

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

Volume XI X  
Number 1  
Winter 2012

### Save the Date:

March 16– SCRIP Board Meeting, Gander Mountain, 9 am

March 17– Wildlife Day, Community Arts Center, 10am-2pm

March 24– MLTU banquet, 5:30-?

March 31– Paint Creek Cleanup, 8:30-11:30am

April 14– 1st Day of Trout

April 20-21, 27-28– Flight 93 Tree Planting

April 21– Stonycreek Cleanup (Benscreek Canoe Club), 9am-noon

April 22– Westmoreland Earth Day, 12-4pm

April 23–4th Laurel Highlands Conservation Coalition Conference– 9am-3:45pm

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People of SCRIP

## Two Brine Water Injection Wells Found in Somerset County

by Len Lichvar, SCRIP Chairman

Thanks to the investigative efforts of the Somerset Conservation District a "discovery" was made in regard to the location of two brine water injection wells both located in the Stonycreek River watershed. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), that is the primary permitting agency for injection wells in Pennsylvania, there are eight such injection wells in the state. It just so happens that two of them are in Somerset County.

According to information received by the District from the EPA, one well is owned by Cottonwood and the other by CNX (Consol). It was also revealed that the wells were originally drilled as shallow gas wells, but have been operating as deep injection wells for many years.

The EPA requires analysis of the wells every two years and relies on the company's own reporting to supply the information and data to the EPA in regard to what is actually being introduced into the wells. The EPA has one well inspector for the state.

The injection wells deposit their fluids approximately 8,000 feet deep into the Oriskany Sandstone formation. The Oriskany is located just below the Marcellus Shale formation.

According to the EPA tracking and monitoring, the pressures produced in the injection wells are essential to keeping the waste material from migrating elsewhere. Unlike the fracturing process often used in Marcellus Shale well drilling, the injection wells are not permitted to produce pressures that fracture the Oriskany Formation. The injection fluids must travel only through the fissures that already exist in the Oriskany Formation.



Photo by Len Lichvar

This is one of the two brine fluid deep injection wells located in the Stonycreek River watershed in Somerset County.

The Conservation District has received annual reports on the wells that have information and data on both wells courtesy of the EPA. The District is currently analyzing that information.

Recently researchers at Columbia University have studied earthquakes in Ohio and have pointed to a deep injection well as the probable cause of an earthquake that shook Youngstown, Ohio on New Year's Eve.

No such situation has been attributed to any of the injection wells in Pennsylvania to this point. However, the EPA is currently in the process of permitting additional injection wells in Warren County that are under appeal because of concerns raised by citizens in that area.

In addition, it seems to appear that citizens, the conservation community and decision makers locally in the Cambria-Somerset region had no idea that these injection wells were in operation in the Stonycreek River watershed. The Somerset Conservation District and SCRIP will continue to work with the EPA and other entities involved to attempt to make the injection well process a more open and information friendly procedure in the near future.



## Paint Creek Watershed Clean-Up Scheduled For March 31

by Melissa Reckner

In cooperation with the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, the Paint Creek Regional Watershed Association's third annual litter clean-up will be held Saturday, March 31, which is two weeks before the opening day of trout, from 8:30 AM – 11:30 AM. We will again focus on Berwick Road, but new this year is our commitment to clean-up a 2-mile stretch of Route 160 between Windber and Elton, along Little Paint Creek. Volunteers are asked to meet at the pull off along Route 160, where L. Paint passes under 160. We'll then split into two crews – one to do Berwick and another for 160. Volunteers should wear sturdy shoes or boots, long pants and sleeves, and dress for the weather. Trash bags, safety vests, gloves, and light refreshments will be provided. If you would like to help, please RSVP to Melissa Reckner at 814-444-2669 or mrecker@kcstreamteam.org by March 28.

### In Case You're Wondering...

*The Que Classic will not be held this year.* The SCRIP board decided to hold another summertime event in its place. See the article on *Paddle the Que* on this page.



