

Susquehanna Chapter Trout Unlimited (SCTU)

Annual Watershed Summit January 10, 2019

Covenant Central Presbyterian Church
807 W. 4th St., Williamsport, PA

Summary Notes

Attendees: 50 in attendance. See attendance sign-in sheet.

SCTU President Walt Nicholson convened the fourteenth annual summit at 7:00 PM. Walt stated that the purpose of the meeting was to learn about the volunteer efforts and accomplishments of our area's watershed groups, conservation organizations and agencies during 2018 and their upcoming plans to help preserve, protect and enhance our area streams and watersheds.

Walt said that the mission of the Susquehanna Chapter of Trout Unlimited is to preserve and protect coldwater resources.

- He encouraged meeting attendees to read the Chapter's Susquehanna Ripples newsletter, available online.
- Fly tying classes begin the 1st Tuesday of February (Feb 5th) and continue for eight weeks. The class is free and participants receive a TU membership.
- Charlie Knowlden is leading the Healing Waters Initiative for veterans. Rod building class will start tomorrow.
- Monthly Chapter meetings are on the second Wednesday of the month at the Covenant Central Church. Emmet Kyler and Chad Lauer, Waterway Conservation Officers for the PA Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC) will be speakers at the February 13th meeting. Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director, and Eric Hussar, President & Regional Commissioner, have also been invited.

Walt then introduced a number of elected and state officials in attendance including the three Lycoming County Commissioners, Tony Mussare, R. Jack McKernan, and Rick Mirabito; Representative Jeff Wheelend; Charley Hall (representing Garth Everett); Eric Hussar, President and Regional Commissioner of the PAFBC; Marcus Kohl, DEP Regional Director; Mark Davidson, Director, Lycoming Conservation District; Fran McJunkin, Deputy Director, Lycoming County Planning; and Tom Randis, Water Quality Manager, DEP Regional Office.

Each group was given 5-8 minutes for a presentation. Following are highlights of the presentations. The complete presentations may be found on the SCTU website at <https://susquehannatu.com>

Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PAFBC)

Walt introduced Tim Schaeffer, the new Executive Director. Tim recognized Bill Worobec, former Fish Commission Regional Representative. Tim's background includes stints at the PA Environmental Council, State Audubon, DEP, and 10 years at the PAFBC. He mentioned the following PAFBC initiatives:

- Volunteer Youth Permit – for a small fee the PAFBC receives significant funding from the Federal excise tax on sporting equipment. Trout Unlimited chapters can purchase vouchers for youth. Youth permit members can participate in the Mentored Youth Program enabling Youth to fish the weekend before opening of Trout Season.
- He encouraged support of a new Bill that would give License exemptions for therapeutic recreation, Wounded Warriors, and Breast Cancer recovery.
- The Division of Environmental Services is working with the Dirt & Gravel Program to improve 100 stream crossings/blockages
- Senator Yaw recently convened a tour regarding cleaning debris out of local streams. Tim encouraged officials to make use of a DEP publication called Guidelines For Maintaining Streams.
- The PAFBC will continue to advise DEP on projects to benefit fish habitat and will continue the Unassessed Waters Program in conjunction with partners.
- Susquehanna bass fishing has improved, according to recent surveys, although it needs to be closely monitored.

Dr. Jonathan Niles, Susquehanna University Long Term Brook Trout Studies in Loyalsock Creek

Dr. Niles and his students have been active participants in the Unassessed Waters Initiative, and have conducted long term brook trout studies in Loyalsock Creek. He summarized his research on short term flooding impacts. Catastrophic flooding, such as the 8" of rain in 7 hours in Dry Run in the Fall of 2016, may wipe out entire year classes. Populations may take 3-5 years to recover. He studied the late August 2011 and October 21, 2016 events. The 2011 event did not affect the trout spawning redds so it had a lesser impact on populations. Increased mid-fall rainfall events (such as from tropical storms) could lead to population decreases and genetic isolation. Recolonization by brown trout and gravel blockages at the mouths of tributaries can also contribute to population decreases.

Lycoming College Clean Water Institute (CWI)

Dr. Mel Zimmerman noted that the CWI celebrated their 20th Anniversary. He introduced Bob Smith, Peter Petokas, and Emily Bolen of the staff. Mel summarized 2018/2019 CWI initiatives:

- Monitored stream restoration work on Wolf Run. Found brook and brown trout after farm conservation work on W. Branch Murray Run.
- Continued to provide Environmental Programs for 400-500 students with the Waterdale Environmental Education Center.
- Continued to participate in the Unassessed Streams Initiative in conjunction with the Susquehanna River Heartland Coalition, potentially leading to Special Protection water quality status for additional streams.
- MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Water System) - Interns have assisted the Lycoming County MS4 municipalities with monitoring of 250 stormwater outfalls. Recently received a \$250K Urban Stormwater grant.
- Hellbender Research - Dr. Peter Petokas is continuing his Hellbender research. Now raising Hellbenders in captivity. The bill that Senator Yaw introduced to make the Hellbender the PA State Amphibian has passed the Senate and is heading to the House.
- Performed limnological survey of Indian Park pond; found an interesting freshwater jellyfish.
- Measuring stream flows on the Loyalsock regarding the Chief water withdrawal.

