

# PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL

COORDINATOR'S REPORT

November 17, 2004

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

## 2005 CONSERVATION TILLAGE CONFERENCE

Dianna and I are once again assisting with the development and the logistics of holding the Tri State Tillage Conference. We have received \$200 in commercial sponsorship so far and 400 postcards have been mailed out to previous registrants to remind them to hold the date of January 25<sup>th</sup>, 2005 open for attending the conference.

## 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. 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 Julia McCray of Tionesta Borough 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 also received a companion grant from DCNR for \$25,000 to assist with this large project. The Forest County Action Team was also recently awarded another \$15,000 grant from the US Forest Service to assist with this project. Tionesta Borough is working with a private engineer to refine and develop the renovation plan into a bid package for construction. To try to get this project moving, I coordinated a meeting with the engineer, Carl Jablonowski of the USFS, former RC&D Coordinator Harvey Pinkerton, Julia McCray, and myself to look at the plan and visit the project site. We also were trying to determine if the Forest Service would be willing and able to commit some labor assistance through the FCI McKean prison inmate program. Although Carl Jablonowski viewed the project favorably, and opined that it looked like something that the crew could get involved in, apparently the Forest Service is unwilling to commit the resources to this project at this time. I will continue to work with Tionesta Borough to complete this project.

## 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. Harvey has been developing a plan with the help of a local committee to hold a public meeting to announce the project. No date for the meeting has been finalized yet.

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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. Approximately 85-100 hydrant engineering designs have been prepared to date with an estimated 10-15 installations completed, however, we can only verify two completed installations based on completion reports submitted to date. Audio visual equipment and GPS equipment necessary for the project has been acquired by each RC&D. The 9 RC&D's covering the state have publicized the project and accepted applications from potential participants, prioritized the applications received, and selected the best sites for design. I have also requested 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. As soon as the budget revision is approved, contracts will be developed for signature of the Penn Soil Conservancy Charitable Trust, the administrator of the grant. A total of \$82,100.38 has been spent to date on this project.

Locally, I am providing assistance to local volunteer fire departments to assess potential projects and provide design assistance as requested. I have provided three designs for projects in Clarion County, two in Forest County, two in Warren County, one in Venango County, and have just completed evaluations on twelve more sites in Venango County for the Cooperstown VFD.

## VALUE ADDED SMALL SCALE DAIRY PROCESSING PROJECT

I have completed a tentative agenda for a day long Value Added Dairy Processing educational program. The program is called **MAKE SOMETHING MORE FROM YOUR MILK** and it will be 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 features expert speakers that will explain 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, cheesemaking, yogurt, and ice cream.

David Steele, Coordinator for Southern Alleghenies RC&D and I are trying to locate a source of funds to videotape the educational program on February 3<sup>rd</sup> to make it available later on for local meetings throughout the state.

I traveled to Somerset to give the powerpoint presentation I developed on the Value Added Dairy Project to Southwest PA Chapter of Project Grass. The group there was very supportive of 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.

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## PENN SOIL RC&D COUNCIL 501 C 3 Status

The IRS has now granted approval on Penn Soil RC&D's application for 501 C 3 Status as an incorporated non-profit organization. From here on out, the RC&D Council will be the applicant on all new grant applications. Previously, The Penn Soil Conservancy Charitable Trust was the financial agent for the RC&D Council. The Trust will continue to serve as the financial agent for Penn Soil on all active projects until those grants expire, unless we petition the grantors for a new grant contract with the Council.

## 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. We received notification this week that the grant application was not selected for funding during this latest round of awards. The project has been listed in the State's Green Bank for possible funding from other sources as funds become available. I will be doing some research to determine if there are other possible sources to fund the project and plan to continue to try to get the project funded.

## 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.

## TRAINING

I attended a one day training session covering financial management of RC&D Councils presented by Sarah Knight, CPA. The session was helpful in developing a better understanding of our new accounting system and understanding financial management of grants.

I also attended a one day training session on Microsoft Frontpage Software which will be helpful in updating Penn Soil's website on a continuing basis.

Respectfully submitted,

Wesley W. Ramsey  
Coordinator