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[conewagoinitiative.net](http://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.*

#### Inside this issue:

Volunteer Opportunities	2
Rain Barrel Workshop	2
Precision Feeding Conference	3
Partner and Practice Spotlights	3
Photo Gallery	4
Live staking events	5
Old Hershey Rd Planting	5
Landowner Survey	5
Calendar	6

# Conewago Currents

Volume 3, Issue 2

Spring 2013

## The Coordinator's Report

After a slow start to spring, warm weather has finally arrived in the Conewago!

It was a productive winter for the Initiative and its partners. We held a winter farmers meeting in February that drew 50 attendees—with a good mix of Conewago farmers and conservation partners. Farmers learned more about the progress they are making in the Conewago, and heard presentations on two high priority conservation practices: no till and riparian buffers. Highlights included testimonials from Ron Kopp and Dave Coble, two Conewago farmers who recently transitioned to 100% no till, and the Hoss's lunch of course!

On the residential front, we continue to make progress on the Conewago stormwater incentives program. Over the last several weeks, LandStudies conducted several property assessments for residents in the watershed to

develop Green Masterplans. And we are pleased to report that the first application for cost share was approved for a rain garden at South Londonderry Township's Colebrook Park! Read more below in the Partner Spotlight.

For Conewago residents and friends looking to get their hands dirty this spring, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Penn State Extension have teamed up to provide a number of volunteer activities in the Conewago Creek watershed--everything from live staking to tree planting to riparian buffer maintenance. To learn more about these activities and how to get involved, read on.

I hope to see you at our big spring event—the Conewago Earth Day

Celebration at Aberdeen Mills on Saturday, April 20!

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## Conewago Creek Earth Day Celebration to be held on April 20

The Tri-County Conewago Creek Association is sponsoring the fifth annual Conewago Creek Earth Day Celebration on the banks of the creek at a historic mill and farmstead.

**Aberdeen Mills**  
**2405 Mill Road, Elizabethtown**  
**Saturday, April 20**  
**9:00 am - 12:00 pm.**

The public is invited to attend this event which will take place rain or shine.

Attendees can help sample the stream for aquatic insects, take a guided wildflower hike through the woods, and tour the Mill. Partners of the Conewago Creek Initiative will have educational materials displayed and be available to

answer questions. Drinks and snacks will be provided and each family in attendance can take home a free native tree.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation is partnering with Penn State Extension to plant a riparian buffer along the stream during this event. Volunteers are needed to help with this

*(Continued on page 2)*



## Earth Day

(Continued from page 1)  
project. Riparian buffers are one of the most cost effective ways to improve stream health because trees filter runoff, soak up stormwater, and provide food and habitat for aquatic life. This event

will provide a great opportunity for volunteers to help the stream while having fun.

"This will be a fun morning for the entire family," said Matt Royer, president of TCCCA. "We'll offer practical and easy tips on backyard

stewardship that improves water quality and creates wildlife habitat."

Merritt and Katcha Neale, owners of Aberdeen and local sustainable agriculture producers, are graciously hosting the event.

## Volunteers needed to conduct Riparian Buffer Maintenance

### Wenger Buffer

200 Prospect Road, Hershey  
Thursday, April 11  
5 pm – 7 pm

Volunteers are needed to perform spring maintenance on a 7 acre riparian buffer along the Conewago Creek. The maintenance includes straightening tree tubes, tree tube removal, and re-staking trees that are not growing straight. These tasks are very important to the survival of the young trees, especially after winter flooding events.

### Hershey Meadows

Hershey Rd (Rt 743) at  
Conewago Creek,  
Elizabethtown  
Saturday, April 27  
9 am to 12 pm

The Hershey Meadows restoration project was undertaken by the Tri-County Conewago Creek Association and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in 2009. The project restored 30 acres of wetlands, stream banks, and riparian buffer along the Conewago.

Volunteers helped

plant approximately 3,000 trees in 2011 to establish the buffer. To maintain the positive progress, volunteers are needed to perform spring maintenance on the buffer. The maintenance includes straightening tree tubes, tree tube removal, and re-staking trees that are not growing straight. This will be a great opportunity to explore this visible project and learn about the positive impacts this stream restoration site has had on fish populations.

To learn more about and to register for these and other volunteer events in the Conewago watershed and throughout the Chesapeake Bay region visit:

<https://www.cbf.org/events/other/pa/restoration-events/registration>

### Don't Forget to "Like" us on Facebook!

The Conewago Creek Initiative joined Facebook this past fall. Photos from events and around the watershed can be viewed on our page. Event details, news related to the Conewago Creek, Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay will be shared, and Facebook provides an easy way for you to ask questions and be involved.



## Learn about rain barrels at a workshop in Mt. Gretna

The Lebanon County Conservation District is holding a rain barrel workshop in Mount Gretna on May 22 to teach attendees about the benefits of using a rain barrel. The cost of the workshop is \$65 and each household in attendance will leave with a rain barrel and the skills to install it.

