



LITTLE SEWICKLEY CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

P.O. BOX 183 LEETSDALE, PA 15056

www.lscwatershed.org

NEWS FROM THE WATERSHED

OCTOBER, 2016

“WATERSHED WONDERS” DISCOVERY DAY

On Sunday, May 22, 2016 we hosted our first annual Watershed Wonders Day. The event was a great celebration of our local treasure – Little Sewickley Creek.

Thanks to the hard work of over 30 volunteers, we were able to spread our enthusiasm for our watershed to many families!

- More than 70 people, mostly families with young children, visited the Amphibian Habitat Restoration site in Bell Acres. They enjoyed catching frogs and salamanders, and were treated to ice cream cones generously provided by the *Sewickley Confectionary*;
- At least 14 people hiked through the mud for a guided walk to our local beaver dams;
- Thirty-eight people participated in a yellow ducky race in Morrow-Pontefract Park; we took in \$99 in donations and the QV Creekers made sure we recovered all the ducks;
- In Walker Park, many people used a kick net to capture (and release) macroinvertebrates;
- Young and old tried their hand at casting and learned about all the different species of fish in Little Sewickley Creek.

Thank you to everyone who participated - we hope you enjoyed it as much as we did.

Stay tuned for the second annual event in May, 2017!

WETLAND RESTORATION PROJECT GENERATES COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Amphibian Wetland Restoration Project

In October of 2015, after months of planning and preparation, a wetland area in Bell Acres was constructed over a two-day period to provide habitat for amphibians and other wildlife whose original habitat had been filled in during 2004-2006. The restoration was made possible through funds from the Allegheny County Conservation District (ACCD) and through the cooperative efforts of our project partners: Fern Hollow Nature Center (FHNC), Bell Acres and Sewickley Heights Boroughs, the Big Sewickley Creek Fire Department, Western PA Conservancy (WPC), Robert Morris University (RMU), and many community volunteers.

Once the amphibian breeding migration began in early 2016, it became apparent that the wetlands were a great success. First to appear were the breeding adult wood frogs and Jefferson salamanders, then the egg masses, and then masses of larval salamanders and frog tadpoles, as well as spring peepers, a species not seen nor heard in that area for many years. Also in residence were green frogs, bullfrogs, and American toads, as well as a variety of macroinvertebrate species.

The QV Creekers, the Quaker Valley High School environmental science interns, monitored the site with RMU students and also worked with WPC botanists to identify and gather wetland plants to be transplanted to the new habitat.

As part of the grant from ACCD, FHNC presented three successful project showcase programs at the wetlands for the community, and has since offered other educational programs for students and community groups.

We look forward to a successful future for the wetlands and their inhabitants - and to many years of education and research opportunities for students and the community.

A poster of the history of this conservation effort was developed and presented by the QV Creekers during the “Watershed Wonders” Day.

Sewickley Herald Honors LSCWA as “2016 Citizen Of The Year”

Bobby Cherry and Kristina Serafini from the staff of the Sewickley Herald were on site to observe, first-hand, the initiation of the wetlands project. Then, in the following March (in 2016), Bobby and Kristina were invited to return to see that the new wetlands were actually attracting the frogs and salamanders who were looking for their old breeding grounds.

In the spring of 2016, the Sewickley Herald honored the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association *“For the group’s work to preserve a watershed and protect wildlife — including spearheading a project last year to save an uncommon type of salamander...”* by naming the group the Sewickley Herald Citizen of the Year for 2015.”

This quote from the Sewickley Herald staff acknowledges that the award was bestowed, in part, because of the success of the amphibian wetland restoration, which is an extension of the mission of the LSCWA. For that honor, the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association again thanks the staff of the Sewickley Herald for giving us a great opportunity to describe our mission and accomplishments.

STUDENT PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS WE SPONSOR**SUMMER DISCOVERY**

Summer Discovery day camp filled up again this year with a mix of new and returning campers. The weather was very cooperative and campers enjoyed their days at Walker Park and at the new venue of Fern Hollow Lake. Don and Rett King invited everyone to use their property instead of traveling to North Park on Fridays. This let campers explore another area of the Little Sewickley Creek Watershed. Many campers had previously fished at the lake with other groups so they searched the land around the lake for terrestrial species and also examined the macroinvertebrates in the pond. The campers were able to get a close-up look at the larvae and nymphs that are part of the lake's food web. Thank you, Don and Rett, for sharing your part of the watershed!



Look for information regarding registration for next summer on the LSCWA website after March 1, 2017.

QV CREEKERS and ALLEGHENY COLLEGE CREEK CAMPThe Latest from the QV Creekers

This is the 8th consecutive year that LSCWA has provided funding for QV Creekers, the Quaker Valley High School afterschool environmental science internship. Of the 72 students who have completed this internship, many have gone on to pursue careers in the natural sciences - and some have even returned as guest speakers to share their new research interests.

