



Visit us on the web at
conewagoinitiative.net

The Conewago Creek Initiative is a locally-led, collaborative partnership effort in the Conewago Creek watershed in Dauphin, Lancaster, and Lebanon Counties. We seek to work with local residents and stakeholders to increase awareness and adoption of land management practices that will improve water quality of local streams and ensure healthy farms and communities, implementing the vision of the Conewago Creek Watershed Community: *a restored Conewago as a centerpiece of pride and a treasured asset in a rural landscape.*

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Conewago Currents

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The Coordinator's Report *Matt Royer*

Welcome to the first newsletter of the Conewago Creek Initiative.

What is the Initiative? It is a locally-led, collaborative partnership effort in the Conewago Creek watershed in Dauphin, Lancaster, and Lebanon Counties. The Initiative seeks to work with local residents to increase awareness and adoption of land management practices that will improve water quality of local streams and ensure healthy farms and communities.

The partners in the Initiative are many, and include private, public, and nonprofit groups at the local, state, and federal level. A list of current partner organizations can be found on the final page of this newsletter.

The most important partners in the effort are the members of the Conewago Creek Community who live,

work, and play in the watershed.

And it is exciting to see what the Conewago Creek Community is up to. As you'll read below, many community members came together this summer and fall to create a powerful vision for the watershed: a vision of clean water, viable and productive farms, and well-planned communities.

Collaborating to pool resources, skills, and ideas, Initiative partners will work with farmers, homeowners, business owners, and municipal officials to achieve the vision.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact me. We would love to work with you as we all do our parts to make the vision a reality.



Winter has brought cold and beauty to the Conewago Creek Watershed this year.

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A Powerful Vision for the Conewago

In engagement efforts such as the Conewago Creek Initiative, community participation is critical to success. So is having a plan, and the involvement of the community in developing that plan.

This past summer and fall, Initiative partners together with Conewago residents embarked

on a "visioning process" to develop a vision for the Conewago—what they want the watershed to look like in the future—and suggest ways in which to achieve that vision. The process kicked off in August with a community pancake breakfast at the Lawn Fire Hall, where watershed residents were given a

chance to provide input on opportunities and changes needed to ensure the health and vitality of the watershed.

At the breakfast, recruitment of a "Conewago Vision Team" began. The team included farmers and residents of the watershed, local municipal
See VISION page 2



The Conewago Community developed a vision of clean streams, productive farms, and well planned communities.

Funds are available to farmers for conservation in the Conewago. To learn more, contact your local Conservation District.



A Powerful Vision for the Conewago (cont.)

leaders and business owners, and members of agencies and organizations active in the Conewago Creek Initiative.

Through two meetings in August and September, the Vision Team, facilitated by Janie French of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, synthesized input from stakeholders and developed a vision statement in which the community saw the “restored Conewago” as “a centerpiece of pride and an asset in a rural landscape.”

On October 23, 2010, *A Vision for the Conewago* Conference was held to present the vision to the broader Conewago watershed community and determine how it may be implemented. The vision in video format, produced by Penn State Public Broadcasting, premiered. More than 40 participants commented on the vision, suggested action items, and then prioritized action items to advance the vision. A final vision report and the video are now posted on the Initiative’s website at

www.conewagoinitiative.net.

Restoring and protecting a watershed takes a committed and coordinated effort from many stakeholders with support and technical assistance from local, state and federal agencies. In the Conewago, a vision plan is now in place that will rally residents and local officials, and serve as a beacon for all future watershed restoration and protection efforts in the Conewago, and a model for other Pennsylvania watersheds.

Conewago Farmers Are Getting It Done

Of all the Conewago Initiative’s programs, its farmer outreach is well on its way to great success. That’s attributable to two things: the great work of local agricultural staff, and the commitment of Conewago farmers to conservation.

