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**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

Volume 1, Issue 3

Summer 2011

## The Coordinator's Report

It has been a busy summer in the Conewago watershed. "Community outreach" has been the theme. And as you read below, there is good reason to be excited about the Conewago community: preliminary results of from our recent landowner survey indicates that Conewago farmers and residents have a high interest in and take personal responsibility for clean water.

We've held several events and workshops this summer as Conewago Initiative partners work hard to take the message to the community. In July, Capital Area RC&D sponsored a buffer walk at the Wenger farm, where landowners learned how to take advantage of the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), received a hands on invasive species identification course, and learned about stream restoration practices. An evening forestry

workshop for woodlot landowners, held at the Governor Dick Environmental Center and sponsored by USDA NRCS, was well attended. Participants learned about the importance of forest management for healthy watersheds and USDA cost share programs for forest stewardship planning and practices. Initiative representatives were on hand at South Londonderry Township National Night Out and the Pennsylvania Chautauqua in Mount Gretna, where speakers presented tips on how homeowners can do their part for clean water by "going native."

And if you missed us at these summer events, catch our booth at the Elizabethtown Fair all this week, or join us at Haldeman Mansion in Bainbridge the morning of September 10 as we introduce the critters of the watershed to the entire family!



**Watershed community events and workshops abounded this summer.**

*Matt Royer*

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## Protecting Water Quality Important to Conewago Landowners

Earlier this year, residents in the Conewago Creek watershed received surveys asking about their management practices and perceptions of water quality in Conewago Creek, Susquehanna River, and Chesapeake Bay.

Results of this survey are currently being analyzed and will be used by the Conewago

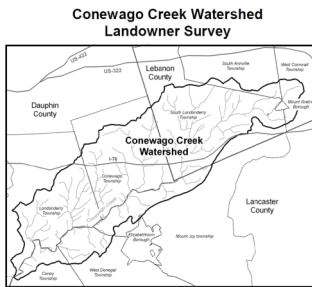
Initiative's Project Advisory Team to develop partnerships and educational efforts to improve water quality in the Watershed.

The survey sought to describe landowners in the watershed and their current attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and knowledge toward clean water,

and identify opportunities for various programs and offerings by Initiative partners.

The survey was mailed to a list of 190 farmers and 1500 randomly sampled non-farm landowners in the watershed between February and May of 2011. Completed and returned  
**See SURVEY page 2**

## Landowner Survey (cont.)



**91% of Conewago farmers and 79% of non-farmer residents feel it is their personal responsibility to help protect water quality.**

surveys resulted in a response rate of 51% from farmers and 40% from non-farmers.

Some preliminary results from the survey are as follows.

Water quality is described as worse in the Chesapeake Bay and Susquehanna River than the Conewago Creek. Farmers are split on their views on water quality in the Conewago Creek; non-farmers generally see the water quality in the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay as worse than farmers see it.

34% of farmers and 28% of non-farmers rated water quality in Conewago Creek as poor/fair, while 44% of farmers and 35% of non-farmers rated it as good/excellent.

47% of farmers and 52% of non-farmers rated water quality in the Susquehanna River as poor/fair, while 26% of farmers and 16% of non-farmers rated it as good/excellent.

Finally, 41% of farmers and 46% of non-farmers rated water quality in the Chesapeake Bay as poor/fair while only 19% farmers and 13% of non-farmers rated it as good/excellent.

Concern about water quality was relatively high, and equal across all groups and water bodies. About 80% of farmers and non-farmers described their level of concern as somewhat or very concerned for the Conewago Creek, Susquehanna River, and Chesapeake Bay.

Results showed a high conservation ethic among Conewago landowners. 91% of

farmers and 79% of non-farmers feel it is their personal responsibility to help protect water quality. 87% of farmers and 78% of non-farmers believe that using the recommended conservation practices improve water quality, while only 11% of farmers and 14% of non-farmers feel such practices have little impact.

Results are still being analyzed, and complete reports will be made available on the Initiative's website later this fall.

## Landowners Wanted for Stormwater Student Project



**Residential and commercial landowners in the Conewago can work with Penn State students and faculty this fall to develop recommendations for green stormwater management on their properties.**

Photo by Dick Brown

Residential and commercial landowners in the watershed who are interested in learning what they can do on their own properties to improve water quality now have an exciting option.

This fall, Penn State landscape architecture and engineering students and faculty will work with interested Conewago landowners to develop site-specific concept plans and recommendations for managing stormwater using "green" approaches that improve water quality, increase wildlife habitat, and enhance the beauty of your property.

This "hands on" course is being offered by Professor Kelleann Foster to her landscape architecture students at Penn State

University Park and Dr. Shirley Clark to her hydrologic engineering students at Penn State Harrisburg.

