

Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association

P.O. Box 183, Leetsdale, PA



The Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association is a non-profit organization whose members work together to protect, conserve, and develop the precious natural resources of this 9.5 square miles. The watershed encompasses parts of Leet Township and Edgeworth, Bell Acres, Franklin Park, Leetsdale, Sewickley Heights, and Sewickley Hills boroughs.

NEWS ... FROM THE WATERSHED

December 2014

SEWICKLEY ACADEMY'S CREEK CLUB JOINS UP

During this school year, **Sewickley Academy's Creek Club** volunteer teams joined LSCWA to monitor the creek using Alliance of Aquatic Resource Monitoring (ALLARM) testing for barium and strontium. The ALLARM system of data collection is financed by Dickinson College to monitor streams in areas that could be affected by pollution from the shale gas drilling process.

For this second year of baseline testing, Little Sewickley Creek again surpassed the threshold for conductivity and total dissolved solids. April Claus, Director of Environmental Education at Fern Hollow Nature Center, supervises collection of this data.

In addition, these SA students, on an on-call volunteer basis, step in to plant trees, do clean-ups and assist in the several of the activities of the QV Creekers. LSCWA welcomes the help!

CAMP DISCOVERY TURNS 21!



Under the able leadership of Chriss O'Lare, Camp Discovery has flourished for the past 21 summers. June 2015 will mark the 22nd year that this camp has been offered to rising third through sixth graders.

In 2015, camp sessions will be June 22-26 and June 29-July 3 from 8 a.m. to noon at Walker Park. This outdoor education program uses a hands-on approach to stream and woodland habitats. On Fridays, campers are transported via Quaker Valley School District to North Park. Camp fees are \$35 per family.

By March, on-line camp applications will be available on the QVSD web site. Sewickley Academy and St. James students are welcome also.



Students are busy at the LSCWA wreath making workshop at the Sewickley Library on Dec. 2nd with help from Grapevine and Village garden club guides.

ONE MAN'S PASSION ADDS UP TO MANY CONSERVED ACRES

Incorporated in 1991, Allegheny Land Trust at its tenth year anniversary could only boast its acquisition of nearly 450 acres of protected land. Enter Roy Kraynyk in 2003, first as executive director through 2012 and currently as Land Protection Director. Through his diligent efforts, ALT now owns and safeguards 1,700 acres and holds conservation easements on another 168 acres.

Under Roy's leadership, ALT placed its acquisition focus on the Allegheny County Natural Heritage Inventory (ACNHI) which was developed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPA) in 1994. This scientific study identified critical habitats with wildlife species of state or national concern, native or rare plant species or both habitats.

Of special interest to LSCWA are the over 225 acres owned by ALT within the Camp Meeting Woods Biological Diversity Area of ACNHI. Most of these acres lie within the Little Sewickley Creek watershed. Protection of these land parcels helps the creek maintain its exceptional water quality by filtering and absorbing stormwater. An additional 96 acres are now under contract including 58 acres surrounded by Sewickley Heights Park: ALT is also negotiating for another 91 acres in Quaker Valley.

Roy authored the Sewickley Heights Vision Plan that the Borough adopted in 2012. This plan helps to prioritize land conservation based on its contribution to the community's cultural heritage-its unique scenic and historical character.

No stranger to scenic preservation, Roy's degree in landscape architecture first landed him a job designing large highway flower gardens for WPA. He was also founder and president of Hollow Oak Land Trust that protects land in Moon Township and nearby airport communities. During Roy's 10 year tenure on the Allegheny County Farmland Preservation Board, over 2,000 acres was protected.

Thank you, Roy, for your able leadership of ALT's land acquisition mission! Our watershed benefits from your passion for land protection!



ALT acquisitions that link up with established parks:

- 1) in 2004, 52 acres on Audubon Road close to Sewickley Hills and Sewickley Heights parks
- 2) in 2005, a 44 acre parcel along Magee Rd.
- 3) between 2006-2011, several smaller parcels in Sewickley Heights and Sewickley Hills
- 4) in 2013, 48 acres between Magee Rd. & I-79; 10 acres at Little Sewickley Creek's headwaters
- 5) in 2014, a 30 acre parcel on Waterworks Road
- 6) planned for 2015, a 50 acre parcel north of the Sewickley Heights Park entrance.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER...

In 2014, LSCWA entered a new era in our 41 year history! Our new web site now portrays our programs and projects with a fantastic array of photos! We reworked our by-laws which were last revised in 1981 to reflect how our organization currently operates.

