

# Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project Make Use of Our Rivers

## Long-Awaited Conservation Release Has Begun

*By Len Lichvar, SCRIP Chairman*

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### Important Dates:

Sept. 15-Ohio River Watershed Celebration in Pittsburgh on Gateway Clipper

Sept. 17-SCRIP Meeting Greenhouse/White Water Park in Tire Hill-9AM

Oct. 13-27-Stream Team Fall Sampling Round

Oct. 29- SCRIP Meeting Sewak residence in Oglétown 9AM. Optional grouse hunt after.

### Awards Granted

**PA Environmental Council's**  
40 Under 40  
*who will shape the way we treat our land, air and water over the next several decades*

to:

Kristin Sewak, *Head of Natural Biodiversity and SCRIP board member, and*

Lauren Lazzari, *VP of Investar Redevelopment and wife of SCRIP board member, Mark Lazzari*

Congratulations!  
You are an inspiration to all of us.

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The long anticipated and sought after release of water from the Quemahoning Reservoir has begun. No, not the whitewater release, the conservation release. This virtually forgotten about water release is in reality the restoration of at least to some degree the historic flow from Quemahoning Creek into the last mile of the stream and the Stonycreek River. This flow has been interrupted since the construction of the dam at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

This long term dewatering of both waterways has served to impair and reduce the positive impacts of the water quality improvements that have been implemented in the past 20 years to abate abandoned mine drainage (AMD) and other pollution. Although aquatic life and fish have returned to both waterways the recovery has been limited because of this water quantity issue.

All that changed in late July of this year when the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) mandated conservation release of 8,200 gallons per minute (GPM) or 11.8 million gallons a day (MGD) of water from the Quemahoning Reservoir was finally completed. The whitewater release will come from a separate location and mechanism.

The release draws its water from two sources that include a location 36 feet below the breast of the impoundment and a second location near the bottom of the reservoir. The temperature range, monitored continuously at the outflow, so far has fluctuated from 49 degrees to 60 degrees depending on the time of day.

This coldwater as well as the added flow is the key to improving and restoring additional aquatic life according to Pennsylvania Fish and Boat commission (PFBC) Area Fisheries manager **Rick Lorson**. "The cold temperature and constant flow will allow aquatic life to respond in a positive way.

We should see a dramatic change in the species assembly. Because the Stonycreek has improved this surge of additional cold water should tip the balance in favor of a better habitat and potentially a **much better trout fishery.**"

Lorson commented 20 years ago about the potential benefits of a conservation release long before it occurred. He says, "It is amazing that it took this long to happen, but we also have to understand that not all the changes will occur quickly either."



The recently completed conservation release at the Quemahoning Reservoir puts 11.8 MGD of water into the Que and Stonycreek Rivers everyday.

*Photo by Len Lichvar*

To determine what changes will occur Lorson plans to survey the lower portion of Quemahoning Creek and the Stonycreek in 2012. In the meantime the Somerset Conservation District has placed real time temperature loggers at the outflow of Quemahoning Creek and downstream on the Stonycreek to record temperature regime changes 24 hours a day every day as an initial assessment of the change.

The installation of the conservation release is the culmination of efforts that began in the mid 1980's when Bethlehem Steel began to actively market the Manufacturers Water Company properties that included the Quemahoning, Hinckston Run and Wilmore Reservoirs and South Fork and Border Dams. The Greater Johnstown Water Authority (GJWA) in 1989 was poised to purchase the Quemahoning. The potential transfer of the permit gave rise to the request for a conservation release.

*Continued on page 3*

## 5th Annual Que Classic Results *by Melissa Reckner*

The Stonycreek Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) held the Fifth Annual Quemahoning Classic Fishing Tournament on Saturday, July 10, 2010 at the Quemahoning Reservoir in northern Somerset County.

Fifty-one anglers, including 9 youth and 4 women, participated. Three children fished from shore while the rest of the participants fanned out across the Que in 22 boats. Anglers came from Armstrong, Bedford, Cambria, Somerset, and Westmoreland Counties!

Together, they caught a total of 87 fish; the **most ever in the Que Classic's history!** (Those fish habitat structures must be working!) Unlike last year, more largemouth than smallmouth bass were caught and released. Anglers caught a total of:

- 33 smallmouth bass, ranging in size from 7.25" to 17.5";
- 48 largemouth bass, ranging in size from 6.5" to 21";

### Volunteers Needed

The Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team is in need of a few good volunteers!

Stream Stewards are needed to collect water samples from the Coal Pit Run AMD treatment systems near Twin Rocks, Cambria County. Five sites within these adjacent systems are sampled monthly. It takes less than an hour to complete the sampling, not including the drive and prep work. Ideally, this person(s) would also collect one sample from the Vintondale discharge quarterly.