The students will first review a property assessment checklist with the landowner and gather background site information about the property. Armed with this information, the students will meet the landowner for a site visit to observe the landscape, identify problem areas and opportunities, and discuss with the landowner their objectives and needs.

The project will culminate in a workshop the afternoon of Saturday, November 5, where the students will present the concept plans and recommendations they have developed for the landowners, and suggestions and resources for imple-

mentation will be presented. Conewago Creek Initiative partners will participate in the workshop to offer many of these suggestions and resources.

If you are interested in working with the students on this exciting project, please contact Matt Royer at [mroyer@psu.edu](mailto:mroyer@psu.edu).

Space will be limited to six landowners, so reserve your spot today!

## Conewago Partner Spotlight: US Geological Survey

Thinking about fishing the Conewago this weekend and wondering if the forecasted rains will make the stream too high? Thanks to the US Geological Survey, there is now an online tool to help you make the call whether to cancel your plans or not!

The US Geological Survey is a science organization that provides impartial information on ecosystems and the environment. As part of their ongoing water quality monitoring, USGS recently installed a stream gage in the lower watershed, along

Sawmill Road. The gage collects monitoring data on a continual basis for a variety of parameters, including stream height, flow, turbidity etc. The monitoring data is then displayed in "real time" for several of the key parameters. A second gage will be installed in the watershed at Prospect Road in the near future.

Mike Langland, USGS Hydrogeologist, serves as the USGS representative on the Conewago Initiative. Mike sits on the Monitoring Work Team that has developed a long term

monitoring plan and is currently working on developing some short term indicators that will help assess early signals of success with the Initiative's efforts. Mike has been the key landowner contact for USGS in choosing locations for gages and working out the issues of installation.

Because of USGS's involvement in the project, Initiative partners and watershed community members can track progress in reducing pollution loads in the Conewago over time.



Pictured above is the new USGS stream gage on the Conewago. To check real time stream data for this station, follow this link:

[http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/uv?site\\_no=01573710](http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/uv?site_no=01573710).

## Volunteers Needed for October Tree Plantings

Two major tree plantings are planned for this October in the watershed, and we are looking for you to give us a hand!

The first planting will occur on **Saturday, October 15 at 9:00 am**. As an Eagle Scout project, Logan Finley has been tending over 100 native trees and shrubs all spring and summer, and will be planting them on the Ambrose farm along Route 241. Volunteers are encouraged to join Logan's

scout crew!

The second planting will occur on **Saturday, October 22 at 9:00 am** at the Hershey Meadows restoration site. Volunteers will join Tri-County Conewago Creek Association and Mark Metzler of Wild Resources, Inc. as they finish planting a forest riparian buffer along the Conewago Creek downstream of the Route 743 bridge. The first half of this buffer was planted by Mark and

volunteers in the spring and is doing well this summer.

For more information on these events, contact Matt Royer at [mroyer@psu.edu](mailto:mroyer@psu.edu) or look for more details in our September Conewago Connection enews.



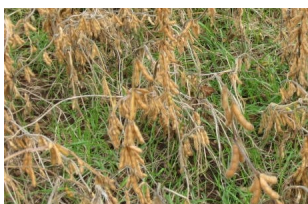
Watershed resident Logan Finley waters trees as part of his Eagle Scout project. The trees will be planted by Logan and volunteers at the Ambrose farm on October 15.

## Practice Spotlights

### On The Farm: Cover Crops

Now is a good time to start thinking about planting fall cover crops. Cover crops protect and even improve soil in a cost effective and sustainable way. Keeping soil continually covered reduced erosion, increases soil organic matter and moisture retention. Some cover crops such as legumes are also highly effective at fixing

nitrogen in the soil, thereby reducing the amount of nitrogen needed for spring planting. For more information about cover crops, visit the [Penn State Extension website](#).



### Around The Home: Grass Clippings

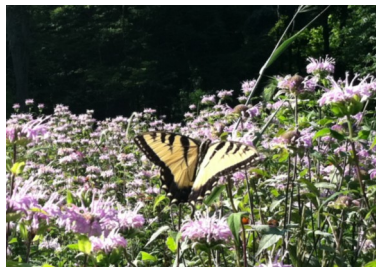
Many homeowners spend countless hours every summer bagging grass clippings. Did you know it is better for your lawn and the watershed if you let those grass clippings lay? The clippings will naturally fertilize your lawn as they decay. Maintain a nice looking lawn by using a mulching mower and cutting to one-third of the blade

length. This practice will prevent fertilizer runoff from your lawn, save you money spent on commercial fertilizers, give you a healthy, organic lawn, and save you lots of time each summer!





