

SCRIP Meeting Minutes
March 21, 2019

A SCRIP meeting was held on Thursday, March 21, 2019 beginning at 3:07 PM at the Gander Outdoors in Richland. The meeting was attended by SCRIP Board Members Len Lichvar, Joe Gorden, Melissa Reckner, Karlice Makuchan, John Dryzal, and Larry Hutchinson. Tom Clark, Jim Eckenrode, Jr., Bill Strosnider, and Adam Cotchen joined the meeting in progress.

The meeting was also attended by Chris Garbark of Conemaugh Valley Conservancy, Doug Beri, Jr. of Indiana County Conservation District, Jim & Meg Moses of Somerset County Conservancy, Bob Hook of Somerset County Conservancy, Mark Lee of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, Branden Diehl of the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Jeffrey Ripple of PA Council of Trout Unlimited, Greg Shustrick of Somerset Conservation District, David Leiford of PA DEP's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, Pat & Randy Buchanan of Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, Jeff Sarver of Shade Creek Watershed Association, Daniel Ryan of PA Fish and Boat Commission, and Gary Smith of PA Fish and Boat Commission. Travis Tasker of Saint Francis University joined the meeting in progress.

Introductions were made.

Lichvar shared that the Somerset County Commissioners were collecting donations to plant a tree in honor of the late John Vatauvuk, who was a SCRIP Board Member. Reckner/Makuchan made a motion for SCRIP to donate \$100 towards the tree. All in favor. Motion carried.

Dryzal/Makuchan made a motion to approve the January meeting minutes. All in favor. Motion carried.

Reckner shared an email from Cambria County Conservation District's AmeriCorps who is working to revamp the District's website and market events through a "journalistic partnership." Send any news/events to Shannon Johns at cccd3@co.cambria.pa.us.

Reckner shared that Tony Marich has become SCRIP's first lifetime member with a donation of \$1,000! Thank you, Tony. Board members are asked to consider how this may be shared, promoted, and used.

There was no Treasurer's Report.

By-law Amendments

Lichvar reviewed the process of updating the by-laws, which were mailed to the board of directors. After a comment or two, Dryzal/Makuchan made a motion to accept the by-laws revision as submitted. All in favor. Motion carried. Lichvar said they will be posted on SCRIP's website. Dryzal thanked Lichvar, Piper and Reckner for their work on this.

Stonycreek River

Shustrick reported on the progress of the Oven Run rehabilitation. Site E is just about done. It will treat 300 GPM. Site F is next. About 200 GPM will be treated there. All of these systems are about 20 years old and need refreshed to operate well. Design work and funds will determine to what extent.

Funds for Lambert's Run ALD system Phase II were secured. Shustrick said the final design and permitting should be completed this year.

Lichvar reported on a citizen report of liquid manure spreading in the headwaters of the Stonycreek River. The Somerset Conservation District did investigate and found poor management practices and a point source discharge entering the Stonycreek River. They will be working with the agricultural community to educate and implement better practices. Ripple said PATU has a white paper on nutrient spreading. It's on their website.

Paint Creek

Reckner reported that the Paint Creek Regional Watershed Association (PCRWA) and Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited will hold its 10th annual litter cleanup along Little Paint Creek, Route 160, and Berwick Road on March 30 with volunteers meeting at 8:30 AM along Berwick Road.

Shade Creek

Hutchinson said they held a Green Drinks event this week, in partnership with the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy (CVC), that was well attended.

Hutchinson said Cliff Denholm with Stream Restoration, Inc. revamped the Swallow Farm treatment system and will do a little work on it yet.

Sarver said a contact of his captured some drone footage of various projects in the watershed.

Hutchinson said CVC asked the Shade Creek Watershed Association to take over the monitoring of its treatment systems again since CVC doesn't have enough funds to manage that sampling. Hutchinson questioned if the Oven Run sites are being sampled. He said Austin Russell may be willing to do it. Reckner recommended Garbark reach out to Stream Team volunteers who had accompanied her sampling at those sites to see if they would be willing to team up to sample.

Hutchinson said the Shade-Central City High School Trout Release is scheduled for April 26.

Hutchinson elaborated on SGL 228 system and some issues there. Hutchinson will need to speak with Leiford.

Lichvar prefaced the update from Leiford on the proposed Shade Creek Active Treatment

System Plant. About two years ago, everything seemed promising, but the situation has changed. Leiford appreciated the opportunity to provide an update. The good news is that DEP/BAMR received AML funding, which comes from a tax on coal, and up to 30% may be put in a set-aside fund. Leiford said the Cresson treatment system is online with some kinks being worked out. This system should restore 22 miles of stream. He said the Blacklick system design is 65% completed and should be done this year. When that system is constructed and operating, 25 miles of Blacklick Creek will be improved.