#### Save the Date (continued)

- April 27– SCRIP Board Meeting, Gander Mountain, 9am
- April 28– Shade Creek Watershed Interpretive Trail Opening and Kids Fishing Rodeo at Laurel Run
- May 18-20– Stonycreek Rendezvous at Greenhouse Park (Benscreek Canoe Club)
- May 31, June 1-3 Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh Rivers Sojourn (Conemaugh Valley Conservancy)
- June 3– Moonlight Paddle at Que (Benscreek Canoe Club)
- June 16– River of Year Sojourn and Appreciation Day at Greenhouse Park
- Aug. 2-4– 4th Annual Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference, Ramada Inn and Conference Center, State College

## Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference Call for Presentations

by Melissa Reckner

The Western Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation and its partners welcome you to join us at the 14th Annual Pennsylvania Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference, August 2-4, 2012 at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center, State College, PA. With the theme, "New Frontiers in Reclamation," this year's conference intends to explore innovative ways to achieve abandoned mine reclamation in Pennsylvania.

Exciting opportunities abound with new and emerging treatment technologies in addition to partnership opportunities with the shale gas industry in utilizing abandoned mine drainage and mine pool water.

Abstracts for presentations which revolve around this year's theme of "New Frontiers in Reclamation" are now being requested. Presentations illustrating the successes of working collaboratively with industry have particular relevance to this conference and are being solicited. If you have a presentation in mind that would be a fit and would like the conference planning committee to consider it, please submit an abstract of your presentation (no more than a half page as a Word document) with all pertinent contact information, to Anne Daymut: [anne@wpcamr.org](mailto:anne@wpcamr.org). Abstracts must be emailed by the close of business on April 15, 2012.

### Paddle the Que Event Slated for This Summer



SCRIP board members have decided to hold a *Paddle the Que* event this summer modeled after the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission *Paddle PA!* Program. The goal of the program is to introduce participants to basic paddle skills and safety awareness.

The program usually includes three 10 minute sessions on life jacket and water safety, hazards to paddlers and paddling safety, and paddle skills. At the end of the instruction period, participants will have some free paddle time.

PA Fish and Boat Commission staff will lead the workshops and the canoes and kayaks will be provided for the participants. Advance registration will be required.

In addition to this set program, there may be other displays and/or activities. More details will follow in the next newsletter. Stay tuned!

### Wells Creek Watershed Association Receives Mini-Grant

Recognizing the vital role that watershed groups play in protecting our water resources, Dominion, in partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy instituted a mini-grant program which is now in its eighth year. Wells Creek Watershed Association, under its President, Thurman Korn, was happy to receive a \$300 award this year which will help with their general operating expenses. Congratulations, Thurman!

## Saint Francis University Faculty and Students Available to Help Local Watershed Groups

*by William Strosnider, Ph.D*

The Environmental Engineering Department at Saint Francis University has recently won support from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds to assist nonprofit watershed restoration organizations in the Greater Conemaugh Watershed. The funds are being used to establish the Watershed Restoration Amplification Program (WRAP). Via WRAP, SFU professors and students will be using real class projects, research teams, service-learning internships, and volunteer events to assist local watershed restoration nonprofit organizations. Examples of the type of assistance that can be provided include:

- Website development
- Fundraising material creation
- Press releases
- Grant writing
- Data collection
- Data analysis
- Engineering design advisory
- Trash removal events
- Troubleshooting engineering problems
- And any other task that helps a watershed restoration nonprofit organization

The nonprofit partners currently include: the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, Natural Biodiversity, Shade Creek Watershed Association, FracTracker, Sandyvale Memorial Gardens, and SCRIP. However, WRAP is looking for more watershed associations in the Greater Conemaugh Watershed in need of assistance! Please contact Dr. Bill Strosnider ([wstrosnider@francis.edu](mailto:wstrosnider@francis.edu)) for more information about WRAP.

To maximize the lasting impact of the Foundation's support, the university has established the Center for Watershed Research & Service. **Dr. Bill Strosnider serves as the center's director with Drs. Denise Damico (History) and Joel Bandstra (Environmental Engineering) as associate directors.** Additional Center members include Drs. Nathan Malavolti, Ed Zovinka and Charles Dameron (Chemistry); Drs. Irene Wolf, Lane Loya, Charles MacVean, and Sue Morra (Biology); Dr. John Harris and Shawn Simmers P.E. (Engineering); Drs. Lauri Chose and Tim Bintram (English). These faculty and their students are ready to serve the Greater Conemaugh Watershed.

