

Springs & Sinks

A newsletter of the Spring Creek Watershed Community

Huge Spring Creek Cleanup Planned for Anniversary

THE SPRING CREEK WATERSHED COMMUNITY will celebrate the first anniversary of its 1996 International Countryside Exchange Saturday, September 20, with a watershed-wide cleanup in the morning and a party in the afternoon.

Festivities will continue Sunday with the ClearWater Conservancy's annual Spring Creek Day, to be held this year on the grounds of the Military Museum at Boalsburg from noon to 5 p.m.

The September 20 cleanup is expected to be one of the most extensive ever undertaken of Spring Creek and its tributaries. It will involve hundreds of volunteers from throughout the watershed and generate tons of trash and debris.

The date marks the conclusion last year of a six-day visit to the watershed by an international team of experts who left a host of recommendations to protect the area's natural resources and enhance the quality of life. One result was the formation of the Watershed Community that is sponsoring the Sept. 20 observance.

The cleanup will be conducted simultaneously in all 14 municipalities in the Watershed and Penn State University. It will involve business, conservation, and government interests, as well as the public at large. Municipal officials are being asked to designate stream sections in their areas most in need of cleanup. PennDOT plans roadside cleanups in the watershed to coincide with the streamside work.

The cleanup is being planned by a steering committee consisting of representatives of The ClearWater Conservancy, Trout Unlimited, University Area Joint Authority, Corning Asahi, Bellefonte Lime Co., the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental



Protection, Centre Region Planning Office, Centre County Solid Waste Authority, PennDOT, and radio station WRSC, which offered to sponsor such a cleanup during Rivers Month in June but there was not time to organize it.

Following the cleanup, volunteers will be guests of the Spring Creek Watershed Community at an anniversary party at Fisherman's Paradise. The formal part of the observance will include a review of accomplishments since the study team's visit a year ago and a status report on priority projects still in progress. The rest will be fun and relaxation.

Volunteers who would like to participate in the morning cleanup and afternoon party are urged to telephone 237-0400 and leave their name and telephone number.



Trail System Considered for Spring Creek Corridor

The Spring Creek Watershed Commission has expressed keen interest in reviving and implementing a long-held concept of an integrated trail system for the Spring Creek Corridor.

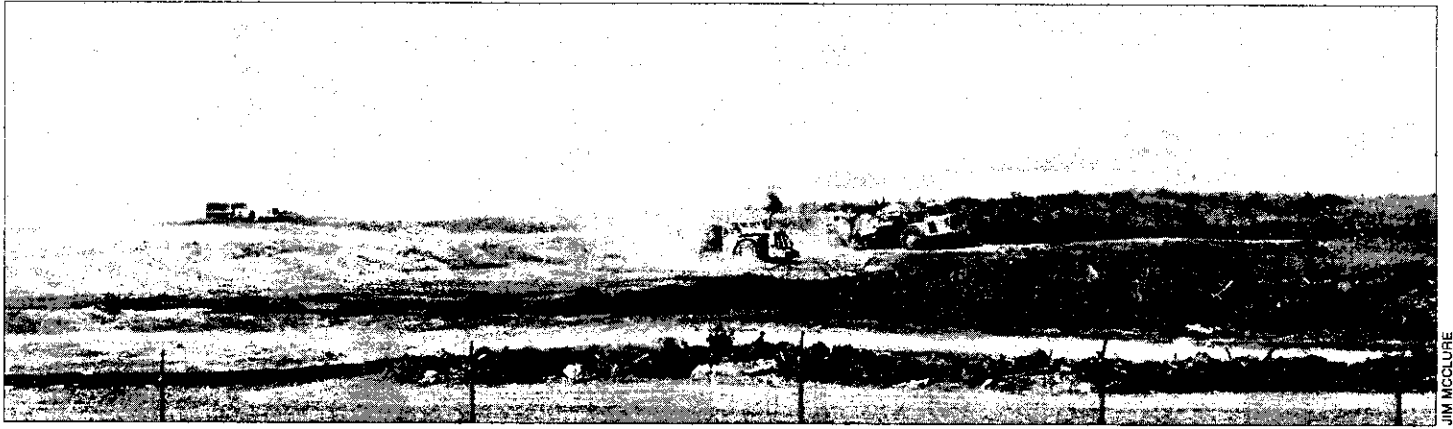
It would extend from the headwaters of Spring Creek in Harris and Ferguson townships to the stream's confluence with Bald Eagle Creek at Milesburg, passing through Bellefonte and possibly connecting with Bald Eagle State Park near Howard. Another segment to be considered would be the Buffalo Run corridor with headwaters in Benner and Patton Townships.

