

**Volume XXVII  
Number 1  
Winter 2020**

**Save the Date:**

**March 19–** SCRIP board meeting, Coal Country Brewing, 625 West High Street, Ebensburg, 4 pm.

**May 15-17- 2020** 30th Rendezvous on 50th Anniversary of Benscreek Canoe Club. Based at Greenhouse Park. For details see, [benscreekcanoeclub.com/rendezvous](http://benscreekcanoeclub.com/rendezvous)

**June 4-7–** 21st Annual Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh Sojourn. For details see the CVC website, [conemaughvalleyconservancy.com](http://conemaughvalleyconservancy.com)

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# Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

## Trust Fund in the Works to Preserve Stonycreek Water Quality

by Len Lichvar



**Reconstruction of Oven Run AMD Passive Treatment System Site F at Hawk View is currently underway.**

*Photo by Len Lichvar*

An initial effort has begun that may lead to the creation of a trust fund for future operation, maintenance and reconstruction of the four Oven Run AMD passive treatment systems on the Stonycreek River. For the past several years the Somerset Conservation District, which is legally responsible for the perpetual ongoing maintenance of the systems and the Somerset County Conservancy that owns the land of two of systems, have worked together to explain why long term funding is essential to the sustainability of the improved water quality of the Stonycreek River.

In early 2020, front page articles in both the *Somerset Daily American* and the *Johnstown Tribune –Democrat* as well as a news segment on WJAC –TV brought the current and future underfunding predicament to the attention of the public and private sectors.

Chad Gontkovic, owner of Coal Tubin’ in Johnstown, set up a Facebook fundraiser that in over two weeks netted over \$1,700.00 from small donations from the public.

The Somerset Conservation District is now exploring the best options to invest this initial amount of funds in a way that money can be added and will grow so that the future of the primary AMD treatment systems on the Stonycreek is secured.

More details as to how this fund will be invested and increased and how future contributions from individuals as well as the public and private sectors can be added will be forthcoming in the near future.

## U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Met with Area Groups Concerned About Sediment Removal Plans on the Stonycreek River

On Friday, February 14, representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Pittsburgh District, met with leaders of area groups concerned about plans to remove sediment from a section of the Stonycreek River near Johnstown High School as part of regular maintenance.

Groups' main concern was the ecological impact that this sediment removal would have on the aquatic life that relies on the streambed material to survive and the effect on recreational development in the area.

The Corps representatives explained that they were responsible for the operation and maintenance of this flood protection project which was designed and built to reduce flood risk for the people of Johnstown and that the Johnstown local flood protection project prevents an average of \$48 million in flood damages every year. Failure of the project due to a flood could impact over 9,700 people, 2,650 structures, 22 which are critical, and result in an estimated \$2.3 billion of possible flood related damages.

The Johnstown Local Protection Project Sediment Removal Contract was awarded September 19, 2019 and is scheduled to start March or April of 2020. The flood protection project provides channel capacity by protecting existing river banks with concrete flood walls designed to accommodate discharges equivalent to those of the March 1936 flood which is the maximum natural flow of record.

It calls for the removal of approximately 11,000 cubic yards of sediment along one mile of the channel and 5 acres of vegetation within the channel. Vegetation within weep holes and expansion joints on the concrete banks will also be removed and all the joints along the concrete slope will be cleaned and resealed.

There were a number of questions from attendees and responses from the Corps: What if a natural riparian buffer was used in place of the man-made one along the river? Concrete moves water faster so the river would need to be widened and a long process would be needed to look at this. What about environmental (aquatic ecosystem restoration) and recreational (boating) goals? Are there areas that we should look at first to accomplish these? The most visible areas, may be near the Incline. Sandyvale is expanding, so would this area be a good place for removing the river wall? Others feel that big business is not coming back and that recreation is the future of the area.

It was understood at the end of the meeting that this work would go on as contracted but the Corps representatives emphasized that they would keep expressed concerns in mind and would work with the stakeholders in the future.



**The Stonycreek River is pictured here snaking around Johnstown High School and into the city. (The red area shows the track around the football field with the high school buildings in front.) The yellow area shows the banks of the river where the sediment will be removed.**

## NatureWorks at the BottleWorks Was a Huge Success

The NatureWorks event, held on March 7, had its best year ever! With over 400 people counted at the door, plus the staff, volunteers, and exhibitors, there was an attendance record over 500 people! These are the organizations that participated:

Allegheny Ridge Corp  
 Benscreek Canoe Club  
 Brandywine Conservancy's Penguin Court  
 Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority  
 Cambria County Conservation District  
 Cambria County Solid Waste Authority  
 Conemaugh Valley Conservancy  
 DCNR Bureau of Forestry - Forbes & Gallitzin State Forests  
 First Waves  
 Friends of the Incline Plane Trail  
 Hope Cyclery  
 Jack Paluh Arts  
 Johnstown Ridgebacks

LHORBA  
 Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited  
 Nathan's Divide Watershed Education Center  
 National Wild Turkey Federation - Allegheny Plateau Chapter  
 PA Fish and Boat Commission  
 Prince Gallitzin State Park  
 REI  
 Somerset Conservation District  
 Stackhouse Park  
 Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP)

For more information on these organizations, visit the NatureWorks Facebook page.

**SCRIP's activity was to make chalk using iron oxide recovered in stream cleanups. Larry Hutchinson (*in light shirt*) instructs participants in the process.**



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

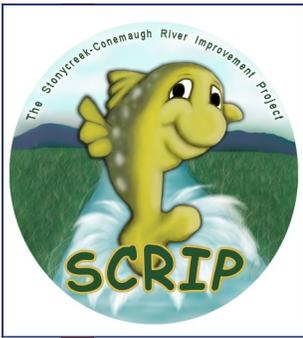
\_\_\_\_\_ **A. I am fine receiving an electronic version of the newsletter for the cost listed above for my membership level. My email address is:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(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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**People of SCRIP**

**New and Renewing Members**

- |                             |                         |
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