The Dirt on Dirt and Gravel
By Michael R. Silsbee, PhD, Director the Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies

Welcome to the first issue of the Dirt & Gravel Gazette. This is the first in a series of bimonthly newsletters for Pennsylvania’s dirt and gravel road community. The Gazette will be a mixture of news, information exchange, calendars, meeting announcements and whatever else our community needs.

Well, it’s taken a long time but the Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies here at the university was recently awarded a contract by the State Conservation Commission to provide a set of services for its dirt and gravel road program. Thanks should go out to many people to list here including the whole original Task Force. Special thanks should go to Trout Unlimited’s “Bud” Byron and Ed Bellis, and our own “Woody” Colbert who made the dirt and gravel road program a big part of their life.

The center will not just be providing the services listed in the contract (see article by Kevin Abbey elsewhere in the Gazette) but will also be seeking other ways to enhance the center’s activities. For instance the center has applied for and received a Growing Greener grant to create an Outdoors Classroom in Penn State’s Stone Valley Experimental Forest. The center is seeking and hopes to be able to announce soon other public and private grants for research and demonstration projects. Some of you may be called upon to act as partners in these projects. We are depending on your help to make the center’s efforts a success.

Acknowledgement:
The D&G Gazette gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Pennsylvania’s State Conservation Commission and the Dirt & Gravel Road Program.

“It’s Official” Conservation Commission Endorses Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies
By Kevin Abbey, Dirt & Gravel Roads Consultant

At the January 23, 2001 meeting of the Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission, the decision was made official…that is the decision to link up with Penn State for the purpose of establishing a Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies. The Commission’s endorsement of the Center, approved in concept last year, included the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Materials Research Laboratory (MRL) at Penn State as well as a first year Work Plan and Budget.

The MOU calls for Center personnel to continue to deliver the program’s Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance 2-day education/training course, provide technical assistance and field work training, publish technical “fact sheets” and newsletter, communicate and report on program activities, and offer program support of the Geographic Information System-based (GIS) data collection and reporting protocol. In conjunction with a re-structured FY 2000-01 funding allocation, the scope of the §9106 Dirt & Gravel Road Program increased significantly from the original priority listing of 900 worksites located in Exceptional Value and High Quality watersheds to a statewide inventory of 9600 worksites identified and assessed by Conservation Districts.

Long envisioned by the Task Force on Dirt & Gravel Roads (see related Task Force article), the Center will serve as a permanent clearinghouse for research, product/practice testing, investigation/evaluation of materials and techniques for use in the ongoing maintenance of Pennsylvania’s 17,000+ miles of unpaved roads. Establishment of the Center completes the recommended action list advocated by the Task Force in its 1997 published Status Report. In presenting the MOU and Work Plan for adoption, State Conservation Commission’s Executive Secretary, Karl Brown, said “we believe the Center has assembled the necessary technical resources and has in place the organizational (continued on page 3)
Task Force Selected for Governor’s Environmental Award

By Kevin Abbey, Dirt & Gravel Roads Consultant

Governor Tom Ridge and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary James Seif presented the 2000 Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence to the Task Force on Dirt & Gravel Roads at a December ceremony in Harrisburg. Cited by Governor Ridge for “its environmental contribution to every Pennsylvanian and progressive stewardship of Penn’s Woods,” the Task Force was recognized in the “Education & Outreach” awards category. A reception to recognize and thank individual members of the Task Force was sponsored by the Center and held in the State Capitol immediately following the awards presentation.

Originally assembled in 1993, the Task Force on Dirt & Gravel Roads researched the impact of sediment pollution from the state’s unpaved roadways, gained the needed support and built the foundation for the State Conservation Commission’s Dirt & Gravel Road Program. Rooted in the belief that “local control of local pollution” works best, this voluntary pollution prevention program was authorized and funded in law with an annual $5 million by Section 9106 of the Vehicle Code.

Frequently referred to as the “impetus” behind Pennsylvania’s innovative approach to dirt and gravel road maintenance, the Task Force was a cooperative working group made up of 16 different non-profit organizations, commercial businesses, and local, state, and federal government agencies committed to working together on the problem of dust and sediment pollution.

Here at the Center we take the lessons learned by the Task Force seriously and we stay focused on its advocated principles:

- Education & Training based on principles of natural systems;
- Collaborative public-private partnering.

Please join us in congratulating the Task Force on their award and please take a moment the next time you run across a Task Force member to express the gratitude of us all for their fine work.

