

Volume XXVIII  
Number 2  
Spring 2021

**Save the Date:**

**July 15**– SCRIP board meeting, Greenhouse Park, 3 p.m.

**August 14**– **Intro to Kayaking**, sponsored by PA Fish and Boat Commission and SCRIP, Que Recreation Public Area at 9 or 11 a.m.  
**See page 4 for details and registration.**

**September 11**– Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited annual banquet, Holiday Inn, Johnstown, at 5:30 p.m.

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# Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

## Reforestation of Reclaimed Mine Lands Intensifies by Tom Clark



**2021 Mine Land Reforestation Project in Clearfield County.**

*Photo by Oliver Aerial*

Trees are hot! Not only do they sequester carbon, but they also can improve water quality and offer wildlife habitat and refuge. Where that is needed most is on our reclaimed surface mines that dot our landscape. Due to compaction, however, those reclaims have a difficult time moving into an early successional forest. Enter the Office of Surface Mining’s Appalachian Region Reforestation Initiative and its Forest Reclamation Approach (<https://arri.osmre.gov/>).

Those reforestation efforts are now gaining a foothold in the Stonycreek-Conemaugh Basins with several projects being completed this spring. Those include a small planting at the new DEP Ehrenfeld mine refuse reclaim project, a 12-acre project in Flight 93, and the largest, a 40-acre plot of surface reclaim in the Gallitzin State Forest near Krayn.

Additional 2022 plantings are already being planned for in our basin. If you own a mine site that could use reforestation, feel free to contact me at [tclark@srbc.net](mailto:tclark@srbc.net) for a site visit and the possibility of being added to our future list of reforestation projects.

**SCRIP is Celebrating its 30 Year Anniversary This Year!**  
The SCRIP board is brainstorming ideas to honor this momentous occasion. Look for more details in the next newsletter! In the meantime, see Oven Run Trust Fund blurb on page 4.

# Somerset Conservation District: Past, Current, and Future AMD Initiatives

by Len Lichvar



The new team that is responsible for the reconstruction of the Oven Run AMD treatment systems includes from left to right: **Greg Shustrick, Watershed Specialist for the Somerset Conservation District, Phil Gardner, Phil Wilson, Danielle Kalp, Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance Group, Branden Diehl, Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.**

*Photo by Len Lichvar*

Over 26 years ago I stood on the small open grass field along State Route 403 in Shade Township near the Stonycreek River and broke ground for the first Oven Run Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) passive treatment system. Representatives of federal, state and local agencies and volunteer organizations and elected officials, including U. S. Congressman John Murtha, joined me at the ceremony. The event was the beginning of the comeback of the Stonycreek River driven by several previous years of data gathering, securing of funds and project design. The then newly formed Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project (SCRIP) was charged with coordinating the ongoing and yet to come projects.

Fast forward to now and I was recently joined at the same location by the new team that has been charged with essentially doing the same funding, design and this time reconstruction in order to maintain the impacts of the original systems that have combined to restore miles of fishery and create a nationally recognized destination point for anglers, kayakers and outdoor resource users of all types all of which has provided the surge of an eco-tourism industry in the Cambia-Somerset region.

The Somerset Conservation District, which was instrumental in implementing the original systems, also made the legal commitment to operate and maintain them forever. The small District staff has used their professional skill sets to successfully achieve success with this huge burden by securing funds from the federal AML Fund through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) Growing Grant program and by and from other innovative sources and methods.

Thus far two systems have been reconstructed by the District and the final two are set to be completed this year and the PA DEP is currently reconstructing a 5th Oven Run system that they have oversight on. Phil Wilson, a Technician for the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation District's Technical Assistance Group explains, "All of the systems worked well by removing metals and raising pH and adding alkalinity, but as time passed the limestone that treated the water became more coated with metals and was not able to treat the water as well. We have since redesigned and rehabilitated Site E to treat 250 GPM doubling its original design of 125 GPM.

*Continued on page 3*

## SCD AMD Initiatives *(continued from page 2)*

We have also redesigned and reconstructed Site F to treat 175 GPM adding another 50 GPM of treatment. The two systems for this year's reconstruction will also be updated with newer technology such as a Coanda intake screen, new water control structures and valves."

The Oven Run Systems are actually only a part of the AMD abatement efforts in the region. In Somerset County alone there are 24 AMD treatment systems and a limestone doser all maintained by the District, local volunteer watershed organizations or non-profits. In addition to those the PA DEP operates other systems and the active mining industry, because they are mandated to do so by regulation, operate and maintain yet many others. More extensive active treatment systems are on the way including one on the Little Conemaugh River in Cambria County and another planned for Shade Creek in Somerset County.

Last year the District was able to establish the Oven Run Sites A, D, E and F Trust Fund with the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies. The purpose of the fund is to provide long term financing for future maintenance and reconstruction of these specific sites. Funding is something that has been a challenge to acquire now and could become even more difficult to secure in the future.

Founding and current SCRIP Board member Joe Gorden describes it this way, "If the Somerset Conservation District had not prioritized rehabilitating these treatment systems, all that recreation would have been lost. Finding financing was a struggle and the District's efforts have been nothing short of heroic. Now that the final pieces are falling into place and for now we can expect another 20 years or so of clean water for recreation."

The overall future of long term continuation of current systems and construction of still much needed new systems rests in the hands of the U. S. Congress. The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) of 1977 that created the federal Abandoned Mine Land (AML) Fund that distributes dollars back to states to fund AMD treatment and is derived from contributions from the current tons of mined coal, is set to expire in September of this year.

Recently Congressman Matt Cartwright (D) and Congressman Glenn Thompson (R) have co-sponsored legislation to extend the Act. However, Congress must pass the legislation and the President must sign it to ensure this essential funding continues.