Loyalsock Creek Watershed Association

Dave Engle, on behalf of President Marc Lewis, summarized activities undertaken or supported by the Association:

- Participated in Loyalsock 2018 River of the Year Celebration
- Acid mine drainage treatment monitoring of the limestone beds in the Lopez area - cells aren't capturing total flow but are reducing acidity and minerals.
- Partnering with the gas industry on environmental projects.

Sullivan County Conservation District

Corey Richmond, Watershed Specialist, noted that Sullivan County is the headwaters for Loyalsock and Muncy Creeks in Lycoming County. He summarized some of the events and activities:

- Public Education initiatives - "Good Water/Good Coffee," "Centralia PA Lost Town," "Vanishing of the Bees," and Green Career Day.

- Continued the Dirt and Gravel Program, which benefits local watersheds by reducing erosion and sedimentation, including improved aquatic organism passages.
- Elk Creek Restoration – Phase V.
- Emergency Stream Maintenance Workshop
- Earth Day tree plantings and seedling sales.

Lycoming County Conservation District

Walt introduced Carey Entz-Rine, Watershed Specialist, as a very valuable environmental education resource. Carey summarized the District's activities:

- West Nile Virus program.
- Continued the Dirt and Gravel Road Program.
- Mill Creek West project and Middle Road and Beacon Light Road projects on Wolf Run, an ag impaired stream near Pennsdale.
- Next year's projects include Wallis Run debris removal, Wolf Run habitat, and Muncy Creek near Hughesville.
- Trout in the Classroom educational initiatives with three school districts.
- Continued to provide environmental education programs at the Waterdale Center.

Northcentral PA Conservancy (NCPC)

The Northcentral PA Conservancy is a land trust devoted to conserving the working farm and forest lands and watersheds in Northcentral PA. The Conservancy works with property owners, PAFBC, DEP, the County Conservation Districts and others on stream improvement projects by administering a Growing Greener grant program; including stream bank stabilization, riparian fencing, manure management, farm conservation plans, and other projects. Jason Fellon of the PA DEP Regional Office, on behalf of the Renee Carey, stated that in 2018 there were a total of eleven sites in six counties; entailing 5000+ feet of streams, 129 fish habitat structures, two ag crossing, and 2.75 acres of riparian buffers, including:

- Indian Run, Montour County, tributary of Mahoning Creek – outside bank stabilization.
- Lewisburg Park, Union Co. – tweaked structures to get flow centered
- Wolf Run – remove excess sediment sources
- Turtle Creek Union County – ongoing project, added grade controls so stream can access the floodplain instead of cutting into the banks
- E. Branch Briar Creek, Columbia County – stabilized outside bends

Loyalsock District State Forest

Chad Gadsby, Service Forester for the Loyalsock District, summarized progress in recovering from the extensive damage from the flash flood on Oct 21, 2016. Masten area repairs have been completed. Pleasant Stream road to the north has been repaired. Other repairs are ongoing, starting in the Spring. Pleasant Stream Rd may be moved out of the valley.

Loyalsock State Forest was in the epicenter of the 2016 event with the area receiving 8"-9" of rain in a 4-6 hour period, this following the Tropical Storm Lee event in 2011. There was additional damage from the July/August 2018 floods. Projects will be bid out this Spring.

The District completed 56 stream crossing assessments.

Tiadaghton District State Forest

DCNR Forester Ben Gamble stated that he is responsible for managing gas development in the Tiadaghton District. Ben summarized several District programs:

- Gas management. There are 56 well pads from five companies. The 500 miles of pipelines are replanted with species that will benefit all wildlife. Manual cutting is required on steep slopes to maintain root structures.
- An initiative to add large woody debris to several tributaries of Pine Creek and Young Woman's Creek, improving trout habitat and mitigating downstream flood impacts.
- Removal of invasive plants, such as Japanese Barberry.
- Road repairs. Slate Run Road has sloughed off – must use Manor Fork & Francis Rd detour.

Walt Nicholson commended DEP & DCNR for their rapid response to the recent Tombs Run brine spill incident.

PA Trout Unlimited (PATU)

Kathleen Lavelle, the Field Coordinator for the PA Coldwater Habitat Restoration Program, gave the presentation.

- Kathleen stated that TU is undertaking a repeat of the 2009 Susquehanna River Benchmark in order to evaluate progress in meeting water quality goals, and to establish a long term monitoring program.

- PATU assessed 117 streams in 2018. Twenty seven streams were in the Upper West Branch – of these, five contained trout.
- PATU continues to assess culverts for Aquatic Organism Passage (AOP) and identify priority areas for reconnecting trout populations.
- Kathleen encouraged organizations to take advantage of PATU's free technical assistance for design, permit, and construction of stream bank stabilization and other projects.

