



*Great Allegheny Passage at Harnedsville*

# CONSERVATION IN SOMERSET COUNTY

## Y E S T E R D A Y – T O D A Y – T O M O R R O W

**The conservation of natural resources through locally led initiatives and projects encompasses a great heritage in Somerset County in large part because the need for such efforts have been great. The following is a summary, not a complete listing or history, of natural resource conservation in Somerset County. For more specific details please contact or visit the web sites of the organizations and agencies listed within and at the end of this document. Better yet, become actively involved with them.**

## E C O N O M I C S O F C O N S E R V A T I O N

Conservation is not just about providing the ability to protect and improve natural resources such as land, water, air, soil and the like. It is also about creating economic opportunities and incentives that will in turn promote even greater conservation efforts.

The Somerset Conservation District document, “Future AMD Restoration Costs and Economic Benefits in the Stonycreek River Watershed”, is a detailed account of the current and potential future economic contribution of clean water in Somerset County and should be noted by every decision maker and resident of Somerset County. It is available on the District’s web site at [www.somersetcd.com](http://www.somersetcd.com).

Another telling reality of the impact of conservation is the data made public in 2014 by the Somerset County Chamber of Commerce that, if it were not for tourism generated tax dollars, each resident of Somerset County would pay \$564 more in state and local taxes. The data compiled by Western Carolina University Economist Dr. Steve Morse also documents that \$184,681 is spent on arts, entertainment and recreation every day in Somerset County.

A significant portion of this spending is directly tied to the resurrection of Somerset County’s natural resources that attract those tourists as well as locally spent dollars which further justifies the past conservation initiatives and strongly supports their continuation as clearly outlined in this document. The citizens of Somerset County without question receive a significant return on every dollar and every hour of time invested in natural resource conservation proving that conservation is indeed a very wise investment.

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Throughout its history Somerset County has remained essentially rural. Manufacturing has been a limited significant economic factor. Railroads reached the county in the early 1870's; thereafter, the county's economy was better connected to the nation's economy. The local economy was then able to export more of the products of its farms, forests and mines. The county's resources contributed to the nation's Industrial Revolution in the 20th century. By the early 1900's, much of Pennsylvania and the county were stripped of their once vast forests. With regeneration, forests again cover about 60% of the county. The procedure of mining coal left the county with more enduring problems. The legacy of polluted water is a problem that has been very difficult and extremely costly to deal with. Great strides have been made to correct the legacy of water issues that private businesses and public sector organizations have worked in unison on solving. The extractive industry is still a significant part of the local economy.



## TOURISM

The natural environment continues to draw many visitors. The county is home to state parks and forests, state game lands, trails, resorts, resort housing developments, vacation homes and camps of all sorts: youth, scout, church, fishing and hunting. Preserving the character of the Laurel Highlands was the motive for the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to initiate a conference to focus on the region. The concern is that some types of future economic development could degrade the existing character of the highlands. Conservation groups, government officials, and business interests joined together to form the Laurel Highlands Conservation Coalition. Two unanticipated events brought world-wide attention to the county. Those events led to the establishment of the Flight 93 National Memorial and the Quecreek Mine Rescue visitor's center. The Somerset County Fair, the New Centerville Jubilee, Mountain Craft Days, the Stonycreek-Kiski River Sojourn, and other local events generate activities for all ages year round. The Pittsburgh Zoo chose a 724 acre parcel here to locate programs for exotic species of concern. The Somerset County Chamber of Commerce has said that a conservative estimate is that 4 million people now visit the county each year.



Flight 93 Memorial



Mountain Craft Days



New Centerville Jubilee

## GUIDING DOCUMENTS

There have been many documents promulgated to guide our efforts to preserve or improve the natural environment. Some of those that have been most important are The Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin Conservation Plan-1999, which is now being updated by the Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team. The Casselman River Watershed Conservation Plan-2000. The Somerset County Natural Heritage Inventory-2006. The Southern Alleghenies Greenways and Open Space Plan-2007. The Somerset Conservation District completed



the Stonycreek River Watershed Reassessment Plan, The Wills Creek Preassessment Plan, the Whites Creek Coldwater Heritage Plan and the North Fork of the Bens Creek Coldwater Heritage Plan, the State of the Watersheds Report, and the Future AMD Restoration Costs and Economic Benefits in the Stonycreek River Watershed Report.

