

Springs & Sinks

A Newsletter of the Spring Creek Watershed Community

Steering Committee Dons New Hat

The grass-roots committee that organized an international team study of the Spring Creek watershed last September emerged from its December meeting with a new name and a more focused agenda.

The former Spring Creek Watershed Community Local Steering Committee for the 1996 International Countryside Stewardship Exchange is now known as the Spring Creek Watershed Community.

The shortened name was a popular choice among 22 options presented to members of the Steering Committee, consisting of residents, other interested persons, and representatives of government, business, industry, and agriculture in the 14 municipalities that lie within the 175-square mile watershed.

It is also reflective of tackling tasks on



a watershed-wide basis, instead of piecemeal by individual townships, as the broadly-based volunteer organization moves to implement Exchange team recommendations and confront other challenges not addressed in the study.

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Study Brings New Impetus to AgLand Preservation

The visit to Centre County by the Spring Creek Watershed International Exchange Team last September and their call for stronger efforts to preserve rapidly disappearing agricultural lands in Centre County apparently have begun to pay off at both the public and private levels.

The Centre County Commissioners recently approved spending \$40,600 in next year's budget for this purpose in a matching program ranging from 4-to-1 to 6-to-1 with the State of Pennsylvania. The amount is \$15,600 more than the \$25,000 budgeted in each of the previous two years and includes \$600 donated by the Centre County Farmland Trust, a non-profit private organization founded in 1994 to help preserve agricultural lands.

To date the County Agland Conservation Board has purchased development rights to 2,088 acres of farmlands in Centre County, paying farmers \$2.2 million for 11 farms under the matching program with the state.

Equally encouraging is the recent decision of Ferguson Township's Board of Supervisors to set aside \$40,000 for purchase of development rights to farmlands in the township that otherwise might go into residential or commercial development. If other townships follow Ferguson's lead, Centre County will be well on the way to offsetting the threats to one of its most important assets and its heritage.

Our own local Farmland Trust experienced increased interest and new memberships following our donation to the County of \$500 for the Agland Preservation effort on top of the \$100 we gave last year. Publicity and editorial support of this in the Centre Daily Times brought a

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Signs Update

The Watershed Sign Committee has forged ahead in investigating the logistics and design of watershed boundary signs. The committee, with the assistance of the Centre County Planning Office, has identified 40 potential watershed boundary sites along roads entering the watershed.

Committee Chair Jim McClure said he was delighted to learn that the watershed boundary goes through the Grange fairgrounds in Centre Hall. "This presents us with a splendid opportunity to explore setting up a sign with an informational text that explains the watershed and its hydrology in greater detail," he said.

The Committee plans to establish criteria by which it can determine the suitability of each of the potential sites for the signs. Criteria may include visibility

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One of several sign designs being evaluated by the sign committee.

Creating a Vision for the Spring Creek Community

One of the principal recommendations of the 1996 Countryside Stewardship Exchange was that the communities of the Spring Creek watershed develop a shared vision of the future they would all support.

Such a common vision could guide the future actions of the individual municipalities and property owners in the watershed in such matters as zoning and land use and protection of natural resources.

At its October meeting, the Local Steering Committee for the 1996 Exchange voted the recommendation a high priority among long-range projects. A committee was created called the Vision Process Research Group. Current members are Caren Glotfelty, Bob Eberhart, Jennifer Watson, Cory Miller, and Jackie Melander, and they welcome additional volunteers.

As a first step they will compile a bibliography and a collection of articles on "community visioning" and make them available throughout the watershed and at the Spring Creek Exchange site on the Internet. They will also prepare a brief summary report on examples of community visioning to present to the watershed community, and coordinate their activities with Public Issues Forums on Growth and Development in Centre County.

The group identified a number of communities which may be good examples of community visioning and will be contacting them for information and guidance. The communities include Athens and Clarke County, Georgia; several communities in Oregon; Hanover and Tamaqua, Pennsylvania; and Annapolis, Maryland.

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Route 220 Final EIS

From the US Route 220 Newsletter:

"The Final EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] has been prepared to document the Federal Highway Administration's and PennDOT's responses to the comments received during the official Draft comment period (which ended on May 22, 1995). The Final EIS report also includes the recommendation

for the Preferred Alternative. The project's lead agency, the Federal Highway Administration, must circulate the Final EIS before making a decision on the proposed project. The Final EIS document was made available to the public as of December 27, 1996. A 45-day time period, ending on February 10, 1997 is provided for public comment. Following this time period, the Federal Highway Administration will review the written comment from the public and agencies and will identify the Selected Alternative by issuing their Record-of-Decision."

