

Volume XXX
Number 2
Spring 2023

Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

Penguin Court and Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited Sponsor Field Trips

by Melissa Reckner

Save the Date:

July 2- 3rd round of mine drainage treatment grants open

July 24- SCRIP board meeting, Greenhouse Park, 3 pm

Oct. 24-26- AMR Conference, Grand Hotel, Altoona, PA (See page 4.)



Wild geraniums, seen on the plant ID hikes, are common woodland natives that are attractive to pollinators.

Penguin Court and the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited organized four field trips for five schools that participated in Trout in the Classroom this year. Blacklick Valley High, Divine Mercy Catholic Academy East and West, Shade-Central City High, and Shanksville-Stonycreek Elementary all raised rainbow trout provided by the PA Fish and Boat Commission.

After releasing fish into a state-approved body of water, students participated in workshops led by Penguin Court, MLTU, and their partners: Blue Knob State Park, Gallitzin State Forest, PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Master Naturalist, Prince Gallitzin State Park, SCRIP, Shade Creek Watershed Association, Somerset Conservation District, and Western PA Conservancy.

Topics covered bird nests, fly casting, macroinvertebrates, plant identification, turtles,

water chemistry, and more! Sometimes students had an opportunity to fish with either a fly or spinning rod, too, possibly sparking a lifelong hobby. The day is fun and memorable.

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Sludge Removal at Oven Run Site F

InnoH2O AMD and Field Operations Manager Logan Lichvar operates a pump to remove sludge from a pond at Oven Run AMD Treatment System Site F (Hawk View) as part of the Somerset Conservation District's ongoing operation and maintenance responsibilities. After completion of the sludge removal, Blackner Excavating will replace the clogged piping in order to allow the treatment system to go back online. Photo and caption by Len Lichvar



Pennsylvania Office of Outdoor Recreation



In numerous newsletter articles, SCRIP has recognized the economic benefits of cleaning up our rivers and streams. According to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), outdoor recreation contributes \$14 billion to Pennsylvania's economy with the help of 152,000 employees. With that in mind, Pennsylvania officials are preparing to propose the state's first Office of Outdoor Recreation this summer and establish the outdoor recreation industry within Pennsylvania's government and connect it with other essential government agencies.

Pennsylvania began to build this office in 2021 and hired its first Director of Outdoor Recreation, Nathan Reigner, PhD. Reigner, a recreation social scientist, has 20 years of professional experience in private, non-profit and academic sectors.

Aside from the economic benefits of outdoor recreation, it improves the quality of life that attracts residents and businesses, provides savings in healthcare, safety, infrastructure, and environmental management and enhances Pennsylvania's image as an active, attractive and diversified state. If implemented, Pennsylvania would become the 19th and also the largest state in the country to establish an office of outdoor recreation.

In the fall of 2022, Reigner formed the [Recreation Engagement Coalition](#) of 50 statewide leaders. They helped to develop strategies and goals to help Pennsylvania support the outdoor economy. For more information about the director, resources, etc. see [Home \(pa.gov\)](#)

Third Annual PA Pollinator Photo Challenge



Penguin Court and the Westmoreland Pollinator Partners are hosting the third annual Pennsylvania Pollinator Photo Challenge. Now through August 4, 2023, submit your best photos of pollinators found and photographed in Pennsylvania, such as bees, beetles, butterflies, flies, hummingbirds, moths or wasps. Open to the public, this contest has categories for youth and adults with prizes awarded for first, second and third place in both categories. New this year will be a contest category dedicated to monarch butterflies in all their life stages. Learn more about how you can participate at www.brandywine.org/photo-contest.

Meet New SCRIP Board Member, Dave Leiford



Following a tour of active duty with the United States Marine Corps, I attended Penn State and graduated in 1984 with an environmental resource management degree. I started my career with PA D.E.R. as a mining specialist in March of 1985 and became a surface mine inspector in 1988. I transferred to the Bureau of Waste Management in 1992 as a solid waste specialist and later worked as a field operations supervisor until transferring to the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation in 2012 where I worked in the Acid Mine Drainage Division. While there I worked in the Set-Aside program overseeing the development of active and passive mine drainage treatment systems. Additionally, I administered the Growing Greener grant program within BAMR. I was able to finish out my career with PADEP in July of 2020.

My wife Marsha and I have been blessed with five children who are now grown. Since my retirement the Lord has also blessed me with the ability to continue enjoying many outdoor activities including hunting, fishing, skiing, biking and hiking. When forced to remain indoors, I enjoy working on various projects in and around the house including starting garden plants from seed.



Jackie Ritko Joins SCRIP Board

Jackie has over 20 years of experience with the Cambria County Conservation District. She received a degree in Geology from the University of Pittsburgh in Johnstown in 1995. While studying at UPJ, she interned for Cambria County and worked on the initial SCRIP Little Conemaugh AMD Assessment. During her tenure at the district, Jackie has focused primarily on environmental education and small watershed improvement projects. She is very excited to be part of SCRIP at this exciting time and looks forward to working to restore water quality in the Little Conemaugh.

