



Coordinating Committee Meeting Summary: Tuesday, October 20, 2009

Attendance: Pam Adams, Paul Bartley, Rob Cooper, Bob Donaldson, Ann Donovan, Jason Fellon, Barbara Fisher, Jim Gazza, Brianna Hutchison, Bill Sharp, Lysle Sherwin

**Guest Speaker: Hands-on Watershed Education in Service to Pennsylvania Communities**  
(Lysle Sherwin, Penn State Center for Watershed Stewardship)

Penn State's Center for Watershed Stewardship (CWS) was formed in the mid-1990s following increased interest by state and federal governments in watershed planning and protection. The CWS strives to create a network of highly trained watershed professionals through its interdisciplinary and intensive graduate program and to form partnerships with communities and stakeholders in Pennsylvania in order to improve watershed assessment/planning and to create effective long-term solutions for the protection of watershed resources.

The CWS offers a graduate option in Watershed Stewardship that trains students as watershed stewards through interdisciplinary coursework and projects. The option requires 19-22 additional credits on top of the courses required for the student's master's program. A key element of the Watershed Stewardship option is the Keystone Project, a two-semester practicum requiring students to work with members of the community and natural resource professionals to identify natural resources problems in a selected watershed and craft a written watershed stewardship plan addressing these problems. The Keystone Project watersheds are chosen based on a number of criteria, including watershed problems (looking for a mix of issues), presence of local sponsorship, potential for cost recovery, and match with student talents. Local watersheds are preferred for logistical reasons.

The Spruce Creek Watershed was chosen as the site of the 2003-2005 Keystone Project. The land area of this watershed is split nearly 50:50 between Centre and Huntingdon Counties. The watershed is listed as impaired due to sediment and agricultural issues. Students completed a Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP) for the entire watershed, which assessed macroinvertebrate community, riparian buffer condition, and corridor land use patterns. The students also conducted a public meeting where they presented the results of their assessment and gave watershed residents the opportunity to share their concerns.

As part of the Spruce Creek Watershed Keystone Project, the Halfmoon Creek sub-watershed was chosen for an in-depth assessment. At the time, the watershed was experiencing the sixth-fastest rate of growth in Pennsylvania. Residential growth impacts compounded Halfmoon Creek's long history of problems with agricultural pollution. The students used the Rapid Volunteer Evaluation of Riparia (RiVER) protocol to assess three reaches of Halfmoon Creek located in Loveville, Stormstown, and Gatesburg/Weaver Forest. The results of this assessment were used to make recommendations to improve stream quality through a number of projects (e.g., riparian buffer installation, instream habitat improvements, streambank stabilization, etc.). The students established four project sites along Halfmoon Creek and improved 3,200 feet of the stream by installing 1,600 feet of buffer and 24 fish habitat structures, and planting 1.1 acres of warm season grasses.

The CWS identifies a number of strengths and weaknesses in its Watershed Stewardship option. First, the service-learning/community based model seems to work well for meeting the major educational goals of the option; however, it can be difficult to strike a balance between the results of the students' assessment and community

management. Residents of the Keystone Project watersheds sometimes get caught up in a single issue rather than looking at their watershed as a whole, whereas the students try to be more objective. This type of conflict can sometimes be good if the students can broaden the focus of residents. For example, in the Beech Creek watershed, residents were very focused on acid mine drainage remediation and weren't doing much to protect the remaining high quality waters in their watershed. Through the Keystone Project, students were able to get Beech Creek residents to broaden their focus to include protection of these waters. This also increased the residents' pride in their watershed because they realized that they did have a number of high quality streams despite the high incidence of acid mine drainage in their area. Another difficulty of the Watershed Stewardship option is that it forces students to split their academic focus between two demanding projects (i.e., master's thesis and Keystone Project). Students choosing the option almost always require more time to finish their degree.

To learn more about the Center for Watershed Stewardship, the Watershed Stewardship graduate program, or Keystone Projects, please view the CWS website at <http://water.psu.edu/cws>.

### **A New Name for the Spring Creek Watershed Community**

Mr. Eberhart re-opened the discussion from the September meeting regarding the Community's name change. He asked that the group focus on two options: Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed and Spring Creek Watershed Association.

Ms. Adams (a resident of Spruce Creek watershed) cautioned that Spring Creek Watershed Association would be the same acronym as Spruce Creek Watershed Association, but still felt that this name would be more appropriate.

Mr. Sharp stated that he preferred Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed, but felt that there were strong arguments for either name. For public perception purposes, "association" suggests a more organized group than "friends." Depending on the final decision, the group might need to refine its goal statement.

Mr. Donaldson pointed out that the group is continually evolving based on changes in membership and meeting attendance. At some point in time, we may want to consider becoming a 501(c)3 organization. Mr. Donaldson indicated that he preferred Spring Creek Watershed Association for the new name.

Mr. Eberhart said that the main reason for changing the group's name was to reduce confusion between the Community and the Commission, and he felt that the word "association" won't really help very much to lessen the confusion. Mr. Donaldson thought that association would simply imply a tie to the Commission while still differentiating between the groups.

Ms. Donovan said that if Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed was chosen, we could always explain to outsiders that the group is a watershed association.

Mr. Fellon stated that how the group represents itself at meetings is important and he doesn't feel that the Community is a typical watershed association because of the typical attendees. Mr. Fellon suggested the name "Spring Creek Watershed Council," but this suggestion was vetoed because of the existence of a number of government councils in the area (i.e., Centre Region Council of Governments, Milesburg Council, etc.).

