

**Volume XXVIX
Number 4
Fall 2022**

Dec 19– Deadline for Watershed Mini Grants. For details: [Western Pennsylvania Conservancy \(waterlandlife.org\)](http://www.westernpennsylvaniaconservancy.org)

Jan 19– SCRIP board meeting, Windber Hotel, 4pm.

March 11– NatureWorks, BottleWorks, Johnstown, 10am-2pm. (See this page for more details.)

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Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

Abandoned Mine Drainage Update by Len Lichvar



Excavation during the upgrades at the Rock Tunnel AMD treatment site on the South Fork of Bens Creek.

Photo by Greg Shustring

The Somerset Conservation District’s ongoing and never ending operation and maintenance of AMD treatment systems in Somerset County continues with the completion of upgrades and repairs to the piping as well as significant sludge removal at the Rock Tunnel AMD treatment system located on the South Fork of Bens Creek. Both upgrades were funded through a WPCAMR Quick Response Grant. The repair work was contracted to and completed by Whitehorse Excavating and InnoH2O Solutions.

The District continued its now many year long efforts to secure land access and a

permit for the final phase of the Lamberts Run AMD project. After years of unsuccessful negotiations on both fronts the District has asked its project consultant, Hedin Environmental, to redesign and relocate the project on another adjacent parcel of land. If feasible this would require piping of the discharge and the re-permitting of the project.

At Oven Run Site F (Hawk View) clogged piping at one of the sediment ponds has caused the short circuiting of a portion of the system. A contract will soon be awarded for repairs and installation of an additional valve. The funding for this needed project comes from the District’s Special Project allotment of money that comes from the State Conservation Commission by way of the Pennsylvania Legislature’s allocation of District funding in the state budget.

NatureWorks Returns

After a brief hiatus because of the pandemic, NatureWorks is returning to the BottleWorks from 10 AM – 2 PM on Saturday, March 11, 2023. This FREE, family-oriented event introduces guests to nearly two dozen conservation groups and agencies working in the Laurel Highlands and allows visitors to learn, often through hands-on activities, about local natural resources and outdoor recreation opportunities. SCRIP is a proud sponsor of NatureWorks and will be present at the event.

*Melissa Reckner and Sue Konvolinka
NatureWorks Organizers*



An oil absorbent boom placed in Oven Run just upstream from the intake for the Oven Run AMD Treatment System Site A.

Photo by Len Lichvar

On October 27, an oil leak was discovered at Highland Tank and Manufacturing Company in Stoystown and fuel oil spilled into the surrounding soil and Oven Run. This was a result of an unaddressed piping issue from a previous holding tank system. Len Lichvar, District Manager, Greg Shustrick, Watershed Specialist from the Somerset Conservation District and Phil Wilson, Conservation Technician from the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts, joined representatives from Somerset County Emergency Management, PAD DEP and EPA at the Oven Run Site A water intake location to assess the potential impact to the system and the Stonycreek River.

The 2,000 gallons of heating oil fuel that spilled into Oven Run has necessitated that Oven Run AMD Treatment System Site A be turned off in order to assure that no oil contamination enters the system. The full impact of the sampling data documented significant improved water quality entering the Stonycreek River as result of the reconstruction efforts is now continually being compromised as a direct result of this incident. The District continues to monitor the status of the cleanup efforts.



Josh Fox (left) and Len Lichvar at the screening of “Gasland” in Boswell in 2010.

Photo by Melissa Reckner

It took almost 14 years and filmmaker Josh Fox’s documentary and Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro’s legal charges to make it happen, but Cabot Oil and Gas has agreed to pay 16.29 million dollars to Pennsylvania American Water to construct a public water system for the residents of Dimock, Pennsylvania.

Some of you may remember, others no doubt have forgotten and yet more do not know that SCRIP invited and hosted nationally known film maker Josh Fox and presented one of the first public airings of the acclaimed documentary “Gasland.” Fox came to North Star High School in Boswell to personally present the landmark film. SCRIP initiated this effort to draw the public’s attention to the potential impacts of improperly regulated unconventional gas well drilling in Pennsylvania.

For years, despite what the documentary accurately portrayed and is now confirmed by the settlement, the company denied responsibility for the damage violation of the Clean Streams Law.

For more detailed information on this nationally known water quality impairment that SCRIP helped focus attention on, visit: [‘Gasland’ driller will pay millions for new water system in Dimock | StateImpact Pennsylvania \(npr.org\)](http://StateImpactPennsylvania.com) The documentary “Gasland” is available for viewing on YouTube. [If you have not ever watched it before, you should.](#)



**Len Lichvar, Vice-Chairman of SCRIP,
Elected President of
PA Council of Trout Unlimited**

Len, seen here, checking the pH of a waterway.

Photo by Aimee Steele

SCRIP Vice – Chairman and Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited member Len Lichvar has been elected President of the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited (PATU). Len previously served as the Co-Chairman of PATU’s Trout Policy Committee and was the Western Regional Vice President.

In this expanded volunteer capacity Len will be responsible for overseeing all state council operations including supervising two state council staff members. He will chair meetings of the Council’s Executive Committee that considers recommendations from the Council’s various sub-committees on everything from trout policy, conservation, women’s diversity, membership, development, youth education, communications and more. The Council also facilitates the bi-annual statewide Coldwater Conference, administers project funding programs, coordinates the Trout In the Classroom Program, publishes a quarterly newsletter and works closely with National Trout Unlimited on state and national issues.

PATU is comprised of 49 local Trout Unlimited chapters and 17,000 members across the state. The PA Council is the largest Trout Unlimited State Council in the country.