At left, Somerset County Conservancy student intern, Logan Lichvar, collects aquatic macro invertebrates while Somerset Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, records the data. Professional work such as this generates much of the information utilized for the scientific foundation of these documents.

## THE SOMERSET COUNTY NATURAL HERITAGE INVENTORY (SOCNHI) - 2006

The SOCNHI (235 pages) is an important part of the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP). PNHP is a member of NatureServe, the organization that coordinates natural heritage efforts through an international network of member programs throughout the Western Hemisphere, including all 50 states. Inventories have been prepared for all of the 67 counties in Pennsylvania.

The SOCNHI has an overview of the county's natural features: physiology & geology, soils, disturbances and natural resources. The study examines the broad-scale landscape and the more discrete scale of individual species and the natural communities that make up that landscape. Conservation organizations can use the inventory as a source of prioritized places in the county. It can be used to help guide internal planning and define the county's essential resources that can be the focus of protection efforts. Land trusts and conservancies throughout Pennsylvania have used their inventories for these purposes.

Somerset County's inventory identifies 72 Biological Diversity Areas, Landscape Conservation Areas and Important Animal and Bird Areas. They are ranked according to their significance as areas important to the biological diversity and ecological integrity of Somerset County. The four significance ranks are: Exceptional, High, Notable, and County. Natural Communities are ranked according to their global and state status. Endangered species are identified according to their global, federal, and state status.

## A G R I C U L T U R A L   P R E S E R V A T I O N

The Somerset Conservation District Farmland Preservation Program provides assistance to preserve farms and open space. The voluntary program enables current landowners to ensure that their property will continue to serve their families and future generations in the form of sustainable agriculture and open space. So far 1,259 acres of farmland have been preserved through the program in Somerset County. However, funding is not provided in the amount that could secure additional acres that are still on waiting lists.



## A G R I C U L T U R A L   T E C H N I C A L   A S S I S T A N C E

The Somerset Conservation District, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA Farm Service Agency, and Penn State Extension all provide extensive and valuable, technical guidance and qualified funding assistance to the Somerset County agricultural community enabling them to be more economically viable and at the same time create healthy soil and water through sound conservation practices. Nutrient Management and Conservation Planning are just some of the assistance that these agencies provide. These and other Best Management Practices (BMP's) also benefit the public at large as well as the overall resource conservation driven economy and the jobs it supports.

## V I E W S H E D S   &   A C C E S S

Very significant public dollars and professional and volunteer time have been invested into the healing and conservation of our land and water in Somerset County. This renewal of our natural resources and landscape coupled with nationally known attractions such as the Flight 93 Memorial, Quecreek Mine Rescue site, state parks and forest land, and the GAP Trail have now made Somerset County a Mecca and destination point for outdoor recreation and tourism.

In order to maintain and fully take advantage of this rather new and growing economic opportunity it is essential to preserve the integrity and character of the region as well as access to our land and water resources. The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) has made significant acquisitions that have become key components of all of this, and coupled with the land holdings of the Somerset County Conservancy, Cambria-Somerset Authority, NPS, and state DCNR lands there is a greater amount of public land or public accessible land in the county than ever before.

However, most of the land that is often used for recreation or access to it is privately controlled. In addition these private land holdings often comprise the majority of the access points to and the viewsheds of the public lands and other land and water utilized for recreation.

Overall the county and the region have been lacking in making efforts to secure public access and viewshed protection. There have been efforts to secure easements along the GAP Trail and a newly created initiative between the WPC and the Somerset Conservation District will attempt to secure public easements for public access and viewshed protection in the Flight 93 corridor. These efforts are in their early stages and currently lack empowerment for staff and funding to be as successful as they need to be.

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Information and education is the key to the future of conservation in Somerset County. Toward those ends efforts have long been underway to create educational opportunities regarding natural resources.

The conservation organizations in Somerset County have sponsored and attended countless public events, meetings and conferences with displays, presentations and information about their efforts.



The Somerset Conservation District has sponsored the Somerset County *Envirothon at Laurel Hill State Park* for over 20 years. The program enables high school students from across the county to both learn and then compete in regard to their knowledge about natural resources and natural processes. The District also conducts additional conservation education programs tailored to school and other youth and adult groups throughout the year.

The Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited and Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team, with support from the Somerset Conservation District, coordinate the Trout In the Classroom program in Somerset County schools where students raise trout and learn what these fish need to survive. The program concludes with the release of the fish into an area waterway and special resource conservation and outdoor programs for the students. The Somerset County Conservancy has environmental education programs available to school groups and others at the Kimberly Run Natural Area. Participants learn about aquatic insects, water quality and forest and land conservation practices.

