



**2009 Annual Report
Munnell Run Farm Foundation, Inc.**

www.munnellrunfarm.org

Mission Statement

The Mission of Munnell Run Farm Foundation, Inc. is to develop and maintain the capability of Munnell Run Farm to integrate agriculture and ecology education through hands-on programs for students and adults in watershed management, nonpoint source pollution control, stream ecology, wetlands, forestry and agriculture.

Vision Statement

The vision of the Munnell Run Farm Foundation is to nurture a conservation ethic in our youth, agriculture producers, and community members in order to affect a positive cultural, economic and environmental impact in our rural community. It is further our vision that Munnell Run Farm shall become a destination for school children, educators, civic organizations, agriculture producers, and families to explore and discover the interrelationship between agriculture, the natural and cultural environments and our economy.

Munnell Run Farm Foundation, Inc. is a tax-exempt not-for-profit organization that supports the operation of Munnell Run Farm (MRF). We collaborate with other like-minded organizations and individuals to provide a meaningful experience for visitors to the Farm. The Mercer County Conservation District provides staff and operating support. The Neshannock Chapter of Trout Unlimited operates and maintains the trout nursery and participates in educational programming and other events throughout the year. The Mercer County Historical Society operates the Rural Life Museum. The Mercer County Commissioners provide the land and buildings for an annual lease fee of \$1.00 and have granted the Foundation a conservation easement that holds the Farm for the purposes of agriculture and education in perpetuity. The Commissioners also sponsor grants that are needed to improve the infrastructure of the Farm.

The working farm provides a setting for educational programming that helps people to understand where their food is grown and how agriculture and the environment interact. It's done through hands on educational programs. Formal programs were provided to preschoolers, elementary and middle school students that satisfied the state standards for "Environment and Ecology", especially as they relate to agriculture and wetlands.



2009 educational programs were greatly curtailed with the departure in mid-year of Miss Jill, MCCD Education Coordinator, who provided the leadership and was the primary presenter of programs until her resignation in August. A hiring freeze necessitated by the economic and budgetary conditions in the County prevented the continuation of programming through the end of the year. MCCD staff, part-time presenters and volunteers augmented the programs at the Farm. A series of Spring and Summer classes were held for Preschool but the planned Fall classes had to be cancelled.

Programs for adults were conducted for the Wal-Mart Employees retreat June 30th. Fifty employees from stores in northwest PA participated in various hands-on activities. Each person had a hand in butter making and farm to fiber activity, composting, organic gardening, and stream water quality monitoring using kick seines to collect macroinvertebrates. They also made ice cream to serve for dessert after lunch and toured the Farm on foot and on the “hay wagon”.

The Farm also hosted a riparian buffer workshop for landowners, meetings of the Penn-Ohio Shenango River Watershed Association, and the NW PA Project Grass committee. Tours of the Farm were also given to two groups interested in developing their farms into educational facilities.

Special events included Earth Day on the Farm, Munnell Run Farm Day, and the Watershed Challenge. A sunny September day provided nearly 1,000 Farm Day visitors the opportunity to experience artisan demonstrations, local food, horse-drawn wagon rides and wagon tours, and to eat food provided by local nonprofit groups. The Watershed Challenge, patterned after the Envirothon, was held October 21st for 6th thru 8th graders from nine schools in four counties (including two from Ohio) in the Shenango River watershed. The PA Game Commission, DCNR Bureau of Forestry, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Wallace and Pancher, Inc., Trout Unlimited, and the Conservation Districts in Mercer, Crawford, Lawrence and Trumbull (OH) counties participated.



Mercer County Commissioners sponsored the \$170,000 DCNR matching grant received in 2007 and a Pennsylvania Conservation Corps grant that ended June 30, 2009. The DCNR grant will end December 31, 2010 and will enable us to add a new entrance road and make needed improvements to the lane, including the replacement of the culvert at Munnell Run. The PCC grant provided a crew and funds to install a new roof on the Rural Life Museum, to begin the conversion of a two-stall garage into the Farm’s Welcome Center and “Country Store”, and build an amphitheater in the woodlot. The Munnell Run Farm Foundation contracted with a builder to complete the carpentry, electrical and plumbing in the building.



The Regional Food Venture at Munnell Run Farm took another step forward with a contract with the Small Business Development Center at Gannon University. The SBDC will develop operating, staffing, business and marketing plans with the help of. MRFF will use the \$50,000 Agriculture Planning Grant from the PA First Industries Fund to pay for the contract. The grant will also provide the means to design the physical plant, which will re-use the existing former laundry building. With a completed design and construction cost estimate, funding will be sought for its construction. The steering committee continues to meet regularly to guide the process. The project would be used by local and regional farmers, caterers, bakers and others who want to start a business by making value-added products such as jams, jellies, sauces, juices, yogurt, cheese and butter. The sustainability of the project will come from the rental fees, as well as fees for special programs such as cheese making classes and special events.

The Farm’s Cooperative Trout Nursery managed by the Neshannock Chapter of Trout Unlimited completed its 11th year of operation by raising and stocking 2,000 brown and 50

golden rainbow trout. T.U. members also participated in many educational programs held at the farm and opened the nursery to numerous public tours.

In its fifth full year of operation, the Rural Life Museum operated by the Mercer County Historical Society continued to provide museum tours to visitors in 2009. Plans were advanced



to relocate the historic Bigler House to the Farm. Its tie-in to Mercer County is that it was built by John and William Bigler in 1844, who were to become governors of California and Pennsylvania respectively in 1852. The Shenango Conservancy, which now owns the building, committed most of the funds for the project and provided an initial payment of \$10,000 toward the cost. The cost to rebuild the house at the Farm is estimated at \$90,000. We need to raise \$25,000 more. We're seeking grants but donations will be a tremendous help. The MC Historical Society will help with furnishings and future

programming help. Pasture fencing was moved to create a site that will replicate a rural homestead during the latter half of the 19th century. In 2009 a design that accommodates the Uniform Building Code was completed and building permit was received. When completed, it will be incorporated into the educational programming at Munnell Run Farm.

New in 2009 was the Munnell Run Farm Foundation's Small Games of Chance license that added raffles to the fund raising tools. It provided the means to make the first ever profit for MRFF, Inc. at Farm Day. Wal-Mart donated \$4,700 to MRFF with \$3,500 stipulated to be used for "underserved people". Program fees and special events provided \$2,191.95 for the Munnell Run Farm Foundation treasury, and sales of garden vegetables, tote bags, T-shirts and added \$618.97. The Mercer County Conservation District provides the manpower to maintain the Farm, provide educational programming and to manage the Foundation's day-to-day functions. Also new in 2009 - Our website, www.munnellrunfarm.org got a facelift. We hope the fresh new look will help to make the site more informative and more often visited.

We look forward to the possibilities that 2010 will bring.