Pine Creek Watershed Council

Jim Weaver stated that the Pine Creek Watershed Council is a group of many organizations from Lycoming, Tioga, and Potter Counties that is working together to protect the Pine Creek watershed by implementing the Pine Creek River Conservation Plan.

Jim summarized progress on the Pine Creek headwaters protection project. The Woolly Adelgid, a sap sucking insect pest, has moved up into the Pine Creek watershed and is threatening the hemlock trees, which could result in a trophic cascade of environmental impacts, including an increase in water temperatures. The Council has identified priority riparian buffer protection areas for planting of underlying replacement trees to maintain the riparian buffer functions.

The Council is evaluating the use of several species as replacement trees, including Norway Spruce, and plans pilot planting of selected species. Recently identified Adelgid resistant Hemlock trees are also a possibility. Ben Gamble of the Tiadagton District Forest stated that the District is spending funds to treat Hemlocks.

Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association (MSRA)

Walt introduced Carol Parenzan, Riverkeeper for the Middle Susquehanna Riverkeeper Assoc., Inc. Carol shepherded the Loyalsock 2018 River of the Year initiative. She said that the River of The Year activities included 20 events, 70 partnering organizations, 1500 hours volunteer time, and 2700 people. Carol needs volunteers to continue the Science on the Sock and Worlds End Day programs. Other MSRA activities include the following:

- Launched floating classrooms on the Hiawatha riverboat. Programs sold out, so they are planning 10 programs in 2019.
- Nature Book Club – in conjunction with Susquehanna Chapter Trout Unlimited had a discussion at the September, 2018 meeting and plan a discussion of River of Dreams by Susan Stranahan at the Sept, 2019 SCTU meeting.

- Environmental Rights Workshop
- Chesapeake Bay Journal article about MSRA's "Conservation Canine" to sniff out sewage
- Environmental Justice Advisory Board – pharmaceutical impacts and microplastic study with Bucknell

Carol said she hopes to see many of the participants at the PA Watershed Conference in State College the last weekend in February.

Susquehanna Greenway Partnership (SGP)

Corey Ellison, Executive Director, said that the SGP's goal is to connect residents and communities to the Susquehanna River. The Greenway has three components – a Trail System, River Water Trails, and River Towns. The SGP was one of the partners for the North Branch Canal Trail and the Susquehanna Riverwalk in Williamsport, and is supporting extensions of these systems. The walkable and bikeable trails are intended to reconnect communities to the river. Following are some of the activities of the SGP:

- Conducting a water trail signage inventory, updating the 2004 Water Trail Map to promote use of the river.
- Assisting River Towns to identify projects and funding sources, such as the Heart of Williamsport.
- Support of asset based Entrepreneur Development
- Education and outreach activities include the Annual Susquehanna Sojourn and photo contest.

Lycoming Creek Watershed Association (LCWA)

Mike Ditchfield said that the LCWA has been revitalized and is working on an ambitious "Midway" project in partnership with Union Township in Tioga County, Charley Hall of Representative Garth Everett's office, Larry Brannaka of the USFWS, and Marcus Kohl of DEP. The project, on Lycoming Creek north of Roaring Branch, will result in streambank stabilization, flood damage reduction, and sediment reduction. There is good local property owner buy-in. They are looking for funding.

Also, the log vein at the Sheshequin Campground downstream of Marsh Hill needs to be repaired.

Meetings are the third Tuesday of the month.

Harvey Katz – Annual Global Surface Temperature Relative to Late 19th Century Average

Harvey Katz briefly gave an update of his McIntyre Wild Area bog research. He identified 150 bogs. He presented his findings at a Conference and is working on a Journal article.

Harvey, a Scientist, prefaced his remarks about global climate change by stating that he is a reporter and doesn't make up nature. He also asked the audience not to shoot the messenger for bringing bad news.

Harvey stated that there are three sources for global temperature data - NASA, NOAA, and an International Climate Change group. There are only slight variations among the data. He obtained and plotted out the raw data from NASA on a graph for the attendees. Temperature was fairly steady at the turn of the century before trending upward, with declines during low fossil fuel consumption levels in WWI, the Great Depression, and WWII. The velocity of temperature changes started increasing about 1956. The critical two degrees Celcius (3.6 degrees fahrenheit) temperature increase, with increased risk (as determined by scientists) of catastrophic environmental and economic impacts, will be reached in 2023-2024 if present trends continue. Harvey said that he always thought that global warming would be the next generations' problem, but the data clearly shows it happening in his lifetime.

He stated that he also has CO₂ "Greenhouse Gas" data that parallels the temperature data, with corresponding declines during the World Wars and great depression.

Closing

Walt Nicholson thanked the presenters and attendees. He said that the meeting represented a wonderful ongoing demonstration of a cooperative partnership between volunteer, academic, philanthropic, and governmental organizations and agencies to share information, efforts, and make efficient and effective use of scarce private and public funds to protect and educate the public about our valuable streams and watersheds.

Walt invited the attendees to stay after the meeting for refreshments and discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin McJunkin, Secretary