



SCWA Newsletter

SPRING EDITION

JUNE 2021

Sewickley Creek Watershed Association

*Working Together
For A Better
Environment*

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Newsletter Contributors

Rob Cronauer, Tom Keller,
Jim Pillsbury

Contact Us:

PO Box 323
Youngwood, PA 15697

Office Phone (724) 610-0829

scwa@sewickleycreek.com

Thomas W. Keller
Executive Director

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La Roche Students Survey Wildlife at Lowber Project



One of the traps set up near the discharge pond to collect frogs for measurements.

At La Roche University, our BioSOLVE class consists of biology majors Mina Ayad, Sara Funderlich, Josee Kahambwe, Daryl Klingensmith, Isabelle Orange, Riley Polacek, and Tristan Tinney and is led by Drs. Gail Rowe and Christine Duncan. In the fall of 2020, we began a vertebrate wildlife survey at Lowber Project. We chose Lowber Project because a recorded wildlife survey had not previously been conducted there. Our experimental sites are the remediation ponds, discharge pond, and wetlands, and our control site is Sewickley Creek across the road from the remediation ponds. The purpose of our research is to observe how the vertebrates are affected by the abandoned mine drainage and to compare the biotic and abiotic features between the experimental sites and the control site. Additionally, we are establishing baseline data that could be used as reference in future research at the Lowber remediation ponds or other similar abandoned mine drainage remediation ponds. Our study has continued into the spring of 2021.

In the fall of 2020, we recorded the number of individual vertebrates and species observed on four days during September and October. The types of vertebrates included fishes, salamanders, snakes, turtles, birds, and various mammals. We detected the highest number of different species on September 11 (8 species at the ponds and 5 species at the creek) and the fewest species on October 3 (5 species at the ponds and 1 species at the creek), which could be due to the temperature difference between those days.

Successful Spring Cleanup

On Saturday, March 14, SCWA launched the first of many roadside cleanups for 2021. Volunteer participants were Lonnie Zimmerman, Ted Curnow, Megan Leonard and Lee Zimmerman (missing from photo were Alex Ferrenberg and Donna Suskovich.)

If you are aware of a roadway with excessive litter in our watershed and would be interested in volunteering for a cleanup, please email SCWA with your contact information!



Brinkerton Mine Drainage Treatment System

The Brinkerton Mine Drainage Treatment System was constructed in 2008. The system was installed using funding from many sources including grants and private donations.

The system has worked effectively at removing the iron from the mine drainage. The system is on property owned and operated by the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association (SCWA). The SCWA has performed routine operation and maintenance of the facility to the best of their abilities, however they have limited resources.

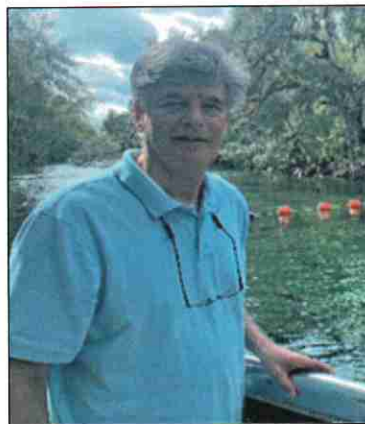
Late in 2020, the Westmoreland Conservation District (WCD) obtained a \$277,238 Growing Greener Grant from the Department of Environmental Protection to work on this system. SCWA is partnering with the WCD because of its comprehensive nature. This proposal is geared towards not only providing the immediate needs of the system but also ensuring its long-term sustainability.

The system, since its construction, has not had a significant iron sludge removal. Part of passive mine drainage system maintenance is removal of the accumulated iron. This maintenance is needed because the system is losing its ability to treat the water because the holding capacity of the cells is being diminished with iron deposits. The system is in dire need of iron removal. In addition to the iron removal, upgrades are proposed. These upgrades include iron removal infrastructure (pipes), water flow management, water oxidation with the onsite blowers, and vegetation management.

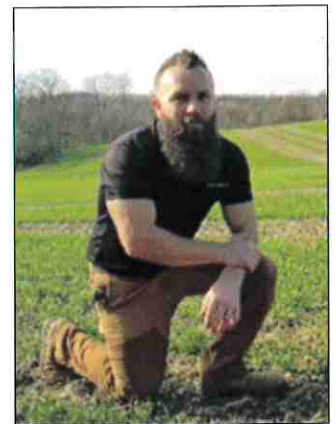
SCWA Welcomes New Directors!



Jessica Kane has a background in Environmental Science from the University of North Carolina—Wilmington. After traveling to Pennsylvania, she worked for the Westmoreland Conservation District and became involved with other local environmental organizations. Jessica is a Penn State Master Gardener with a passion for preserving native flora and fauna.



While not a native of Pennsylvania, Dr. Robert Whyte has many enjoyable memories of visiting family in Conemaugh when he was a child. He and his family have lived in the greater Pittsburgh area for over 16 years. Robert is a professor at California University of PA and actively works in streams, wetlands and lakes, seeking help to restore these aquatic habitats.



Brad Clark began working with SCWA as a volunteer for the organization's Earth Day Cleanup in his role with Menasha Packaging. Brad has a tremendous passion for the outdoors, both on the water and land, and as a youth mentor. He is currently the administrator for Norwin Inline Hockey and is also the head coach for the elementary, middle school and high school teams.

Passing of Directors

The Sewickley Creek Watershed Association (SCWA) mourns the recent passing of two good friends and Directors, Dr. Mark Stauffer and Ray Bennet.

Dr. Mark Stauffer passed away in January, 2021. He worked for 19 years as an associate professor of chemistry at the University of Pittsburgh's Greensburg campus, spending 9 of those years as Division Chair. He had a passion for both analytical chemistry, publishing research in his field, as well as a passion for teaching. Mark and his students conducted on-site water sampling at the Lowber AMD site and under his supervision, students would analyze the water in the classroom at UPG. He made Lowber a part of the Pitt experience and loved sharing his expertise and environmental commitment to the community through the Lowber Family Field Days.

Ray Bennett, a 20-year SCWA Director went to be with the Lord in February, 2021. Ray was also elected to the Director Emeritus position. He participated in many clean-ups, fund raising and other events. One of Ray's favorite activities was organizing Boy Scout Eagle Projects. One project in particular involved Scouts from Troop 457 New Stanton and SCWA volunteers spreading several tons of gravel on trails leading to fishing spots on the Sewickley.

Both Mark and Ray will be missed by all at SCWA!