Leiford gave a background of the Shade Creek project. In 2017, BAMR requested OSM assistance to help complete sampling and modeling, and it was determined that this project would restore 13 miles of Shade Creek and a significant portion of Stonycreek, at least down to Paint, and then it would help buffer Paint's influence. Leiford believes it is a worthwhile project. The wrench comes from the fact that OSM noticed that the PBS/Corsa Coal Job #12 site is discharging into the Reitz #4 mine pool. Title IV funds are restricted to abandoned sites. The issue is that an active mine is now discharging into the #4 mine pool, which drains mines not mined since the early 1900s. OSM said Title IV funds can't be used for treatment now because of the active mine discharge. DEP studied how Corsa's discharge was influencing the #4 discharge and found that it was significantly impacting it. The DEP's California Office permitted this discharge, which is formally called the MD31 discharge (Reitz #4 – behind the firehall). The DEP DMO requested Corsa Coal perform a study of the available data for the MD-31 discharge. John Foreman was commissioned to perform this study. Foreman's report and review of the data said the impact from the Corsa discharge was actually raising alkalinity in the mine pool. The elevated iron levels observed in the data are due to episodic precipitation events. BAMR disagrees, but, even without that dispute, OSM questions if the discharge would be eligible for Title IV funds, even if PBS would stop injecting into mine pool, since it has been influenced post-1977. If the discharge returned to its original bad water quality, then it could be Title IV eligible - hopefully.

As previously stated, John Foreman studied data from 2000 to the present and found that there is an impact to the mine pool, but it has been a positive impact (increase in alkalinity). There are, however, elevated trace metals that shouldn't be there. A question is whether these metals are from the active mining operation or were they already in the mine pool and no one noticed.

Even if Title IV funds can't be used to treat the Reitz #4 (MD31) discharge, perhaps capital budget funds could be used. It's going to be an estimated \$18 million project.

Leiford said this all is a disappointment to BAMR. Shade Creek is a beautiful stream with a high recreation value, and it would make a great fishery. He said BAMR doesn't want to give up on this, but something needs to change.

PBS/Corsa Coal should be able to treat their water other ways. There are very few instances of coal cleaning plants discharging their water into a mine pool; usually that water is treated on the surface. There were two occasions over the past year that PBS discharged to the stream. Reckner asked when the permit was up for renewal, but Leiford didn't know.

Leiford touched on the proposed active treatment plant for the Portage discharges and said DEP is vetting two sites for the plant's location, which should be determined by the end of summer.

Back to the Central City treatment plant, Clark commented that this is a big hurdle, but not a block. Leiford said the other three big discharges in Central City could be treated, but we wouldn't get the restoration, so it would be hard to justify that cost. The timing to lock in funding is unknown. The funds aren't necessarily going to go elsewhere, but DEP won't sit on the monies either.

Normally, coal cleaning operations treat site water at the surface and have a NPDES permit to discharge to a stream. DMO permitted PBS's request to discharge into the Reitz #4 mine pool. Perhaps the permit could be challenged. Sarver asked if, by discharging their water into the #4 mine pool, does PBS take responsibility of #4 discharge. Leiford said yes, if it is negatively impacted.

DEP's study and data would be available as public record. Smith noted that this is a once in a lifetime opportunity, and we can't let it slip by.

Even if capital budget funds could be used to construct the treatment system, which would require congressional approval, about \$400-500K/yr. would be needed to operate it, which is why Title IV funds are needed. The key is that the #4 discharge's water quality would have to return to its original bad quality (pre-PBS/Corsa). OSM has not taken this off the table. Reckner said she thinks it is appropriate to ask a DMO representative to speak to SCRIP at its next meeting, and so, Reckner/Eckenrode made a motion to request a DMO representative or two, be it from the California office and/or Ebsenburg office, be present at an upcoming SCRIP meeting to discuss this topic further. All in favor. Motion carried. Lichvar will set that up.

Center for Watershed Research and Service

Strosnider gave a brief report on with whom the Center has been working. He announced that, in May, he and his family are moving to South Carolina, where he will be running a marine laboratory, though, technically, he'll still be with St. Francis University (SFU) until August. Strosnider said he'll continue some work from a distance, and he can still give advice. Due to this move, he is removing himself from the SCRIP Board of Directors. He said it's been a great privilege to serve on SCRIP board. Strosnider noted that SFU still has nice opportunities to work in the watershed community, especially since Eckenrode is with SFU. Strosnider introduced Travis Tasker, a post-doc who will assume Strosnider's job with the Center. A new post-doc will replace Tasker, so the Center will be well staffed to provide aid. SCRIP gave Strosnider a round of applause and its thanks for all that he has contributed to SCRIP and the local environment.

