



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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Summer 2013

The Coordinator's Report

Time flies when you are having fun and we definitely had fun at our volunteer events this spring! Trees were planted, rain gardens installed and seedlings prepared for fall plantings. For a summary of all the fun that was had, check out the article on page 5. We are very appreciative of all the hard work that these volunteers put into these projects. **Thank you!**

Now that planting season has come to a close, the Conewago Initiative is planning to have fun in a new way— a bike tour! The Conewago Rail Trail, which runs parallel to the Conewago Creek, provides an excellent way to see several of the projects the Initiative has been working on over the past 5 years and we are excited to bring conservation and recreation together during this event. Read below for more details on how you can participate.

Additionally, workshops are being planned to teach about rain barrels, and riparian buffer

maintenance. Make sure to register early for these educational opportunities!

If you are looking for another way to get involved in your community and to help the Conewago Creek, consider joining the Tri-County Conewago Creek Association. This watershed group works hard to protect and restore the health of the Conewago Creek. They always welcome new members and are very active

within the Initiative. Learn more about this group, their amazing accomplishments and how to become involved by reading the "Partners" section of this Conewago Currents edition.

Enjoy your summer!

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Come Bike With Us

Summer has finally arrived which means that it's time to go out and play! Join the Conewago Creek Initiative for a fun, educational bike tour along a three mile stretch of the Conewago Rail Trail and lightly used back roads. The Conewago Rail trail marks the pathway of a railroad that once operated for nearly 100 years until Hurricane

Ages of 1972 left the railway ruined. The railway is now preserved and has been converted into a family friendly bike path.

The bike tour will showcase the Initiative's conservation and restoration projects, such as riparian buffers, stream bank stabilization, livestock fencing, and wetland

restoration, at five locations in the Conewago watershed. On the tour, participants will have the opportunity to ask farmers, homeowners, and Initiative members about land management practices and learn how to improve water quality on their properties. At our last stop, you will be able to observe

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Bike Tour Continued

(Continued from page 1)
a fish survey and macroinvertebrate sampling. These samplings techniques provide an indication of the health of the stream and insight on potential restoration methods that can be implemented to improve stream health.

The bike tour will begin at:

**Davis Florist and Garden
Center Hoffer Road
Elizabethtown
Saturday, July 20th
8:00 AM to 12:00 PM**

Please bring a helmet

and bike in ready condition for riding along the trail. The bike tour is limited to 30 registrants so please sign up soon at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/277QD6W> or call 717.948.6609. Light refreshments will be available. We look forward to seeing you on July 20th!



Buffer Maintenance Workshop Scheduled

Riparian buffers, can provide many benefits to a stream because the vegetation planted along the bank helps hold soil in place, filter out trash and pollutants, and provide shade and habitat for fish and other wildlife.

Often, when trees are planted along the stream to form a riparian buffer, they are planted into dense grass or invasive vegetation which challenges the tree's ability to survive. Maintenance is very important during the first few years after the trees are planted in order to help them overcome the pressures of other vegetation and hungry

animals. Spraying herbicide around the trees, mowing the surrounding grass, and straightening tree tubes after storms are very important tasks that need to happen.

If you have a planted riparian buffer, or are interested in planting one in the future, please consider coming to our riparian buffer maintenance workshop. This workshop will help explain the benefits of performing maintenance and how to do so in a way that will help guarantee successful growth.

The workshop will be held at the Hertzler Farm where John Hertzler has planted

approximately 14 acres of riparian buffer. Mark Metzler, a riparian buffer maintenance consultant for Wild Resources, Inc., will be leading the discussion on how maintenance should be performed.

**Hertzler Farm
676 N Hertzler Rd,
Elizabethtown
Wednesday July 24
9:00 am-Noon**

Please call Kristen Kyler at 717-948-6609 or email conewagocreekinitiative@gmail.com to register before July 19th. Space is limited!

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.