Volunteers are also needed to sample the Boozer Mine Discharge near the Glessner Covered Bridge in Shanksville and Wells Creek in Coleman Station, Somerset County on a quarterly basis. It takes 35-45 minutes to sample these sites, not including drive time. Training and supplies will be provided for the above. Volunteers must provide their own transportation and be able to navigate uneven terrain.

Lastly, volunteers are needed to deliver environmental education programs in Cambria and Somerset County schools that have a Trout in the Classroom program. This opportunity is perfect for retired educators! Child abuse and criminal record clearances are required.

Contact Melissa Reckner, Stream Team Director, for more details at 814-444-2669 or [mreckner@kcstreamteam.org](mailto:mreckner@kcstreamteam.org).

- 2 walleye, which were both 17"; and
- 9 pike (again, the most in the Classic's history), ranging in size from 17.5" to 23".

No one caught any trout, musky, or carp, though they are in the reservoir, which is supporting a growing diversity of fish as a result of water quality restoration and conservation projects throughout the Quemahoning Creek watershed that also led to numerous fish habitat projects at the reservoir.

This tournament would not have been possible without the volunteer efforts of our thirteen judges: Jim and Holly Eckenrode, Mike Imler, Matt Johnson, Mark Lazzari, Mark Lee, Bryan Mahoning, Rob McCombie, Dave Sewak, Dave and Maria Steele, and Adam Wilusz. If the Que Classic grows, as we hope it does, more judges in boats will be needed, especially with the anglers catching so many fish!

Special thanks also goes to Fred Cotchen, Ken Dranzik, Thurman Korn, Len Lichvar, Karllice Makuchan, and Melissa Reckner for volunteering in other areas of need like registration and set-up.

Finally, thank you to all of our sponsors for supporting SCRIP and this event, which will use the funds raised to further conservation and education in the upper Conemaugh River Watershed. Sponsors included American Eagle Screen Print and Embroidery, Cambria County Conservation District, Cambria Somerset Authority, the Daily American, Gander Mountain, Greater Johnstown Watershed Association, Stu Horner, Jenner Rod and Gun Club, Kabler Thomas Financial Group, Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, Karllice Makuchan, Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, Musser Engineering, Inc., Nardecchia Spay Neuter Fund, REI, Somerset Conservation District, Somerset County Commissioner John Vatauvuk, Somerset County Sportmen's League, Summer's Best Two Weeks, and Wells Creek Watershed Association.

SCRIP looks forward to hosting next year's tournament!

Prizes and Awards  
SCRIP awarded over \$1,000 worth of prizes it purchased at a discount provided by Gander Mountain to the child, woman, and man angler who caught the most total inches of fish in each category.

The Cameron K. Rozier Memorial Most Accomplished Angler Award and an electric trolling motor went to Eric Kish of Colver for being the only person to catch three different species of the eligible fish. Kish caught two smallmouth bass, two largemouth bass, and one walleye.

### YOUTH DIVISION

Jesse Erb – Smallmouth Bass – 1 fish totaling 15"  
Bobby Kish, Jr. – Largemouth Bass – 2 fish totaling 25.5"  
Bobby Kish, Jr. – Pike – 1 fish totaling 17.5"

### WOMEN'S DIVISION

Kayla Trexel – Smallmouth Bass – 3 fish totaling 31.25"

### MEN'S DIVISION

Larry Eisenhuth – Smallmouth Bass – 5 fish totaling 63"  
Ted Polinowski, Jr. – Largemouth Bass – 7 fish totaling 92.5"  
Eric Kish and Bill Miller – Walleye – Each caught one 17" fish  
Ken Fetterman – Pike – 2 fish totaling 43.25"

We still have a few *Que Classic* t-shirts left. Sizes S-L. \$8.00

If you are interested, please contact Melissa Reckner at 814-444-2669 or [mreckner@kcstreamteam.org](mailto:mreckner@kcstreamteam.org).



*Quemahoning Classic Fishing Tournament V Winners (left to right): Ken Fetterman, Ted Polinowski, Jr., Eric Kish, Larry Eisenhuth, Kayla Trexel, and Bill Miller.. Photo by M. Reckner*

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) is a voluntary conservation program that encourages producers to address resource concerns on their property by undertaking additional conservation activities, and improving, maintaining and managing existing conservation activities. Through CSP, the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) provides financial and technical assistance to eligible applicants to conserve and enhance soil, water, air, and related natural resources on their land. CSP is available on Tribal and private agricultural lands, as well as for nonindustrial private forest lands (NIPF) in all 50 States, the District of Columbia and the Caribbean and Pacific Islands Areas. The program provides equitable access to all producers, regardless of operation size, crops produced, or geographic location. One unique aspect of CSP is that it will fund establishment of certain conservation practices that protect stream corridors and create wildlife habitat on eligible crop, pasture and forest land.

