CONSERVATION TILLAGE CONFERENCE

Dianna and I are once again assisting with the development and the logistics of holding the Tri State Tillage Conference. The date for the 2005 Tillage Conference has been set as January 25th, 2005 at the Radisson Hotel in West Middlesex. A similar date has also been reserved for the 2006 conference at the same location. Work on the development of the program is expected to be finalized in the next month, so the publicity committee can begin its work.

## PROJECT GRASS

In cooperation with Penn Soil RC&D, Tim Elder, NRCS Grazing Specialist has applied for a new Growing Green Grant in the amount of \$ 126,400 for establishment of grazing systems called Northwest Project Grass Phase II. We won't know anything about this grant until late summer or fall of 2004.

We also have now received our finalized contract on the \$55,000 solar powered pumping demonstration grant funded by DEP through the Energy Harvest Grant Program. I have been working with Tim Elder to work out the details of the program which is expected to fund somewhere

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

between 6-10 solar pumping systems in conjunction with adoption or improvements in grazing systems. We are hoping to select some participants in June and begin work on installation.

## HUNTING AND FISHING MUSEUM

I attended a board of directors meeting of the H&F Museum in Tionesta on April 22<sup>nd</sup> to update the board on the status of two grants that Penn Soil had active files on. The Allegheny Wild & Scenic Complex grant of \$20,000 funded by the US Forest Service expires on November 30, 2004. This grant must be spent by the deadline to fund part of the infrastructure on the island which may include a handicapped accessible fishing pier, pedestrian walkway around the island, parking lot, etc. Meeting the deadline on completing some of this work is critical because this federal grant can serve as part of the match for another state funded \$40,000 grant for the same project which lasts until 2006.

## CONSORTIUM FOR SCIENTIFIC ASSISTANCE TO WATERSHEDS (C-SAW) GROWING GREENER GRANT

I processed an application for C-SAW assistance from the Venango CD for assistance with setting up a project to conduct a comprehensive study and assessment of the Upper Two Mile Run watershed and Justus Lake. The District is asking for specific assistance with the development of a study design plan, identifying proper protocols and procedures for collecting the data, and ensuring quality control of the monitoring process. The application has been submitted to the USGS and will likely be forwarded to the agency or organization best equipped to handle this request.

Another C-SAW request for assistance from the Forest CD was handled by the USGS. In this instance, the purpose of the request was to determine high and low water elevations of the Allegheny River at the Hunting and Fishing Museum site in Tionesta. This information was needed for engineering design of facilities such as the handicapped access fishing pier and pedestrian walkway around the island. Using measurements taken by Doug Carlson with a wire weight gage at the Route 62 bridge in Tionesta at regular intervals, the USGS was able to correlate the data with the flow data from the stream gaging station at West Hickory to develop reliable flow data for the Tionesta site. That flow information has now been passed on to the Engineering Team.

## 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. All the councils that are ready have received at least 20 dry hydrant kits to get them started, and we are now re-ordering kits for each council that is ready. Materials including the announcement of the program and the priority rating worksheets have been sent to all NRCS and District offices in the Penn Soil Area.

There has been some re-allocation of the budget categories due to NRCS furnishing laptop computers and GPS Units which were to be purchased from the grant. Since there was some inequity in the number of kits furnished per county, the RC&D Coordinators agreed that the first priority in reallocating dollars should be to close the gap in the number of kits furnished per county. As a result Penn Soil will receive 48 kits instead of the 40 originally budgeted. Kits are available to the six highest rated projects after June 1<sup>st</sup> in each county. District or NRCS field offices should

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

have the priority rating worksheets completed to justify the locations approved for installation. Kits will be made available as soon as the individual counties are ready to proceed with selection of sites.

## VALUE ADDED SMALL SCALE DAIRY PROCESSING PROJECT

Penn Soil had previously approved an RC&D project submitted by the Lawrence Conservation District about a year ago which focused on the feasibility of establishing small scale pre-engineered dairy processing plants to assist farmers with direct marketing their products. I am not aware of any activity beyond Harvey assisting a farmer with some research about the Pladot Mini-Dairy processing system.