The EIS report will be made available for public review at the following watershed-based locations:

■ Centre County Planning Commission, Willowbank Building, Bellefonte (355-6791)

■ Centre Regional Planning Commission, Fraser Plaza, State College (231-3050)

■ Patton Township Municipal Building, Patton Plaza, State College (234-0271)

■ PA Fish and Boat Commission, 450 Robinson Lane, Pleasant Gap (359-5147)

■ Penn State, Pattee Library (865-3063)

■ Port Matilda Post Office (692-8100)

■ US Fish and Wildlife Service, 315 S. Allen Street (234-4090)

Also, the ClearWater Conservancy has a copy to loan out overnight. Call 237-0400 to schedule.

About This Newsletter

Springs & Sinks is a regular newsletter of the Spring Creek Watershed Community. It will initially appear monthly, and after that as the flow of information warrants.

Its major purpose is to inform the public and members of this organization – and also sponsors of the 1996 Spring Creek International Countryside Stewardship Exchange – about progress in implementing recommendations from the Exchange, as well as about watershed problems and developments occurring outside the scope of the Exchange.

The Editors of the newsletter are Herb Thompson (814-234-2512) and Kristen Saacke Blunk (814-237-0400). Design and artwork is the responsibility of Jim McClure (814-237-5739). They welcome your comments and suggestions for improvements and, above all, your individual contributions to future issues. An important function of the newsletter is to serve as an exchange of information among members. The mailing address is P.O. Box 163, State College, PA 16804.

Air National Guard Site Update

The Air National Guard initiated a recent round of informational meetings with representatives of various business, government, and nongovernment organizations to discuss the contents and conclusions in their State College-based Site Investigation and to receive input on how to determine whether the site is currently contaminated.

The Guard Station is located in College Township on Penn State property, north of the Blue Band practice field on Park Avenue. The site is in the Big Hollow recharge area.

Walt Ebaugh and Jim McClure met with the Guard's consultant on behalf of the ClearWater Conservancy. In technical comments submitted, Ebaugh and McClure had suggested that the earlier assessment of the station lacked necessary information relative to the potential for, or already existing, groundwater contamination. In addition to the Guard's plans to conduct soil testing, they recommended "sampling and analysis of groundwater to establish conclusively whether contaminants have impacted groundwater quality."

Ebaugh further commented that the "Station is located on the margin of the Big Hollow Well Field. Were hazardous wastes to reach groundwater, they could travel down the groundwater flow field to reach one or another of those water supply wells... Sampling and analysis would determine whether the released contaminants have reached the groundwater table."

The source of the potential contaminants of concern is primarily historical practices related to vehicular maintenance.

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Slalom Training in Bellefonte

Spring Creek, between the Lamb Street and High Street bridges in Bellefonte, is scheduled to become a kayak and canoe boating training area for Junior Olympics candidates. Dave Kurtz of the Wildwater Boating Club says the plan calls for riparian and stream bank improvements, as well as habitat improvement within the waterway itself.

What Is a Watershed? *by Jennifer Watson*

It's not just your favorite fishing spot, and it's not simply the spring bubbling out from the ground along the mountain. It's also not just about the water that we drink or the septic systems in our backyards. But put all of these things together, and a true picture of a watershed starts to emerge.

A watershed includes each of these things and more. It includes family farms and subdivisions, old villages and industries, sewage treatment plants and tourist destinations. We all live in a watershed and what each of us does every day ultimately affects the stream that bears our watershed name.

Quite simply, water flows downhill. A watershed is all of the land area that drains downhill to one particular point.

In the Spring Creek Watershed, for example, a drop of water that falls as rain far up on the inner slopes of Tussey Mountain above Pine Grove

Mills, eventually makes its way over the land, through the ground, or in the streams past Bellefonte to the point where the Spring Creek joins the Bald Eagle Creek in Milesburg.

Like limbs of a tree, smaller watersheds join larger watersheds, first the Bald Eagle, then the West Branch of the Susquehanna, and finally the Susquehanna, until a drop of water from the upper reaches of the Spring Creek Watershed flows into the Chesapeake Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

Even within the Spring Creek Watershed, a hierarchy of streams stretches its fingers out to the farthest reaches of the watershed's land area. The names of tributaries such as Buffalo Run, Logan Branch, Slab Cabin Run, and Cedar Run, just to name a few, are familiar to people who might not otherwise identify themselves with Spring Creek.