Londonderry Township is hosting a rain barrel workshop

The Conewago Creek Initiative, Londonderry Township, and the Dauphin County Conservation District are partnering to hold a rain barrel workshop at the Londonderry Township Building on August 17 at 10:00 a.m. to teach attendees about the benefits of using a rain barrel. The workshop is free 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 August 7th at the latest. The workshop will be held at:

**Londonderry Township
Building
783 S Geyers Church Rd
Middletown, PA 17057**

For more information and to register contact: Kristen Kyler at 717-948-6609 or email conewagocreekinitiative@gmail.com



Is your septic system functioning properly?

Most landowners in the Conewago watershed rely on onlot septic systems to treat their sewage. A malfunctioning septic system can cause huge problems. "In addition to requiring costly repairs, malfunctioning systems can contaminate surface and groundwaters, cause various health problems, and spread disease as well as create unsightly messes and foul odors when raw sewage surfaces or backs up into the home," states Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection. Many farmers in the watershed have taken the initiative to

fence their cows out of the streams so their manure isn't being dumped directly into the water. Making sure septic systems are keeping human waste out of the water, is also important.

Some signs that your system might not be working properly include: toilets running sluggish, wet soil around any part of the system, and sewer smells in or around the house. To continue functioning properly, septic systems need to be pumped every 3-5 years in order to remove all of the accumulated sludge.

For more information about

onlot systems and ways to help keep your system functioning properly see DEP's factsheet on Onlot System operation and maintenance: <http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt?open=514&objID=554156&mode=2>

Most of us don't think about where our waste goes on a daily basis, but hopefully this article will remind you to think about making sure your system is functioning properly or make you appreciative of your public sewer.

Conewago Partner Spotlight: TCCCA

The Tri-county Conewago Creek Association (TCCCA) has been working to monitor, preserve, enhance, and promote the Conewago Creek and its watershed since 2002. This group of volunteers has conducted stream clean-ups, planted riparian buffers, and performed stream monitoring. They host outreach and educational events including the annual Conewago Creek Earth Day Celebration which is held at

Aberdeen Mills each spring.

TCCCA has successfully been awarded grants for stream restoration projects that have made huge improvements to the watershed. The Hershey Meadows project, which is visible from the Conewago Rail Trail near Rt 743, was a major accomplishment for TCCCA and for water quality.

This group was also responsible for developing a Comprehensive Restoration Plan for the watershed which has helped guide the efforts of the

Initiative and partners.

TCCCA helped provide a base for the Conewago Initiative to build from and continues to be an important partner in achieving success in this watershed.

They are always looking for additional volunteers and welcome new members. Joining a watershed association is an excellent way to become involved in your community and to improve stream



health.

Visit their website at www.conewagocreek.org to learn more about this organization and how to become involved.

Practice Spotlights

On The Farm: Grassed Waterways

The Conewago watershed has experienced some heavy rains recently. Locations that are developing gullies and experiencing erosion, might benefit from a grassed waterway.

A grassed waterway is a graded channel, seeded with grass, that is designed to transport water from one location to another at a speed that prevents soil erosion. Reducing soil erosion helps keep our streams from turning brown

turning rain storms and keeps productive soil on the field.

Your County Conservation District can help you install this beneficial conservation practice.



Around The Home: Rain Gardens

A rain garden is a garden that is designed to catch rain water and snowmelt as it moves across the land, reducing stormwater runoff. They are very simple for a homeowner to install, but provide numerous benefits like butterfly habitat and pollution reduction. They should be planted with plants that can tolerate wet soils and that are native to Pennsylvania. There are numerous resources online that explain

how to design, build and plant your own rain garden. To see a rain garden in action visit South Londonderry Township's Colebrook Park where a rain garden was installed this spring!



Conewago Photo Gallery



This issue's gallery features pictures from the Earth Day Celebration at Aberdeen Mills, seedling rescues, the planting of the Colebrook Park rain garden, and a photo of Lake Duffy.
(Pictures credited to Jenn Fetter and Kristen Kyler of Penn State Extension)

Buffers and Barrels and Gardens, OH MY!

This spring has been jammed packed full of workshops and events. Each volunteer event that was scheduled had a fantastic turn out of volunteers who tackled each project and exceeded all expectations. Additionally, a rain barrel workshop was held in Mt Gretna that provided an opportunity for around 40 households to learn about and take home a rain barrel. The annual Earth Day Celebration held at Aberdeen Mills was also a success. Continue reading for some highlights from this spring's larger events.