A rain barrel is a rainwater collection system that stores rooftop runoff to be used later for activities such as lawn and garden watering, even car washing and window cleaning. Rain barrels are an easy way to

reduce the amount of stormwater leaving your property and reduce your water bill at the same time.



Interest in this workshop is expected to be high, so make sure to register early and by May 10th at the latest. The workshop will be held at:

**Mt Gretna Community  
Volunteer Fire Company  
Boulevard Street, Mt. Gretna  
Wednesday May 22  
6:30pm**

For more information and to register contact: Stephanie Harmon at 717-272-3908 Ext. 4

## Precision Feeding Conference for Dairy Producers

The Penn State Extension Dairy Team will hold a one-day conference to help producers examine current topics related to the precision feeding of dairy cattle.

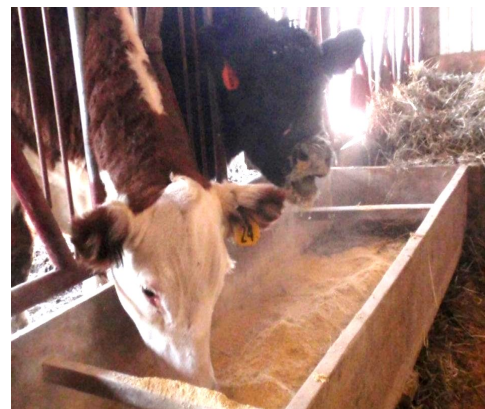
**Farm and Home Center  
1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster  
Thursday May 9  
9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m**

Proper feed management is essential to good health, good production and good profitability on

dairy farms.

The program is designed for producers, nutritionists and certified feed management plan writers, all of whom can benefit from advanced and current information in feed management.

To learn more about the agenda for the conference and the day's speakers visit Penn State Extension's Event website: <http://extension.psu.edu/animals/dairy/events/advanced-topics-in-feed-management-conference>.



## Conewago Partner Spotlight: South Londonderry Township

South Londonderry Township of Lebanon County is an important partner in the Conewago Creek Initiative. They have been working to improve water quality for years, even before the Initiative was developed.

They are the only municipality in the watershed, and in Lebanon County, that has an Environmental Advisory Council (EAC). The EAC has developed a Natural Areas Program that acknowledges landowners that have areas of native

vegetation, ponds, wetlands and other wildlife habitat on their properties. This program aims to educate the township's residents on the importance of native plants for wildlife and to reduce the need for fertilizers and pesticides. Visit South Londonderry Township's website to learn more about this program and how you can become involved: <http://www.southlondonderry.org/stwpea.php>

South Londonderry Township is also participating in the Conewago Initiative's

Stormwater Incentives Program and will be installing a rain garden at the township park in Colebrook later this spring. This rain garden will help capture the stormwater from the park, preventing erosion and keeping the runoff from flowing to the Conewago. Volunteers will be needed to help plant the rain garden so check the Initiative's website over the next few weeks for information.

Additionally, the township sends a



representative to the Initiative's Project Advisory Team and Stewardship Development Team meetings each month. They have provided excellent ideas on how to connect with area residents and are always willing to help coordinate activities between Conewago watershed municipalities.

## Practice Spotlights

### On The Farm: Precision Feeding

Manure contains significant amounts of nitrogen and phosphorus that the livestock ate but didn't use. Precision feeding attempts to adjust the amount of nutrients animals eat in order to control how much is produced in their



manure. If the manure contains fewer nutrients, the runoff should also transport less nitrogen and phosphorus to the streams. Precision feeding can have other benefits as well:

- 1) Increase milk yields through more efficient nutrient usage.
- 2) Reduce feed costs by cutting down on excess nutrients currently being fed to the cow.
- 3) Reduce the need to ship or store manure because manure containing less nitrogen and phosphorus can be spread on fewer acres.

### Around The Home: Fertilizing

Recent estimates indicate that lawns and turf grass are now the largest "crop" in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, covering more than 3.8 million acres and eclipsing pasture, hay/alfalfa and row crops.



Our tendency to

over-fertilize, over-pesticide and over-water our lawns leads to run-off that can foul streams and rivers. Here are a few tips for having a healthier lawn:

- 1) Mow your grass to 3 inches or taller
- 2) Have a sharp mower blade
- 3) Fertilize in the fall and follow the directions on the bag

For more tips visit: <http://www.conewagoinitiative.net/practices/home/lawn>



## Conewago Photo Gallery



This issue's gallery features pictures from the **Winter Farmers Meeting**, volunteer events, blue heron footprints and a snapping turtle.

(Pictures credited to Jenn Fetter of Penn State Extension, Kate Austin of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and Kristen Saacke Blunk of Headwaters, LLC.)



