



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

After a terribly long and cold winter, it is finally nice to see some green coming to the Conewago landscape. It is a refreshing change!

Change is coming to the Initiative's offices as well. As some of you may know, last year I was appointed as Director of the Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center and relocated to State College. Kristen Kyler, who began working with us as an intern in 2012 and stayed on board as Project Coordinator, is now our full time presence in the AEC's Lower Susquehanna office. She has taken the reigns as the Initiative's local coordinator and is doing a terrific job.

So this will be my last coordinator's report. We have been able to accomplish much in the last five years. It is a credit to our Initiative partners, and most importantly, the landowners and residents of the Conewago.

Without their willingness to adopt conservation practices, our Initiative would have been a failure. As you will read below, a new publication, *Stories from the Conewago*, tells the stories of several of those landowners. We hope these stories inspire others in the watershed and beyond.

Under Kristen's leadership, the Initiative will continue to grow and thrive. As you will read below, there are many exciting spring events underway and planned in the watershed. With continued support from the AEC, our partnership will continue to work together for a restored Conewago—you can join us at our next Project Advisory Team meeting on April 23, 1-3 pm, 1st Floor Church Hall, Penn State Harrisburg.

We hope to see you at one of our many springtime activities!

Matt Royer
Penn State Ag and Env't Center
(814)-863-8756



Stories from the Conewago— A new publication

A new publication entitled "Stories from the Conewago— the value of conservation to landowners, neighbors, community & society" is hot off the press. The 20 page booklet shares the stories of hard-working landowners in the Conewago Creek watershed and how their conservation efforts have provided valuable ecosystem services that benefit all of us.

Ecosystem services are goods and services provided by natural processes that benefit society. Farms and rural lands provide many ecosystem services

like groundwater recharge, flood control, food production, clean air and clean water. Landowners can adopt conservation practices that greatly enhance the benefits provided by their lands.

The people and properties featured in this publication have valuable conservation practices in place that are benefitting the entire Conewago Creek watershed community. There are 6 stories shared in this booklet as well as a guide on how to assess lands for their ecosystem services. Descriptions of conservation

practices that help to enhance those benefits are also included along with the programs that are available to provide financial assistance.

There are many residents in the watershed who are implementing conservation practices, but this guide specifically focuses on the stories of Ivan Hanson, John Hertzler, the Neale family, Dick Brown, Larry Coble of Tri-County Conewago Creek Association, Tom Murray of Elizabethtown College, And

(Continued on page 2)



Photo by Shannon Fretz Photography

“Stories from the Conewago” Continued

(Continued from page 1)
Nate McKelvie of Milton Hershey School. A special thanks to all of them for sharing their stories and putting conservation on the ground. We hope these

stories inspire others in the Conewago watershed and beyond to practice conservation and land stewardship.

You can view “Stories from the Conewago” on the

homepage of our website- www.conewagoinitiative.net. If you would like a hard copy, email Kristen Kyler your address at klk343@psu.edu.

Conewago Earth Day Event– May 3

The sixth annual Conewago Creek Earth Day Event will be held at its traditional location on the banks of Conewago Creek at the historic Aberdeen Mills and farmstead.

Aberdeen Mills
2405 Mill Road, Elizabethtown
Saturday, May 3
9:00 am - 12:00 pm.

This event has been well-loved by the community for many years thanks to the efforts of the Tri-County Conewago Creek Association, the local volunteer watershed organization. The public is invited to attend this event which will take place rain or shine.

Merritt and Katcha Neale, owners of Aberdeen Mills and local sustainable agriculture producers, are graciously hosting the event. This year’s event will

focus on forest management. The Neale’s recently planted over 12 acres of forest on their property to help improve water quality and to provide wildlife habitat. In a unique approach, rotational grazing is being used to protect the new forest plants from competition by invasive weeds.

The May 3rd event will begin with an introduction to the Conewago Creek and Aberdeen Mills. Attendees will then be led on a forest walk to explore the forest restoration project. Along the way, blooming wildflowers will be identified and discussed. Last year, Lady Slippers and Virginia Blue Bells were among the favorite flowers spotted. Those looking to volunteer will be given a chance to help perform some maintenance on the forest planting. The methods and benefits of the project will be

shared. Back at the mill, attendees will be able to help pot some trees that will be used in future forest restoration projects, explore the historic mill, and meet the farm animals. Partners of the Conewago Creek Initiative will have educational materials displayed and be available to answer questions.