We also began a campaign to gather email addresses for our members. Now the board can deliver important information between meetings and at times other than LSCWA's annual newsletter.

Our nominating committee canvassed the board directors to solicit those willing to take on officer roles. On January 15, 2015, the officers will be:

President: Sarah Shockey
Vice President: to be determined
Treasurer: Jon Orndorff
Secretary: Diane Abell

LSCWA also welcome three new directors:
April Claus, Chriss O'Lare and Jean Sebolt

So, raise a toast to new directors and new directions!

IN APPRECIATION

For 2014, over \$10,000 was contributed by area citizens, businesses and non-profits in support of LSCWA programs. Thank you one and all!

QV CREEKERS- ON THE CREEK AND IN THE WATERSHED

The QV Creekers Program continue to perform general water quality testing-both chemical and physical at specific sites on the creek and its tributaries. Their monitoring results over the past five years underscore the extraordinary quality of the Little Sewickley Creek and its tributaries.

The strength of the QV Creekers Program comes from three sources: the local leadership of April Claus, Director of Environmental Education at Fern Hollow Nature Center, academic support from Quaker Valley School District, and the direct supervision of Laura Branby from Allegheny College's Creek Connections program. The twenty students in this year's program will receive one-half an academic credit for their successful participation.

These students can be found assessing fish diversity and general health of the fish populations in the creek. They can be noting any significant changes in the stream's aquatic invertebrates. They can be ascertaining the effect of invasive plant species on watershed integrity. They may locate and examine various amphibian populations. These are the kinds of activities that make the QV Creekers extremely knowledgeable about our watershed.

These students are exceptional young people who develop extensive scientific capabilities. Often, QV Creekers join the program for multiple years. Each spring, LSCWA recognizes each student with a certificate of appreciation for his/her commitment.

The Watershed Association also offers scholarships for interested QV Creekers to attend Creek Connection's week-long summer camp with its intensive outdoor education experience on the Allegheny College campus and environs. The QV Creekers meet other students from around the world to share and improve their scientific skills.



COMMUNITY NEWS...

Over the past 2 years, **Sewickley Civic Garden Council(SCGC)**, donated over \$27,000 to teaching gardens, landscaping and flower containers around public buildings, in two parks and on street lamps. Each May, SCGC sponsors the Garden Mart which raises funds for the summer hanging baskets. SCGC's Garden Tour will be June 19 and 20, 2015.

Quaker Valley Recreation Association(QVRA) has received a county grant of \$150,000 from the Community Infrastructure and Tourism Board toward rain gardens for its Legacy Fields on Camp Meeting Road. LSCWA wrote a letter in support of this grant request. Consider a donation to QVRA toward to completing the landscaping phase.

Allegheny Land Trust operates a passive mine drainage treatment system at its 87 acre Wingfield Pines site in South Fayette and Upper St. Clair Townships. Twenty acres of ponds and native plants filter 43 tons of iron oxide per year at a flow of 2,000 gallons per minute on its way to Chartier's Creek. This is a good example of "reuse, restore."

The Pittsburgh Botanic Garden, near Settler's Cabin Park in Collier and South Fayette Townships, opened on August, 2014. In just five months, more than 3,000 visitors have enjoyed its welcome center and the 3 miles of groomed trails in the "Woodland Gardens" area. Put this spot on your destinations list!

PERMANENT FENCES PROTECT SALAMANDERS IN BELL ACRES

This October, permanent fencing was built around the Bell Acres sewage treatment tanks off of Backbone Road by volunteers from LSCWA, QV Creekers, Sewickley Academy's Creek Club, and Fern Hollow Nature Center. The fencing protects the Jefferson Salamanders, a state- defined "species of interest," from falling in and dying in the tanks.

The four year old flexible fencing was intended to be temporary until the Bell Acres Municipal Authority (BAMA) replaced this sewage plant with a pumping station. Then, the sewage tanks would be removed.

Plans have changed with the BAMA and the sewage station will be revamped, but not removed. The new fencing around these still active sewage tanks is now a long-term protective measure for the salamanders.

The Jefferson Salamander population does appear to be surviving and is utilizing the two LSCWA artificial ponds. However, each spring's differing weather conditions during migration and mating make it difficult to make clear assumptions about population stabilization and resurgence. The site will continue to be monitored. The 2014 migration data will be posted on our web site: lscwatershed.org.



Hannah Bablak, Colby Schmitt, and Mimi Zipparo 2014 QV Creeker attendees at Camp Creek Connections, gave a slide show narration on their experiences at the camp at the LSCWA annual meeting on November 12th.