The integrated trail system would be used for biking, hiking, and jogging and would, in selected areas, provide much easier public access to Spring Creek than is now possible. Some trails already exist that could become part of the system.

The idea was broached by Centre County Commissioner Vicki Wedler at the July 22 meeting of the Watershed Commission after she had attended a bicycle path dedication in Ferguson Township that was attended by State Sen. Doyle Corman, who supports the concept of an integrated trail system for the area. The Watershed Commission consists of one elected official each from the 14 municipalities in the watershed and the three Centre County Commissioners.

Bob Donaldson, Director of Planning for Centre County, who was familiar with previous efforts to establish an integrated trail system, briefed the Watershed Commission on some of these efforts and the problems encountered. The Commission authorized the submission of appropriate grant applications that would allow the County and municipalities to begin developing long-range plans for such a system.





JIM MCCLURE

Muddy Mystery Clarified

Inspections by the Centre County Conservation District and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) determined that construction activities at the University Park airport expansion were responsible for muddy conditions found in Benner Spring and Spring Creek June 12 and 13, and again on June 19. Penn State University is conducting the expansion.

Erosion control facilities were located over sinkhole-prone areas at the site, and a sinkhole developed at the inside toe of the settling pond, causing sediment to flow into the groundwater and into Benner Spring. As soon as the water level dropped below the sinkhole, the spring began to clear up.

The area was excavated by contractors for the University, the sinkhole was completely plugged with concrete, the area

Looking southwest from Rock Road, one can see heavy earth-moving equipment rumbling across the sinkhole-prone landscape, as acres of soil are laid bare and work proceeds on improvements to University Park Airport.

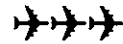
was covered with a geotextile material, and compacted clay was layered as the pond embankment was restored.

At a meeting held on-site June 26, Penn State agreed to changes in the design of the settling pond to minimize the potential for sinkhole development. DEP accepted the University consultant's concept of placing a 12-inch thick layer of impervious clay, followed by a 60-mil high density polyethylene geomembrane and topped by an additional 12-inch layer of clay. A permit amendment will be submitted to DEP for

formal approval.

Benner Spring is the water source for the Benner Springs trout hatchery operated by the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The discharged sediment entered the hatchery and caused the deaths of a number of trout. Because the pond will be converted into a stormwater detention pond when runway construction is completed, both the Commission and DEP officials were concerned about the possibility of contaminated stormwater entering the hatchery should the pond leak again. Authorities say the new liner system proposed by the University is superior to the original design and should prevent any sinkhole development below the pond.

The Centre County Conservation District continues to inspect the earthmoving activities at the airport on a regular basis.



Public Briefing Set for August 16 on Streamside Restoration Project

Residents of the Spring Creek Watershed will have an opportunity Saturday, August 16, for a first-hand look and briefing on a Spring Creek riparian restoration demonstration project scheduled to become a training model for the Chesapeake Bay area.

The site is Spring Creek's passage through the Military Museum grounds at Boalsburg. The briefer will be Andy Otten of the Penn State Department of Landscape Architecture, who with Neil Korostoff of Penn State is creating the demonstration project.

