



Volume XXX
Number 1
Winter 2023

March 25 – MLTU Fundraising Banquet at the Holiday Inn, downtown, 5:30 pm. Tickets needed.

March 26 — Benscreek litter cleanup; Meet @ Jim & Jimmies, 10 am

April 1 — Opening day of trout season! Enjoy!

April 4 – [Creating a Monarch Waystation](#), virtual program, 6:30 pm (cont. p.2)

In This Issue:

DEP Projects (cont.)	2
NatureWorks (cont.)	3
SCRIP Board	4
Waddell Retirement	4
Oven Run Film	4
Pam Milavec	5-6
Higgins Run	6-7
People of SCRIP	8

Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

New Project Possibilities for the Area Due to Influx of Funds to Pennsylvania

Due to recent legislation, Pennsylvania will receive a huge influx of funds to treat and restore the rivers and other water systems in our area.

This is the result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) that was approved by Congress on November 6 and signed into law by President Joe Biden on November 15. Then on December 29, 2022, the Omnibus Budget Bill for fiscal year 2023 became law and enacted the amended Safeguarding Treatment for the Restoration of Ecosystems from Abandoned Mines (STREAMS) Act.

Patrick Webb, Acting Director of the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), presented a Power Point slide show to the SCRIP board at their meeting on March 9 to explain the new laws, DEP plans for implementation, and tips for SCRIP organizations to apply for grants. He was assisted by Tom Malesky and Jon Smoyer, other DEP Personnel who attended the meeting.

In specific terms, this means that Pennsylvania can apply for \$244.9 million annually for the next 15 years, with \$74 million set aside each year for the future. Each application will be valid for 5 years, so fund rollover will stay in state coffers for this time.

(continued on page 2)



Elizabeth Good (*pictured below*), a PA Master Naturalist, developed an interest in bird nests and pursued that interest by starting a collection which she displayed for attendees at NatureWorks held on March 11 from 10am to 2pm at BottleWorks. Ever the teacher, (she retired from Westmont Hilltop School District), she challenged children and adults to identify the bird that built each nest, based on location, size, materials used to build it and other clues.

Beth was a new addition to the 22 non-profit conservation or outdoor recreation organizations, including SCRIP, to educate families about our area natural resources and take advantage of all the opportunities for enjoying these resources.

(continued on page 3)



(Photo by Melissa Reckner)

Save the Date
(cont.)

April 29 — Little Paint Creek litter cleanup; Meet @ Berwick Road, 8 am

May 13 — Shade/Crumb Road litter cleanup; Meet @ Iron Bridge 9 am

May 24— SCRIP Board Meeting, Jim & Jimmies, 3 pm

June 3 — Kids Rodeo @ Windber Sportsmen's Club, 8 am

Penguin Court Native Plant Sale anticipated online April 1 – May 2 at www.brandyvine.org/conservancy/events

Funds *(continued from page one)*

Other monies expected are \$26.5 million coal fee based which varies depending on coal production, for 13 years, and \$26.63 million from Abandoned Mine Lands Economic Revitalization (AMLER) Program.

The BIL/IIJA funds can be used for AMD treatment, system operation maintenance and repair (OM & R) and water supply issues. They are “use or lose” after 20 years. The STREAM Act which amended the BIL/IIJA to include a 30% set aside of funds for future work, have no deadline for spending. Any unused funds stay in state coffers and would act as a long term savings account.

The eligibility and priority for reclamation of certain sites is established by law. Once the eligibility is established, then reclamation of the sites is prioritized as Priority 1 (P1), Priority 2 (P2) or Priority 3 (P3). The STREAM Act is more of a set aside of 30% for P3 AMD, P1/P2 mine fires and P1/ P2 mine subsidence. *For a more complete description of these priorities, see the box on page 3.*

If there is no scope change, BIL/IIJA funds can be used on projects that have the necessary approvals, and are not in construction yet. More and bigger projects and those which were considered too expensive previously can be done and they can speed up AMD treatment plants that are already being worked on along with AMD abatement and treatment work.

According to the BIL/IIJA Law, for AMD Watersheds, the reclamation first approach should be used to reclaim hazards and eliminate or reduce AMD sources. Coal refuse pile removals are eligible as are operation and maintenance (O&M) of critical passive treatment systems.

DEP is adding staff and ramping up grant opportunities. There are three grant rounds this year with the current round set to close on April 28. Other rounds are July 3– August 25, and October 2 to December 2, 2023.