## Volunteers "Liven-up" the Little Conewago

written by: Kate Austin, CBF's Pennsylvania Grassroots Field Organizer

Planting season is here and volunteers recently helped to plant "live stakes," along the Little Conewago Creek near Colebrook. Live stakes are cuttings that are harvested from new growth branches of tree species like black willow and red osier dogwood. These native trees commonly grow along stream banks, at or below the water line,

providing bank soil stabilization and habitat for aquatic life.

On March 21 volunteers got started by harvesting willow, dogwood, and elderberry

stakes. Matt Royer, director of the Lower Susquehanna Initiative, taught volunteers the proper method to harvest cuttings: pruning the young branch at a 45-degree angle at the base, trimming off the small shoots to a single, 18-24" live stake, with a straight cut across the top to encourage new growth. Royer says that it is important to harvest the live stakes while they are still dormant and have not begun to leaf out.

Some of the cuttings were potted and sent to Davis Nursery, a partner of the Initiative, for use in future streamside buffer plantings. Two days later, volunteers stepped into hip waders, got into the Little Conewago Creek at the Hanson Farm, and planted the remaining willow and dogwood live stakes.

Using a piece of rebar to first drill a hole in the stream bank, they inserted the live stakes just above the

surface of the water, spacing the stakes every two feet. Harvesting more live stakes from black willow and red osier dogwood stands along the creek as they went; the volunteers

planted a considerable section of the creek. The relative ease and cost-effectiveness of live staking makes it an important tool for volunteer stream restoration projects.

The live staking workdays kicked off a busy season of spring volunteer restoration projects in the Conewago Watershed planned in partnership with the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. See page 2 for a list of upcoming volunteer opportunities.



Photo Credit: Kate Austin, CBF



## Old Hershey Rd Planting

On Saturday, April 6 volunteers gathered to help plant trees along the Conewago Creek. It finally felt like spring; jackets were soon unzipped, the sun was shining and the time went quickly. 125 trees were planted in less than an hour under the supervision of Mark Metzler, an expert in riparian buffer planting and maintenance.

A diversity of native trees and shrubs were planted that prefer to have "wet feet" and will survive the flooding that often happens at this site. Each tree was planted inside

a tree tube to help protect it from deer and meadow voles.

The tree planting is part of a larger restoration project sponsored by the Tri-County Conewago Creek Association and funded by a PA DEP Section 319 grant. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service installed stream bank stabilization structures at this site in the fall. The trees will help ensure success in reducing bank erosion. Attendees were taught about how projects like this one can help improve the stream, reducing sediment and nutrients.



Photo Credit: Jenn Fetter, Penn State Extension

## Landowner Survey Results Summary Now Available Online

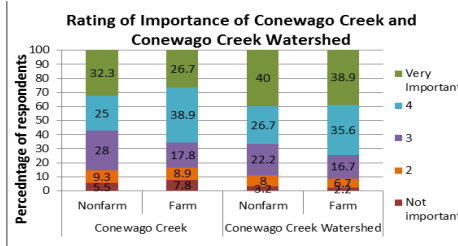
Were you sent a survey several years ago asking about your opinions on water quality, your use of the Conewago Creek, and how you preferred to be informed of events? Well the results are finally in! You can currently read the summary of the report on the homepage of the Initiative's website.

The survey was conducted by Penn State and the results will be

used to help guide the Conewago Initiative as it continues to work with volunteers and landowners to improve the health of the Conewago Creek.

Overall, residents of the watershed are concerned about, and feel that it is their responsibility, to help protect water quality. Many people, both farmers and non-farmers, use conservation practices to help make their property more

environmentally friendly but there is still room for improvement.



## 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, 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**



**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

### **Conewago Creek Earth Day Celebration**

Aberdeen Mills  
2405 Mill Road, Elizabethtown  
Saturday, April 20  
9:00 am - 12:00 pm.

### **Precision Feeding Conference**

Farm and Home Center  
1383 Arcadia Road, Lancaster  
Thursday May 9  
9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

### **Rain Barrel Workshop\***

Mt Gretna Community  
Volunteer Fire Company  
Boulevard Street, Mt. Gretna  
Wednesday May 22  
6:30pm

### **Volunteer Events**

#### **Wenger Buffer Maintenance\***

200 Prospect Road, Hershey  
Thursday, April 11  
5 pm - 7 pm

#### **Hershey Meadows Buffer Maintenance\***

Hershey Rd (Rt 743) at Conewago  
Creek, Elizabethtown  
Saturday, April 27  
9 am to 12 pm

### **Tri-County Conewago Creek Association Monthly Meetings**

Conewago Township Bldg  
Old Hershey Rd, Elizabethtown  
Wednesday, April 24  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm  
Wednesday, May 29  
7:00 pm - 9:00 pm

### **Conewago Initiative Project Advisory Team meeting**

Penn State Harrisburg  
Church Hall  
Wednesday, May 15  
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm

**\* Pre-registration required**