If you think you are nowhere near a stream and can't possibly be concerned about the Spring Creek Watershed, think again. Every inch of land is part of some watershed, and the people who live on that land impact the watershed with the activities of their daily lives. We all affect the watershed in both positive and negative ways. The trick is learning how to balance the negative impacts with more positive impacts to create a better watershed environment and a higher-quality watershed community.

If you would like to learn how you can make more positive impacts on our Spring Creek Watershed, call (814)237-0400 and join the "Spring Creek Watershed Community".

Jennifer Watson is a planner for the Centre Region Planning Commission. This article appeared originally in the Centre Daily Times August 7, 1996.

New Hat *continued from page 1*

In earlier meetings, the committee had set priorities for implementing the many long-range and short-range recommendations it had received from the study team in September.

The top priorities among these are:
Short-Term

- Erect signs at watershed boundaries to create a better identity of the area covered.

- Study, and promote county-wide consideration of, the impacts that new Interstate 99 will have on Spring Creek (including land use at interchanges) as it crosses the watershed.

- Urge the Centre County Commissioners to intensify efforts to preserve rapidly shrinking agricultural land in the watershed.

Long-Term

- Establish a continuing effort on education about the watershed, with special outreach to school children.

- Develop a watershed management plan with growth boundaries.

- Create a consensus vision for the watershed, describing what we want our community to look like in the future, including open spaces, historic preservation, Spring Creek, etc.

Status reports on these priorities are included in separate articles in this newsletter.



Signs Update *continued from page 1*

and amount of traffic in the vicinity of the boundary.

Language under consideration for the signs simply states, "Entering Spring Creek Watershed."

In addition to the watershed boundary signs, the Committee is investigating the feasibility of creek and spring identification signs that would state the location of road crossings over Spring Creek, Buffalo Run, Logan Branch, etc.

The watershed boundary sign concept was a recommendation made by the International Exchange team during their September 1996 visit to the Spring Creek watershed. In their report, the team emphasized that to develop a watershed identity and stewardship ethic, people must connect with the watershed through their own association with its location. This recommendation has been widely embraced by many people and organizations throughout the Spring Creek watershed.

Funding for the project is currently being sought. A recent application to the Centre County Community Foundation requested partial support for the production and installation of the signs. Additionally, contributions by local businesses and industries, as well as individual contributions, are welcome.

For more information on the Watershed Sign Committee's work and volunteer opportunities, contact Jim McClure, 238-8278.

Atotech, UAJA Receive Environmental Awards

Congratulations to Atotech USA Inc., an electronics equipment firm in Ferguson Township, and the University Area Joint Authority, operator of the sewage treatment plant in College Township, on winning 1996 Pennsylvania Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence.

Atotech recently received a Pollution Prevention Award for its in-plant recycling efforts dissolving and reclaiming copper from electronic circuit boards as part of its waste treatment process. A separate process regenerates acid for reuse in its etching machines.

The UAJA won a Technology Innovation Award for its computer run composting system that turns sewage and hardwood sawdust into a desirable and much sought-after soil additive. The process annually makes 14,000 cubic yards of compost, enough to fill 200 tractor-trailers, and frees up space in landfills.

When the composting started in 1992, the UAJA gave it away. Now landscapers and contractors are paying \$2.50 to \$4.50 a cubic yard for the product, which is used on athletic fields and around new homes. And authority officials say demand outruns supply.

About 36 tons of solids are removed from the wastewater that passes through the UAJA plant each day.

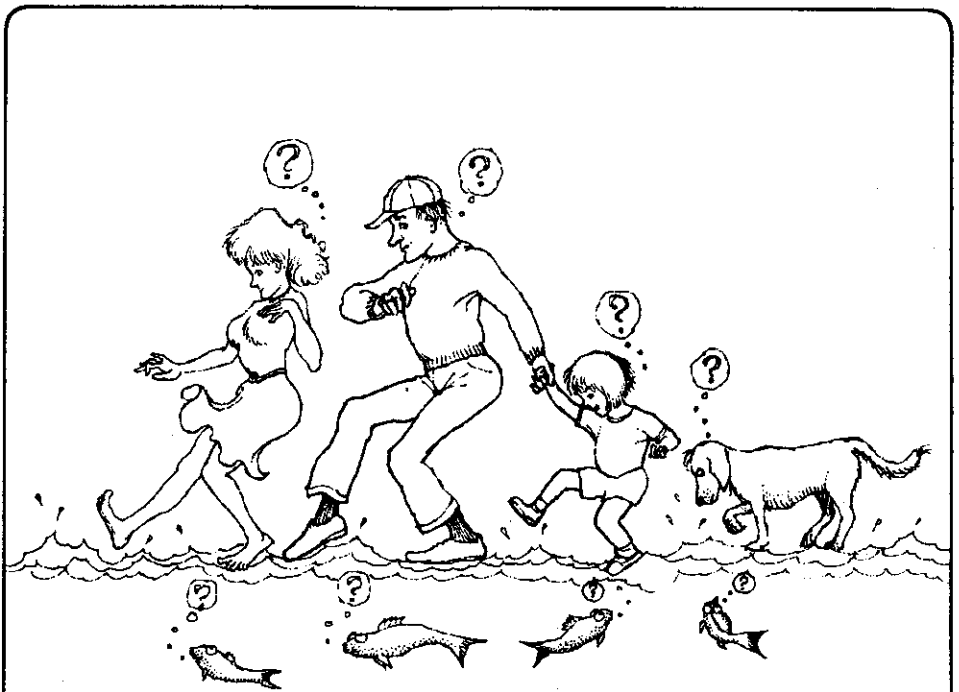
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Bellefonte, Milesburg Monitor Energy Plant Siting on Creek