There are 15 firms now and another 29 being reviewed to bid on projects. The companies need to: be in compliance with Justice 40 Initiative (40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution); use Davis–Bacon construction labor wage rates; follow the Build America, Buy American (BABA) Act; track the number of and incentivize the employment of current or former employees of the coal industry; encourage unionized labor agreements.

Upcoming BIL/IIJA Projects: *(left to right)*

- Relocate high volume AMD negatively impacting properties and heavily traveled SR 50 near Carnegie, PA
- Five home underground mine subsidence stabilization drilling and grouting project in Westmoreland County *(DEP photos)*



NatureWorks *(continued from page one)*

A total of 370 people attended this year, including 313 guests and 57 exhibitors and volunteers, a very good showing, especially since this was a restart of the in-person event after the Covid gap years and the forecasted snow. The last in-person event was in 2020 and a virtual event was held in 2021.

NatureWorks was coordinated by **Penguin Court of the Brandywine Conservancy** and **Bottle Works Ethnic Arts Center**. Melissa Reckner and Sue Konvolinka work together every year to arrange this excellent event to help the community learn and become more engaged with regional conservation and recreation in our region. They are an awesome team!

This event not only relies on all the exhibitors and volunteers donating their time but the organizations that help to sponsor it by covering the cost of renting the BottleWorks: SCRIP, Mountain Laurel chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Allegheny Plateau chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf). Tom Hindman, who usually mans the NWTf booth, was unable to attend this year but the organization's contribution still helped to make it possible.

Aside from the 22 interactive exhibits, there was a special film. First Waves SurfsUp director Ian Smith held his presentation at 1:45pm in the Black Box Theater (formerly the Bottle Works Building- 411 Third Avenue, Johnstown, PA 15906) on paddleboarding, conservation, and how youth can get involved. If you missed it, you can see it [here](#).

Melissa and Sue are already working on special events for next year. Keep watching for those announcements!



Participants were guided in making Iron Oxide Chalk by SCRIP board members, Larry Hutchinson *(pictured)* and Karlice Makuchan and friend of SCRIP Kathy Ross. This simple activity was designed to emphasize recycling and what can be done with iron hydroxide (*iron oxide when dried*) collected from abandoned mine wetlands. *(Photos by Melissa Reckner and Karlice Makuchan)*



Eligibility and Priority for AML site Reclamation *(continued from page 2)*

Priority 1 (P1)—the protection of public health, safety and property from extreme danger of adverse effects of coal mining practices.

Priority 2 (P2)—the protection of public health and safety from adverse effects of coal mining practices.

Priority 3 (P3)—the restoration of land and water resources and the environment previously degraded by adverse effects of coal mining practices including measures for the conservation and development of soil, water (excluding channelization), woodland, fish and wildlife, recreation resources and agricultural productivity.

SCRIP Board Changes



Adam Cotchen

There have been a number of SCRIP board changes recently necessitated by new jobs, retirements, and members moving out of the area. Tom Clark, Jr., accepted a job as Project Development Manager with the Kleinfelder Company and as such could no longer be Chairman, although he is permitted to remain a SCRIP member. As a result, Adam Cotchen was elected as the new SCRIP chairman.

Adam is a watershed scientist with Western PA Conservancy's (WPC) Watershed Conservation Program, and has served on the SCRIP board since 2015. Prior to his time with WPC, Adam worked with Indiana County Conservation District for nearly a decade in roles ranging from AmeriCorps member to district manager. A lifetime Trout Unlimited member, Adam is also active with the local Mountain Laurel TU chapter. Adam and his wife Lauren live in Richland, where their two daughters attend elementary school. Adam spends most of his free time outdoors, mostly fishing and hunting, and is particularly passionate about fly fishing for wild trout.



Jeff Sarver

With another board position open, the SCRIP board looked for someone with background in watershed work and Jeff Sarver fit the bill. Jeff is a lifelong resident and outdoorsman of Shade Township. He has 25 years of experience in corporate security, fire and life safety. Jeff is the President of Shade Creek Watershed Association and has been a member of that group since 2017.

Both of these men, with their background, experience and dedication to the environment will help SCRIP to stay on track and fulfill its mission to improve and maintain water quality in the Upper Conemaugh Basin. We welcome Jeff to the board and Adam to his new position as chairman and look forward to working with them for the good of the region.

