

**Volume XXX
Number 4
Fall 2023**

Save the Date:

Jan 16– SCRIP board meeting, Windber Hotel, 3 pm.

Feb 10– SCRIP & other conservation organizations staff information tables at JSO. *(See page 3.)*

Mar. 9– NatureWorks at BottleWorks, 10am-2 pm. *(See page 3.)*

April 22-26– [WVA Mine Drainage Symposium and Congress](#). Morgantown, WVA

In This Issue:

Conservationist Awards	2
NatureWorks	3
JSO & SCRIP	3
Water Infrastructure Workshop	4-5
<i>(cont. from page one)</i>	
People of SCRIP	6

Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

Water Infrastructure Financing Workshop Held at the Johnstown Area Heritage Association on November 29

John Wenzel of the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy along with John Stephen from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Water Network, The Water Center at the University of Pennsylvania and the Environmental Finance Center sponsored a workshop on Water Infrastructure Financing on November 29 at the Johnstown Area Heritage Discovery Center from 9am-1 pm.

The **Southwestern PA Commission (SPC)** “helps counties, cities, municipalities and townships access more than \$35 billion state and federal transportation and economic development funds allocated to the region through 2045.” Its Environmental Programs Manager Cathy Tulley, described the organization and cited Act 167, Stormwater Management, as its initial focus.

Regional Water Challenges

Johnstown City Manager Ethan Imhoff cited municipal fragmentation as a reason it was difficult to devise a comprehensive approach to issues in Cambria County. There are sixty different municipalities, boroughs, and townships, comprised of 1000 or less people. Johnstown itself has 20-25 municipalities with strains on their budgets. With police, fire and others taking precedence, stormwater management usually ends up last. The working group’s stormwater plan for the region needs to pursue funding and is looking for DEP support.

The Cambria Somerset Authority (CSA) was formed “to continue to provide water resource for industrial and potable water users in Cambria and Somerset Counties, while simultaneously providing diverse



SCRIP Chairman Adam Cotchen presented Protecting Source Water with Large Woody Material Restoration at the workshop. *(See section on page 4.)*

recreational opportunities for the benefit of the region.” Jim Greco, representing CSA, began his talk by crediting SCRIP and Len Lichvar for much of the river cleanup that made recreation possible. Two principles of cost and recreation (low impact) has been guiding them lately. The Quemahoning Reservoir (The Que) has become an important recreation area providing boating, fishing, and other sports. The interest in swimming has led to a beach expansion. With conservation in mind, over 2000 fish habitat structures have been built. However, litter, especially from styrofoam cups is a concern. *(continued on page 4)*

Dr. William Kimmel Named Outstanding Professional Coldwater Conservationist

by Melissa Reckner



Melissa Reckner and Dr. Kimmel, as he accepts his award. *Submitted photo*

Dr. William Kimmel, professor emeritus of Biological and Environmental Sciences at California University of Pennsylvania (now known as PennWest California) was named the 2023 Outstanding Professional Coldwater Conservationist by the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited.

“Doc” is well known and respected among non-profit conservation organizations in the area, as he and his students have often assisted with biological surveys at a huge cost savings to these groups.

Doc has dedicated his life and career to education and research that evaluates and protects coldwater habitats and the life within them. He has dozens of publications with a special focus on mine drainage and acid rain impacts on macroinvertebrate and fish communities in southwestern Pennsylvania. His decades of genetics work highlight the population fragmentation and inbreeding of brook trout in the Laurel Highlands, as well as the impact of climate change on these vulnerable communities.

During his decades of teaching, Doc has mentored hundreds of students, many of whom pursued careers in wildlife and fisheries management. His charges remember him fondly and comment on the wealth of knowledge they gained from him. Even those of us who did not have him as an instructor recognize his extensive knowledge and passion for protecting coldwater streams and appreciate his willingness to investigate and problem solve.

Doc hasn't slowed down in retirement! He still regularly participates in fish and macroinvertebrate surveys, and he is always open to chatting about the latest projects and science..

Congratulations, Dr. Kimmel!