According to PA DEP's Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mining Operations John Stefanko, "There are still 10.8 billion dollars needed to address remaining AMD impacts in Pennsylvania with a significant amount of that in southwest Pennsylvania." Prime examples are the Shade Creek and Paint Creek watersheds which are still extensively inundated with AMD impacts and also create a dead zone on the Stonycreek River.

Americans are using our outdoor resources like never before. There has been a 62% spike in water and land use by the public since the start of the pandemic and it shows little sign of decline. According to biologist Dan Ryan, of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the state has 5,166 miles of water that does not sustain a fishery, much of it attributed to AMD impacts. That calculates to a 29 million dollar a year loss in just that one usage in economic revenue.

Much progress has been made in water quality improvements, yet much more awaits the funding, administration, design and construction of projects to address it. The improved quality of life and the significant improved economic impacts have all been calculated, documented and proven.

Therefore, we cannot afford to lose what we have gained and can easily justify the additional efforts to continue to multiply the current positive impacts. The coming months and years will determine what we sustain and what we gain – or not.



## Intro to Kayaking Program Set for August 14, 2021 at the Que Reservoir



The PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC), in partnership with SCRIP, is offering an Introduction to Kayaking program on August

14 at the Quemahoning Reservoir's Public Recreation Area at the newly built Gazebo 1 located near the shoreline below Medium Pavilion 1. Participants are asked to park in the main parking lot, not near the pavilions. There will be 2 sessions - one at 9 a.m. and one at 11 a.m., with each one lasting 1 1/2 hours. The first part will be "classroom instruction" and the last part will be on-the-water paddling.

This program provides a great opportunity for participants to experience kayaking. You will learn about PA legal requirements, choosing and properly wearing a life jacket, water hazards, and basic paddling skills from PA Fish and Boat Commission staff. You will then have ample time to paddle the beautiful Quemahoning Reservoir.

PFBC will provide kayaks, paddles and life vests. Children must be 12 or older to paddle in a single kayak. Two tandem kayaks will be available for younger children to accompany an adult.

To register for this free event, please send the **name/names, whether 12 or older, address, phone number, and whether you want a single kayak or a tandem kayak and preferred time slot to [xmancritt55@gmail.com](mailto:xmancritt55@gmail.com).** Registration deadline is **August 7**.

## A River Reborn— A Documentary on the Little Conemaugh



The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, in partnership with Penn Environment held a World Premier of their film on our local river on

April 8. From their description:

"As the Little Conemaugh River winds through Pennsylvania's Allegheny Mountains, it forms the backbone of a region with a legacy of industrial might. Like a scribe, the river carries the weight of that history, as mile after mile runs empty of life, poisoned by toxic pollution from countless abandoned coal mines. Generations of residents and neighbors of the river have turned their back on it, believing the damage to be irreversible, scolding their children for playing in its orange waters. But a decade-long effort from a coalition of local groups has begun to suggest a different future for the Little Conemaugh and for other rivers in Pennsylvania and beyond, long written off as casualties of the coal industry. ***A River Reborn*** tells the story of the re-birth of the Little Conemaugh and what it reveals about our ability to fix what might have been lost forever."

If you missed seeing the 30 minute documentary, featuring local people who helped in the clean-up effort, you can see it here, **[A River Reborn](#)**.

### Oven Run Trust Fund

Our [Fall 2020](#) newsletter featured an article by Len Lichvar about the establishment of the Oven Run Trust Fund at the Community Foundation of the Alleghenies, to maintain Oven Run Sites A, D, E and F. Even though individual board members had donated to the fund, Joe Gorden offered to match a donation by SCRIP, up to \$1000. With that prompt, board members voted to donate \$1000 of SCRIP Funds to this effort. **Perhaps your group would consider a similar action.** A great way to celebrate our anniversary would be to make sure Oven Run will have the necessary funds to survive the next 30 years!

## In Memoriam—David Sewak



David Sewak, a Johnstown native who moved to Cascade, Montana, died suddenly in his sleep there on March 17, 2021, leaving behind his three children, Aedan (18), Cassidy (17) and Sage (13) as well as his mother, other relatives, and friends.

Dave, a graduate of Randolph Macon College, with a history and philosophy degree, devoted his work life

to his love of the outdoors. He held various positions at the U.S. Department of the Interior, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resource and Trout Unlimited before his move to Montana. Instantly falling in love with the area, he eventually ran a fishing guide business, Crazy Fly Fishing LLC, that combined his knowledge of fishing and the great outdoors. His interest in mushroom growing led to his co-authoring of *Mycelial Mayhem*, a do-it-yourself guide to mushroom growing that encouraged the growing and use of diverse mushroom varieties into a sustainable lifestyle.

Dave was well known for his quick wit, giving spirit, and volunteer time to the community, as well as his lengthy intricate stories. Because of his work with Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited, a memorial at Clear Shade Creek will be placed there in his honor. SCRIP has also made a donation to a Go Fund Me account established by a friend to help his children. Those who knew him were saddened by his passing, but remembrances of him will always bring a smile to our faces.

### 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:**

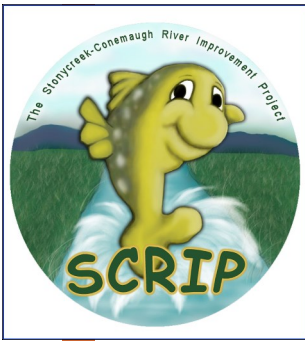
\_\_\_\_\_ **A. I am fine receiving an electronic version of the newsletter for the cost listed above for my membership level. My email address is:** \_\_\_\_\_

*(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](mailto:info@scripPA.org).* Send donations to: **SCRIP, P.O. Box 164, Windber, PA 15963**



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**Windber, PA**  
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**[www.scrippa.org](http://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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