During the 2015-2016 school year, in addition to their ongoing efforts at the amphibian wetland restoration site, the Creekers assisted local zoologist, Ryan Miller of the Western PA Conservancy (WPC), to conduct a wood turtle survey in the LSC watershed. This is part of a larger study coordinated by US Fish and Wildlife Service to discover more about this species' distribution, genetics and population size. The Creekers learned how to collect life history data on the three turtles captured during the survey, and hope to again participate in the spring, 2017, survey.

This fall, the QV Creekers will again be working with Eric Chapman, Director of Aquatic Science at WPC, to continue investigations on the upstream movement of fish species resulting from the July 2015 Woodland Dam removal. Last October, the group sampled two locations upstream of the dam removal site and found several species of fish not seen above the dam before its removal, including the rainbow darter, smallmouth bass, central stoneroller, and spotfin shiner. It is expected that fish diversity will be higher this fall in comparison to last year's data.

The QV Creekers are also collecting samples from local frog species to send for lab analysis to Dr. Kurt Regester of Clarion University who is researching the prevalence of the chytrid fungus (B.d) and ranavirus in amphibian populations throughout PA. It is thought that these two pathogens play a role in the decline of amphibians globally, and the newly restored wetland area in Bell Acres provides the Creekers with an accessible amphibian population for Dr. Regester's study.

Creek Camp Scholarship

Since 2010, LSCWA has provided full/partial scholarships for QV Creekers to attend a summer session of Creek Camp at Allegheny College. This year's scholarship recipient was Quaker Valley High School junior Abby Smith of Edgeworth Borough. Abby will make a presentation of the highlights from her experiences at Creek Camp at our Annual Meeting on November 16. There is more about Creek Camp and Abby's adventures at the Creek Connections website (<http://sites.allegheny.edu/creekconnections/creek-camp/>).

NEW PROJECT**WATERSHED ASSESSMENT OF LITTLE SEWICKLEY CREEK**

In 2015, LSCWA learned that the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) had rejected a petition to upgrade the designation of LSC from High Quality to Exceptional Value, a designation held by only a few streams in PA, due to issues of sedimentation. The 140-page petition, developed by Duquesne University graduate student Nate Reinhart under the supervision of Ed Schroth, LSCWA Board member, was submitted in 2012.

In response to the DEP evaluation, the Board approved the pursuit of a watershed assessment of LSC, to be led by an environmental consultant, in order to determine problems within the creek system and to prioritize them according to severity of impact on the health of the creek. Once the assessment is complete, funding will be sought to address the issues identified, with the future goal of having the Re-Designation Petition re-submitted to the DEP.

A Request for Proposal (RFP) was developed and circulated in August to environmental consultants in western PA. The proposals are due by the end of October, and the consultant whose proposal is selected will be notified by January of 2017. The cost of the assessment will be covered through internal funds and grant money.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

WAGGONER’S HOLLOW AND DEVIL’S HOLLOW PROPERTIES

The Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Association owns 92 acres in the Waggoner’s Hollow (aka Wagner’s Hollow) area along Little Sewickley Creek Road and extending up to Camp Meeting Road and 77 acres in Devil’s Hollow along Sevin Road. The land is under conservation easement with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, designated as “forever wild”. Trails through the property are used by horseback riders, hikers, and bicyclists, but “no motorized vehicles”. Since property ownership does not seem to fit any of the purposes of the LSCWA as defined in our bylaws, the Board has voted to donate the Waggoner’s Hollow land to the Borough of Sewickley Heights, to be added to the park system already maintained by the borough. The LSCWA has initiated talks with the Allegheny Land Trust to determine their interest in receiving the Devil’s Hollow property. These property transfers will insure continued care and use as specified in the conservation easement or deed restriction. We will keep you posted as we move toward completion of the transfers – and hope you will explore these really scenic sections of our watershed.

CAMP MEETING ROAD LANDSLIDE REMEDIATION

At the beginning of the summer, construction was begun to remediate the landslide on Camp Meeting Road. Trees and other vegetation were removed, but work halted because of problems relating to the Stream Encroachment Permit required by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Since no controls had been installed, a rainstorm at the end of July caused erosion from the ravine into the headwaters of Little Sewickley Creek. LSCWA was in immediate contact with representatives of the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Allegheny County Conservation District (ACCD) to alert them to the runoff problems. As a result, the contractor installed erosion and sedimentation controls: netting was placed over bare soil and erosion socks were placed in crucial areas to contain and absorb stormwater run-off. We are glad to note that the controls now in place appear to be limiting further erosion and sedimentation. We will continue to monitor Little Sewickley Creek and the landslide site for erosion and sedimentation problems during the coming months.