The Spring Creek Watershed Local Steering Committee was assured at its December meeting that the Boroughs of Bellefonte and Milesburg are both monitoring plans for the siting of an energy plant on Spring Creek at Milesburg.

Chuck Salvanish, a Milesburg supervisor, said the two borough councils have had discussions about this and will continue to follow the matter closely.

"Our concerns about the potential effects on Spring Creek include the impact of trucking through the area," Salvanish said.



We're All Walking on Water!

We're walking on water? Indeed we are. If we live in any borough or township adjacent to Spring Creek and its tributaries we're standing on our water supply, and driving over it, and going about our daily activities over it. It courses beneath us throughout the watershed.

Unlike areas that draw their water from reservoirs and other sources outside the immediate vicinity, our drinking water all comes from underground in this watershed. So protecting and enhancing the quality of this precious resource in the face of rapid growth and development was a major

objective of a study conducted last September by an international team of experts. And it's a major goal now of the Spring Creek Watershed Community, the broad-based volunteer group of citizens and varied watershed interests who organized the study and are now carrying out its recommendations.

If you're not presently a member and would like to help this group protect our future water supply and other essential resources call 237-0400 and volunteer. Membership is free, and it's an exciting and worthwhile crusade to keep the Spring Creek watershed a pleasant place to live and work.

AgLand Preservation

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wave of new attention and interest in our cause.

Much of the increased attention to the problem of disappearing farmland has occurred since the visit of the International Countryside Stewardship Exchange team of experts to Centre County and the Spring Creek Watershed last September.

In their final report the team cited the "loss of prime agriculture land to haphazard development" as a major issue in the area's future. Noting that more than 12,300 acres of farmland were lost to development between 1975 and 1990, and

4,400 acres from 1990 to 1995, they urged the County Commissioners to "annually commit the maximum amount of county funds to the State's Farmland Preservation Program."

Let's all hope that this new impetus on efforts to save our precious farmland resources will continue to strengthen and grow to the benefit of our Spring Creek Watershed Community and all of Centre County.—E. Lynn Miller

E. Lynn Miller is Professor emeritus of Landscape Architecture at Penn State and President of the Centre County Farmland Trust.

Grad Students Address Watershed Community

At a December 3 presentation, 18 members of a Penn State graduate class entitled "Special Project in Watershed Management Planning -- The Spring Creek Watershed" presented three separate watershed management plans to the Spring Creek Watershed Community.

According to Professor Paola Ferrari, a member of the team-taught course, "We encouraged students to work in an ideal situation, not looking at existing constraints, but by generating recommendations that would tangibly help the watershed."

The grad students approached the assignment from a variety of stances and in some cases specifically affirmed recommendations made last September by the Exchange team, with whom they worked. In other cases, they provided original recommendations that were additive to the Exchange team's. For instance, one of the watershed management plans specified that the greater community should establish criteria for the types of businesses it wishes to attract and seek only those businesses that ascribe to proactive pollution prevention and watershed protection activities.

The final reports delivered by the teams can be reviewed by the public. Interested persons should contact Caren Glotfelty, 863-2506, a member of the teaching team.

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ClearWater's Role in the Watershed

The Board of Directors of the ClearWater Conservancy, at its December meeting, passed a resolution to continue providing support to the watershed initiative. In its resolution, the Board stated, "The ClearWater Conservancy, in 1997, will serve as a facilitator to the Local Steering Committee (now the Spring Creek Watershed Community), providing staff and financial support to assist in developing a watershed community for Spring Creek." In addition, ClearWater has appointed its Vice President, Caren Glotfelty, to be the point of contact between ClearWater and the Watershed Community.