## EROSION, SEDIMENTATION & STORMWATER CONTROLS



*The Conservation District's demonstration rain garden*

The ability to keep the soil on the land rather than eroding into waterways is an ongoing and key ingredient to maintain both the vitality of Somerset County's land and water.

Earth moving is subject to state oversight and permitting under Chapter 102 of PA's Code 25. The erosion of soil is a natural process, but the goal of the oversight is to minimize soil loss and sediment loading that also carries pollutants into waterways from non-natural sources.

The Somerset Conservation District issues NPDES earth moving permits, and reviews others for completeness. The District works closely with business and earth moving firms involved in the process to assist them in meeting the compliance requirements. The District also performs site visits to ensure that the permit requirements are being met and provides additional field assistance and guidance to assure that the permit guidelines translate into effective on-the-ground performance.

Stormwater runoff and flooding aggravate and can impair erosion and sediment control measures and creates additional erosion and soil loss as well as the transport of pollutants. Somerset County Pheasants Forever Chapter has raised and invested thousands of dollars in plantings that have stabilized hundreds of acres of soil while creating wildlife habitat. The Somerset Conservation District also initiated methods that local citizens can implement to reduce the impacts of runoff and flooding. The District's Rain Barrel Program enables citizens to purchase rain barrels that can be fitted to their homes and business that allow rain water to be slowing dispensed back on the land reducing the impacts of stormwater runoff. The District also has technical assistance available in the construction of rain gardens as well as a demonstration rain garden that offer another local method for citizens to use to reduce the impacts caused by heavy precipitation.



*Casselman River*

## C A S S E L M A N R I V E R

The Casselman River watershed drains much of central and southern Somerset County. The river has an unfortunate history with AMD and other impairments. In 1993 a severe pollution episode, that killed aquatic life and fish, impaired the water quality led to a renewed effort to restore the river. Through the efforts of local, state and federal agencies and organizations such as the Casselman River Watershed Association, the longest tenured watershed organization in the county, the fortunes of the Casselman as a recreational and economic asset are now on the

rise.

The Casselman is now home to an ever increasing population of aquatic and fish life and the creation of the Great Allegheny Passage along much of the river corridor has opened up its recreational opportunities to literally thousands of visitors from around the world.

Ongoing conservation efforts such as AMD passive treatment systems, a limestone doser that reduces AMD and increases alkalinity in the river along with public canoe and boat launches, trail heads and communities now catering to tourism have all put a positive focal point on the waterway that continues to gain support and momentum.

## B E N S C R E E K W A T E R S H E D

The Bens Creek watershed, that encompasses the South Fork and North Fork of Bens Creek, is a primary tributary to the Stonycreek River. The headwaters originating from the Laurel Ridge is of outstanding quality and harbors significant aquatic life including wild brown, brook and rainbow trout.

The lower sections have been altered and impaired from man's intrusions and sources of AMD have impacted sections for decades. However, recent AMD abatement efforts of SCRIP, the Somerset Conservation District, and the PA DEP have now minimized those impairments.

In conjunction with those efforts, the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, that has been an outstanding support partner in the water quality improvements of the Stonycreek River watershed for many years, initiated 20 years ago a long term ongoing stream improvement program in the Bens creek watershed. The chapter, consisting of all volunteers, has designed, funded and constructed stream improvement projects that have increased the fish holding capacity for gamefish such as trout as well as reduced soil loss and sediment impairment in the watershed.

## L A U R E L H I L L C R E E K

The Laurel Hill Creek watershed is one the few waterways in Somerset County that has not suffered from the impacts of resource extraction. Its long winding journey through forest and farm land to its confluence with the Casselman River at the "Turkeyfoot" near Confluence provides boating, fishing and scenic vistas that depict the epitome of what makes the Laurel Highlands region in Somerset County so unique and attractive. The watershed is home to tributaries that contain excellent water quality and wild trout, historic covered bridges, state parks, special regulated angling sections, campgrounds, resorts, and has been and is a ecotourism destination.

Water quantity has been the watershed's primary issue. A variety of uses and users have often stressed the ability of the watershed to maintain a flow that can sustain its aquatic ecosystem. However, with the development of the Laurel Hill Creek Watershed Management Plan, fostered by the efforts of local organizations and state and federal agencies, now provides important data for decision makers to use in protecting the vitality of the watershed and is now available for their use.