Earl Waddell Set to Retire in the Summer

Earl Waddell, Cambria Somerset Authority's (CSA) manager for most of its existence, is set to retire on June 30. The Cambria Somerset Authority is a partner organization of SCRIP and in his capacity as manager, Earl would give a report when he attended SCRIP meetings, keeping us abreast of what was happening at the Hinckston, Wilmore and especially the Quemahoning reservoirs as well as other parts of the system. For a period of time, many discussions centered around the problems with the release valve used for white water boating/rafting. Building fish habitat structures at the Que was one of the projects that CSA did in conjunction with the Somerset Conservation District, SCRIP, and other conservation groups a number of times. We wish Earl the best on his retirement!

Oven Run Rededication Ceremony

Senator Bob Casey's speech at the Oven Run rededication ceremony on September 1, 2022 is available now on YouTube. The link is below.

[US Senator Bob Casey Jr. Speaks at Oven Run Rededication in Somerset County - YouTube](#)

Pam Milavec, Former SCRIP Board Member, Enters Next Phase of Her Life



If you see Pam Milavec today, she'll most likely be dressed as she is in the photo, ready to ride her mountain bike, rather than in work clothes she wore for her thirty-two year career with the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

When she retired in 2015, she split her time between western Pennsylvania and northern Arizona. But in 2021, she and her husband sold the house that they built in Pennsylvania and moved to Sedona, Arizona permanently. They had fallen in love with the area and with their daughter Rika living close by in Denver, they decided to make Sedona their new home. With this move, she would no longer be on the SCRIP board, but while she was, we benefitted from her expertise with Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) issues.

Preparation for her long career started with a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown (UPJ) where she studied ecology with a minor in geology. In 1983 she was hired at DER, the Department of Environmental Resources, the former name of DEP, as a water quality specialist in the Bureau of Water Quality Management at the Ebensburg district office.

In 1984 she moved to the Bureau of Oil and Gas Management at the Ebensburg district office and while working there came to know one of our other SCRIP board members, Robb Piper. They were meeting with a woodland owner in northern Cambria County who was very upset with how the gas well industry "rutted up his woods roads" to construct a tie line for joining two wells together. Robb remembered her calm, patient manner with the man, ignoring the abusive words he dealt out. She could not do much for him since he did not own the gas rights, but the restrained manner she exhibited was a quality others she worked with would see over the years.

In 1993, Pam got her dream position when she was hired at the DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation (BAMR) for the Cambria district office and the Harrisburg central office as an entry-level water pollution biologist. She later served in that position at higher levels. Here she was most involved with AMD cleanup in polluted streams, locating AMD discharge points, conducting bio-surveys and presenting recommendations for improvement of the streams. She noted that volunteer assistance from organizations like SCRIP was central to the mission.

One of the big projects she remembers was the clean-up of the Stonycreek River. Six problem areas were identified on Oven Run, a stream in the Stonycreek's watershed, that was putting huge amounts of pollution in the waterway and killing the aquatic life. The Oven Run Project, a series of five separate passive treatment systems (sixth one was a land reclamation project) was completed from 1995 through 2002, extending the Stonycreek's fishery by seven miles, greatly improving the water supply of Hooversville and providing measurably cleaner water as far downstream as Johnstown. Malcolm Crittenden, a former watershed manager at PA DEP, remembers that "Her great disposition enabled her to accomplish much and to avoid the "rabbit holes" of acid mine drainage. She was very helpful without promising the impossible and she helped create the high respect that BAMR enjoys nationwide."

Since these passive treatment systems have about a 20 year life span, five of the passive treatments systems that Pam was involved with at Oven Run were reconstructed recently and a rededication ceremony was held to celebrate this on September 1, 2022.

Pam was also a great mentor to new hires. Tom Clark, Jr., former AMD Project Coordinator in the Susquehanna River Basin remarked, "Pam gave me my start in the business. Without her, I would not be where I am today." (*continued on page 6*)

Pam Milavec (continued from page 5)

He continued, “Her passion and tenaciousness for the restoration of AMD-impaired watersheds was an early example to me on how you tackle projects and the problems they sometimes pose.”

Pam’s experience with AMD has helped out in other ways. In her time in Sedona, Pam became involved with Friends of the Forest, a volunteer group that works hand in hand with the US Forest Service to maintain, monitor and build trails, monitor and document thousands of archeology sites, lead educational hikes, provide trail information to visitors and many other activities to minimize impacts to the forest.