Aberdeen Mills Buffer Planting

This year's Earth Day Celebration was special because a 20 ft riparian buffer was planted by a large group of volunteers who came out to learn more about the Conewago Creek and to make a difference. This buffer will work in partnership with fencing that keeps the farm animals out of the creek to create a healthy streambank.

The children that attended the event loved looking at bugs collected from the stream. The leech, while not a "good" aquatic bug in terms of stream health, was way more entertaining to the kids than the mayflies and caddisflies that were also found.

Eisenbise Buffer Planting

A happy and hardworking class of middle school students helped plant a buffer on the Eisenbise Farm in May. They planted 70 trees in only a few hours and were very attentive while learning about the benefits of riparian buffers. The digging was hard, making them enjoy their picnic lunch all the more!

Seedling Rescues

Two seedling rescues were held this spring in which small trees from landowners' gardens were "saved" from being weeded and potted for use later this year. Over 250 seedlings were potted between the two events. This trees will spend the summer at Davis Nursery before being planted in riparian buffers this fall. While this is a slight experiment, seedling rescues are looking to be a great way to use resources more efficiently.

Rain Barrel Workshop

The rain barrel workshop that was held in Mt Gretna at the end of May provided 40 rain barrels to participants at a highly discounted price. The Lebanon County Conservation District gave a presentation on stormwater that was very engaging for participants. Several attendees even won candy bars! Once installed, these rain barrels will help reduce the amount of stormwater entering the

Conewago Creek during rain storms.

Colebrook Rain Garden

The Conewago Initiative's first rain garden was installed earlier this month at the South Londonderry Township park in Colebrook. The rain garden was designed and installed by LandStudies, Inc, a local consulting firm and partner of the Initiative, but was planted by a hard working group of volunteers. Holes for 4 large trees had to be dug, water carried in 5 gallon buckets from the generous Twin Kiss ice cream shop, and herbaceous material planted. It was hard work, but the enthusiasm of the volunteers made for quick work.

This rain garden will function to capture runoff from the rail-trail parking lot, keeping it from running down the street and into the creek. It also makes an excellent demonstration rain garden. Be sure to check it out on your next visit to the park!

Thank you to all the volunteers who came out and helped with these events. Over 250 volunteer hours were spent helping out with projects this spring. That is equivalent to over \$5,300!

Ag Progress Days is almost here

Ag Progress Days at Penn State is Pennsylvania's largest outdoor agricultural exposition. This years show will be held August 13, 14, and 15th. Ag Progress Days is held annually during three days in August at the Russell E. Larson Agricultural Research Center at Rock Springs, nine miles southwest of State College, PA.

It is sponsored by Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences and features exhibits that showcase the latest in Penn State research, as well as information on best management practices and changing regulations in the agricultural industry.

With over 400 exhibitors from 34 states and 4 provinces of Canada, there is something for everyone.. Learn about the latest innovations in the agricultural industry and spend your day with Penn State Extension educators.

This year, some of the work being completed in the Lower Susquehanna region will be featured, including a summary of all the projects completed in the Conewago watershed.



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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

Bike Tour*

Davis Florist and Garden Center
Hoffer Road Elizabethtown
Saturday, July 20th
8:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Buffer Maintenance Workshop*

Hertzler Farm
676 N Hertzler Rd,
Elizabethtown
Wednesday July 24
9:00 am-Noon

Rain Barrel Workshop*

Londonderry Township Building
783 S Geyers Church Rd
Middletown
Saturday, August 17 @ 10:00 am

*** Pre-registration required**

Ag Progress Days

Russell E. Larson Agricultural
Research Center
Rock Springs, PA
August 13, 14, 15

Tri-County Conewago Creek Association Monthly Meetings

Conewago Township Bldg
Old Hershey Rd, Elizabethtown
Wednesday, July 31
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm
Wednesday, August 28
7:00 pm – 9:00 pm

Conewago Initiative Project Advisory Team meeting

Penn State Harrisburg
Church Hall
Wednesday, July 17
1:00 pm - 3:00 pm