## QUEMAHONING RESERVOIR

The Quemahoning Reservoir was created at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to supply water to the steel making industrial complex of Johnstown. The 10 billion gallon capacity impoundment served this purpose for many decades until the late 1990's when the industrial infrastructure of the region began to diminish. In 1997 Bethlehem Steel put the Quemahoning and four other reservoirs in Cambria and Somerset Counties along with over 3,000 acres of land up for sale. Shortly afterward U. S. Congressman John Murtha informed SCRIP of the impending sale and the SCRIP board of directors initiated a successful action plan that eventually led to a monumental effort that secured a public acquisition of these reservoirs and land through a combined effort of the Somerset and Cambria County Commissioners that was consummated in 2000.



*Paddling the Quemahoning*

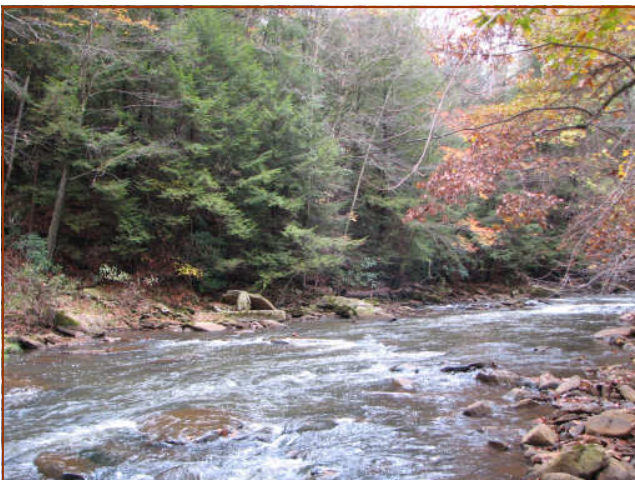
The two counties formed the Cambria-Somerset Authority to manage the water and land resources which includes supplying water to business, industry, and homes and establishment of low impact public water and land recreational opportunities.

What the small handful of conservation minded SCRIP board members knew at the time was that if the public could control major local water resources it could also enhance and direct its economic future. With continued industrial water sales and the implementation of the Quemahoning Pipeline that provides additional water to municipalities, businesses, and homes, along with the recreational development at the reservoirs, the business and economic climate of Somerset County has increased exponentially. Water is the key that turns the economic engines of America and thanks to the vision of conservationists and monumental conservation driven efforts that economic motor is now operating better than ever.

To learn more about the details of the historic public acquisition visit the Somerset Conservation District web site at [www.somersetcd.com](http://www.somersetcd.com) and click on "Quemahoning Reservoir From Private to Public and Beyond."

## QUEMAHONING CREEK

The Quemahoning Creek watershed drains 98 square miles and is impounded by the Quemahoning Reservoir. Just like much of the Stonycreek River watershed it was virtually devoid of life for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century due to AMD. In concert with the efforts occurring on the Stonycreek, initiatives forged through partnerships with the Somerset Conservation District, Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council and Conservancy, Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project, Somerset County Conservancy, Jenner Rod and Gun Club, and state and federal agencies two AMD passive treatment systems were designed, funded, and constructed. The Jenners System was built in 1997 and the Boswell System was completed in 2004.



*Quemahoning Creek*

The reduction of these two major sources of AMD enabled the establishment of a year round trout fishery in the stream as well as significant pollution reduction to the Quemahoning Reservoir. Along with the locally led efforts that constructed public parks such as Orenda Park and the Boswell Lions and Jaycees Community Park along its banks, the Quemahoning Creek now has access to and the ability to provide for land and water recreational opportunities that have been lacking to the citizens of the area for over 100 years.

## C H E S A P E A K E   B A Y   W A T E R S H E D

Many residents as well as visitors to Somerset County are not aware that the county contains a portion of the headwaters to the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The Wills Creek watershed drains to the Potomac River Watershed and the Raystown Branch of the Juniata River sends its water to the Susquehanna River Basin. Much attention and funding nationally and statewide goes toward improving the water of the Chesapeake Bay that include the rivers supplying its water. Impairments from agricultural runoff, urban stormwater runoff, and outdated sewage treatment plant effluent are all sources of serious degradation of the Bay and its tributary waters.

