

**Volume XXVIII
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Save the Date:

January 20– SCRIP Board Meeting, on Zoom, at 3 pm. Our secretary, Melissa Reckner, will send a link closer to the date. If you are not on the board and would like to attend, contact her at: mreckner@brandywine.org to receive the link.

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Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

SCRIP's 30th Anniversary Tour by Len Lichvar

The Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) celebrated its 30th Anniversary milestone on September 29, 2021 with a public tour of Oven Run AMD Passive Treatment System Site D (Oaks Trail) and an evening social gathering at the Crows Nest Restaurant.

The tour was attended by nearly 50 interested citizens, conservationists, agency staff and two County Commissioners among others. Site D was the first of the hallmark Oven Run AMD projects constructed in 1995. The system is currently being completely reconstructed by the Somerset Conservation District. District Manager Len Lichvar and Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick along with Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District Technical Assistance Group Professional Engineer Danielle Kalp and Conservation Technician Phil Wilson provided the background, current status and function of the system to the attendees.

Information on the Oven Run Sites A, D, E and F Trust Fund was also provided to all participants and donations were collected that will be added to the Fund that will be used for long term future operation and maintenance of the systems.

The past 30 years have seen tremendous progress in water quality improvement in the upper Conemaugh River watershed. That success began with the formation of SCRIP in 1991 and has led to countless additional new and never before available recreational and economic opportunities for the Cambria-Somerset region.

In order to sustain and continue that progress SCRIP, and its components of volunteers and agency partners, will need to continue their efforts for many more years and anniversaries to come.

SCRIP founding Board Member Joe Gorden with the original SCRIP logo at the 30th Anniversary event.



Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Conservation Technician, Phil Wilson, *far left*, explains the reconstruction and function of Oven Run Site D to attendees of the SCRIP 30th Anniversary Celebration Tour. *Both Photos by Len Lichvar*

Editorial by the SCRIP Board of Directors

After debate, the U. S. Congress passed and President Biden signed, the federal Infrastructure Legislation into law on November 15, 2021. The bill aims to revitalize the nation's roads, bridges, waterways and public transit. As part of the bill the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) was reauthorized to allow for extractive fees to continue to be used to reclaim abandoned mine lands and to treat abandoned mine drainage (AMD) that pollutes our local waterways such as the Stonycreek and Little Conemaugh Rivers. These national expenditures are really an operation and maintenance plan which shifts more federal funding toward waterway infrastructure.

Notice that the bill mentions "waterways" which not only provide transportation, but also recreation as well as industrial and drinking water. Our public good thrives when infrastructure is built and maintained. The need for infrastructure is not new. Remember the Erie Canal and the Horseshoe Curve which brought the trains across the mighty Alleghenies. Congressman John Murtha understood this need when he created the Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) in 1991. He charged it with making Johnstown's rivers swimmable, fishable and drinkable by 2000. Although the task has been daunting and is ongoing, local progress has occurred as witnessed by community facilities such as Greenhouse Park, events such as the Stonycreek Rendezvous and businesses such as Coal Tubin'.

The historic improvement of water quality in the Stonycreek River by means of water treatment infrastructure such as the Oven Run AMD passive treatment systems that prevent 433,620,000 gallons a year of AMD laden water from reaching our rivers, provide clean water for industry, homes and has restored over 20 miles of fishery.

The resulting eco-tourism finds a network of bicycle and hiking trails along our waterways which are being revived, in part, via these infrastructure projects. The newest project is the active mine drainage treatment plant to address the legacy deep mines along the Little Conemaugh River. The successful completion of this large infrastructure project, in the headwaters near Portage, will further clean up rivers all the way to Pittsburgh and beyond.

Like treatment of drinking water, our network of AMD treatment facilities is a vital component of the national infrastructure. AMD water treatment facilities represent an investment that must be maintained similar to bridges, roads and buses. The benefit of clean water adds a marked improvement to the quality of life around our region and to the pride that we take in our outdoor mecca of fishing, kayaking, biking and scenic splendor.



Retired DEP Watershed Manager and SCRIP board member, Malcolm Crittenden, received the Mayfly Award (pictured left) at the 2021 PA Abandoned Mine Reclamation conference. As one of five DEP watershed managers, Malcolm helped local watershed groups navigate the Growing Greener grant process so these watershed groups could install passive treatment systems to clean up their streams. In addition, he oversaw the design, construction and maintenance of water treatment systems on forfeited mine sites. The final leg of this widespread "treatment complex" included the regulation of trusts set up by coal companies to ensure the perpetual treatment of acid mine drainage at permitted mine sites. Malcolm is representative of the many ways in which the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has partnered with citizens and businesses to restore our streams in Pennsylvania.

Reconstruction of Oven Run Passive Treatment Systems Hits Another Milestone

by Len Lichvar



The District has already completed the rebuild of Sites E and F (Hawk View). The completion of Site D leaves Site A as the last of the four systems to be completed. Work on Site A already began while Site D was underway and it is expected to be completed by mid-December.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) reconstruction of Site B, which was originally designed, funded and constructed by the agency, has been underway for several months and is also expected to be completed by the end of December 2021.

When these goals are achieved it will mark a hallmark of water quality improvement that has been a heavy lift for all involved. Although the finish line has not been crossed the vastly improved water quality of the Stonycreek River should be sustained, if not increased, once all these systems are collectively back on line.