Starting last winter, County Conservation Districts introduced the Initiative to all farmers in the watershed with a letter announcing three informal meetings and indicat-

ing they would be conducting baseline conservation surveys of farms. Surveys and farm visits proceeded through October. Farmer cooperation in the surveys was tremendous, resulting in nearly every farm in the watershed surveyed.

Survey results allow us to credit Conewago farmers who have installed conservation practices, and allow staff to prioritize farmers who want or need to install more.

And there is a *lot* of conservation practices going in the ground on Conewago farms. You can see it for yourself driving around the watershed. We’ll provide some specifics in future updates.

More money is available in the Conewago, USDA’s designated “Showcase Watershed” for PA. Now is the time to take advantage of being in the spotlight! To learn more, contact your local Conservation District.

Conewago Partner Spotlight: Spring Interns

The Conewago Creek Initiative is fortunate to have three talented interns this spring, **Lauren Taneyhill**, **Adam Derkacz**, and **Heidi Musshafen**.

Lauren is a junior at Penn State, majoring in Community, Environment, and Development. She has a strong interest in community based environmental initiatives. Last year she studied abroad in Kenya, working on a project to establish an eco-village. Lauren has devel-

oped the Initiative’s website and has done a wonderful job! You can check out her work at www.conewagoinitiative.net.

Adam is a senior at Elizabethtown College, majoring in Environmental Science. While at Etown, he has participated in numerous water quality and wildlife habitat studies. Last summer, he worked for the National Park Service in Acadia National Park, confirming a passion for field

work. He has applied to graduate schools to pursue a masters in ecology.

Heidi is a sophomore at Penn State, majoring in Environmental Resource Management. Heidi is working with the Conservation Districts to develop a professional poster for the Soil and Water Conservation Society national conference in Washington, D.C. in July.

Welcome interns!

Think Spring: Plan Your Rain Garden *by Lauren Taneyhill, PSU Intern*

Winter maintains its grip, but now is the perfect time to start thinking spring – flowers blooming, butterflies fluttering. Time to plan your rain garden!

Rain gardens are one form of “green landscaping” – designing beautiful and healthy places to live while reducing pollution and providing wildlife habitat.

Rain gardens have water quality benefits by managing stormwater runoff. “The primary purpose of rain gardens is to catch the first

flush of pollutants off a road, parking lot, or roof, and protect our drinking water,” says Bryce Davis, owner of The Plant Place and Davis Organics, Elizabethtown.

A rain garden is very similar to a traditional garden with a few main differences. It should be located on the downhill site of the property to receive stormwater runoff, and should be sized proportionate to the area from which it will collect runoff. Size will be dependent on soil type as well. The

ground should be slightly indented so that the water can flow into and fill the garden. It should be able to drain the collected water over several hours to several days, and it should contain native plants that can handle being soaked with water.

To learn more, attend a Cooperative Extension rain garden workshop on March 26 at the Dauphin County Agriculture and Natural Resource Center. [Click here](#) to register.



Photo by Ward Wilson, Tetra Tech

**Rain gardens
reduce pollution,
provide wildlife
habitat, and help
create a beautiful
place to live.**

Watershed Group Receives Stream Restoration Grant

The Tri-County Conewago Creek Association has received a \$108,000 grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection for stream restoration projects on the Conewago Creek.

TCCCA is the local watershed group for the Conewago Creek watershed. Since its founding in 2002, it has worked on many projects with landowners interested in restoration of their streamside properties.

TCCCA volunteers have helped plant trees along streams and maintain plantings to control invasive species. In 2009, TCCCA, with the help of the Fish and Wildlife Service and many other partners, completed a stream restoration project on the Conewago at Route 743. Severely eroding stream banks were stabilized and fish habitat structures were added. Wetlands were also restored. A forest riparian buffer will be planted this

spring.

This latest grant will fund additional stream bank restoration and forest riparian buffer restoration in the Conewago.

Do you have streamside property in need of restoration? TCCCA would like to help. Visit the [TCCCA website](#) or email us at

conewagocreek@yahoo.com.