He will inform those attending what the project will entail and how they can help in its development. The Chesapeake Bay



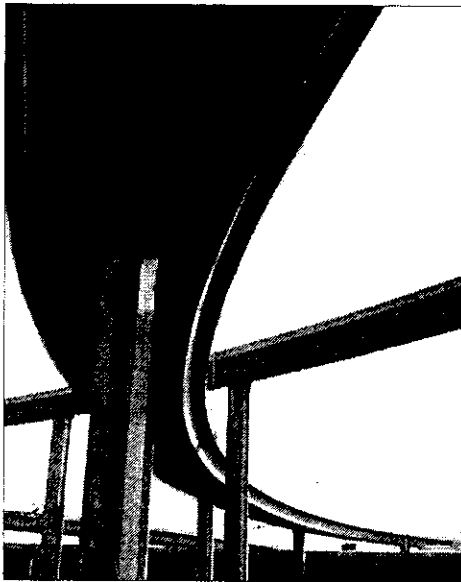
This poster at streamside outlines the natural history of the site and the scope of the restoration project.

Alliance has selected this demonstration project as a model for training environmentalists on techniques involved in streambank protection and plans to bring candidates here for instruction.

The restoration project is being implemented through a grant from the Western Pennsylvania Watershed Protection Program and through efforts and contributions of local industries and businesses, the Pennsylvania Military Museum, Penn State University, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the Pennsylvania National Guard, the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps, the ClearWater Conservancy, and Trout Unlimited.

The project's informational meeting for the local public will begin at 10 a.m. Aug. 16 at the kiosk behind the museum. Meanwhile, Mr. Otten is available at 865-7832 to answer any questions.





I-99 Proposal Makes Progress

The Watershed Community's request for cooperative planning by municipal governments in zoning around interchanges of superhighway I-99 in the Spring Creek watershed appears to be making some headway.

Patton and Spring townships, with authority over five of the eight interchanges planned, have agreed not to take any rezoning actions until a cooperative study of conditions around the interchanges and possible impacts of changes on Spring Creek and its tributaries – and on other municipalities and Penn State University – can be completed.

College and Benner townships, with zoning authority around the other three interchanges, have not yet responded to the Community's May 27 request, or to its offer to send spokespersons to explain the proposal at one of their meetings. But Community leaders remain hopeful that they, too, will cooperate.

Meanwhile, the Spring Creek Watershed Commission, made up of the three Centre County commissioners and one elected official from each of the 14 municipalities in the watershed, accepted at its July 22 meeting the Community's offer to try to find grant monies to finance the land use study that would precede future zoning actions.

In a June 17 memorandum to the Commission, the Watershed Community said the main purpose of its proposal "is to initiate cooperative planning among the municipalities in order to encourage desirable and environmentally sound

development around the interchanges."

"The suggested moratorium on zoning changes near the interchanges, which has received some attention in the press, is a secondary feature of the proposal and is intended only to provide time for completion of the planning study before zoning changes that permit irreversible land uses are made," the memorandum said.

The Community cited these reasons why cooperative planning should begin now:

"1. Areas close to interchanges will become very desirable sites for commercial, industrial, and residential development.

"2. Although the highway will not be complete until after the year 2000, municipalities need to begin now to anticipate and plan for expected development pressures.

"3. Careless development will have adverse effects on environmental features. While PennDOT has shown concern for the environment in its design of the highway and its interchanges, responsibility for effects of subsequent development around the interchanges will fall largely to the municipalities. As some of the interchanges are close to Spring Creek, the potential for damage to the stream is especially great at these locations.

"4. Judicious zoning around the interchanges will permit municipalities to steer various types of development to areas where growth is desirable and where its adverse impacts will be minimized.