It is recommended to wear appropriate footwear for walking approximately half a mile on a wooded trail that has the potential to be muddy. The volunteer activities at this year’s event are part of Penn State’s Greening the Lower Susquehanna Project, in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Questions about the event can be directed to Kristen Kyler at (717) 948-6609 or klk343@psu.edu.



Rain Garden Workshop Offered

A rain garden workshop is being held to instruct attendees on the need for rain gardens and how to install one.

Saturday, May 17
9 am-noon
Londonderry Township Building
783 S Geyers Church Rd,
Middletown

Are you considering putting an addition on your house, building a patio, or extending your driveway? New regulations may

mean that you will be required to partner these types of projects with a “green” practice.

Rain gardens are one way to capture rainwater and keep it from harming your local stream. They can be beautiful additions to your yard!

The importance of rain water management, how to design and install a rain garden, and a discussion on the best plants to use in these

gardens will be included in this half day workshop. Weather permitting, participants may have a chance to get some hands on planting experience.

Anyone with a desire to install a rain garden or who is curious to learn more about stormwater is encouraged to attend. The workshop is free but registration is required. To register visit:: <http://extension.psu.edu/natural-resources/water/events/rain-garden-workshop>



Live Staking Success

As soon as the ground thaws and the first signs of spring appear, it is time to live stake. Live staking is the process of cutting live branches from willow and red osier dogwood trees and sticking them directly in the banks of streams. These branches grow into new trees and develop root systems that help hold the mud of bare stream banks in place. Live staking is a simple and inexpensive way to protect a stream from eroding streambanks.

It can also be a really fun activity!

On March 22, the live staking season was kicked off with a workshop and volunteer event at the Hanson Farm. Last year volunteers live staked half of the section of Little Conewago Creek that flows through the farm. The event this spring built on the success of last year's project and completed the work that was needed. The live stakes on this property will work together with a riparian buffer that was planted 13

years ago to fully restore this piece of the stream.

The very next weekend a group of dedicated and determined volunteers met at Flory Park in Lancaster County to live stake a section of Mill Creek. An event planners worst fear came true-rain! But those who had signed up, showed up and worked hard. The volunteers planted 2000 live stakes in 2 hours with smiles on their faces. Last fall, volunteers planted 1000 trees to form a riparian buffer at this same site.

The final live staking event of 2014 occurred on April 5th when a group of Penn State students traveled from State College to work side by side with local volunteers to live stake Gallagher Run. This tributary to the Conewago Creek has eroded stream banks that the live stakes will work to protect.

The students, majoring in Environmental Resource Management, are taking a class taught by Matt

Royer on issues and careers related to the Chesapeake Bay. They were very excited to get some hands on experience. Several topped their waders in their enthusiasm! The students also spent time that day touring the watershed and surrounding areas.

See page 4 for additional photos from these events.



Photo by Anna Marie Nachman, PSU

Manada Conservancy is Hosting a Riparian Buffer Day

Are you a creek-side landowner? Join Manada conservancy on Saturday, April 26th to find out how you can plant a buffer in your own backyard! Combined with Hummelstown's Arbor Day celebration, there will be a ceremonial tree planting and raffles. Don't miss your chance to win a free plant for your property!

This community planting project has been funded by the League of Women Voters of PA Citizen Education Fund through a Growing Greener grant from the PA DEP in partnership with The Manada Conservancy, Hummelstown Borough, and United Water.

Saturday April 26th 10:00 AM
109 North Hanover Street,
Hummelstown PA 17036

This event is free and open to the public. For more information, please contact Jennifer Hine at jhine@manada.org or call (717) 566-4122.

Green Your Blues! A Stormwater Workshop

The Green Your Blues stormwater workshop is presented by the Little Conestoga Partnership.

Saturday, April 12 9:00 AM-noon
Manheim Township Public Library
595 Granite Run Dr., Lancaster
Please Register

Participants will learn about: stormwater, watersheds, and how residents of the Little Conestoga watershed can receive funding to help improve water quality in that watershed. The workshop includes walking the

Public Library property with stormwater professionals, training on how to assess your own property's stormwater impact, and a review of best management practices (such as rain gardens, rain barrels, riparian buffers, and more) that YOU can use to help control local flooding and reduce water pollution!

The Little Conestoga Partnership represents a collaborative effort to improve water quality in Lancaster County, the Susquehanna River, and the Chesapeake Bay.



