

**Volume XXVII
Number 4
Fall 2020**

Save the Date:

January 21– SCRIP Board Meeting through Zoom, 1 pm.
For link, contact:
Melissa Reckner: mrecker@brandywine.org

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Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

Somerset Conservation District Receives Award

by Len Lichvar



Somerset Conservation District staff *left to right front row*, Resource Technician Aimee Steele, District Manager Len Lichvar, Assistant Manager and Financial Administrator, Sue Moon, *Back Row left to right*, Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick, Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Technician, Keith Largent, Agricultural Conservation and Nutrient Management Technician, Don Williams, and Dirt and Gravel and Low Volume Road Technician, Terry Tallion.

Photo by Linda Zug

District Manager Len Lichvar and the Somerset Conservation District staff were recognized with the **2020 Walter Lyon Award** presented by the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals. The award recognizes excellence in professional conservation efforts and outstanding natural resource enhancement project accomplishments.

Trust Fund for Oven Run AMD Passive Treatment System Established by Len Lichvar

A Trust fund to provide long term financial support for the Oven Run AMD Passive Treatment systems on the Stonycreek River has finally become a reality.

The Somerset Conservation District's Oven Run Treatment Sites A, D, E and F Trust Fund is now an official fund with the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies.

The District, in addition to its many water quality improvement efforts and projects, also administers the Chapter 102 erosion and sediment control program, provides technical assistance to the agricultural community, conducts environmental education programs, administers the Dirt and Gravel Road Program for water quality protection and provides administrative and other support for local watershed groups and non-profits.

The fund was established thanks to the long term and ongoing public information and education efforts spearheaded by the Somerset Conservation District.

The fund currently has \$26,830.00 thanks largely to an initial Facebook Fund Raiser initiated by Chad Gontkovic and Coal Tubin in March of 2020. An additional contribution of \$25,000.00 was made by the Somerset County Commissioners in October.

(continued on page 2)

Trust Fund *(continued from page one)*

Charitable donations are now being accepted that will be required to grow the fund over the coming years to support future operation and maintenance and of the systems. The water quality of the Stonycreek River is now more secure and the long term growth of this fund will assist in ensuring that the previous successful efforts to revitalize the recreational and economic future of the Cambria-Somerset region will continue into the future. To donate go to www.cfalleghenies.org.

Official Dedication of Soap Hollow Run Fish Habitat Improvement Project

By Len Lichvar



Conemaugh Township Supervisor Steve Buncich speaks at the Soap Hollow Run Fish Habitat Project Dedication on October 15, 2020 at Greenhouse Park.

Photo by Len Lichvar

The Soap Hollow Run Fish Habitat Improvement project was officially dedicated on October 15, 2020 with a ceremony recognizing the project's contribution to the enhancement of the Class A wild trout stream located in Greenhouse Park in Conemaugh Township Somerset County.

A variety of invited speakers discussed their role in the project that began over 3 years ago through the efforts of the Somerset Conservation District. District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick designed, secured grant funds and oversaw the construction of the project.

The project received volunteer assistance and funding from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited and additional funding came from National Trout Unlimited's Embrace-A -Stream Grant Program, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Forever Wild Grant Program, Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highland's Conservation Landscape Grant Program, and Johnstown Vision Together 2025 River Capture Team Grant program.

Articles in the Johnstown Tribune-Democrat, Somerset Daily American and a segment on WJAC-TV further promoted the efforts of all the partners in enhancing the coldwater resource and the significance of wild trout to the ongoing eco-tourism industry and recreational assets in the Cambria-Somerset region.

Innovative Way to Remove Iron Sludge

by Len Lichvar

The Somerset Conservation District utilized an innovative method to remove iron sludge from the Rock Tunnel AMD treatment system. GAP VAX, of Johnstown, used their special mobile equipment to remove sludge from the wetland portion of the treatment system. The effort proved successful. However, only approximately 33% of the sludge was removed given the funding available that allowed for only one day of operation.

SCRIP contributed funds and the District provided the balance for the experimental effort. This method as well as other options will be examined for potential future sludge removal.

The Rock Tunnel system, located on the South Fork of Bens Creek, was the first AMD passive treatment system that was constructed in the Stonycreek River watershed through the coordinating efforts of SCRIP in 1991. Unfortunately, there is no official entity obligated to maintain this system and the Conservation District has voluntarily assumed the responsibility for it despite limited staff and even more limited funds to continue the ongoing operation and maintenance that this system requires.

Remembering Thurman Korn

by Melissa Reckner

On October 28, 2020, SCRIP and its partners lost a watershed hero: Thurman Korn, who passed away at the age of 90.

Thurman grew up in the Wells Creek watershed and was a truck driver by trade. He taught himself about Abandoned Mine Drainage, restoration needs, grant writing, political prowess, and more, simply because he wanted to bring life back to the stream in which he played - but never fished - as a child.

Wells Creek is approximately a 9-mile long, coldwater tributary to the Stonycreek River, Pennsylvania's River of 2012. Like many other streams, Wells Creek was decimated by AMD and sewage.

In the 1970s, the Somerset Township Municipal Authority formed and installed a sewage collection and treatment system. To counteract the AMD, the Wells Creek Watershed Association (WCWA) was created in 1999 with Thurman serving as president of WCWA from 1999-2014.



Thurman Korn at the Wells Creek Watershed Association's system, Adams #7. *Photo by Melissa Reckner*

Some of the early members had been stocking trout in Wells Creek at Listie for several years, but they had to feed the trout since the stream did not support a food source! Under Thurman's leadership, the WCWA began working with landowners and securing grants, particularly from Growing Greener, to monitor discharges, secure permits, delineate wetlands, remove refuse piles, and design and construct treatment systems. The WCWA also grew its membership to well over 100 members, conducted litter cleanups throughout the watershed, and combatted vandalism at treatment systems. Thurman was involved with all of these activities.