The landslide on Camp Meeting Road in Bell Acres is of major concern to several groups who hope for the project to be completed as soon as possible: the Watershed Association, aware that sediment from the slide area affects a major tributary of Little Sewickley Creek; the Quaker Valley School District, which must reroute school buses at great expense; drivers and cyclists, who must detour around the slide. But we do recognize that, since Little Sewickley Creek is designated a “High Quality – Trout Stocking Fishery” by the state, the final permit from DEP must contain terms to ensure protection of the ravine in the future. We look forward not only to a timely remediation of the slide area but also one that addresses the slide prone character of the ravine.

SPANISH TRACT GOLF PRACTICE RANGE

In October, 2015, the Watershed Association became aware of proposed construction of a 22-acre golf practice range on private property in a slide-prone area of the watershed. To fully understand the proposed project, several members of the Watershed Association attended an Edgeworth Borough Planning Commission meeting and reviewed the detailed permit application documents: the NPDES permit application submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the geotechnical reports and Tree Harvest Plan submitted to Edgeworth Borough.

The Watershed Association testified at the January 26, 2016, Public Hearing of the Edgeworth Zoning Hearing Board. We outlined our concerns about the removal of 300 mature trees, the potential for erosion and subsequent sedimentation in Little Sewickley Creek and its tributaries, possible landslides on the steep slopes, and runoff that might contain fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides and fungicides.

Edgeworth approved the construction of the practice range with the stipulation that the borough engineer and geotechnical engineer be on-site to oversee the project.

In an e-mail dated 9/28/16, John Schwend, Edgeworth Borough Manager, provided an update on the site:

The Stack project is moving along without issue. At the completion of the land clearing process, the Borough Geotechnical Engineer paid visits to the site to ensure stability as they made their cut and fill operations. During one rain event in the late spring, it was noted that some of the E-S controls were not quite adequate. I notified the Allegheny County Conservation District and the project manager, and the conservation district reviewed and approved their additional controls. Recently, we have visited the site and final grading operations were taking place. I would imagine that seeding will occur soon, as well as a fall planting for the trees that must be replaced.

NEW PROJECT

SAMPLING FOR TOTAL SUSPENDED SOLIDS

The Watershed Association has initiated testing for total suspended solids (TSS) in Little Sewickley Creek and its tributaries to monitor runoff and erosion along the stream, in particular in the vicinity of the Camp Meeting Road construction and the Spanish Tract golf practice range. Hunter Bearer, a student from Robert Morris University, collects samples at locations upstream and downstream from the sites approximately twice per month and after major rain events. He is compiling the data and will present the results at the Annual Meeting on November 16. The results will also be available on our website. To date, there have been no elevated TSS results to indicate that either construction site is negatively impacting the stream.

QVRA UPDATE

The Quaker Valley Recreation Association (QVRA) has just completed another successful season of baseball and softball games at its Legacy Fields at Bouchard Family Park. After several years of struggling to control the volume and quality of stormwater run-off during the construction of the athletic fields, QVRA reports that the rain gardens, overall site vegetation, and detention ponds are working well to prevent further sediment from negatively impacting an important tributary of Little Sewickley Creek. The main priority moving forward will be to raise funds to meet a PA DEP-requirement for tree planting, to build a much-needed community soccer field, and to develop walking paths and exercise stations around the site.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Date/Time: Wednesday, November 16, 2016
Location: Fern Hollow Nature Center, 1901 Glen Mitchell Road, Sewickley, PA

BUSINESS MEETING FOR MEMBERS OF THE WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
7:00 PM

- Approval of Minutes from 2015 Annual Meeting
 - Approval of Treasurer’s Report for Fiscal Year 2016
 - Approval of Budget for 2017
 - Election for Officers and Directors for 2017-2018
- Anyone who is a paid LSCWA member may vote on the above items.
- Approval of transfer of Devil’s Hollow property
- To be voted on by the Board of Directors

OPEN MEETING FOR THE WATERSHED COMMUNITY
7:30 PM

- President’s Report of LSCWA projects, programs, and accomplishments in 2016
- Allegheny College Creek Camp Report
- Total Suspended Solids Testing Program Report
- Report on Distribution of Fish Species
- Little Sewickley Creek Watershed Assessment Report

SUMMARY OF 2016 EXPENSES
FOR THE LITTLE SEWICKLEY CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Thanks to the generosity of our members, we have been able to provide project and program support,
as well as to cover other expenses:

Summer Discovery Camp at Walker Park	\$ 3787.93
Stipends for Director and Counselors; Insurance	
Fern Hollow Nature Center	\$ 4550.00
QV Creekers projects	
Allegheny College Creek Camp	
Property insurance	\$ 1205.00
Waggoner’s Hollow, Devil’s Hollow (Sevin’s Road)	
Newsletter	\$ 1420.00
Printing, postage	
Administrative costs	\$ 452.37
Website, mailing, office supplies	
TOTAL 2016 EXPENSES	\$ 11,415.30