

**Volume XXVII  
Number 2  
Spring 2020**

**Save the Date:**

**July 16**– SCRIP Board Meeting, Greenhouse Park, 3pm.

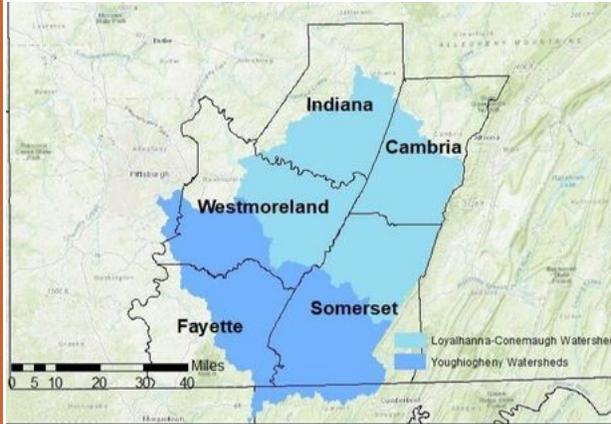
**July 31**– Deadline for ARIPPA Award  
(See page 2.)

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# Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

## Economic Value of Clean Water



**The area of study crossed five counties: Indiana, Cambria, Westmoreland, Somerset and Fayette and the Loyalhanna-Conemaugh and Youghiogheny Watersheds.**

What is the value of clean water? What are the economic benefits of natural resource conservation? Area conservation groups wanted to find answers to these questions to determine the dollar return of their years of environmental improvements. Sources of funding are ever harder to come by, so having documentation from a study of this kind would bolster their efforts to maintain present systems and obtain funding for future projects.

So in 2016 Key-Log Economics, a Virginia based environmental consulting firm, was chosen to do a study across a five county area, encompassing the Conemaugh, Loyalhanna and Youghiogheny Watersheds. This study would model the return on investment that the regions would receive from restoration and conservation projects.

Two SCRIP members were part of the eight member Steering Committee, Len Lichvar, District Manager of the Somerset Conservation District, and Robb Piper, a Forester from Cambria County and formerly District Manager of the Cambria County Conservation District.

The study found that the entire area with its 6,000 stream miles generates \$3.7 billion annually in ecosystem service benefits or the benefits provided by nature for human well being. We rely on nature to purify our air so that we can breathe and to cycle nutrients so that we have clean drinking water. Clean streams are important for fishing and kayaking and the aesthetics of our forests are important to hikers. The health of our resources is important not just to the residents but invites visitors and their tourism revenue to the region.

Laurel Highland residents are quite familiar with the legacy left by coal mining and the miles of streams damaged by that industry. Abandoned mine drainage (AMD) with the release of heavy metals and/or acidity was the source of much of the pollution found in our rivers and streams. Other industries or practices, such as natural gas drilling are degrading water quality and threatening our watersheds, too.

The study focuses on the economic benefits of cleaning up the watersheds or the value attached to delivering various ecosystem services. The study examines these areas: AMD remediation, continued development of unconventional natural gas, promoting higher water quality for recreation, improving sewage management and increasing natural riparian buffers. (continued on page 2)

(continued from page one)

## Key Findings of Study

### 1. Restoring 878 miles of AMD-damaged streams in the study region could bring:

- \$16.8 million a year in recreational fishing benefits
- Up to \$765 million in increased property values

### 2. Improving water quality across regional watersheds to bring increased value to recreation (and new participants):

- 844,000 recreational fishing days/year in the Loy-alhanna-Conemaugh and Youghiogheny watersheds bring in \$31.7 million in regional spending and \$41.9 million in net economic benefit (how much they value the experience) to anglers
- Improved water quality could bring in an additional \$1.1 million in value to participants of water-based recreation

### 3. Establishing 100-foot natural buffers on 176 impaired stream miles in the region could bring:

- Annual net benefits totaling \$2.9 million, including benefits from enhanced nutrient retention, carbon storage, and recreation
- One-time net benefit totals \$2.1 million and includes enhanced aesthetic value along stream side properties

### 4. Estimated future costs to watersheds associated with unfettered resource extraction as well:

- 30,000+ acres of forest and agricultural land may be lost to natural gas well pads in the next 10 years, leading to:
- \$2.7 million/year in lost agricultural production Damages to water filtration, habitat & biodiversity, recreation, and carbon storage of up to \$57.4 million/year by 2030