However, in Somerset County none of those impairments are present. The water, as it exits the county, is virtually unimpaired and much of the water quality especially in the Wills Creek watershed, is of exceptional quality.

The Somerset Conservation District's Wills Creek Watershed Assessment project has documented this and proposes many conservation initiatives to preserve the integrity and productivity of both the land and water. The goal of the conservation community is to maintain and protect this water quality so that costly restoration efforts are never required. The current conservation work in these watersheds is aimed at doing just that.



*Signing of the lease agreement.*

## S O M E R S E T   L A K E

Somerset Lake was constructed in 1957 to create angling and boating opportunities in Somerset County that were severely lacking back then. Over its 60 years of existence it has done exactly what it was intended for and also generates over \$1.2 million a year into the local economy from the activities it generates.

However, due to spring seeps under the earthen breast of the dam and the need to meet new flood control regulatory standards, Somerset Lake is now designated a high-hazard impoundment that requires \$8 million of restoration. The dam water level has already been lowered 6 feet to maintain the integrity of the weakened breast and could be lowered further if the structure continues to weaken.

Thanks once again to the efforts of the conservation community, a renewed effort to save the lake and continue its economic stimulus is now underway. The Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) was founded in 2013 as a standing committee of the non-profit Somerset County Conservancy. Raising awareness and funds has been the primary goals of the group and thanks to overwhelming support from citizens, businesses, organizations, and the entire community, as well as county and state elected officials, it has been successful in both. To date over \$100,000 has been raised from individuals, businesses, and sportsmen's groups contributions, the Somerset County Commissioners, also through events such as LAKEFEST, increased awareness and a renewed interest in the lake has occurred.



In addition, the SLAC efforts have led directly to the creation of the Somerset Lake Nature Park, through a lease agreement between Somerset County and the PA Fish and Boat Commission. This agreement now has established Somerset County's first, true public park on the uplands area around the lake. The angling and boating on the lake will continue and will eventually be complemented by many other public amenities such as pavilions, trails, restrooms, new access, and more over the coming years. A walking trail for birding and fishing access and new boat launch have already been built. Although much more is yet to be accomplished, the future of the lake is now actually brighter than ever directly because of the conservation led efforts to save the lake.

To learn more about Somerset Lake and the efforts underway to preserve and enhance it, visit the web site [somersetlakepa.org](http://somersetlakepa.org).



## STONYCREEK RIVER

The Stonycreek River begins at Pious Spring in Berlin and ends at its confluence with the Little Conemaugh River in Johnstown. The river flows for 46 miles and drains 468 square miles. For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the river and most of its tributaries were impaired by abandoned mine drainage (AMD), a water pollution source caused from the extraction process of coal.

In the late 1980's the Somerset Conservation District and the Cambria County Conservation District, along with regional support from the Southern Alleghenies Resource Conservation and Development Council and Conservancy and a handful of local conservation-minded activists, determined that the water in the Upper Conemaugh River watershed, that included the Little Conemaugh River, could be improved from its degraded state. The organizers enlisted the support of the late U. S. Congressman John Murtha in solidifying local, state and federal agency support and created the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) to coordinate the efforts. Over 25 years later, through countless hours of professional and volunteer efforts and over \$12 million of public investment resulting in the design and construction of AMD passive treatment systems, the main stem of the Stonycreek River and several tributaries have rebounded in aquatic life and fish life. The six-site, \$5 million Oven Run AMD abatement project, which was developed through the public-private partnership efforts of SCRIP, is a hallmark of those efforts. The Oven Run AMD Abatement Project was the first of its kind in the United States to treat AMD as the primary water quality impairment and was funded through an innovative partnership between the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection utilizing funds from PL-566 Small Watershed Protection Program, EPA Section 319, and the newly enacted Growing Greener Program. The result has been sustainable recreational development and positive economic impacts to the county and the entire region. The Stonycreek River was named Pennsylvania River of the Year in 2012 for its revival and the results of it now create a destination point for anglers, boaters, whitewater enthusiasts, and provides improved water quality for business and industrial development.

However, the comeback is far from complete. Tributaries such as Paint Creek and Shade Creek still have miles of water impaired by AMD. The Stonycreek River itself still suffers from remaining AMD and in many locations from nutrient and sediment impairments. The treatment systems, having reached their 20-plus year life span, are in dire need of restoration in order to prevent failure and a return of a polluted waterway. The Somerset Conservation District legally committed to the upkeep of these systems in the 1990's and has performed that role well despite limited staff and even more limited funding assistance. A recent PA DEP Growing Greener grant to the District has provided funding support to upgrade the passive treatment systems, but to implement this major project much design, administration, and construction workload is now tasked to the District and its partners such as the PA Association of Conservation District's Technical Assistance Program.

