

Volume XXX
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 Summer 2023

Save the Date:

Sept. 13– SCRIP Board Meeting, Chuck George property, 4318 Somerset Pike, Holsopple at 3 pm.

Oct. 24-26– AMR Conference, Grand Hotel, Altoona, PA. It's filling up quickly! [For details and registration.](#)

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Stonycreek-Conemaugh River Improvement Project

Oil Spill on the Stonycreek River Near Carpenters Park

by Len Lichvar



Remediation material spread along railroad tracks where spill occurred and where ground below tracks is still infiltrated with fuel oil.

Photo by Len Lichvar



Containment efforts directly below railroad bed to minimize ongoing seepage of fuel oil into the Stonycreek River. It is estimated that 1,500 gallons of fuel oil spilled from a railroad tanker car as a result of an accident with a truck at a railroad crossing.

Photo by Len Lichvar

On August 23, 2023 a truck and train collided on a railroad crossing near Carpenters Park in Somerset County. A CSX railroad tanker car was ruptured and spilled approximately 1,500 gallons of fuel oil.

Somerset County Emergency Services (EMS), PA Department of Environmental Protection and the PA Fish and Boat Commission arrived on scene. Retention devices were placed across the river as well as directly below the railroad tracks where the spill occurred. The soil at that location is saturated with oil. Remediation material was placed on the surface. It is unclear if this material will sufficiently reduce the oil in the soil and there is no assurance that the contaminated soil will be removed given the challenging location it is located in. There is the real potential for the oil to leach out for an extended period of time especially during heavy rain events.

Given this concern Somerset Conservation District Watershed Specialist Greg Shustrick conducted a visual snapshot aquatic and biological assessment of the site. Macroinvertebrates were identified 120 feet upstream and downstream of the spill site. It appears there was minimal impact to the stream ecology. However the greatest ongoing threat to the river and its aquatic life is where the porous soil and gravel absorbed the fuel oil. Given the potential for ongoing leaching of the soil the District has made an official recommendation to Somerset County EMS that as much as possible of the contaminated soil should be removed.

(continued on page 2)

Oil Spill *(continued from page one)*

It should also be noted that through an electro fishing survey, conducted on the Stonycreek River along the Jim Mayer Trail outside of Johnstown at this time last year, a variety of fish species were captured including wild brown trout. This is yet another reason for concern about any upstream contamination of the river.



Note – SCRIP Vice-Chairman, Len Lichvar was interviewed on WJAC-TV and discussed the millions of dollars of AMD abatement projects upstream of the spill and the still fragile, but documented aquatic life and fish life that survive year round downstream of the contaminated site. *(Photo by John Arway)*

Ongoing Maintenance of Oven Run-Site F by Len Lichvar



A test pit being dug at Oven Run Site F. *Photo by Len Lichvar*

At the request of the Somerset Conservation District, as part of their ongoing operation and maintenance of the Oven Run Systems, Ridge Energy Company Inc. is securing samples of waste coal deposits at Oven Run AMD treatment system Site F (Hawk View). Ridge Energy is currently removing waste coal at a site just across State Route 403 from Site F. If analysis indicates any of the deposits from Site F are usable for energy production Ridge Energy will consider removing it which will add yet another water quality improvement to the Stonycreek River by eliminating historic infiltration run off coming from these deposits adjacent to the river.



Chuck Krevell of Ridge Energy Company Inc. prepares samples of the waste coal for analysis. *Photo by Len Lichvar*



Fencing at Oven Run-Site D

by Len Lichvar

Fencing designed to impede beaver dam construction at Oven Run AMD treatment system Site D (Oaks Trail) was recently installed through the efforts of the Somerset Conservation District along with assistance from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Impacts from beavers are being monitored and addressed on other treatment sites in the Stonycreek River watershed as well.

Photo by Len Lichvar

Intro to Kayaking Emphasizes Safety by Melissa Reckner



Mandy Smith, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission education specialist, begins the Intro to Kayaking workshop with class instruction. SCRIP Vice-Chairman, Len Lichvar, is in the background looking on.

Photo by Melissa Reckner

On Friday, August 11, SCRIP and the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) held a workshop at the Quemahoning Family Recreation Area to introduce 22 registrants to kayaking. PFBC's Mandy Smith and Kristi Niekamp discussed water safety, emphasizing the importance of wearing a life preserver, basic boating skills and registration, and other tips for water recreation.