Lifetime Conservation Award Presented

At the annual meeting in Mill Hall the Pennsylvania Council of Trout unlimited presented a special lifetime conservation award to the late Randy Buchanan, for his service as the long time President of the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MLTU) and his active involvement in countless coldwater conservation projects in the Cambria, Somerset and Bedford County region. Accepting the award are L to R, MLTU member Jill Roberts, MLTU Vice-President Shane Rudnik, MLTU President Dave Maher, Randy's wife and MLTU Treasurer Pat Buchanan, MLTU member and Randy's niece Becky Buchanan and niece Kim Lardieri. *Photo by Len Lichvar*

NATURE WORKS

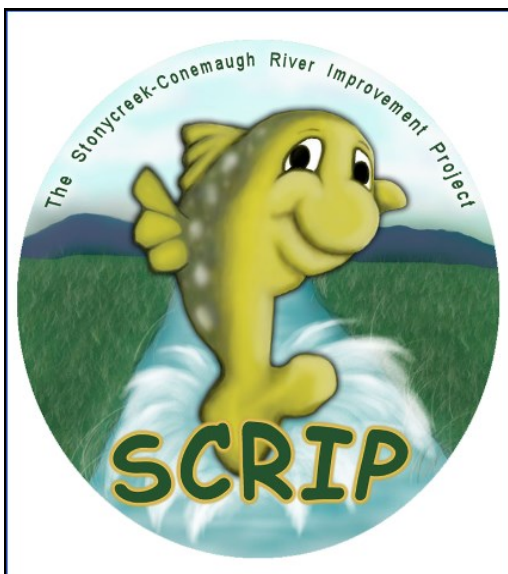
NatureWorks will be held Saturday, March 9 at the BottleWorks Ethnic Arts Center in the Cambria City section of Johnstown from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. This free, family-oriented event is meant as a cure for “Cabin Fever” and will showcase over 20 local conservation organizations and state agencies that are working to restore and promote our region’s local natural resources. Learn how to correctly install a bluebird box with the Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania, view live macroinvertebrates and see how anglers tie

artificial flies to mimic them with MLTU, create chalk colored with iron oxide recovered from abandoned mines with SCRIP, make an animal track booklet with Penguin Court to take home so you can identify tracks in the snow and mud, learn about local whitewater recreation opportunities with Benscreek Canoe Club, and more! Stop by and say, “Hello!”

NatureWorks Pairs with Johnstown Symphony Orchestra

by Melissa Reckner

The appeal of NatureWorks drifted to the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra, whose staff is working with NatureWorks organizers Sue Konvolinka and Melissa Reckner to host “Growing Our Future” before the JSO’s February 10th concert: “Classics with Curtis Stewart” at 7:30 p.m. at the Pasquerilla Performing Arts Center at UPJ. Nine organizations, including SCRIP, will be present before and during intermission of the concert to share news of their work, drum up some membership, and promote local natural resources. Displays will be geared towards adults. Get your tickets at www.johnstownsymphony.org.



SCRIP Needs Your Support!

The number of SCRIP members has dwindled over the last several years and is half of what it was in 2017 despite outreach to past members and renewal reminders. SCRIP currently has 34 dues-paying members. Dues help SCRIP cover its basic operating costs. Please consider supporting SCRIP as a dues-paying member. If you’re not sure of your membership status, please email info@scripPA.org.

Workshop *(continued from page one)*

Continued progress is essential especially since quality of life improvements attract larger corporations. Companies want to know what is available for their employees in their free time.

Restoring Rivers with Large Woody Materials

Starting with a picture of early America showing an old growth forest with various tree species of different sizes and ages, some on the ground, he then showed pictures of a tree being felled and then sent downstream on area rivers on large timber rafts. In the late 1800's, these rivers were declared public highways and were dug out and dynamited to clear the channel to get the forest products to market. Good for markets but not so for aquatic ecosystems.

Adam Cotchen, **SCRIP Chairman** and Watershed Scientist with the **Western Pennsylvania Conservancy**, began the description of the Large Woody Material Restoration Project on Higgins Run, one of the projects that the conservancy has been doing for the last 10 years. In addition to aquatic habitat restoration, it helps to mitigate downstream flooding and improves connections between aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems.