Calendar of Events

Dirt & Gravel Roads Training Sessions:
March 7 & 8  Potter County, Potato City Country Inn
Sandy Thompson, 814-274-8411
March 28 & 29  Columbia/Montour County, Portabella Catering
Mary Ruth Wagner, 570-784-1310 ext. 114
April 4 & 5  Crawford/Erie Counties, American Legion Waterford
LeRoy Gross, 814-796-6760 ext. 5
April 10 & 11  Wyoming County, Shaffer’s Pink Apple, Tunkhannock
Josh Longmore, 570-836-2589 ext. 3
May 9 & 10  Lycoming County, Old Lycoming Fire Hall, Williamsport
Mark Davidson, 570-433-3003
May 23 & 24  Jefferson County, Warsaw Vol. Fire Company
Shawn Wessell, 814-849-7463

Erosion & Sediment Products Expo
March 10, 2001  Central Mountain Middle School, West Gym
Mill Hall, PA 570-726-3798

Road Grading Demo
March 14, 2001  Keystone College, Route 6, LaPlume
Wyoming County Conservation District
570-836-2589

D&G Roads Annual Meeting & Workshop
March 20-22, 2001  Atherton Hilton
State College, PA 16801
For Details Contact 814-865-5355

Potter County - Road Grading Demonstration
April 20th

PSATS
PSATS Annual Convention & Trade Show
April 22-25, 2001
Hershey Lodge, Hershey, PA

Where’s Phil?

Many of you know Phil Dux. We are happy to announce that last November he joined the Center and will be continuing his activities on behalf of the dirt and gravel program. The following is a short list of field visits, demonstrations and other activities that Phil has planned for the next couple of months:

Clinton County - Erosion and Sediment Control Expo
March 10, 2001. Phil will be discussing dirt and gravel roads with vendors and contractors.

Keystone College March 14, 2001 At a Contractor’s Workshop hosted by Wyoming, Luzerne and Lackawanna Conservation District, a live demonstration of grading techniques specifically adapted to maintaining Driving Surface Aggregate

Potter County - Road Grading Demonstration April 20th. Techniques utilizing conventional grader blades and carbide tipped/toothed grader blades will be demonstrated.

PSATS Annual Meeting April 22-25, 2001. Phil is scheduled to give a presentation and will be hosting a booth during the annual show.
Guest Column

The Spirit of Cooperation
By Woodrow “Woody” Colbert, Coordinator, State Conservation Commission, Dirt and Gravel Road Pollution Prevention Program

The spirit of cooperation is by far the most important, and most sparsely mentioned, factor in the success of this unique program. However, in this unique circumstance, other factors normally used to measure success may fall short. They may fall short because the program is fundamentally different from its core all the way out.

The distinction of uniqueness is earned by Dirt & Gravel’s heritage of bottom-up public support, its birthright of non-lapsing funds allocated on the basis of uniformly verified problems and its legislated mandate of local control.

As an act of reinforcing good faith, Section 9106 of the Vehicle Code requires a “spirit of cooperation” as a condition of participation in the program. Its placement in the act is such that it applies equally to conservation district staff, applicants and contractors. Cooperation is a characteristic that can neither be tidily measured nor simply required by the usual means. It must be learned by example.

If cooperation is so important but it cannot be quantified or specified, then what guidance is given? First, return the actions in kind. Applicants who whole-heartedly and sincerely adopt program values and demonstrate that adoption with camaraderie, publicity and voluntary compliance with program values should be acknowledged. Acknowledgement can be shown with favorable publicity, awards and access to your attention. As in all matters of honor, full open and frank discussion of the reasons why cooperators get legitimate recognition, should spur others to do likewise.

If ever there was an example of cooperation in action, it is the Task Force on Dirt and Gravel Roads. In that light, you are its legacy and have a wonderful opportunity to return the favor.

Is there a cost to the act of cooperation? Has anyone ever been diminished by showing a kindness? Is this the higher power to supplant the traditional approaches?

It is a locally controlled program. You control the answers to these questions and to the real success of the program! Will this program coordinator help when he can? “You betcha.”

The Verified Sites Workgroup has made a recommendation to the SCC that any Districts who have not spent or committed an amount equal to their first two years (97-98 and 98-99) of funding should not receive an allocation in FY 2001-2002. Their allocations would be redistributed to the remaining counties. Funding would resume for those counties, without bias, at the date of the next allocation for which they are eligible. These recommendations are pending SCC consideration at its March 14 meeting. You will have until April 15th to update your data.

Two Day Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance Training

The Center will again be teaming with The Pennsylvania Transportation Institute to offer the very successful training program on Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance of dirt and gravel roads. The training will be undergoing an overhaul during the coming months. The goal of the overhaul is to incorporate “lessons learned” into the program.

Scheduling of the training sessions will be available through the Center (tel. (814) 865-5355, Fax (814) 863-7040). Kathy Moir will be handling the scheduling process. Typically a lead time of 8-10 weeks will be required. However, in the busy spring and fall months considerably longer lead times should be expected. The 1st and 3rd Wednesday and Thursday of every month are the preferred dates for training. However, we will continue to work with you to schedule other times if needed.

“IT’s Official” continued from page 1 structure to help the Commission take the Dirt & Gravel Road Program to the next level of performance.” In support of the unanimous Commission action, DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Management, Lawrence Tropea cited the Dirt & Gravel Road Program as “a leadership program that warrants our support and that should be encouraged to develop a methodology for quantifying the effects of preventing sediment pollution.”
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Please pardon our “dust” as we get underway. Keep watching the Gazette for new articles and features as the “dust” clears. Suggestions are welcome.

Please submit to:

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