To register please contact Matt Kofroth, Lancaster County Conservation District at 717-299-5361 x124 or MattKofroth@lancasterconservation.org

Conewago Photo Gallery



This edition's Photo Gallery features scenes from our volunteer live staking events.

A Unique Volunteer Opportunity

Penn State's Greening the Lower Susquehanna Initiative is looking for a **Tree Nursery Volunteer** to help take care of the tree seedlings in their native tree nursery for the summer of 2014. Nursery help will be needed from May to October.

The nursery is located at The Plant Place: Davis Organics (405 Hoffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022)

There will be approximately 1,500 tree seedlings that will need to be weeded on a bi-weekly basis (every other week). The tree seedlings grow in pots 9 inches tall with a soil surface of 3 inches by 3 inches. Because of the small size of the pots, weeding should only take

about an hour if they are weeded on a routine basis. Regular weeding is very important for ensuring the optimal growth of the trees. Fast growing weeds can quickly limit the small trees of water, light, and nutrients which is why a bi-weekly schedule should be established.

Some other tasks could include helping to organize the trees prior to plantings, discarding and tracking dead trees, and watering trees that are not receiving enough from the sprinkler system.

The volunteer will need to be able to bend, kneel, and potentially lift flats of 25 trees. For the majority of the work, the volunteer would be working independently and can maintain their own schedule. Training can be provided on the different tree species and weed

identification.

If you would be interested in volunteering or have any questions about the opportunity, please contact Kristen Kyler at 717-948-6609 or klk343@psu.edu.



Practice Spotlights

On the Farm: Stabilized Walkways

The areas where your livestock tend to congregate (feeding areas, walkways, etc..) can become a water quality concern. The constant hoof action tears up the grass creating a mud pit prone to erosion when it rains. The mud and manure from these heavy use areas can be polluting the stream just down the hill. Stabilizing these areas with solid materials can

eliminate this risk. If you are concerned that your heavy use area could be having a water quality effect, talk to your County Conservation District for assistance.



Photo by Tippecanoe watershed Foundation

Around the Home: Plant Natives

Bees, butterflies and other insects are very important to the natural environment. They pollinate crops and other beneficial plants and help to control pests like mosquitos. They need native plants to breed and eat. Birds and other wildlife also depend on native plants.

As you start planning your flower

beds this spring, look for native plants to buy and avoid planting those that are known to be invasive or damaging to the ecosystem. There are some good guides available online.



Photo by Shannon Fretz Photography

Conewago Partner Spotlight: The Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF) has been a partner in the Conewago Creek Initiative since the beginning. CBF is a multi-state nonprofit that aims to "Save the Bay" through education, advocacy, litigation, and restoration. The CBF field staff is on the ground working with farmers to plan and install CREP buffers, they have helped lead numerous volunteer events and educational workshops in the

watershed, and have provided support to the Initiative by attending Project Advisory and work team meetings.

CBF is very active in all aspects of protecting water quality throughout the Conewago, the Susquehanna and



CHESAPEAKE BAY FOUNDATION
Saving a National Treasure

the Chesapeake Bay watersheds. They lead trips to the Bay that connect Pennsylvanians to the Chesapeake Bay, but also work locally to lead tree and rain garden plantings. Check out cbf.org to learn about all that they do.

CONEWAGO CREEK INITIATIVE

Kristen Kyler
Local Project Coordinator
Penn State Harrisburg
307 Church Hall
777 West Harrisburg Pike
Middletown PA 17057
Phone: 717-948-6609
Email: klk343@psu.edu

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. Geological Survey • U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service • U.S. Environmental Protection Agency • Chesapeake Bay Foundation • ZedX, Inc. • American Farmland Trust • Capital Area RC&D • LandStudies, Inc. • Wild Resources, Inc. • Tetra Tech, Inc. • Aquatic Resources Restoration Co. • RGS Associates, Inc.

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



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

Green Your Blues Workshop

April 12 9:00 AM
Manheim Township Public Library

595 Granite Run Dr., Lancaster

Riparian Buffer Demonstration

April 26 10:00 am
109 North Hanover Street,
Hummelstown PA 17036

Conewago Earth Day Event

May 3 9:00AM
Aberdeen Mills
2405 Mill Rd, Elizabethtown

Rain Garden Workshop

May 17 9 am—12:30 pm
Londonderry Township Building
783 S Geyers Church Rd
Check our website for more details closer to event

Conewago Initiative PAT Meeting

April 23 1:00 PM
1st Floor Church Hall, Penn State Harrisburg

Earth Day is April 22!