Left to Right, Somerset Conservation District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick and Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District's Technical Assistance Group Professional Engineer, Danielle Kalp and Technician Phil Wilson complete a technical review of the system.

Photo by Len Lichvar

The continuing saga of the reconstruction of the Oven Run AMD passive treatment systems in Somerset County has hit another milestone with the completion of Site D (Oaks Trail) in November. Although the planting of a wetland within the system will not occur until spring 2022, the site has been deemed substantially complete. In addition to the system itself the interpretive walking trail also was improved and reinstated. New and updated signage will be created and installed next year.

Site D was the first of the Oven Run systems to be designed and constructed in 1995. It along with the other collectively named systems have all reached their effective life expectancy over the last several years. The Somerset Conservation District was legally obligated in the 1990's to operate and maintain the systems forever.



In order to keep the passive treatment system working properly, the compost must be changed and the limestone must be cleaned periodically. These systems were designed to last about 20 years before needing to clean the stone or change the compost. In this picture, Danielle Kalp shows examples of limestone after it has been cleaned (left) and before (right) during the 30th Anniversary Celebration Tour (page one).

Public Input Needed on Bens Creek Conservation Plan

by Adam Cotchen

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) received a grant from the Coldwater Heritage Partnership to complete a planning project for the Bens Creek watershed in Cambria and Somerset Counties. The Coldwater Heritage Partnership welcomes public involvement in the development and planning of the project. To provide an opportunity for public input, WPC created a story map to provide background information on the watershed, and the goals and methods of the project. Please follow the link below or **scan the code at the end of the article** to check out the story map, and find out how you can help: <https://tinyurl.com/28yywyzk>

Bens Creek is a High-Quality/Exceptional Value tributary to the Stonycreek River in the Kiski-Conemaugh drainage located in northwestern Somerset and southwestern Cambria counties. Bens Creek is a prized coldwater fishery, offering both wild and stocked trout fishing opportunities, adjacent to the city of Johnstown. Nearly seven miles of stream in the watershed are stocked annually by PA Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC). The Bens Creek watershed contains nearly 60 miles of naturally reproducing trout streams, including 10 miles of Class A waters.

Despite the abundance of wild trout and favorable water quality found in the watershed, there is certainly much room for improvement. According to PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) surveys, nearly nine miles of stream in the watershed are listed as impaired and do not meet designated aquatic life uses.

The key partners in this project are the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU) and Somerset Conservation District (SCD). This project relies on public input from stakeholders like you. Local knowledge is the best source of information. Do you know of a problematic culvert, an eroding streambank, or other water quality issue? Are you interested in a stream improvement project on your property? If so, please add it to the story map, or feel free to reach out by email to acotchen@paconserve.org with any comments or questions.

This project was financed in part by a grant from the Coldwater Heritage Partnership on behalf of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (Environmental Stewardship Fund), the PA Fish and Boat Commission, the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, and the PA Council of Trout Unlimited.



Que Recreation Manager Passed Away



Ken Dranzik passed away on November 6, 2021. Anyone who had an event at the Quemahoning Reservoir will recognize him at once. In this photo, "Big" Ken is assisting with a fish structure habitat project. See page 5 for a personal perspective on Ken.

Photo by Len Lichvar

A Personal Perspective on "Big" Ken

by Len Lichvar

"Big" Ken, as he was known to everyone, was the Quemahoning Recreation Manager for SB2W's. Through that role he became well known to countless users of the recreation facilities at the Quemahoning Reservoir. Without question as the exponential expansion in use of the Que escalated Ken's responsibilities, interaction and persona grew along with it.

Although most met Ken for the first time in that role I actually got to know Ken in his preceding life. He was formerly the manager and mentor for troubled youth at Adelphoi Greystone House. Ken would often supervise these young people as they assisted with a variety of community service projects in the region. A number of these endeavors involved assistance in several local community projects I was involved in. Ken's willingness and desire to always help others help themselves was readily apparent to me back then.

What was also obvious to me was that Ken was well educated and even better informed than most regarding

what was going on around him.

He more than once referenced to me that he knew he had the job he did because of a small handful of conservationists, SCRIP and a few other conservation agencies that initiated and pursued the public acquisition of the Manufacturers Water Company properties back when few others realized what success in that monumental task would achieve. Ken respected that vision and effort.

Among the many now well documented recreational, economic and quality of life enhancements that acquisition created was the opportunity for so many to meet a man, and his family, so dedicated to sharing a passion in the outdoors and committed to making their experience in that environment as much fun and as positive experience as it could be.

No doubt Ken's responsibilities will continue to be handled in some manner. Those responsibilities can be replaced. But, you will never replace "Big" Ken.

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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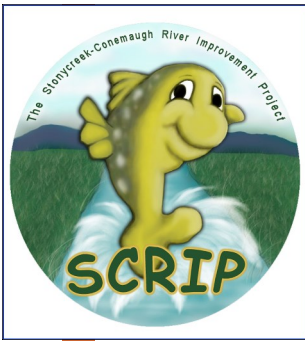
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Make your check payable to **SCRIP**, or for a tax-deductible contribution, make the check to **Southern Alleghenies Conservancy/ SCRIP**. * *If you are not sure of your membership status contact SCRIP's secretary at info@scripPA.org. Send donations to: SCRIP, P.O. Box 164, Windber, PA 15963*



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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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