Penguin Court Offers “Winter Sleeps” Series on Select Animals Found in Pennsylvania

by Melissa Reckner



Penguin Court, a private preserve of the Brandywine Conservancy, is organizing a “Winter Sleeps” virtual series that will highlight the special winter adaptations and survival skills of select animals found in Pennsylvania. Hear from experts who will share information about amphibians and reptiles, bees, bears, bats, and shrews. These virtual presentations will be held Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. from January 25 to February 22. Registration for each program is required to receive the Zoom link and may be completed at

www.brandywine.org/conservancy/events.

Presentations will be recorded and shared with registrants a few days after the live event. These are “Pay What You Wish” programs with proceeds benefiting Penguin Court’s education and outreach.

A Gas Leak on Rager Mountain Has Been Plugged

A gas leak on Rager Mountain, Cambria County, first reported on November 6, has been plugged. Initially it was reported as plugged on November 17 but gas was still detected the next day. The leak was eventually capped on November 19.

The company does not know what caused the leak, but if their preliminary estimate of 100 million cubic feet per day over eleven days is accurate, that would put this leak in the category of major gas leaks by other companies in recent years.

The gas that leaked was natural gas used in homes for heating and cooking. This type of gas is mostly methane, a potent greenhouse gas, which over time is about 25 times worse than CO₂, the main greenhouse gas.

Residents near the woody remote site were warned about the leak and a no-fly zone was established within a mile of the site. The air wouldn't explode since the gas dissipates quickly so it wasn't a public safety threat, but residents did report hearing a loud hiss and the smell of gas; some reported headaches.

Concert for Conservation Update

SCRIP members were part of an enthusiastic crowd of 150 to 175 people from more than 15 conservation and recreation groups who attended the Concert for Conservation on September 17 to celebrate our region's progress in cleaning up area waterways and other environmental improvements.

The concert was headlined by Buffalo Rose (*pictured*) with other performances by JD & Cindy and The Meanwhile Trio. Gillian Hurt, a volunteer for many of the concerts held at the park said, "It was nice to see so many like-minded people who represent the many facets of conservation in our state come together and celebrate their achievement with uplifting music and great food."



Gas Leak at Rager Mountain storage facility owned by Equitrans Midstream in Cambria County.

Photo by PADEP

The company will do a root cause investigation to determine what happened. But one of the biggest concerns, reported by Reid Frazier in his story of the incident, is that the Department of Environmental Protection had done a routine inspection just ten days before the leak occurred. What happened between those days to cause the leak and how can it be prevented in the future?

For more details, see Reid Frazier's reports for *The Allegheny Front* [here](#) and [here](#).

Brad Clemenson, a primary organizer of the event, reported that the concert cleared more than \$1,968. Half of that will go to the trust fund at the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies that supports future maintenance of the abandoned-mine drainage in the Stonycreek watershed. Planning will start soon for another concert in 2023.



Company Seeking Variance to Build Solar Farm in Somerset County

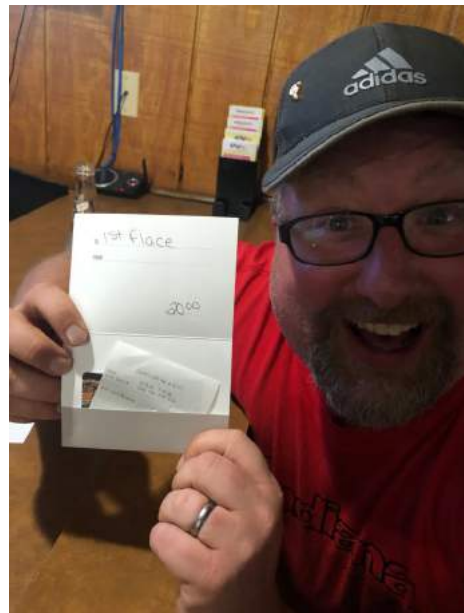


A property in Conemaugh Township, Somerset County may be the site of a 3-megawatt solar farm, if a variance is approved. The site, near the town of Jerome, is located near the Route US 219 interchange.

Sunrise Energy, based in Pittsburgh, is seeking a variance because the land is located in a commercial and light-industrial zone that is not currently zoned for solar farm development.

The energy produced would be directed into First Energy's Penelec territory and their distribution system. Three megawatts is the amount of power needed to supply about 1500 homes but larger customers would use a substantial portion of that.

The company has solar farms in Mercer and Lawrence counties.



SCRIP Chairman, Tom Clark, shows off 1st Place winnings in trivia night contest held after the SCRIP meeting at the Country Inn in South Fork on September 15. He was ably assisted by Jeff Sarver and Larry Hutchinson as they rung in their answers like Ken Jennings! Great work, guys!

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.

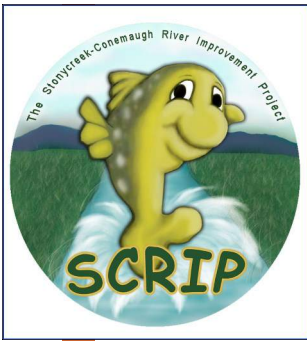
<input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$6)	<input type="checkbox"/> Individual (\$15)	<input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$20)
<input type="checkbox"/> Club/Small Business (\$50)	<input type="checkbox"/> Patron (\$50)	<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining (\$100)
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor (\$500)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime (\$1000)	

Part 2. Select Option A OR Option B:

A. I am fine receiving an electronic version of the newsletter for the cost listed above for my membership level. My email address is: _____
(Please mail your check in this amount to the address below.)

B. I would like to receive a mailed copy of the newsletter. Add \$5 to membership cost listed above.
(Please mail the membership fee plus \$5 mailing fee to the address below.) Total Cost \$ _____

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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www.scrippa.org

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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