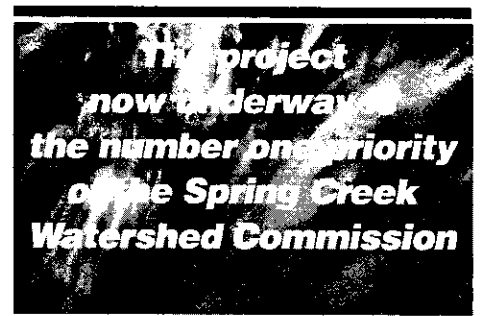
"5. Cooperative planning is needed because future development would then be considered with the watershed, not the individual municipality, as the planning unit. Although interchanges will be located in only four of the 14 watershed municipalities, the effects of development at the interchanges – e.g., the need for water and sewer services, stormwater management, traffic and transportation needs, and secondary land uses – will be felt in municipalities throughout the watershed."

"If a cooperative planning project is undertaken," the memo concluded, "the scope of work might be conducted by the Centre County, Centre Region, and municipal planning staffs. They should be assisted by an Advisory Committee to include representatives of the municipalities, Penn State, sewer and water authorities, the business community, and various stakeholder groups including the Spring Creek Watershed Community. The study itself should probably be conducted by a planning consultant from outside Centre County." ■

Stormwater Control Study Off to Impressive Start

Centre County is off to a solid start in its efforts to develop a management plan that will deal with varying aspects of stormwater runoff, from flooding problems to water quality.

Controlling stormwater runoff is a major problem for local governments throughout Pennsylvania. The project now underway is the No. 1 priority of the Spring Creek Watershed Commission, which was appointed earlier this year and consists of the three Centre County commissioners and one elected official from each of the 14 municipal governments in the watershed.



A citizens' advisory committee to help the County and its consultant, Sweetland Engineering, develop a scope of work for the plan was appointed at a well-attended meeting in Pleasant Gap July 2. Technical advisory committees consisting of experts from Penn State and private geological engineering firms in the area also will be appointed. One such group is already working on a pilot project on Shiloh Road that will develop techniques for managing specific runoff problems in that particular College Township sub-basin that can be transferred to other parts of the watershed.

The public is also getting involved. The League of Women Voters is making stormwater control a major topic for fall and spring meetings, and will start the series with a bus tour of the watershed led by Penn State's internationally known hydrogeologist, Richard Parizek, who will point out potential sources of runoff problems to the Watershed Commissioners and interested members of the public. The series will also include a public forum and meetings on specific topics involved in stormwater management. Other conservation and natural resources groups will be invited to join the League in sponsoring these meetings. ■

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CALENDAR

Thursday, August 7, 7 a.m.

Meeting of the Steering Committee,
Spring Creek Watershed-wide Cleanup,
Old Patton Township Municipal Building
(facing North Atherton at intersection with
Valley Vista Drive and US 322 Bypass)

Wednesday, Aug 13, 7 a.m.

Meeting of the Spring Creek Watershed
Community Coordinating Committee,
Patton Township Municipal Building

Saturday, August 16, 10 a.m.

Public briefing and overview of Spring
Creek Riparian Restoration Project,
Military Museum Kiosk, Boalsburg

Saturday, September 20, a.m.

Watershed-wide cleanup of
Spring Creek and tributaries
(see article, page 1)

Saturday, September 20

First anniversary celebration of 1996
International Exchange Team visit and
report, Fisherman's Paradise (details to
be announced)

**Sunday, September 21,
Noon to 5 p.m.**

ClearWater Conservancy's annual
Spring Creek Day, Military Museum
grounds, Boalsburg



About This Newsletter

Springs & Sinks is a regular newsletter of the Spring Creek Watershed Community. Its major purpose is to inform the public and members of this organization about progress in implementing recommendations from the 1996 Spring Creek International Countryside Stewardship Exchange – and other watershed matters of interest.

The editors 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, and your individual contributions to the newsletter and its exchange of information among members. The mailing address is P.O. Box 163, State College, PA 16804.

**Fire is the
most tolerable
third party**

Henry David Thoreau