Experimenting was done with how to replace the patina once the graffiti is removed, usually with sand paper. So when she was there in the Winter of 2016 she took a sample bag of iron oxide that was produced from AMD passive treatment systems in PA. The resulting color matches worked quite well with the natural patina of the rocks. The team has now incorporated the iron oxide pigments from PA’s AMD treatment sites into their graffiti removal operations.

The SCRIP board members agree with Tom Clark’s remarks about Pam when he said, “We are all going to miss her insight, but wish nothing but the best for her in Arizona where I imagine she is already involved in projects to improve her surrounding environment there.”

Higgins Run Large Wood Installation Project



BEFORE PICTURE: Higgins Run prior to large wood project was 80% + “single thread channel”, lacking in-stream channel diversity, wood debris and ample fish cover.

The Higgins Run Large Wood Installation Project was constructed by the **Somerset Conservation District** and the **Western Pennsylvania Conservancy** in a report dated August 2022, issued just recently. **All photos are from this report.**

What are the benefits of large woody debris in streams? If you ask the public’s perception on this issue, most replies would be negative. They often associate this with flooding, bank erosion and infrastructure damage. Some would also characterize it as unattractive and more hazardous. But what are the benefits?

First we should start with a definition. Large woody debris, also known as large wood, is described as fallen trees, logs and branches that are at least four inches wide and six feet long. Usually this large wood is removed from streams in an effort to clean up stream channels and prevent localized flooding. But large wood has both physical and biological benefits to stream systems.

Trees and other woody material fallen from riparian areas helps to connect the stream channel to its floodplain. It can also act as an obstacle to flowing water in the event of a rainstorm or snow melt, forcing high flows into the nearby floodplain, along with any sediments and nutrients it may be carrying. The floodplain then acts as a sponge, storing water, sediment and nutrients while reducing the volume of water carried by the stream channel itself. This reduces flooding impacts downstream and slows the flow of water as it is forced to flow over and around logs.

Higgins Large Wood *(continued from page 6)*

Large wood also helps create more diverse aquatic habitat. These fallen trees provide cover and hiding places for fish and other aquatic organisms and basking and perching sites for reptiles and birds. Wood provides a surface for algae to grow on and often traps smaller sticks, leaves, and other organic material which provides food sources for a variety of aquatic macroinvertebrates, an important food source for fish diets. This helps to support more diverse fish populations.

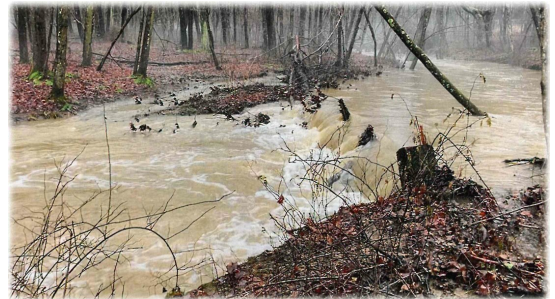
As stated in their report: “Wood is Good! It is a critical component to overall watershed stability and sustainability.” For more information see, [Penn State Extension](#) and the Higgins Run Large Wood Installation Project online [report](#).



Felled cherry tree will serve as floodplain and in-stream habitat.



Irregular large wood pieces provide fish cover and stream channel diversity.



Large wood structures reduce stream velocity, retain sediment, debris and leaf litter within the stream channel and floodplain.

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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_____ Sponsor (\$500)	_____ Lifetime (\$1000)	

Part 2. Select Option A OR Option B:

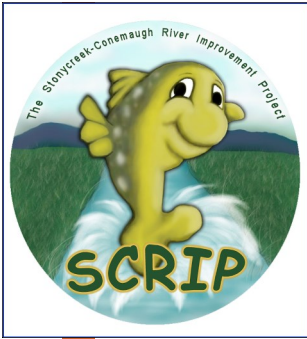
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(Please mail your check in this amount to the address below.)

_____ **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**



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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.

Board of Directors

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------|
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| | Jeff Sarver |

People of SCRIP

New and Renewing Members

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Cambria County Conservation District | Robb & Pam Piper |
| Adam & Lauren Cotchen | Gerald & Ruth Pozun |
| Alexander Charlton – NEW | Scott & Diane Rugh |
| Malcolm Crittenden | Jeff & Mandy Sarver – NEW |
| David Fink Family | Somerset Conservation District |
| Elizabeth Good & Mark Weakland | Somerset County Sportsmen’s League |
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