### Flight 93 Wind Break Tree Planting

Help is needed for tree planting at the Flight 93 Memorial on April 20, 21, 27 and 28. Chris Yeakle, a DEP Mineral Resources Program Specialist, is coordinating Team Leaders. Each Team Leader will lead a crew of 10 volunteers to a pre-assigned area, teach them how to use a dibble bar, supervise the planting for the day to ensure a quality job, and mentor the volunteers as they work. If you would like to volunteer to be a Team Leader, contact him at [cyekle@pa.gov](mailto:cyekle@pa.gov) or 814-797-1191. Leroy Renninger of the National Park Service is coordinating the volunteer Tree Planters. If you would like to just plant trees, contact Leroy at [Leroy\\_Renninger@nps.gov](mailto:Leroy_Renninger@nps.gov).

## Stonycreek River Named PA River of Year for 2012

We did it! The Stony was named PA River of the Year in January. Thanks to all those who voted and solicited others to vote. One big event in honor of this award has already been scheduled. The Stonycreek Quemahoning Initiative and Pennsylvania Environmental Council are sponsoring a River of the Year Sojourn and Appreciation Day on June 16 at Greenhouse Park. SCRIP board members are still contemplating celebration events and/or mini-conservation projects that will be made possible by a share of the \$10,000 prize that SCRIP will receive as a result of this award. Thanks to Kristina Strosnider, SCRIP has a wonderful full color River of the Year logo that can be seen on the front and back covers of this newsletter. Great job, Kristina!

## Shade Creek Watershed Association Events Slated

*by Larry Hutchinson*

SCWA is having its annual Open House on March 20th, beginning at 7:00 pm. at the Central City Borough building. There will be short presentations **of the groups attending followed by ethnic snacks created by SCWA's own Chef Geoffery.**

Official Opening of the "Reitz#1 Interpretive Trail" is scheduled for April 28 starting at 10:00am at the Reitz#1 site. **PARKING** is at the Shade Township Walking Trail and Park on State Route 160 which is in site of the Central City Borough line. A shuttle vehicle will be provided because of limited parking space at the site. The shuttle will run between 9:45am and 10:45am or walk the trail to the site which is about 1/4 mile away. A free Kids Rodeo follows the ceremony of the Reitz#1 trail. Kids, 12 and under, are welcome to fish along Laurel Run which receives clean water from the Reitz#1 Passive Treatment System. These series of ponds treat abandoned mine drainage from the old Reitz#1 mine. Stop a moment at the 3 signs along the trail to learn more about the "Three Waters" in our backyard.

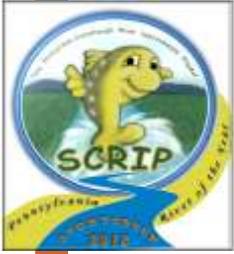
## Grants Awarded to Area Environmental Groups

*by Melissa Reckner*

The Coldwater Heritage Partnership recently awarded grants to the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy / Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team and Somerset Conservation District to prepare coldwater conservation plans for Beaverdam Run and tributaries of the North Fork of the Bens Creek, respectively. The goals of these grants are to build local awareness and support for the preservation of coldwater streams and their watersheds. Both groups will use their grant awards to compile previous studies, if they exist, acquire new data, meet with local interest groups, and develop, then implement recommendations for the protection and enhancement of these streams, which are threatened by industrialization, urbanization and acidification.

## Laurel Highlands Conservation Coalition Conference

The 4th Annual Laurel Highlands Conservation Conference will take place on **April 23 at the Ligonier Town Hall's Community Room from 9 am-3:45pm.** The focus of the conference will be water with an emphasis on declining groundwater supplies. Dr. Leonard Konikow, the Keynote Speaker, has been a research hydrologist since 1972 with the U.S. Geological Survey. Main topics include: creation of an Ohio River Basin Compact, Marcellus Shale presentations, Watershed Tool Kit, Filing for Stream Re-designation and Petitioning to Declare a Watershed Unsuitable for Mining. For information see: [www.pecpa.org/Highlands-conference-focus-water](http://www.pecpa.org/Highlands-conference-focus-water) or email [bclemenson@pec-pa.org](mailto:bclemenson@pec-pa.org).



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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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People of SCRIP

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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](mailto:mreckner@kcstreamteam.org) or 814-444-2669.

Send donations to:  
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