



Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project Make Use of Our Rivers

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Save the Date:

Sept. 9-11– *Tribune Democrat* hosted Outdoor Show at the War Memorial HAS BEEN CANCELED!

Sept. 16– SCRIP board meeting at Orenda Park in Boswell along Route 601, 9 am.

Sept. 22– 10th Annual Ohio River Watershed Celebration in Pittsburgh.

Sept. 23-Fish survey on Que Creek on the reach below the dam at 8 am.

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Photo by Len Lichvar

A 17 inch wild brown trout from a headwater stream in the Stonycreek River watershed.

by Len Lichvar, SCRIP Chairman
Although most anglers and non-anglers alike believe the trout in Pennsylvania come from hatcheries and are delivered in white trucks, wild reproducing populations of trout are much more prevalent than many believe in the headwater streams of both the Stonycreek and Little Conemaugh River watersheds. Reproducing populations of brook and brown trout are common and a few waters also have wild rainbow trout.

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission has embarked on assessing the unassessed waters in the state of which there are thousands in order to determine the actual fish populations that exist. If wild trout are found the information is forwarded to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection in order that any earth disturbances in those watersheds is permitted appropriately.

Without this information the fish, and more importantly the best water quality we have left, could easily be compromised. The importance of this effort needs to be understood in the big picture. It does SCRIP and its many agency and watershed partners no good to work and spend funds to clean up downstream resources if we allow our upstream headwater resources to be degraded.

The wild fish are merely indicators of excellent water quality that has historically not been impaired and needs to be protected and maintained while we continue our efforts to mitigate the effects of decades of pollution to our downstream waterways.

Look for Watershed Tour and Green Drinks Coming on October 25!
More info on page 2.

SCRIP's 20th Anniversary Picnic

SCRIP commemorated its 20th Anniversary with a picnic held on August 7 at Boswell Community Park. Attendees included regular members, past and present board members, government officials, partners and friends of SCRIP and their families. Participants enjoyed a catered lunch, glanced through historical records of SCRIP's beginnings and enjoyed friendly conversations. Len Lichvar then began the program for the afternoon, giving a short recap of SCRIP's founders and beginning years. Additional comments were made by Branden Diehl of the *Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds*, Brad Clemenson, former aide to Congressman Murtha, who helped lead the initiative to restore clean streams and rivers, Dave Mankmyer and Ron Donlan, founding board members (*pictured below left to right*), and Thurman Korn, treasurer of SCRIP.

The speakers' personal reflections emphasized not only SCRIP's past accomplishments in improving water quality in the area but the importance of continuing its work to restore our local streams. (Photo by Len Lichvar)



Somerset County Watershed Summit and Green Drinks

Mark your calendars for October 25, 2011. SCRIP is planning two events that will take place on that day: an educational watershed bus tour that will begin at 1 pm at Greenhouse Park located on Route 403 in Conemaugh Township, Somerset County and a Green Drinks event following the tour at 6 pm at the Crow's Nest, located a short distance from Greenhouse Park. Both events will focus on the 20th Anniversary of SCRIP. The tour will highlight both present and future potential SCRIP project locations. The tour is sponsored by the Somerset Conservation District and funded by a PA Association of Conservation Districts Educational Mini Grant. Both events will be open to the public and RSVP's will be required for the bus trip.



Volunteers Needed to Test Stream Quality

The Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team is in need of a few volunteers to help with quarterly water sampling at the following locations:

- Jenner Treatment System in the Jennerstown/Boswell area;
- Oven Run Treatment System around Kanter;
- Five stream sites in the Windber area; and the
- Penn Hills Treatment System near the Two Lick Reservoir / Indiana County Airport. (You must have a 4-wheel drive vehicle for this one!)

Save the Date *(continued)*



Sept. 25– Somerset Conservation District Sporting Clays Benefit Shoot fundraiser at Stonycreek Shooting Center on Route 160 near Berlin 9-11 am.. For information call 814-445-4652 ext. 5 or email: somersetcd@wpia.net.

Oct. 14– SCRIP board meeting at Russell House in Moxham, 9 am.

Oct. 15– Full moon night Glow-Float on Frankstown Branch of Juniata River from Smithfield to Ardenheim Point Access area. For details, see article on this page.

Oct. 25-Somerset County Watershed Summit and Green Drinks events. See details in the article on this page.

Nov. 15-17– Mid-Atlantic Stream Restoration Conference at Rocky Gap Resort in Flintstone, MD. For details see, www.fws.gov/chesapeakebay/Masrc/index.html

Volunteers will be trained and provided sampling equipment. The Stream Team's fall sampling round is scheduled for mid-late October. If you are interested or would like to learn more, please contact Melissa Reckner at mreckner@kcstreamteam.org or 814-444-2669.

Moonlight Fundraiser on October 15



The Juniata Clean Water Partnership will be hosting a "Glow Float" down the Juniata River in Huntingdon as part of the Healthy Harvest Festival held Saturday, October 15 in Portstown Park (downtown Huntingdon).