Persons, entities, corporations, and Indian Tribes may be eligible for the program. Eligible lands include cropland, grassland, prairie land, improved pastureland, rangeland, NIPF, and agricultural land under the jurisdiction of an Indian tribe. Potential applicants interested in entering into a stewardship contract for CSP assistance may file an application at any time at their local USDA Service Center. Applicants must be the operator of record in the USDA farm records management system for the eligible land being offered for enrollment and must have documented control of the land for the term of the proposed contract. Landowners or operators must include the eligible land in their entire agricultural operation, as represented for other USDA programs and they will need to supply information necessary to determine eligibility and to rank the application.

Requested information may include, but is not limited to, conservation and production records, and evidence documenting control of the land.

NRCS provides a producer self-screening checklist to help potential applicants decide for themselves whether CSP is the right program for them and their operation. The checklist focuses on basic information about CSP eligibility requirements, contract obligations, and potential payments. For approved applicants, NRCS will request the **applicants' conservation activity records and conduct on-site field verification** to substantiate that CMT resource inventory information provided by the applicant was accurate prior to contract approval.

After the conservation system information is verified, NRCS and the applicant proceed to develop a conservation stewardship plan and contract. The contract will obligate the participant to achieve a higher level of conservation performance by installing additional activities scheduled in the conservation stewardship plan, as well as to maintain the level of existing conservation performance identified at the time of application. Contracts cover the eligible land in the entire agricultural operation and are for five years. For all contracts entered into, CSP payments to a person or legal entity may not exceed \$40,000 in any fiscal year, and \$200,000 during any 5-year period. Each CSP contract will be limited to \$200,000 over the term of the initial contract period.

For more information and updates about CSP and other Farm Bill topics, please refer to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site <http://www.usda.gov/farmbill>, or the Natural Resources Conservation Service Web site <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/csp/>.

*Dave Steele is the Coordinator for the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Area.*

## Conservation Release *Continued from page 1*

The GJWA backed away from the sale in part because they did not agree that water needed to be released. Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited President Randy Buchanan, who along with many other conservation groups strongly supported the release says, "The best thing that happened was that the GJWA did not purchase the reservoir. Not only did they balk at the conservation release, but they have historically been opposed to public access and recreation at their facilities which tells you they never had the best interests of the public in mind."

The issue surfaced again in 1996 when a consortium of entrepreneurs under the name of Veritas were on the verge of purchasing the Quemahoning. At the time the PA DEP issued a new technical guidance policy that altered the requirements for a conservation release when a reservoir is sold. This created a huge outcry by local and statewide sportsmen and conservation organizations. Fortunately the short lived Veritas consortium folded and the purchase never materialized.

Then in 2004, after the public acquisition of the Manufacturers Water Company properties were achieved thanks to the efforts of groups such as the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project, Somerset Conservation District and the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council and Conservancy, the water allocation permit for the newly formed Cambria-Somerset Authority was up for revision.

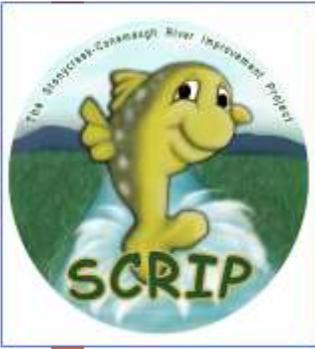
A component mandated a conservation release from the Quemahoning as well as for Hinckston and Wilmore Reservoirs and pass by flows for South Fork and Border Dams.

Again it was the conservation community and sportsmen's community that corresponded vigorously with the PA DEP to ensure that not only would the conservation releases occur, but that in the case of the Quemahoning it should be increased from the original permitted requirement of 10.8 MGD.

Professional studies by independent consultants as well as by the PFBC clearly demonstrated that enough water entered the Quemahoning every day to support a larger release without impairing the future opportunities for water sales or other uses. In the end the PA DEP increased the conservation release by 1 million gallons a day. A small, but important victory for the resource.

According to Somerset Conservation District Aquatic Biologist Eric Null, "The upcoming whitewater release from the Quemahoning has got and will continue to get the bigger share of publicity and it will generate excitement and economic opportunities. However, the conservation release will be what truly enhances the natural resource and that is the impact that will really be the generator for long term recreational and economic sustainability and improvement."

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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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___ Student	\$6
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