County, state and federal agencies, local watershed groups, non-profits and volunteer groups still struggle to fund, protect and enhance the water quality of the Stonycreek River watershed. The prior successes are considered historic accomplishments that many people said would never occur. The Stonycreek River watershed is vastly improved, but far from a complete restoration. The future sustainability of ongoing success is dependent on citizen and political support continuing to stay the course.

For a more detailed perspective on the historic watershed initiatives see the document "Stonycreek and Upper Conemaugh River Basin Restoration Time Line" on the Somerset Conservation District web site at [www.somersetcd.com](http://www.somersetcd.com).



*Stonycreek River*

## G R E A T   A L L E G H E N Y   P A S S A G E

The Great Allegheny Passage (GAP) Trail runs 150 miles between Pittsburgh and Washington, DC, and contributes over \$40 million in direct spending to the economy of the region. What is not so widely known is the GAP trail began life as the Allegheny Highlands Trail in Somerset County through the organizing and design capacities of the Somerset Conservation District in the 1980's. This innovative project was supported both technically and financially through a unique federal/local partnership led by the Federal Soil Conservation Service through the Resource Conservation and Development Program and National Park Service at the federal level, and the Somerset Conservation District, Somerset County Board of Commissioners, and Somerset County Chamber of Commerce at the local level. The proposed "rail trail" on the Western Maryland Railroad right-of-way was actually devised from a true conservation initiative as a way to raise public awareness of the water quality problems in the Casselman River and further the efforts for a clean-up project. The Conservation District led the efforts to conduct a feasibility study, economic impact assessment, determine property ownership and create technical support and documents for construction. Others from outside Somerset County took note and public and private sector interests began to build upon the success of the trail initiative in Somerset County and the GAP Trail became the eventual result.

The Somerset County portion of the GAP Trail is managed by the Somerset County Parks and Recreation Board. Today the entire GAP Trail is world renowned attracting visitors from around the country and the world. Here again a conservation initiative in Somerset County was at the forefront of not only innovative recreational endeavors, but sound economic investments and substantial return on that investment as well.

## A B A N D O N E D   M I N E   D R A I N A G E   ( A M D )   T R E A T M E N T



Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) treatment sites dot the Somerset County landscape. These projects, along with PA DEP sponsored surface reclamation projects and private sector driven coal refuse pile removal are a result of public and private sector funding, design and implementation that reduce the water quality impairments from historic AMD pollution and have restored water quality in the Stonycreek, Quemahoning, Wells Creek, Bens Creek and Casselman River watersheds.

These waterways are now destination points for local residents and visitors that use them for boating, kayaking, fishing and swimming generating spending that benefits the local economy. They also serve business, industrial and municipal waters needs as well. In many locations the land on which they are constructed is also returning to excellent wildlife habitat. Only a few years ago none of this was possible.

Although much progress has been made there are still many watersheds and sections of rivers that suffer from as of yet unabated sources of AMD. In addition, the treatment systems that have been constructed over the last 20-plus years require oversight and maintenance in order for them to continue to function at their full restoration capacities.

Significant conservation efforts, much of it behind the scenes with little fanfare thanks to local volunteer watershed groups and non-profits, continue to both add new treatment systems as well as maintain those already in place.

The story of AMD abatement in Somerset County is one with a successful past. In order to continue that trend, professional and volunteer conservationists will continue to require support from both the public, private, and political sectors to provide the empowerment to maintain, sustain, and increase the quality and economic productivity of the county's essential water resources.





*Aerial View of Kimberly Run & the adjacent Louie-Beach Wetlands*

## K I M B E R L Y R U N N A T U R A L A R E A

The 373 acre Kimberly Run Natural Area (KRNA) is owned and managed by the Somerset County Conservancy, a non-profit land trust overseen by a volunteer board of directors. The KRNA is open to the public and located just south of Somerset bordering Route 219 and consists of fields, forest, and water in their natural state. Many miles of well marked hiking trails allow visitors to traverse the property. Hunting and fishing are permitted and the Conservancy works in partnership with the PA Game Commission to enhance wildlife habitat for game and non-game species alike.