Little Conemaugh River

Dryzal said the Trout Run/Puritan discharge AMD treatment system is moving forward. Dryzal

said the Cambria Co-gen is closing. It is currently in idle mode before it shuts down completely. He noted that its closing is not due to a lack of a fuel supply or because of regulations, but instead, it is a lack of operators. Several employees have gone to work at the Homer City and the new gas plant. This could impact the cleanup of coal refuse piles. Clark asked what coal piles did Cambria Co-gen have leased, but Dryzal wasn't sure. Robindale might have been Cambria's supplier. Dryzal commented that the Cambria Co-gen has always been a strong supporter of the Conservation District's education programming, which will now leave a gap in their funding.

Smith said the PA Fish and Boat Commission's SW Regional Office will be collaborating with DEP BAMR's Biologist (Joe Cocco) to complete fish surveys on the Little Conemaugh River this year. Right now, they're looking at the week of September 9th.

Education Committee

Makuchan reviewed the NatureWorks event held March 2nd at the BottleWorks. SCRIP was one of 23 exhibitors and made iron oxide chalk with the kids. She said BottleWorks was appreciative of SCRIP's sponsorship, and that Reckner and Sue Konvolinka did a great job.

Makuchan completed the newsletter soon after NatureWorks, so the spring issue is out.

Makuchan explained the laborious process of doing the newsletter and said she would like to move more people to the e-version of our newsletter. SCRIP has about 50-60 dues-paying members. She suggests sending the newsletter only to those dues paying members who want a hard copy. This will save SCRIP several hundred dollars a year and it will be more eco-friendly. A discussion followed. Gorden said he likes a hard-copy. It was suggested that those who want a hard copy mailed to them pay more (like \$5/year) to receive a printed version. Gorden/Cotchen made a motion that for the next three issues, SCRIP runs a notice in its newsletter saying, "To avoid a dues-increase, we're going to go to an all-electronic newsletter. If you still want to receive a hard copy, it'll be an extra \$5/year to cover the costs." Then, anyone who actually reads the newsletter and objects can comment.

Makuchan said June 7 is the deadline for the next newsletter. Send items to her at karlice@atlanticbb.net.

Event / Fundraising Committee

Gorden said we'll be partnering with PA Fish and Boat Commission to host an Intro to Kayak Fishing from 5-9 PM on July 23. When registration opens online, via the PFBC's website, he'll send out press releases to advertise the event. Some volunteers will be needed that evening, so save-the-date!

Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team

Beri introduced Garbark as Conemaugh Valley Conservancy's new Program Manager. He said the Indiana County Conservation District (ICCD) is leasing space to CVC, so Garbark works out of the ICCD office in Indiana. Beri noted that the CVC's most recently awarded Growing Greener grant was reduced by 60% so the amount of time Garbark spends sampling must be reduced, which is why Oven Run was dropped. Garbark said he's working to close out the data logger program, and that CVC is hosting a 5K series April through September. Beri announced that CVC's 25th anniversary and annual meeting will be held May 14 at 6 PM at the Johnstown Heritage Discovery Center. Dr. Tim Serfass with Frostburg University will be the guest presenter who will discuss the possibility of reintroducing river otters to the Stonycreek. Lichvar pointed out that river otters are in Quemahoning Creek. Beri said the Stream Team's Adopt-a-Site will continue and is listed on CVC's website.

Website

Reckner thinks that Dutch needs paid yet for his work on the website. Dryzal believes that bill was paid. Reckner will check with Eckenrode.

New Business

As indicated in SCRIP's latest newsletter, Brandywine Conservancy will be hosting the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist training at Penguin Court in Laughlintown this fall. It's available to anyone in the Laurel Highlands region. Applications are due May 1. Apply at pamasternaturalist.org.

Reckner shared that there will be three public meetings in May at which the draft document that discusses the economic value of water in the Conemaugh, Loyalhanna, and Youghiogheny watersheds will be shared. More info about these meetings may be found at <https://www.keylogeconomics.com/laurel-highlands.html>.

Reckner noted that she is planning several Trout in the Classroom Release Days this spring and that volunteers are needed, especially on the days that students will have an opportunity to fish. Contact her for details.

Lichvar distributed the Somerset Conservation District's annual report.

Next Meeting

To be announced depending on DEP's DMO availability. **Update: It will be Wednesday, April 17 at 10:30 AM at Gander Outdoors.**

Lichvar thanked everyone for attending. He appreciates everyone's time and support.

The Meeting adjourned at 5:00 PM. Minutes by Reckner.