In 2002, Thurman led a tour of the Wells Creek watershed for about 50 people, including DEP Deputy Secretary Eric Thumma, the township supervisors, and State Representative Bob Bastian to further connect leaders to the important work WCWA was completing. Since then, WCWA successfully installed three treatment systems, which they still diligently monitor and maintain, and brought Wells Creek back to its former glory! Every year, the WCWA holds a popular chicken BBQ on Super Bowl Sunday to raise funds to stock trout in Wells Creek, which has become a nice fishery.

In 2004, on behalf of the WCWA, Thurman accepted the Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence from DEP Secretary Katie McGinty for bringing the community together and restoring water quality and the subsequent fishery to Wells Creek. Thurman was quoted then as saying, "As great as this award is, and it is great, we really appreciate it, but I can tell you this – it does not hold a candle to the satisfaction that we have received from having been instrumental in cleaning up our boyhood stream." *(continued on page 4)*

Thurman Korn *(continued from page 3)*

Always promoting WCWA and its successes and challenges, Thurman participated in countless meetings and events. He attended many Ohio River Watershed Celebrations and won cash awards for WCWA at that event, multiple times. He was proud to note that he secured eight consecutive mini-grants (2005-2012) from the Dominion Foundation / Western PA Conservancy for WCWA projects. I recall Ben Wright, former Assistant Director of WPC's Freshwater Conservation Program, stating that was a record, at least at that time, and the only reason Thurman stopped applying was that Dominion no longer offered funding to Somerset County groups.

Thurman's dedication to Wells Creek and the region was inspiring, and he was happy to share his knowledge, regularly assisting with education and outreach programs for school students. I remember how he laughed when completing titrations that changed colors and caused young children to claim he was "a wizard!"

While perhaps best known for his role with WCWA, Thurman was a long-time board member of SCRIP. He joined SCRIP in 1997 and was Head of the River Keepers, helping to monitor waterways in Somerset County. Thurman served as SCRIP's Treasurer from about 2000-2013, until he feared his failing eyesight would hinder his work. Thurman also served as the chairman of the Water Resources Committee of the Southern Alleghenies RC&D Council and as a board member of the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy and Somerset County Conservancy for years. He was the long-time editor of the WCWA's newsletter and always promoted membership and involvement with conservation organizations. In 2010, Thurman was named the Somerset County Conservationist of the Year by the Somerset County Sportsmen's League.

Thurman was a bright spot and friend to many of us. He is missed and will be remembered fondly.

Frog Week 2020 Starting the Week of December 13



Pickerell Frog

An upcoming event might be of interest to outdoor enthusiasts. Aaron Capouellez, a Johnstown native who is a communication major with a minor in biology at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown is planning to release his project, **Frog Week 2020**, the week of December 13. This project is part of an internship designed to educate people on the native frogs and toads of Pennsylvania and promote their conservation.

Aaron and his crew of about eight people spent six months investigating these animals, learning from one another as they pursued these creatures in our area. They filmed in many places and documented frogs in unthinkable environments, like abandoned tunnels, on mountains, and even suburban backyards.

The goal of the project is to raise awareness and motivate people to care more about frogs and toads. He feels that the more the public is educated about the importance of native frogs and toads that it will help with their conservation. *(continued on page 5)*

Frog Week (continued from page 4)

Aaron said, “These amphibians don’t get the headlines that many mammals and birds receive but they matter to all of us for their role in our ecosystem. Without frogs, many predators would starve and many insects that are harmful to humans like mosquitoes and ticks would continue to grow in numbers and get out of control. Frogs are a natural pest control and they can live among us eating house invaders like spiders, stink bugs, small rodents and cockroaches.”



American Toad

Some of the featured animals are the pickerel frog (pictured on page 4) as well as bull frog and grey tree frog. The American toad (pictured to the left), will be familiar to many.

Aaron will be sharing videos on his YouTube channel *PA Woods and Forests*. He is hoping that this project can help him work with non-profit organizations next year as he documents frogs and toads along the rivers and waterways and continues to raise awareness and educate the public about the frogs and toads of our state.

This project will feature frogs and toads in their natural environment as most people will choose to observe them. For those whose interest with amphibians goes further, it is important to know the PA regulations about collecting and possessing specimens. A fishing license is required for some while a Scientific Collectors’ Permit is required for others, and there are limitations. Be sure to consult the PA Fish and Boat Commission website and PA Fishing Summary Handbook for current laws and regulations.

Join or renew* SCRIP today!

Name _____
Street Address _____ City _____
State/Zip _____
Phone _____ Date _____ Do you wish to volunteer? _____

To renew or become a Member, please complete Parts 1 and 2 below.

Part 1. Check your desired membership level.

_____ Student (\$6) _____ Individual (\$15) _____ Family (\$20)
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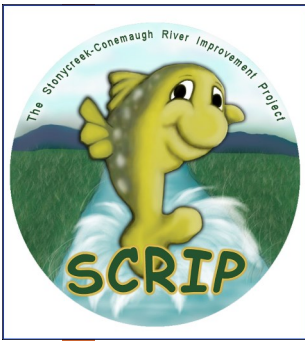
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Make your check payable to **SCRIP**, or for a tax-deductible contribution, make the check to **Southern Alleghenies Conservancy/ SCRIP**. * If you are not sure of your membership status contact SCRIP’s secretary at info@scripPA.org. Send donations to: **SCRIP, P.O. Box 164, Windber, PA 15963**



SCRIP
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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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