Conewago Creek before (2008) and after (2010) TCCCA stream restoration project.

Practice Spotlights

On The Farm: No-Till

No-Till is an excellent practice for minimizing soil erosion and maintaining soil health of crop fields. In a No-Till system, the soil is left largely undisturbed from harvest to planting. The crop residue holds soil in place, increasing soil fertility and preventing runoff into surface waters. No-Till also saves time and money, as less time and fuel is spent preparing

fields for planting. Many farmers in the Conewago are practicing No-Till. Take a drive around the watershed and you will see conservation in action!



Around The Home: Native Meadows

Tired of mowing all that lawn? Plant some in native meadow.

With a little bit of work, the right seed mix, and a good plan for prepping, planting, and maintaining, you can convert a section of your lawn into a native meadow of grasses and wildflowers. Converting lawn to meadow

improves water quality by filtering and infiltrating runoff. It also brings beauty and attracts wildlife year round. For more information, visit [Dick Brown's blog](#).



Conewago Photo Gallery



Clockwise, from upper left: Conewago pancake breakfast at Lawn Fire Company, August 2010; Vision Team meeting at Aberdeen Mills, August 2010; A Vision for the Conewago Conference, October 2010; Before and after photos of buffer restoration on Little Conewago Creek; Winter scenes from the watershed.



Last year's Earth Day at Aberdeen featured face painting and outdoor fun!

Earth Day at Aberdeen Mills Set for April 30

Aberdeen Mills will team with the Tri-County Conewago Creek Association and other partners of the Conewago Creek Initiative to host its third annual Conewago Earth Day Celebration on Saturday, April 30, 2011. The morning event is open to the public.

While specifics are still being planned, the morning will offer tips on buying locally grown foods and protecting clean water through native

landscaping. Families will enjoy sampling the creek for aquatic insects to assess the health of the stream. TCCCA will be potting trees for its native tree nursery, and offering each family in attendance a free tree.

Previous Earth Day Celebrations have been a big success. Mark your calendar and plan on attending, rain or



shine. Visit the [Aberdeen Mills website](#) to learn more.

Conewago Hosts Leading Stream Ecology Expert

One of the world's leading freshwater ecologists visited the Conewago area in November 2010. Dr. Bern Sweeney, director of the Stroud Water Research Center in Avondale, PA, was the keynote presenter at a Stream Ecology and Forest Riparian Buffers Workshop presented by the Conewago Initiative in Elizabethtown. Over 100 people attended.

Forest riparian buffers are areas along streams where native trees and shrubs have been protected or planted.

They filter pollutants, cool water temperatures, help prevent stream bank erosion, and provide flood control. In recent years, Dr. Sweeney's research has shown that forest buffers also increase the *in-stream* processing of pollutants when compared to grass.

Workshop attendees also heard from David Wise of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, who presented on the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP pays 100% of the cost of planting

forest buffers, plus an annual payment to the landowner. It also covers some maintenance costs.

The workshop ended with a tour of a buffer project on the John Hertzler farm along Brills Run, planted in 2008. John's trees are growing well, and in years to come this will help bring cleaner water to the Conewago.



Photo by Anna Marie Nachman

Workshop attendees tour the Hertzler buffer along Brills Run, a tributary of the Conewago Creek.

Natural Areas Program Looking for Applicants

South Londonderry Township is seeking applicants from the Conewago Creek watershed to enroll in its Natural Areas Program.

This highly successful program, now entering its third year and administered by the Township's Environmental Advisory Council (EAC), has enrolled many acres of land in the watershed. The program allows landowners to enroll a portion of their property as a designated

"Natural Area" to promote wildlife habitat and water quality. To qualify, the land must include a native, natural ecosystem and be maintained as such. It could be a swamp, marsh, pond, meadow, or woods. Participants get recognition with an official sign and exemption from weed ordinances. There is no cost to apply and the program is purely voluntary. Allowing public access to your land or preserving it with an easement is *not* required.