Generally speaking, the process involves trees that are strategically cut down or maneuvered into streams. Branches are caught or woven into these structures. Leaf packs, sediment, and other debris carried by stream movement add to the structure. This creates habitat for aquatic ecosystems, protects the stream banks, and creates wetlands and vernal pools. These added materials cut down the stream velocity and mitigate flood risk. In addition, this work is very cost effective, allowing for watershed-scale habitat improvements to be completed for a fraction of the cost of traditional habitat improvement methods. *(See pictures of streams before and after work is done on page 5.)*

Much of the work has been done in the Allegheny National Forest. Data is being collected and always tweaked to improve effectiveness. They want to get the word out to "Please leave trees in and along the streams" and have posted signs to inform the public.

Water Infrastructure Technical Assistance

The **PA Rural Water Association's** Kurt Wagner explained their association's mission to work cooperatively within the industry to support all the water and wastewater utilities throughout the Commonwealth. They provide professional technical support, certified operator training, and other onsite assistance and services to stay in compliance. Services range from camera work on lines to planting trees. See their [website](#) for the full list of trainings, assistance and services.

Ellen Kohler from **The Water Center at Penn** emphasized her organization's coordination with other service providers. First thing cited was an EPA article on the Biden-Harris administration selection of 29 environmental finance centers to help communities access funds for infrastructure projects with a goal of quality water infrastructure and reliable water services. What are the needs of the community and how can they assist? They are able to provide direct technical assistance to communities, help them access water infrastructure funding and coordinate and collaborate to support effective delivery of water technical assistance. She mentioned three communities they are working with at this time, each with different needs.

RCAP (Rural Community Assistance Partnership)

is a "national network of nonprofit partners with over 350 technical assistance providers across the country to improve the quality of life in rural America starting at the tap." Amy Lee Forsha said they promote their work by word of mouth and on their [website](#).

Funding Programs

PENNVEST– Dan Mikesic provides [help](#) with drinking water, wastewater, stormwater, and non-point source projects such as abandoned mines. The funding application is on a revolving basis four times a year. All projects need to have permitting and environmental clearances. Maximum interest rates are based upon a formula outlined in the PENNVEST legislation (Act 16 – 1988) and are based on unemployment rates in certain areas. Usual terms for repayment are 20 years but can be extended to 30. Individual homeowners may also apply to pay for repair or replacement of their malfunctioning on-lot system that serves their principle residence. *(continued on page 5.)*

Funding (continued from page 4)

Also available, homeowner sewage program implemented in cooperation with the PA Housing and Finance Agency for on-lot repair and first-time connection for an existing residential structure. Small projects of \$500,000 or less for projects not exceeding \$1,000,000 have a quick turnaround loan approval by staff. There's no need to wait for a board meeting. Lead line removal effort and emerging contaminants (i.e. PFAS) are other initiatives.

PADCNR- Adriene Smochek said the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation offers [grants](#) in various areas including Rivers Conservation and Development and Community and Watershed Forestry. Grant applications are accepted once each year. County and municipal governments, municipal agencies and non-profits, among others, are eligible. Grants are in demand and about half of applicants are accepted. Most projects are about one year out and need to have a 50% match. Examples of funding include land purchases for habitat, boat launches, fishing access and stream restoration, community tree planting and riparian buffers.



Examples L to R: Before(#1- lack of wood); After (#2 & 3- with wood, during normal and high water flow.)
Photo #1-Greg Shustrick; Photos #2 and 3-Adam Cotchen

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)
_____ Club/Small Business (\$50) _____ Patron (\$50) _____ Sustaining (\$100)
_____ Sponsor (\$500) _____ Lifetime (\$1000)

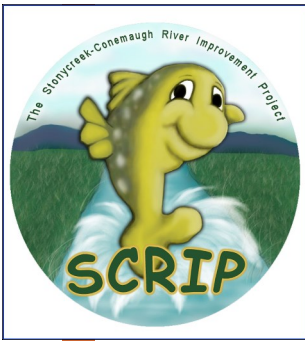
Part 2. Select Option A OR Option B:

_____ **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
P.O. Box 164
Windber, PA
15963

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Here**

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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- | | |
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