Mr. Bartley pointed out a representative of the group could explain the group's name as per Ms. Donovan's suggestion if speaking to someone in person or in writing. What about other venues (i.e., when the group sponsors an event)?

Ms. Adams asked about the group's future direction. Mr. Bartley answered that the group would like to grow and that working towards non-profit status is probably a good idea because it will open up the option of applying for grant money. Ms. Fisher cautioned that if we decide to pursue non-profit standing, we need to consider the process and the time involved (e.g., volunteer time and commitment, legal fees). Ms. Fisher suggested that

because we are still an emerging group, perhaps it would be better to go with a generic name such as Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed rather than taking the label of watershed association at this point in time.

Mr. Eberhart asked Mr. Sherwin for his input because of his past involvement in the formation of watershed associations. Mr. Sherwin suggested that the group carefully consider the connotations of any words used in the name and that we use the group's mission statement as a starting point.

Mr. Sharp said that when the group decides to pursue non-profit status, we will need to organize a weekend retreat to draft a new mission statement, by-laws, and other organizational documents. Mr. Sharp asked if the Commission would object to the Community becoming a watershed association with non-profit status. Mr. Bartley replied that he didn't think it would be an issue with the Commission.

Mr. Eberhart asked if the group's feeling was that we should immediately begin pursuing non-profit status following the name change. The consensus was that it was not necessary right away, but was a goal to work toward in the future. Mr. Donaldson said that right now we need to focus on choosing a less confusing name and then take the next step when the majority of members feel that it is time.

Mr. Fellon made a final suggestion to put the word "stewardship" in the name, but Mr. Donaldson pointed out that there is already a Spring Creek Watershed Stewardship Alliance.

Mr. Eberhart called for a vote. Final count: 8 votes for Spring Creek Watershed Association, 1 vote for Friends of the Spring Creek Watershed, and 2 attendees abstained from voting.

The new name of the Community is the Spring Creek Watershed Association (hereafter abbreviated SCWA).

### **Spring Creek Watershed Sustainability Initiative**

#### *The Model Water Well/Geothermal Borehole Ordinance*

Todd Giddings, chairman of the model ordinance workgroup, was not in attendance, so Ms. Adams (Centre Region Council of Governments) provided an update on this project. The document has been drafted so that municipalities can adopt it as either an ordinance or as part of their property maintenance code. The six municipalities that are part of COG will accept it as part of their property maintenance code. This will provide enforcement capabilities that would not be available if it were to be adopted as an ordinance.

Mr. Donaldson and Mr. Eberhart voiced their disappointment that the model ordinance project is now being publicly touted as a project of COG with no mention of either SCWA or Spring Creek Watershed Commission (SCWC). Ms. Donovan pointed out that the ordinance is still strengthening regional environmental protections regardless of who gets credit for it. Mr. Eberhart agreed that this was true, but also stated that the point of giving the SCWC ownership of this project was to strengthen that group and get their name out into the public sector.

#### *The Spring Creek Watershed Map (Brianna Hutchison)*

Ms. Hutchison reported that the Watershed Map committee had its final meeting on September 30. At this meeting, the committee decided on a few additions and changes to the document, which resulted in additional fees from the designer. Ms. Hutchison is still looking for funding to cover the additional costs, but the project continues to move forward. Ms. Hutchison estimated that the final proof would be ready for by the first week of November.

#### *Dirt & Gravel Road Program (Bob Donaldson)*

Mr. Donaldson reported that Mr. Barry Scheetz of Penn State's Institutes of Energy & the Environment gave a presentation about the Dirt and Gravel Road Cooperative Program at the September meeting of the SCWC. This presentation did not generate a lot of interest among. Mr. Donaldson speculated that this was because most of the municipalities no longer have any gravel roads. Harris Township's Scherer Road may be picked up by the program, but there is currently no official word one way or the other.

*Survey of Environmental Controls in the Municipalities of the Watershed (Bob Donaldson & Bob Eberhart)*

Because of time constraints, Mr. Eberhart bumped this agenda item to the November meeting.

*Brandywine Conservancy Municipal Assistance Program (Barbara Fisher & Bill Sharp)*

Ms. Fisher asked the group for their thoughts about having John Theilacker of Brandywine Conservancy come to a future meeting of the SCWC to talk about Brandywine's "Community Sustainability Assessment" program. As part of this program, Brandywine staff assist municipalities in evaluating their current land use regulations, policies, and planning documents. Brandywine staff can then offer detailed recommendations for short- and long-term strategies for improving the community's environmental, economic, and social sustainability.

Ms. Donovan informed the group about another similar program, Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO), that the Centre County Conservation District (CCCD) is looking into. The CCCD has some funding through a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to send municipal officials to national NEMO workshops.

Mr. Sharp suggested that we look into both programs because both have attractive aspects (i.e., Brandywine is a PA organization and has a history with ClearWater Conservancy, the CCCD has funding for NEMO). Ms. Donovan offered to work with Ms. Fisher and Mr. Sharp to pull together information about both programs to present to the SCWC in November.

Mr. Cooper asked if there were costs involved with the Brandywine Conservancy program. Ms. Fisher indicated that we would need to pay for Mr. Theilacker's mileage, which she estimated to come to about \$250. Mr. Donaldson worried that the SCWC would see this as a plea for funding from the Community. Mr. Eberhart clarified that Mr. Theilacker would give a presentation at a SCWC meeting rather than a SCWA meeting in order to avoid this type of perceived conflict.

**Next Meeting: Tuesday, November 17, 2009, 7:30am at the Patton Township Building**