Bens Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan (CCP) Just Released



The Bens Creek, familiar to many SW Pennsylvania anglers, spans parts of both Cambria and Somerset counties. In 2014, the Somerset Conservation District, realizing that an in-depth study of the watershed had not been done at that time, secured funding from numerous sources and began their study which focused on the North Fork. More detail about that study is [here](#).

This newly released study was designed to cover the rest of the Bens Creek watershed including the South Fork, Dalton Run, Mill Creek, and the lower mainstem. The extensive 60 page report will be released shortly [here](#). The report's summary and conclusions (as found on page 33 of the report and quoted on the next page) detail a success story.

Bens Creek Coldwater Conservation Plan *(continued from page 3)*

The Bens Creek watershed is [a] tremendous coldwater resource of the Laurel Highlands, within the greater Johnstown area. This truly unique watershed boasts publicly-assessable Class A sections of both native brook trout and wild brown trout. Fairly uncommon in PA, wild rainbow trout can also be found in areas of the North Fork Bens Creek watershed. Historically, Bens Creek has also been a very popular stocked trout stream, at least seasonally in the springtime. However, due to recent water quality improvements, Bens Creek has the potential to provide year-round wild trout angling opportunities with proper management, continued habitat improvement, and adequate protection from degradation.

The recovery of the Bens Creek watershed could also be a documented success story for AMD remediation, as many currently listed impaired sections would likely be delisted with updated aquatic life surveys. Additional AMD treatment work remains, but the stream has significantly improved following the Lion Mine pollution incident and Rock Tunnel system upgrades.

As Bens Creek continues to improve and wild trout populations expand, raising awareness and informing landowners about wild trout resources and BMPs should allow for implementing additional conservation practices in the watershed. Hopefully, this plan will be used a guide for local stakeholder groups to prioritize and direct further coldwater conservation efforts in this improving watershed.

This plan was prepared by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy as part of their Watershed Conservation Program and supported by the Somerset Conservation District, Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the Pennsylvania Coldwater Heritage Partnership.

AMR Conference Set for October 24-26, 2023



The 2023 Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference is set for October 24-26, 2023 at the Grand Hotel in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Things are still in the planning stage but presentations and bus tours will still be a part of the conference.

Presentations

If you are interested in making a presentation, please submit an abstract for review. Submissions should be no longer than one page in length and include the presenter's name, title, and organization. Please also include a 1-paragraph bio for the presenter. Submissions and questions should be emailed to Anne Daymut at anne@wpcamr.org.

Bus Tours

Bus tours of abandoned mine lands and reclamation sites will be available. You will need to purchase a separate bus tour registration as the tour will be limited based on the number of available seats.

Sponsorships: Platinum (\$5000 or more) Gold (\$1000 or more) and Silver (\$750 or more).

For more information and to register: [AMR Conference](#)

TickTalk

With the increase in the number of ticks, tick-borne illnesses are on the rise. Even though you may encounter ticks in the woods while pursuing your favorite outdoor activity, you are most likely to be exposed in your own backyard.

The PA Department of Health defines Lyme disease as a bacterial infection carried by the blacklegged tick, also known as the deer tick. According to the CDC: "Blacklegged ticks have a 2-to-3-year life cycle. During this time, they go through four life stages: egg, larva, nymph, and adult. After the egg hatches, the larva and nymph each must take a blood meal to develop to the next life stage, and the female needs blood to produce eggs. Larval and nymphal ticks can become infected with Lyme disease bacteria when feeding on an infected wildlife host, usually a rodent. The bacteria are passed along to the next life stage. Nymphs or adult females can then spread the bacteria during their next blood meal... In general, adult ticks are approximately the size of a sesame seed and nymphal ticks are approximately the size of a poppy seed."

Pennsylvania, has had the highest incidence of Lyme disease in the country in the last 11 out of 12 years, according to CDC data. A lot has to do with our climate. The Northeast and upper Midwest have high relative humidity rates and temperate environments that allow ticks to survive. Another reason that Pennsylvania is rife with ticks is the presence of deer and white-footed mice, host species of the deer tick.



A large study of ticks is underway in Pennsylvania with the full study due to be released this summer. The [PA Tick Research Lab](#) is analyzing data

from 30,000 tick exposures in Pennsylvania from 2019-2021. Part of the research is building prediction models to help reduce human exposure to ticks and lower Lyme disease rates. For more information consult their website: www.ticklab.org.

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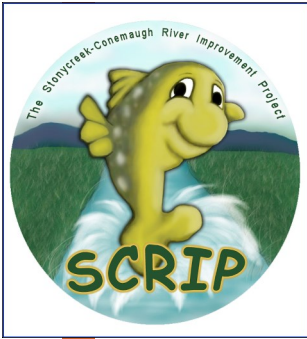
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Make your check payable to **SCRIP**, or for a tax-deductible contribution, make the check to **Southern Alleghenies Conservancy/ SCRIP**. * If you are not sure of your membership status contact SCRIP's secretary at info@scripPA.org. Send donations 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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New and Renewing Members

- Patrick & Etta Albright
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