



Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project Make Use of Our Rivers

Volume XX
Number 2
Spring 2013

Save the Date:
June 18—Japanese knotweed work day 6-7:30 pm

Fish Habitat work days:
June 19— Wilmore & June 20- Hinckston Dams

June 21-SCRIP board meeting— Sewak's residence 9 am

June 27— Paddle the Que event, Que Family Rec Area 5: 30 pm

July 19— SCRIP board meeting, Shustrick Pavilion, 9 am (cont. page two)

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Restoration of Quemahoning Tailwater is Underway

by Len Lichvar, SCRIP Chairman



Greg Shustrick, left, Watershed Specialist for the Somerset Conservation District and Len Lichvar, Manager of the Somerset Conservation District and SCRIP Chairman, assist with the fish survey of the last 1.3 miles of Quemahoning Creek.

Photo by Len Lichvar

The Somerset Conservation District is taking the leadership role in restoring the original stream channel of the last 1.3 miles of Quemahoning Creek below the Quemahoning Reservoir located along Quemahoning Dam Road in Conemaugh Township. At some point, decades ago, prior to today's better understanding of natural steam flows and regulations, this section was dredged in order to provide the flow of water coming from the spillway out of the dam a more unencumbered path downstream. The consequences of this action served to remove virtually all of the natural structures and holding water for fish and other aquatic life.

When the Manufacturers Water Company properties, which included the Quemahoning Reservoir, were publically purchased in 2000 through the foresighted vision of organizations such as the District, it mandated a re-permitting of the reservoir and the creation of a conservation release to restore the historic flow of water to Quemahoning

Creek that had been virtually eliminated by the construction of the reservoir 100 years earlier. (continued on pages 4 &5)



Nick Shawver, an environmental engineering senior working with Blair County Conservation District, hauling tires at PNG Park recycling event. See page 3 for his article.

PA Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference

The annual PA Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference will be August 8-10 at the Ramada Inn in State College. Volunteers and professionals are invited to participate in PA's longest running conference dedicated to this topic. Registration is now open. The registration fee is only \$40 for watershed group members and scholarships are available to offset lodging costs. You can also nominate people as Watershed Heroes and make a "Trading Card" of the person(s) you admire for their commitment, enthusiasm and/or accomplishments. Nominated individuals will be eligible to win cash prizes for their watershed group of choice. For details and to register, see: www.treatminewater.com.

Paddle the Que Event Set for June 27 with a Registration Deadline of June 19



Photo from 2012 Paddle the Que
Due to the success of last year's event, SCRIP and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, will sponsor another Paddle the Que event this June 27 at the Quemahoning Family Recreation Area. If you are interested in canoeing or kayaking but just not sure where to start, then this event is for you!

The event will begin with instruction on safety and paddling skills, followed by a 30-minute free paddle time.

Time slots are: 5:30, 6:15, or 7:00 pm and you may try a kayak, canoe or tandem kayak. Boats and time slots are on a first come, first serve basis, so register NOW! The fee is \$5 per person (16 and older) or \$2 (those under 16). Everyone must pre-register online by June 19.

For more information and to register, visit the SCRIP website: www.scrippa.org/news.

Save the Date

(continued from page one)



July 23 & 24 -CCCD's
Family Days at Disaster's
Edge

July 27– Japanese knotweed work day 9-10:30 am

Aug. 8-10 -AMR Conference at Ramada Inn & Conference Center, State College, PA

Aug. 13– Natural Biodiversity Japanese knotweed workshop 10-11:30am

Aug. 15– Fish Habitat work day at Que, 5 pm

Sept. 19– Ohio River Watershed Cruise, Pittsburgh

Oct. 12- CVC's West Penn Trail Triathlon

Trying Year for Trout in the Classroom

by Melissa Reckner

The 2012-2013 school year proved to be a trying year for several schools participating in Trout in the Classroom for some unknown reasons. State authorities believe that the fry seemed to get to their "swim-up" stage later than normal and so did not have some "good feeds" before Christmas break, and while many dedicated teachers check on the trout regularly over break, the schedule shift might have harmed the trout. Regardless, many fry never feed and succumb to genetic disorders. Also, getting tanks to properly cycle and maintaining adequate water quality in a closed system can be challenging. Still, students learned many valuable lessons, including ones on genetics and survival of the fittest, while they cared for the brook trout throughout the school year. Schools released their trout into state approved bodies of water and most then participated in release day activities coordinated by the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team. Many thanks to the program partners and volunteers who helped with these activities in spite of cold weather, rain, wind, and in one instance, snow! TIC continues to be a popular program in which increasingly more schools want to participate. More information may be found at: www.patrouinthe classroom.org.