The float will be little over an hour long beginning at the park and ending at the VFW Baseball field with a bon fire and light refreshments. Donation will be \$15.00 to support the activities of the Partnership. Registration begins at 5:00 p.m. with launch at 6:00 p.m. To register for the event call the Partnership at 814-506-1190 or e-mail Mike Makufka at mmakufka@jcwpa.org.

If you would need to rent a kayak for the event please contact Roth Rock Outfitters at 814-643-7226.

SCRIP: A Look Back

By Len Lichvar SCRIP Chairman



A press release by the late U. S. Congressman John Murtha dated June 6, 1991

quoted the Congressman as stating, "I can envision a Stonycreek where the fishing is great, not just at the upper reaches, but the whole way to the Point, a Stonycreek that attracts canoe enthusiasts from around the country, a Stonycreek with hiking and biking trails along its banks. All of these activities can be enhanced if we can only clean up the mine drainage from the old abandoned mines. The Little Conemaugh has potential and we will follow the same procedure after we take care of the Stonycreek."

Today we can see that Murtha's vision and predictions have largely been achieved. However, for most local citizens, especially those who have moved to the region recently as well as those who now enjoy the advantages of clean water and were not old enough to remember any different, just how this vision came to fruition is still largely unknown.

It certainly did not come about just because Murtha said it would be so. It occurred through extremely dedicated planning and hard work by both volunteers and professionals in the field of conservation. Murtha's attention was focused on the issue by the Cambria County and Somerset Conservation Districts whose leaders at the time, W. R. Dick Rossman in Cambria and Dave Mankamyer in Somerset, decided an all out coordinated effort to clean up our waterways was overdue.

The outgrowth of all of this was the creation of the Stonycreek-Conemaugh Improvement Project (SCRIP) in 1991 that consisted of conservationists, sportsmen, agency and business representatives charged with orchestrating the goal of reducing the impacts of abandoned mine drainage (AMD). A task that many at the time believed to be impossible.

The dedicated core of SCRIP board members, however, thought otherwise. An editorial in the June 1991 edition of the Johnstown Tribune Democrat entitled "Stonycreek Cleanup? Go for it", publicly supported the cause.

SCRIP immediately set about creating a complete study of the AMD discharges in the Stonycreek River watershed by way of a United States Geological Survey (USGS) \$660,000.00 project funded by the USGS, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and the Somerset Conservation District. SCRIP also pioneered the implementation of a new technology known as passive wetland treatment with the design and construction of the Rock Tunnel AMD abatement project on the Bens Creek.

As the USGS study began to determine the target locations, SCRIP in cooperation with Congressman Murtha at a public meeting in Hooversville in 1993, announced and explained the ambitious 6 site 5 million dollar Oven Run AMD abatement project on the Stonycreek River. This project, born through the public-private partnerships developed by SCRIP which coordinated the efforts of the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service and the PA DEP, would be implemented over the coming years. The effort would eventually restore miles of fishery and greatly improve water quality in the Stonycreek.

Riding the wave of the Oven Run Project success, SCRIP also coordinated similar AMD abatement projects in the Quemahoning Creek, Shade Creek, Wells Creek and Bens Creek watersheds. SCRIP began garnering support from not only regional interests but state and federal levels as well. In early 1998 then U. S. Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt came to Jenners in Somerset County to dedicate a completed passive AMD treatment system in the Quemahoning Creek watershed claiming the efforts of SCRIP and its partners were among the finest such efforts in the nation.

To support its efforts SCRIP initiated a volunteer Riverkeeper program that empowered local citizens to participate in water quality monitoring to confirm the water quality improvements. SCRIP was also the first organization to sponsor rafting and kayaking trips down the Stonycreek River to begin to showcase the potential the river had to offer.

With this type of success local citizens began to understand the motivation of SCRIP and created even more localized grassroots efforts with the establishment of non-profits such as the Somerset County Conservancy and watershed organizations in Shade Creek, Paint Creek, Wells Creek and Little Conemaugh watersheds. These groups, with the assistance of SCRIP, began to expand on the ongoing abatement efforts creating even more successful on the ground projects.

Although SCRIP's core mission is to reduce AMD in the upper Conemaugh River watershed, it also knew that whoever controlled valuable water resources also controlled the recreational and economic destiny of the Cambria-Somerset region. It was SCRIP that initiated the historic game plan led by the Somerset Conservation District and the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council and Conservancy, which eventually led to the public acquisition of the Bethlehem Steel owned Manufacturers Water Company properties that included the Quemahoning, Hinckston Run and Wilmore Reservoirs and South Fork and Border Dams.

Today SCRIP does not rest on its accomplishments of more than 16 miles of restored fishery, publicly accessible water resources and nationally acclaimed renewed economic and recreational opportunities that have resulted from it that benefit all of the citizens. Much more pollution abatement is still needed in the Shade and Paint Creek watersheds in Somerset County. The goal of bringing back the Little Conemaugh River in Cambria County is now well planned out, but not yet achieved. SCRIP will continue to work toward these objectives.



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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.

Send donations to:
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 Windber, PA 15963