Since I have accepted the position as Coordinator for Penn Soil RC&D I have attended several meetings which focused on the business potential for small dairy farms to develop on farm production of specialty or artisanal (hand crafted) cheeses. I am convinced that there is the potential to make a very good RC&D project out of this concept. I have surveyed the other RC&D Coordinators who have agreed that this would even make a good statewide or regional project. In addition, other organizations such as the Pennsylvania Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), Keystone Agricultural Innovation Center, and several Cooperative Extension Agents have already expressed interest in working with this project. I will be attending a meeting with the interested groups on May 24<sup>th</sup> in Indiana County. Several producers in our area have also expressed an interest in this concept. I have developed a PowerPoint presentation on this concept as an RC&D project and would be available to present it to interested groups, assuming that the Council is in favor of expanding this proposal.

## PENN SOIL CONSERVANCY CHARITABLE TRUST VERSUS PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

From the discussions that have taken place at the last two Penn Soil meetings, it is apparent to me that there is widespread confusion about the legal status of the two separate (but related) entities and the evolutionary path that has been set in motion for both organizations. I have researched the history on this matter from numerous parties including former Coordinator, Harvey Pinkerton, as well as other RC&D Coordinators to get the big picture on this issue. I believe I can now clear up the confusion with the following information.

The PENN SOIL CONSERVANCY CHARITABLE TRUST was formed in 1988 as an outgrowth of the Penn Soil RC&D Council. The purpose was to seek grants and donations from all sources to provide financial support for the Penn Soil RC&D Area and other conservation organizations that qualify under Section 501 © 3 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954. The TRUST was originally formed as an unincorporated charitable organization, and then several years later went through the process of incorporating to satisfy a state requirement to accept certain grants such as Growing Greener. This process set up our current paradox in which the TRUST is a legal entity in good standing as far as the state of PA is concerned, but an illegal organization as far as the IRS is concerned due to the sequence of the steps.

According to several other Coordinators across the state, we are not alone in our plight, and several other councils have researched the proper procedure with the IRS in correcting this situation. The IRS had advised that it would be easier to form a new incorporated 501 © 3 organization in the proper fashion by first incorporating the RC&D Council itself and then seeking a new 501 © 3 designation in the name of Penn Soil RC&D Council. That suggestion was accepted by the Council

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

at the November 2003 meeting and the Articles of Incorporation were submitted to the IRS in December 2003. The IRS acknowledged the completed application on January 20, 2004, and informed us that a decision should be issued in within 120 days. Once that application has been approved by the IRS, the new corporation (Penn Soil RC&D Council) will then register as a non-profit charitable organization.

Once that process is complete, the plan is that the new umbrella non-profit corporation (the Council) would become the applicant organization for grants instead of the TRUST (due to the legal paradox described above). For a time period, there will actually be two active 501 © 3 organizations associated with the Penn Soil RC&D Council since the TRUST will have to continue to exist until all the active grants that the TRUST currently acts as a funding conduit for have run their course. Once the last active grant funded through the TRUST has run its course, the future of the TRUST is in the hands of it's board of directors. The options would include dissolution and dispersal of any remaining assets in a manner consistent with the intent of the organization or evolving into some other type of stand alone organization for purposes other than those of the Penn Soil RC&D Council. At some point in the future the Council would likely recommend the dissolution of the TRUST since its primary function would have been absorbed by the new non-profit corporation and it would not be cost effective to carry both entities to perform the same function.

This may seem harsh or ungrateful, but you have to go back and remember the purpose of establishing the TRUST in the first place-to serve as a funding conduit to the RC&D area. The directors of the TRUST will need to decide at that time if the organization has any other purpose or life beyond that of serving the RC&D Council.

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY PENN SOIL RC&D

The National Association of RC&D Councils' Board of Directors has designated the week of July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2004, as National RC&D Week in honor of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the designation of the first ten RC&D Areas in the U.S. Penn Soil was one of the original ten councils, authorized in February, 1964. I am working with Penn Lines Magazine to do a feature story in their July issue about RC&D. I would also like to suggest that the Commissioners in each county within Penn Soil approve a proclamation provided by the National Association designation for use in your respective news outlets. I will be in touch with each county to coordinate this activity as the time gets closer.

Respectfully submitted,

Wesley W. Ramsey  
Coordinator