

2008 Annual Awards Banquet

The Luzerne Conservation District held its Third Annual District Banquet on Saturday, March 29, 2008 at the Genetti Hotel & Conference Center in Wilkes-Barre. With nearly 200 people in attendance, the banquet featured a live and silent auction, raffles, and games of chance. Many local businesses and artists donated merchandise and original works of art for the event.

The proceeds from the banquet benefit the Luzerne Conservation District's conservation education and outreach efforts by helping to support ongoing programming to local homeowners, municipalities, educators, students, and the public through workshops, newsletters, special events, and community programs.

The Luzerne Conservation District took the opportunity to recognize the outstanding conservation efforts of local community members by presenting the 2008 Annual Awards at the banquet. The awards ceremony began with a remembrance of former district board members Risa Andrews and Stan Sowa both of whom passed away last year.

The following award recipients were recognized for their efforts in protecting Luzerne County's natural resources:



Rick Koval (center) accepts the *Stanley M. Sowa, Jr. Conservationist of the Year Award* from LCD Board Member Bruce Trumbower (left), and District Manager, Joshua Longmore (right). Besides his work as Land Protection Specialist with the North Branch Land Trust, Rick's life is filled with efforts to preserve wildlife and other natural resources. He has been and is currently involved in numerous wildlife monitoring and protection efforts including the PA Natural Diversity and Biological Inventories, the Luzerne County Butterfly Atlas, the PA Herpetological Atlas, and the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service's Timber Rattlesnake Assessment, just to name a few.



Jeff Bloss (center) accepts the *Lewis Rinehimer Conservation Farmer Award* from Board Chairman, Tom Venesky (left), and Chesapeake Bay Technician, Jennie Kramer (right). Jeff and his family have been farming for six generations, and have implemented several conservation practices to optimize production while protecting the environment.



Damien Rutkoski (center) accepts the *Conservation Educator Award* from District Manager, Joshua Longmore (left), and Conservation Education Coordinator, Tanya Dierolf (right). Damien is a Science Teacher at Wyoming Area High School, who does a great job of getting his students involved with hands-on conservation and natural resource learning activities. Damien has been involved with our Luzerne County Envirothon for several years, and has participated in the PA Fish & Boat Commission's Trout in the Classroom program.

Congratulations to each of the 2008 award recipients!

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Joe Ackourey (left) accepts the *Watershed Stewardship Award* from Watershed Program Coordinator, Shawn Rybka (right). Joe Ackourey has a deep interest in healthy streams and fishing. He is a member of the Board of Directors with the Stanley Cooper Sr. Chapter of Trout Unlimited and is actively involved with the chapter's Stream Improvement efforts. Joe is recognized as a local expert who's always willing to help people understand the science of streams and how that relates to a successful fishing experience.



Each year our conservation district hosts the Luzerne County Envirothon, a competition for high school students that tests their knowledge of natural resource issues. We want to take this opportunity to recognize the winner of last year's Envirothon, MMI Prep. **Anthony Gennaro** (center) accepts the *2007 Envirothon Award* on behalf of first place students at MMI Prep from Administrative Manager, Sue Kolb (left), and Conservation Education Coordinator, Tanya Dierolf (right).



Diane Madl (left) on behalf of PA DCNR, Musto EE Center, and Nescopeck State Park, accepts the *EPCAMR Partnership Award* from EPCAMR Regional Coordinator, Robert Hughes (right). In partnership with EPCAMR, Diane has reached thousands of students through environmental education in the past decade. Through the "Community Connections Program" she has introduced students to their local environment, as well as, a host of potential environmental careers.



The Luzerne Conservation District also took this time to recognize two other very important conservation partners: **Jackson Township** (represented by Supervisor Chairman Jay Wilkes) and the **Red Rock Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation** (represented by Chapter President Dale Butler). Jackson Township supervisors and employees have always been willing to partner with the District in our efforts to care for the local environment. They've partnered with the District on several Dirt & Gravel Road Projects, and go above and beyond to meet the environmental standards of that program.



The Red Rock Chapter of the NWTF provided a grant and volunteers to build a pavilion on the District grounds. They've also provided a lot of support in helping us pull together a successful banquet. We recognize them for their continued support of our district's educational efforts.