

PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

August 18, 2004

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

TRAINING

I attended the three day Ohio RC&D Summer Training meeting this past week. The meeting was good and provided me with timely information concerning budget development and the role of the finance committee. I also had an opportunity to see some completed RC&D projects and learn about the RC&D role in each of the projects. Another important benefit was that I met the Coordinators and Administrative Assistants for the two RC&D's in Ohio that border Penn Soil, and we discussed the possibility that we might develop future projects across the state line if the interest warranted it.

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. A tentative agenda has been developed for the 2005 conference.

HUNTING AND FISHING MUSEUM

I attended a board of directors meeting of the H&F Museum in Tionesta on July 26th 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.

TIONESTA VISITORS CENTER

I met with Tionesta Borough Manager to review the existing \$10,000 Forest Service grant for renovations to the Tionesta Visitors Center. The original proposal was projected to be a \$30,000 project, but was only partially funded at \$10,000 by the Forest Service. To date only a renovation plan has been developed, and construction needs to commence soon to complete the grant contract in a timely fashion. Tionesta Borough has just received a companion grant from DCNR for \$25,000 to assist with this large project. Julia was going to review the plan with the Borough Engineer and see what projects they could fit into the \$10,000 grant, so we could get the project moving.

FRYBURG WATER QUALITY PROJECT

Penn Soil Conservancy Charitable Trust received word that we have been awarded a \$15,000 grant from the EPA to help local citizens assess water quality problems. I am working with former coordinator, Harvey Pinkerton, to develop the plan in carrying out this project.

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

I attended my first C-SAW meeting and met the partner agencies involved across the state in the program. Ron Phelps, Coordinator for Pocono Northeast RC&D had been the coordinator serving as administrator for this statewide project. Since Ron was transferring to New Jersey, a new coordinator was needed to administer the C-SAW project. John Metrick from Southeastern PA RC&D has volunteered to serve in that capacity.

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.

The county allotment of 6 hydrants has been delivered to either the NRCS office or the Conservation District offices serving Erie, Warren, Crawford, Mercer, and Lawrence Counties. Hydrant kits are available for Forest, Clarion, and Venango counties at the Penn Soil Office. I reviewed the design for three sites in Forest County and two sites in Clarion County. I personally completed site evaluations of three sites in Warren County, and assisted the NRCS field team evaluate one site in Crawford County for training purposes.

VALUE ADDED SMALL SCALE DAIRY PROCESSING PROJECT

I have had several meetings involving interested parties from the Penn State Cooperative Extension Service, Keystone Agricultural Innovation Center, The PA Association for Sustainable Agriculture (PASA), and the Coordinators for Southern Alleghenies and Penns Corner RC&D's. We have worked up a three phase plan to present to the PA Association of RC&D Councils to request that this become a statewide RC&D project. The three phases can be summarized in this manner: Phase I involves generating awareness of value added concepts to dairy farmers across the state. Phase II would be to add working knowledge of requirements to begin value added production of a farm based dairy product. In other words, What do you need to know before you invest in this business strategy? In stage III, the project will focus on assisting interested producers develop the resources to begin production of their own saleable product either at their own facility or a community commercial facility.

AMISH GREYWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM

Five sites are currently being monitored on a monthly basis by the Crawford Co. Conservation District in cooperation with DEP and Penn Soil RC&D. The proposed sites in Venango County have not been completed to my knowledge. Funding is currently available to reimburse Venango CD for a similar monitoring program if the small flow wetland systems are constructed by the Amish before the grants evaporate.

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FLU GAS DESULFERIZATION (FGD) DEMONSTRATION

We received the final payment from DEP to close out this project, and have issued the final payment due to the contractor on the project. We are just waiting for our check to clear the bank and then we will immediately close this account to complete 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.

PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL 501 C 3 Status

The IRS had completed their review of our application for 501 C 3 status and determined that they had several questions and an additional requirement for us to meet. They had specific language that they required be part of the organization's Articles of Incorporation. We had the required language as part of our bylaws; however, they insisted that the required language be part of the corporate founding documents on file with the state of PA. We filed an amendment to our articles of Incorporation with the state, and have just received word that the state has accepted the change. We faxed the notice of acceptance from PA to the IRS and we are waiting for their final approval.

NATIONAL RC&D WEEK

The National Association of RC&D Councils' Board of Directors designated the week of July 11th, 2004, as National RC&D Week in honor of the 40th 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 worked with Penn Lines Magazine to do a statewide feature story in their July issue about RC&D. I also worked with the local feature writer for the Warren Electric Cooperative to do a more detailed story about Penn Soil Projects within the Warren Electric service area. In addition, I have received word that The County Commissioners in Crawford, Forest, and Warren counties signed local proclamations calling attention to Penn Soil's activities.

BIODIESEL PROJECT

I assisted Penn Soil RC&D put together a grant proposal and submitted it for a \$63,956 Energy Harvest Grant to fund the development of ten small scale biodiesel production units throughout the Penn Soil RC&D Area. The original proposal was valued at \$25,000, but the final project description included training and oversight by a private contractor to the ten host locations in providing a turnkey operation. The proposal also included making two of the production units mobile for ease in taking the units on the road to demonstrate the concept at county fairs or other similar public events. I received letters of support from the Venango, Warren, and Erie Conservation Districts as well as one from Ric Nichols, a Warren County farmer, who is interested in hosting one of the biodiesel demonstrations at his farm.

Respectfully submitted,

Wesley W. Ramsey, Coordinator