My Experience Working as an Intern with Blair County Conservation District

“My job enables me to serve the people and the environment while getting valuable experience that will guide me into my future career.”

Working at the Blair County Conservation District I experience many things ranging from working with kids during field trips to sampling for water quality. There are many different programs where I work with young children. I run a station while helping at Ablemarle field trips where the kids get to experience different biomes such as: wetlands, forest, and grassland. At each station, the kids are told what each biome does, how they are important, and how it is unlike other biomes. I helped at the Blair county Envirothon by helping at the different stations. I then helped prepare the judges at the state Envirothon by being a part of a mock team to give a presentation on the given topic. I also help out with rain barrel workshops, explaining how rain barrels are important and how contaminants such as oil, gas, and other chemicals can be washed from our driveways into nearby streams. Rain barrels provide a way to capture clean rainwater and water vegetable or flower gardens.

Nick Shawver at Blair County Envirothon with bear caught by PA Game Commission.

I assist with obtaining water quality information on different levels. Specific waterways require water sampling and field testing. The water samples are labeled, preserved, and shipped to licensed labs for testing. Typical field readings include pH, conductivity, dissolved oxygen, sulfates, nitrates, phosphates, and alkalinity. The plan for acquiring all this data is to create a spreadsheet that will inform viewers of what normal baseline readings should be, as well as show alterations caused by the different seasons of the year.

While working for the Conservation District, I have also helped the Department of Environmental Protection with stream surveys. This includes drawing a rough sketch of the layout of the stream, doing a pebble count to find what size stones are in the stream, and then the actual surveying of the stream dealing with the dimensions from bank to bank. This is important in helping determine the habitat quality of streams.

My job also allows me to help out at events such as river sojourns and recycling events. At the tire, cardboard, and electronics recycling event at PNG Park, I loaded tires for recycling and consolidated electronics. It was nice to help with such a big effort. At the sojourns I sign people in as they come on the first day, as well as help people get into their canoes or kayaks at the beginning of each day. I even got to spend a little time boating myself! All in all, I am happy with how my job enables me to serve the people and the environment while getting valuable experience that will guide me into my future career.

by Nick Shawver, a student of William H.J. Strosnider, PhD, St. Francis University



Greenhouse Park Knotweed Control Project Starting This June

by Kristina Strosnider, Executive Director, Natural Biodiversity

Greenhouse Park, on the Stonycreek River, is an undeniable asset to the greater Johnstown region. Conemaugh Township Supervisors and Natural Biodiversity are working to increase its public accessibility through the Greenhouse Park Knotweed Control Project. The goal of this project is to control and manage Japanese knotweed, and to educate maintenance crews and environmental organizations about knotweed control methods. This two year project will be successful through the work of volunteers willing to help tackle this species that is such a threat to our riparian ecosystems. The knotweed will also be sprayed with a glyphosate herbicide in early fall when it is most vulnerable.



Japanese knotweed has become a big problem along the Stonycreek River (pictured in the background).

Photo by Kristina Strosnider

Help improve Greenhouse Park by cutting knotweed on June 18th from 6-7:30pm and July 27th from 9-10:30am. Gloves, tools and water will be provided. A Japanese knotweed control and removal workshop for maintenance and management personnel will be held on August 13th from 10-11:30am. This project is made possible by funding from the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. With collaboration and volunteers this BioBully can be kept at bay! For questions or to RSVP for the workshop, contact Natural Biodiversity at nbd_staff@naturalbiodiversity.org.

