



LITTLE SEWICKLEY CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 183 LEETSDALE, PA 15056

www.lscwatershed.org

NEWS FROM THE WATERSHED

OCTOBER, 2015

TWO GRANTS AWARDED TO THE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION THIS YEAR

Website Improvement

We are pleased to announce that the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association was awarded a \$900 grant from the Dominion Foundation and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to improve and expand our website which was officially opened in January, 2014.

Financial support for this project is provided by the Dominion Foundation which is dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities served by Dominion companies.

This grant program was administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in commitment to its core mission of conserving Pennsylvania's diverse ecosystems through science-based strategy, leadership, and collaboration.

The members of the LSCWA appreciate the help in covering the costs associated with updating and adding to the material on the website. The grant allows us to continue to fund other programs and projects that we have undertaken.

Archive material soon to be available on the website:

Reports of the baseline hydrology and water quality studies carried out in the early 1980s; water quality data collected from the mid-1980s and continuing to the present; report on the slope stability study of hillsides within the watershed, along with topographical maps of the watershed which show contours, slide-prone areas, springs, and other features. See the Annual Meeting Notice for additional information.

NOTE: If you have archive or history-related material that should be included on the website, please let us know through info@lscwatershed.org.

Wetland Restoration

In June of 2015, LSCWA received a \$9,915 Conservation, Leadership, and Innovation grant from the Allegheny County Conservation District (ACCD). The purpose of the grant is to restore a wetland area in Bell Acres as a natural, viable breeding habitat for local amphibians, in particular the Jefferson Salamander, listed as a "Species of Special Concern" by the PA Fish and Boat Commission. LSCWA and its partners – Fern Hollow Nature Center, the Boroughs of Bell Acres and Sewickley Heights, the Western PA Conservancy, and Robert Morris University – are working with wetland restoration expert Thomas Biebighauser. The wetland construction is scheduled for October 21st and 22nd, 2015.

The original wetland, located near a small sewage treatment plant, was filled in over a period of two years, leaving adult frogs and salamanders with no breeding habitat. In 2008, the Watershed Association worked with Fern Hollow Nature Center to provide a temporary breeding habitat in the form of cattle tanks sunk into the ground. Since that time, the site has served as a valuable site for community and student research and education. With the restoration of the wetland, these opportunities will be greatly increased and enhanced. For more information on the project history, go to www.lscwatershed.org.

No words can adequately express our appreciation to the Allegheny County Conservation District – not only for all of the valuable work that they themselves do in our county – but also for supporting the efforts of groups such as ours. In 2015, they awarded over \$100,000 of grant money to 13 projects – all of which address different areas of environmental concern and will improve the quality of our natural world.

Woodland Dam Removal: a Success Story

When the Woodland Dam was removed, two serious problems were addressed: safety hazards (deteriorating concrete, exposed rebar and a collapsing ledge) were removed, and serious erosion of the banks on either side of the dam was alleviated. In order to minimize further erosion, cross vanes have been installed to help direct current flow away from the banks. The cross vanes will also provide additional habitat for fish and other vertebrates as well as invertebrates.

The dam removal, was a joint effort of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, American Rivers and Behren Environmental Services. They acquired all the necessary permits along with grant money to fund the project.

For the past several years, fish counts have been carried out by the Quaker Valley Creekers, a group of high school students who participate in an environmental internship program at Fern Hollow Nature Center (with funding from LSCWA), as part of their work on watershed projects. The counts have shown that there were 4 times as many fish species below the dam as above, indicating that the dam was inhibiting free migration between the stream and the river. Two months following the dam removal, fish counts at Walker Park and above showed 5 new species upstream from the dam site. Already migration is taking place. The increased biological diversity resulting from populations able to move freely is a real benefit to the health of the stream.

Other Projects with the QVCreekers

Additional fish diversity studies to follow fish and other populations as they move up and down Little Sewickley Creek.
A turkey crop dissection study to determine whether salamanders were serving as a food source for wild turkeys.
Saw-whet owl surveys and banding sessions led by a member of the National Aviary.

Summer Discovery at Walker Park

Although their activities were somewhat curtailed by rain and high water, 48 campers still enjoyed their week of critter collecting and creek walks during the two weeks camp was held. Each Wednesday evening, many campers and their families attended the "Discover the Night" program at Sewickley Heights Park, and the campers also had an opportunity to study additional types of habitats at North Park.

Plans are underway for summer 2016. Because of increases in insurance and bussing costs, tuition for each family will be \$50, while for each camper the tuition will remain at \$35. After March 1, look for 2016 registration information on our website.

QVRA Update

The Quaker Valley Recreation Association (QVRA) reports excellent progress at their Legacy Fields site in Bell Acres. Both the volumes of storm water and the amount of sediment in the run-off have decreased, due to the increased vegetative cover and rain gardens installed earlier this year, a big boost to the health of the Little Sewickley Creek tributary located there. The majority of the 240 young native trees planted in the spring – a combined effort of Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Fern Hollow Nature Center – have survived, even through recent drought conditions. The athletic fields were used heavily this year for both baseball and softball.

THANK YOU, SUSAN

On December 31, 2014, Susan Craig completed 29 years of service with the Watershed Association. She assumed the position of Executive Secretary in 1985, became Vice President in 1986, and in 1989 was elected President. During her years of leadership, the LSCWA provided positive input into issues regarding land use, water quality, and environmental education.

Many of the accomplishments of this year would not have been possible had Susan and the Watershed Association not been actively involved in critical projects and programs within the watershed over the past many years. Susan furthered the work begun in the 1970's, and left a legacy of dedication to the purposes of the organization.

We salute you, Susan, for your leadership and accomplishments.

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Annual Meeting of the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association is open to anyone who wishes to attend

Date/Time: Wednesday, November 18, 2015, at 7:30 PM

Location: Fern Hollow Nature Center, 1901 Glen Mitchell Road, Sewickley

On the Agenda

President's Report of LSCWA projects, programs, and accomplishments in 2015

Presentation of Budget for 2016

Display of historical and archive materials from the Watershed

For additional detail about ongoing projects and programs and areas of interest, please see the minutes of this meeting, which will be posted on our website.

NOTE: Topographical maps of the watershed, showing land contours, major strata of particular importance including red beds, springs, slide-prone areas, will be on display at the Annual Meeting. Borough and township engineers and planning commission members, developers and construction people, and others may find the maps especially helpful during design and/or construction to avoid potential problems.

Thanks to help from people at the Allegheny County Department of Public Works, we now have the 2½ ft x 3½ ft mylar maps (10 of them) in electronic format, along with the map key showing how all the maps fit together. The maps will be available soon on our website for anyone to use.

The Board of Directors needs help from LSCWA members

- Contribute your time to a current project or program.
- Help with Website articles, Publicity, Newsletters, Mailing List.
- Send us suggestions for new projects and/or committees.
- Let us know of people who would like to be on our mailing list.

Get in touch with us through the website (click on the "Join/Volunteer" tab at lscwatershed.org) to let us know your interests.

The Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association is a non-profit corporation whose members work together to protect and conserve the natural resources of Little Sewickley Creek and its watershed. Portions of Franklin Park, Sewickley Hills, Sewickley Heights, Bell Acres, Leetsdale and Edgeworth Boroughs, and Leet Township lie within the watershed.