They also pointed out the differences in the many types of Personal \ Floation Devices (PFDs), which was especially poignant given that Thomas and Kristene Dubics of Seward were present and shared the loss of their son, Joey, who drowned in the Quemahoning Reservoir in July 2018. He was paddleboarding and jumped off the board to retrieve his sunglasses which had fallen in the water. He was not wearing a PFD.

SCRIP's Vice President, Len Lichvar, spoke about SCRIP and summarized its restoration and recreation work, then distributed SCRIP's latest newsletter and a few other handouts.

SCRIP Board Members Malcolm Crittenden and Melissa Reckner and Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited member Dave Wright helped to unload the boats, get people in and out of them, and then pack everything up at the end of the workshop.

SCRIP applauds the participants for taking the initiative to learn basic boating skills, which can save lives. SCRIP is proud to partner with the PFBC on such activities.



Participants, wearing their Personal Flotation Devices (PFD's), listen as Mandy continues her instruction before they can practice in the water.

Photo by Melissa Reckner



Workshop participants practice their skills as they enjoy free time on the Quemahoning Reservoir.

Photo by Melissa Reckner

Stonycreek River Quality and Oven Run Reconstruction Update

SCRIP was officially created in U.S. Congressman John Murtha's office in Johnstown on August 7, 1991. The concept was to have SCRIP become the coordinating force behind the attempt to reduce historic AMD pollution (*top left picture*) in the Stonycreek and Conemaugh watersheds, something that had not been attempted before. The goal has largely been achieved by taking advantage of a new and untested technology at that time, wetland passive treatment systems. The historic improvement of water quality in the Stonycreek River (*top right picture*) has fueled an economic revival in the Cambria-Somerset region.

The Somerset Conservation District (SCD) which was instrumental in implementing the original systems, also made legal commitment to operate and maintain them forever by securing funds from federal and state funds and grants and other innovative sources and methods. The original systems, designed to last around twenty years, were due for redesign and/or rehabilitation.

The new team responsible for the reconstruction of the four Oven Run AMD treatment systems include (*middle picture, left to right*) Greg Shustrick, *Watershed Specialist for Somerset Conservation District*, Phil Gardner, Phil Wilson, Danielle Kalp, *PA Association of Conservation Districts Technical Assistance Group*, Branden Diehl, *Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds*.

One of the sites is highlighted here, Oven Run Site D (Oaks Trail). Reconstruction was underway in 2021 (*bottom picture*) and consisted of the washing of the existing limestone (*top picture on page 5*) new compost, new water control structures and the planting of a wetland. The funding for this project came from the Abandoned Mine Land Economic Revitalization (AMLR) Funds through the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) and contracted and administered by the Foundation for PA Watersheds to the SCD.

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All photos on pages 4 and 5 are by Len Lichvar.

Stonycreek (continued from page 4)

Interpretive signage at Oven Run Site D (Oaks Trail) depicts the water quality improvements created from the updated system (bottom picture). A pH of 6.5 to 8.2 is optimal for most plants and animals, and most natural waters have a pH of 5 to 8.5. The average **pH level** at this site went from 4.61 to 6.04. Average levels of other toxic substances show reduction after the system rehab. All are listed in milligrams per Liter (mg/L):

Iron— 35.71 to 1.4 **Aluminum**— 1.01 to 0.49
Manganese—18.67 to 10.67 **Acidity**— 89.14 to 3.61

Alkalinity is a measure of a river’s “buffering capacity” or the ability to neutralize acid. A measure of 5-10 mg is highly sensitive while 20 is not sensitive. The average **Alkalinity** at the site went from 10.98 to 24.82 mg/L.

The Oven Run AMD treatment systems are essential infrastructure facilities. The four systems alone manufacture 1.6 billion gallons of clean water each year. There are a total of 24 such infrastructure facilities in the Stonycreek River watershed.

The Oven Run Sites A,D,E and F Trust Fund was established by the SCD and is held at the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies for long term future operation and maintenance. [You may contribute at any time.](#)



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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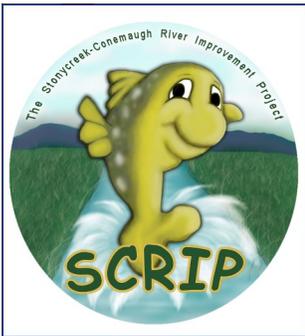
Part 2. Select Option A OR Option B:

_____ **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**



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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

- Pat & Heather Ferko
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