## Two of the Recommendations from the Study:

### Prioritize Funding for AMD Treatment Systems-

- Consider ecosystem services that will provide recurring benefit so long as treatment and restoration are maintained
- Remediation projects in areas with higher population densities, in waterways with native trout populations and those with stocked trout will experience higher-than-average benefits

### Focus on Water Quality when Promoting Outdoor Recreation

- Management actions should be initiated to improve watersheds that are currently impaired and maintain those that are healthy
- Improving watersheds that are impaired would provide opportunities for more recreation and spending in the region to support local jobs and businesses and improve visitor experiences

*For additional information:*

<http://www.keylogeconomics.com/laurel-highlands--valuing-clean-water.html>

## ARIPPA AML Reclamation Awards Deadline July 31

EPCAMR has once again partnered with the Anthracite Region Independent Power Producer's Association (ARIPPA) to offer a competitive award to watershed organizations working on Abandoned Mine Land (AML) and/or Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) remediation projects in the Anthracite and Bituminous Regions of PA. Grants, at a maximum of \$2,500, will be awarded to at least one eligible organization or local government entity (ex. Conservation District) in each region. EPCAMR is hoping to see several good project proposals that they can help fund for this year. Grant proposals should be for on-the-ground AML/AMD construction projects with a completion date between August 2019 and August 2021.

*For more information and the grant application form:*

<http://epcamr.org/home/current-initiatives/funding-project-management/arippa-aml-reclamation-awards>

**Brandywine Conservancy & Museum of Art wants to help keep you connected, entertained, and inspired during these trying times. Check out [Brandywine at Home](#) for craft projects, blogs, virtual tours and more! Be sure to check out the Native Spring Flowers Coloring Sheets inspired by wildflowers photographed in the Stonycreek River watershed and stop back for new content added weekly!**



Wild bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*) is a pollinator magnet and a summertime treat for us! A member of the Mint Family, some species of monarda are commonly called bee balm, and for good reason; bees, butterflies, and especially hummingbirds love the tube-like blossoms that yield a sweet treat for them. Penn State Extension identified it as the 9th most visited plant species over a three-year study. Deer and rabbits seem to avoid the aromatic, square-stemmed plant, but people can enjoy its leaves in tea or a cool glass of water.

Be on the Lookout for these  
**Wildflowers**  
*Photos and commentary by Melissa Reckner*



It's easy to understand how, with its deep red blossoms, cardinal flower (*Lobelia cardinalis*) was named (for the red vestments worn by Catholic cardinals). It is a striking plant, often found along a stream's edge, that is hard to miss. Hummingbirds love it, but herbivores – those critters that eat plants – typically leave it alone as it produces “lobeline” an alkaloid compound that is toxic if ingested.

**Join or renew\* SCRIP today!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Do you wish to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

**To renew or become a Member, please complete Parts 1 and 2 below.**

**Part 1. Check your desired membership level.**

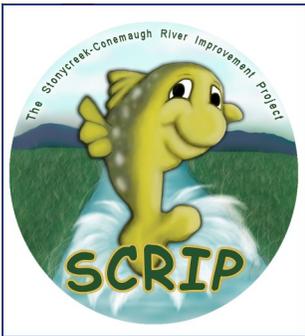
_____ Student (\$6 )	_____ Individual (\$15)	_____ Family (\$20)
_____ Club/Small Business (\$50)	_____ Patron (\$50)	_____ Sustaining (\$100)
_____ Sponsor (\$500)	_____ Lifetime (\$1000)	

**Part 2. Select Option A OR Option B:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **A. I am fine receiving an electronic version of the newsletter for the cost listed above for my membership level. My email address is:** \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Please mail your check in this amount to the address below.)*

\_\_\_\_\_ **B. I would like to receive a mailed copy of the newsletter. Add \$5 to membership cost listed above.**  
*(Please mail the membership fee plus \$5 mailing fee to the address below.)* Total Cost \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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 [info@scripPA.org](mailto:info@scripPA.org). Send donations to: SCRIP, P.O. Box 164, Windber, PA 15963*



**SCRIP**  
**P.O. Box 164**  
**Windber, PA**  
**15963**

**Place  
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**[www.scrippa.org](http://www.scrippa.org)**

**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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**New and Renewing Members**

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