## Conewago Photo Gallery



This issue's gallery features the sights of summer in the Conewago Creek watershed and photos from our many summer events and workshops.

## Conoy/Conewago Watershed Expo September 10

Conewago Initiative partners are teaming up with a neighboring watershed group and a local historical preservation society to offer a watershed expo.

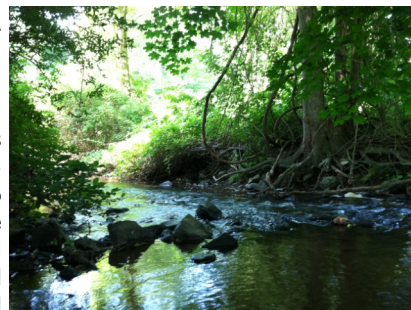
The event will be held rain or shine at the historic Haldeman Mansion, 230 Locust Grove Road, Bainbridge, on Saturday, September 10 from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm.

Joining Conewago Creek Initiative partners are the Conoy Creek Watershed

Association and the Haldeman Mansion Preservation Society, owner of the historic mansion.

Partners will be on hand with displays and information. Watershed educators will sample Conoy Creek and explain what the “critters” of the creek tell us about watershed health. A presentation on mollusks of the Susquehanna will also be offered, with a tip of the cap to Samuel Haldeman, who wrote a seminal treatise on mollusks in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The Haldeman Mansion Preservation Society will offer food and drinks. All food and drink proceeds will benefit the Society, which seeks to preserve and restore the home of Samuel Haldeman, noted scientist, author, and naturalist.



## Lebanon Master Gardeners Symposium September 17

Lebanon County Cooperative Extension is presenting its 7th Annual Master Gardeners Symposium on Saturday, September 17, 8:00 am to 1:30 pm, at the Midway Church of the Brethren, 13 Evergreen Road, Lebanon.

This year's theme is “Conscientious Organic Gardening: Pollinators & Natives.” PA Gardener Magazine contributing writer and photographer Gloria Day will

speak about creating wildlife in your backyard. Ruth Pfeffer, owner of *Birding with Ruth*, will speak about how to invite birds, butterflies, and pollinators to your backyard. Finally, Al Renzi, co-owner of the Yellow Springs Farm Native Plant Nursery, will speak about biological controls for your native garden.

Gardening with native plants can help improve the health of a watershed. Natives attract

insects, pollinators, birds and other wildlife to your backyard, can help manage stormwater runoff, and add beauty to your property.

For more information and to register for the Symposium, [click here](#).



## Free Rain Barrel Workshop September 17

On the other end of the watershed, Dauphin County Conservation District is sponsoring a free Rain Barrel Workshop on September 17, 10:00 am to 12:00 pm at the Dauphin County Agricultural and Natural Resources Center, 1451 Peters Mountain Road, Dauphin.

This “do-it-yourself” workshop will teach participants how to construct their own rain barrel, and will provide a free instruc-

tion manual and rain barrel kit to convert nearly any appropriate container into a rain barrel. Fully reconditioned 55-gallon plastic barrels are also available at no cost, but you must contact the District if you would like a rain barrel.

Rain barrels are good for reducing peak volume and velocity of stormwater runoff, and provide a cost effective alternative to tap water for watering plants and gardens. They are

inexpensive to install and maintain and are part of a good homeowner strategy for protecting your watershed.

The workshop is free, but registration is required. Contact Gil Hershel or Mike Yanchuk at (717) 921-8100 to register.





## CONEWAGO CREEK INITIATIVE

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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

**August 22-27,  
10:00 am - 11:00 pm**

### **Elizabethtown Fair**

Elizabethtown Fairgrounds  
visit our display booth in Expo Hall!

**September 10,  
8:00 am - 12:00 pm  
Conoy/Conewago Watershed  
Expo**

Haldeman Mansion  
230 Locust Grove Road, Bainbridge  
(717) 948-6459

**September 17,  
8:00 am - 1:30 pm  
Penn State Extension  
Lebanon Master Gardeners  
Symposium**

Midway Church of the Brethren,  
13 Evergreen Road, Lebanon  
(717) 270-4391

**September 17,  
10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

### **Dauphin County Conservation District Rain Barrel Workshop**

1451 Peters Mtn. Road, Dauphin  
(717) 921-8100

**September 20,  
9:45 am - 12:15 pm  
Conewago Initiative Project  
Advisory Team Meeting**

Londonderry Township Building  
783 S. Geyers Church Rd, Mtown  
(717) 948-6459

**September 28,  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
Tri-County Conewago Creek  
Association Monthly Meeting**

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

**October 15 and 22,  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm**

### **Conewago Tree Plantings**

Volunteers needed!  
Contact (717) 948-6459 for details

Check the [Conewago Calendar](#)  
often for updated events!