Successful Litter Clean-Up

by Melissa Reckner

In partnership with the Paint Creek Regional Watershed Association, the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team organized the fourth annual Picking Up Paint Creek litter cleanup along Berwick Road, SR 160, and Little Paint Creek in Richland Township. Twenty-two volunteers from PCRWA, Stream Team, Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, Benscreek Canoe Club, University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and Saint Francis University helped remove over a ton of trash and 35 tires in the cold (there was still snow on the ground despite the April date)! Later this summer, PCRWA will be hosting a Green Drinks event in Windber.

Restoration of Que Tailwater

(continued from page one)

It took years to be implemented, but for nearly three years now a daily 10.8 MGD conservation release of cold water comes out of the dam into Quemahoning Creek and then the Stonycreek River.

With this restored flow the missing ingredient to sustain a coldwater fishery was the lack of habitat. The District, in cooperation with California University, electro shocked the Quemahoning Creek two years ago and found no coldwater species such as trout. A second survey by the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) and the District last year confirmed the outcome.

Temperature loggers, placed into the stream by the District, also confirmed that the temperature regimes, thanks to the conservation release, were in the comfort range for trout year round.

With this data in hand the District devised a preliminary habitat restoration design and requested funding support for the project from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. In late 2012 the Foundation announced it awarded \$58,000.00 of GenOn settlement funds to the project that will directly benefit and enhance natural resources in the Conemaugh River watershed that this special funding is dedicated toward. Over a decade ago the Foundation also provided funding to complete the Quemahoning Creek Watershed Restoration Plan from which this and other projects have been derived.

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The District also secured additional project funds from the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP), Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU), Somerset County Sportsmen's League and the Boswell American Legion to bring the total investment so far to \$65,000.00.

“The beauty of this project is that we are simply putting back what is supposed to be there anyway.”

According to District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick, “The project will involve the strategic placement of rocks, root wads and log vanes that will provide cover and habitat for trout and other species as well and provide woody debris for insect life to thrive. The beauty of this project is that we are simply putting back what is supposed to be there anyway.”

The permitting process is currently underway and the Cambria-Somerset Authority has approved the project. If all goes well the project should begin by late summer. The PFBC plans to stock the restored section with fingerling trout in order to initiate a put and grow tail water trout fishery.

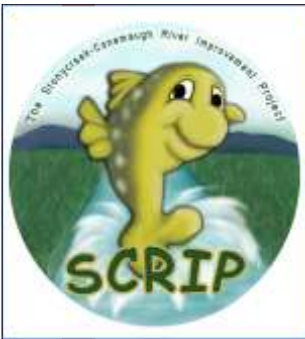
According to Randy Buchanan, President of MLTU, “Tail water trout fisheries are considered among the best coldwater angling destination points. It remains to be seen just how well this restoration works, but the opportunity to create a new economically and recreationally important destination point that provides year round fishing for local anglers is very real.”

If successful this water will be the state's newest tail water trout fishery and help complete an entire watershed restoration effort that began over 20 years ago. The completion of the Jenners and Boswell AMD abatement Passive Treatment Systems restored the water quality of the upper watershed and the Quemahoning Reservoir. The public acquisition of the reservoir opened up a huge amount of formerly private land and water to the public and with the upcoming restoration of the lower watershed additional recreational and economic opportunity will be added to the mix.

These past and current projects can all trace their roots to the efforts of public sector agencies such as the District, PA Department of Environmental Protection, federal Office of Surface Mining and the Natural Resources Conservation Service partnering with groups such as SCRIP, MLTU, Southern Alleghenies RC&D and Conservancy, Somerset County Conservancy and local watershed and sportsmen's groups.

“These efforts that improve our economic sustainability as well as our quality of life do not happen by accident and should not be taken for granted...”

As Buchanan points out, “These efforts that improve our economic sustainability as well as our quality of life do not happen by accident and should not be taken for granted as they often are. It clearly proves that government agencies and public tax dollars along with private contributions coupled with locally led initiatives provide us all a tremendous return on that investment of time and dollars.”



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SCRIP is the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project, a coalition of grass-roots groups and local resource agencies working to restore and promote the Upper Conemaugh watershed.

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Make your check payable to SCRIP, or for a tax-deductible contribution, make the check to Southern Alleghenies Conservancy/ SCRIP.

* If you are not sure of your membership status contact SCRIP's secretary at mreckner@kcstreamteam.org or 814-444-2669.

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