For more information and an application form, visit the [South Londonderry Township website](http://www.southlondonderry.com/natural-areas).

Photo by Dick Brown



The voluntary Natural Areas Program helps promote wildlife habitat and water quality at no cost to the landowner.

Youth Education Corner *by Jennifer Fetter, Penn State Cooperative Extension*

When it comes to water resource education, great efforts are made every day in reaching out to homeowners, landowners, municipalities, developers, and more. However, there is another important audience that is sometimes overlooked, and that is youth. Laying the foundation for understanding water issues is vital to the future of our limited water resources, whether through school curriculum, 4-H clubs,

scouting, summer camps, or individual experiences. Penn State Cooperative Extension and PA 4-H are currently piloting the brand new *Conewago Stream Teams* Program in the Conewago Creek Watershed, where youth are not only involved in water education, but also engaged in the watershed by joining together with the restoration efforts currently taking place there. Youth in and around the

Conewago Creek Watershed can form a *Conewago Stream Team* with their friends, classmates, neighbors, scout troop, 4-H Club, church youth group, or any group of their peers. To learn more, contact Penn State Cooperative Extension Educator, Jennifer Fetter at (717) 921-8803 or jrf21@psu.edu



Photo by Jennifer Fetter

A Conewago Stream Team samples aquatic insects to assess stream health.

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Dauphin County Conservation District • Lancaster County Conservation District • Lebanon County Conservation District • Tri-County Conewago Creek Association • South Londonderry Township • Elizabethtown College • Penn State University • PA Department of Environmental Protection • PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources • PA Fish and Boat Commission • PA Department of Agriculture • USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service • USDA Agriculture Research Service • U.S. Geologic Service • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Chesapeake Bay Foundation • ZedX Corporation • American Farmland Trust • Capital Area RC&D

The Conewago Creek Initiative is a project of Penn State Cooperative Extension made possible through funding by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds



Community working together for a restored Conewago.

The Conewago Watershed Community has envisioned a future that establishes the restored Conewago and its tributaries as a centerpiece of pride and a treasured asset in a rural landscape.

This vision includes a strong agricultural community and productive farmland, community recreation areas and vibrant, well planned communities. Pristine landscapes will be protected while providing sustainable uses of natural resources, clean water and streams, and educational opportunities for generations to come.



Calendar of Events

March 3, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

March 10, 9:30 am - 1:30 pm

Healthy Cows, Clean Streams Workshop

Yoder's, New Holland (3/3)
Paradise Park, Paradise (3/10)
(717) 576-3287

March 12, 8:30 am - 3:00 pm

Dauphin County Woodland Owner's Conference

Dauphin County Ag Center
1451 Peters Mtn. Rd, Dauphin
(717) 921-8803

March 15, 9:45 am - 12:15 pm

Conewago Initiative Project Advisory Team Meeting

DEP Southcentral Region
909 Elmerton Ave, Harrisburg
(717) 948-6459

March 26, 9:00 am - 11:00 am

Rain Garden and Rain Barrel Workshop

Dauphin County Ag Center
1451 Peters Mtn. Rd, Dauphin
(717) 921-8803

March 30, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

April 27, 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm
Tri-County Conewago Creek Association Monthly Meetings

Conewago Township Building
3279 Old Hershey Rd, Etown
(717) 948-6459

April 7, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

Dairy Discussion Group

Londonderry Township Building
783 S. Geyers Church Rd, Mtown
(717) 240-6500

April 16, 8:45 am - 1:00 pm

Pond Management Workshop

Londonderry Township Building
783 S. Geyers Church Rd, Mtown
(717) 240-6500

April 20, 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm

Safe Drinking Water Clinic

Lancaster Farm & Home Center
1383 Arcadia Rd, Lancaster
(717) 840-7429

April 30, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Conewago Earth Day

Aberdeen Mills
2405 Mill Road, Etown
(717) 948-6459