In this capacity, ClearWater has agreed to enter into a contract with the Pennsyl-

vania Department of Environmental Protection to actively support communication and organization of watershed based activities. The contract will provide funding for activities such as generation of this newsletter.

In the scope of work for the contract that was developed jointly between ClearWater and Dan Alters, DEP, three primary work areas are defined, including:

1. Develop stakeholder representation from all sectors of the watershed community to assure a broad base of citizen involvement.
2. Facilitate a watershed-wide stakeholder consensus-building process, and
3. Effectively communicate the watershed approach within the stakeholder group and to the community at large.

Within each work area, a number of specific tasks are defined.

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Keeping an Eye on the Sinkholes

The Sinkhole Watch Committee was formed in 1996 as a joint activity between members of the local Sierra Club Group and the ClearWater Conservancy. It presently consists of 7 members who meet monthly to discuss their observations and findings. Each member has adopted one of more sinkholes which he/she visits periodically to look for problems like polluted inflows or dumping of undesirable objects. In case of a problem, the committee will contact the corresponding municipal or township authorities to promote the appropriate cleanup. Members presently are keeping watch on 10 sinkholes in the State College area.

Recently formed sinkholes in the State College area have been backfilled with boulders and are well stabilized against further cave-ins.

The Committee is also looking into the availability of insurance covering damage caused by sinkhole formations. Such damage is normally not covered as part of a home owner's insurance, but some companies offer a sinkhole insurance supplement.—Gert Aron

Gert Aron is Chair of the Sinkhole Watch Committee.

Watershed Outdoor School

Bellefonte Middle School teachers Dee Stout and Melissa Wisehaupt, through the Centre County Conservation District and in conjunction with the ClearWater Conservancy and other organizations, submitted an application to the Department of Environmental Protection for the 1997 Environmental Education Grant awards. According to DEP officials, over 130 applications were received this year. Announcements of awardees will be made on Earth Day, April 21, 1997.

The submitted proposal centers on the concept of creating an outdoor watershed school model that may be used by teachers and students throughout the Spring Creek Watershed. The first year activities described in the proposal will focus upon creation of an outdoor watershed experience geared towards 6th graders in the Bellefonte school system.

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Watershed Commission

Twelve of the fourteen watershed municipalities have made their appointments to the Spring Creek Watershed Commission, created by county commissioner Vicki Wedler in response to interest stemming from the Exchange team's visit to the area.

Last October, in an unprecedented move, Chairman Wedler announced that the County Board of Commissioners would be forming a watershed commission in order for elected officials to begin formulating a plan for dealing with issues highlighted by the Exchange team's visit.

The first meeting of the Commission is expected to take place in late January.

According to Fran Flanigan, Executive Director of the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, "the Spring Creek Watershed Community should feel very good about having their government leaders make this type of commitment to going forward with a watershed approach."

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You can visit the Spring Creek Watershed Community's Website at <http://www.erri.psu.edu/watershd/exchange.htm>

The ClearWater Conservancy
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State College, PA 16804

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Buffalo Run Community Park

Benner Township plans for a community park in the vicinity of Buffalo Run are moving forward with the recent submittal of a grant application to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for a Key '93 funding opportunity for the design for the park. Twenty-two acres gifted to the township have provided an outstanding riparian area in which plans are underway to develop a recreational path, observational areas, and other opportunities to enjoy the waterway area.

Helen Alters, Benner Township supervisor who is working closely with the project and developed the proposal which was submitted to the state, commented that the park area will provided citizens with outstanding opportunities to enjoy the local environment. "Our plans are to enhance the site by planting native species, keep it in it's natural state, and make it accessible to people to enjoy."

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CALENDAR

Wednesday February 5

■ **7:00 A M**

Coordinating Committee Meeting, Patton Township Building

Thursday. February 13

■ **6:30 P M**

Pre-Roundtable Meeting viewing of the video documentary, "Spring Creek—living in a watershed,"
Centre County Vo-Tech School (Library)

■ **7:30 P M**

Roundtable Meeting of the Spring Creek Watershed Community,
Centre County Vo-Tech School.

Agenda items include report on the outcome of the first Spring Creek Watershed Commission meeting, consideration of organizational structure for the Spring Creek Watershed Community and workgroups on (1) Visioning, (2) I-99 and (3) Education.

For more information about meetings, call 237-0400.