This showcase property is an excellent example of how land and water can be managed for sustainable low impact use and provide an outdoor experience and get away within easy reach of thousands of people.

## W I N D

With around 200 wind turbines, Somerset County has more than any other PA county. The upside of wind energy is, after offsetting significant carbon-emitting construction costs, it produces less carbon dioxide than fossil fuel power plants. However, there are environmental and economic impacts associated with wind turbines. These include:



--Forest fragmentation. Often placed on previously contiguously forested ridge tops, these industrial projects impact large areas affecting breeding and survival of interior forest species, introduce alien plant communities, and allow access of edge predators into interior forest. Power connections to grid create more cleared corridors.

--Direct kills. Somerset County studies by Bat Conservation International in the early 2000's estimated 50-100 bats killed/ tower/ year. In addition uncommon migrant birds experience episodic, weather related kills.

--High costs. Corporate driven wind power which predominates in the county is dependent on large taxpayer subsidies (up to 75% construction cost) and usually high price per KW, these projects all need backup conventional power sources for low-wind times (wind about 25% efficient in County). There are negligible local tax benefits from the wind industry.

Scenic disruption. While a few turbine fields may have interest, covering many or most ridge tops despoils natural beauty and can impact our important tourist industry.

Why long term concerns:

The U.S. presently has 10,000's of turbines which can potentially create 3-4% of our annual electricity usage. The Department of Energy's goal of 20% renewable energy sources (which presently would be largely wind) could require up to 250,000 turbines. Electricity cannot be transported large distances without resistance loss (i.e. from North Dakota to coastal cities). Therefore a state like PA, and especially the "roof top" county of Somerset could end up with many more turbines. Somerset County, still someday, could be covered with turbines that would still produce only a small percentage of present (much less increasing future) regional power needs.

F O R M O R E I N F O R M A T I O N

**Somerset Conservation District**

6024 Glades Pike Suite 103  
Somerset, PA 15501  
814-445-4652 Ext. 5  
[www.somersetcd.com](http://www.somersetcd.com)

**Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project**

P. O. Box 164  
Windber, PA 15963  
[www.scrippa.org](http://www.scrippa.org)

**Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team**

[www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org/conservation/kcst.html](http://www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org/conservation/kcst.html)

**Shade Creek Watershed Association**

314 Central Ave. #205  
Central City, PA 15926  
[www.shadecreekwatershed.org](http://www.shadecreekwatershed.org)

**Paint Creek Regional Watershed Association**

514 Shady Lane  
Windber, PA 15963

**Wells Creek Watershed Association**

PO Box 39  
Friedens, PA 15541

**Stonycreek-Quemahoning Initiative**

[www.thestonycreek.com](http://www.thestonycreek.com)

**Natural Biodiversity**

[www.naturalbiodiversity.org](http://www.naturalbiodiversity.org)

**Somerset County Chapter 603 Pheasants Forever**

PO Box 309  
Somerset, PA 15501

**Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council**

401 Candlelight Drive  
Ebensburg, PA 15931

**Somerset County Conservancy**

P. O. Box 241  
Somerset, PA 15501  
[www.somersetcountyconservancy.org](http://www.somersetcountyconservancy.org)

**Mountain Laurel Chapter Trout Unlimited**

1745 Regal Drive  
Johnstown, PA 15904  
[www.mltu.org](http://www.mltu.org)

**Casselman River Watershed Association**

215 Tatunka Trail  
Somerset, PA 15501  
[www.casselmanwatershed.org](http://www.casselmanwatershed.org)

**Save Our Allegheny Ridges**

[saveouralleghenyridges.org](http://saveouralleghenyridges.org)

**Allegheny Plateau Audubon Society**

[www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org](http://www.alleghenyplateauaudubon.org)

**Foundation for PA Watersheds**

[www.pennsylvaniawatersheds.org](http://www.pennsylvaniawatersheds.org)

**Benscreek Canoe Club**

[www.benscreekcanooclub.com](http://www.benscreekcanooclub.com)

**Conemaugh Valley Conservancy**

PO Box 218  
Johnstown, PA 15907  
[www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org](http://www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.org)

**Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative**

[www.pecpa.org/program.laurelhighlands-conservation-landscape-initiative](http://www.pecpa.org/program.laurelhighlands-conservation-landscape-initiative)

**Somerset County Sportsmen's League**

904 Stewart Street  
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