



CLEARWATER *conservancy*

CLEARWATER NEWS FALL 2008

CONTROLLING INVASIVE SPECIES: PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE AND JAPANESE KNOTWEED IN THE SPRING CREEK WATERSHED

By **Tsultrim Datso**, Riparian Conservation Project Technician for Summer 2008

One of our volunteers, Bob Eberhart, dropped by the other day to bring us the location of some Japanese Knotweed he had discovered while fishing on Spring Creek. What he was marveling over was its beauty. True enough, the focus of our invasive species efforts this summer, the knotweed and purple loosestrife, are quite showy bloomers... for the loosestrife those blooms can generate as many as 2.5 million seeds per plant, and those seeds remain viable 10 to 15 years! The downside of these lovely plants is that outside of their natural habitat (Asia and Eurasia, respectively) they monopolize an ecosystem, allowing little or no room for native flora and their accompanying fauna.

CEDAR RUN PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE REMOVAL

This is where I got my "feet wet"... and my boots stuck in mud up to my knees! Our goal is to stem the tide of loosestrife at its probable source, the pond in Linden Hall and downstream along Cedar Run, before it joins Spring Creek in Oak Hall. Initial treatment occurred in 2005, after which only 25% of the targeted plant returned; we treated again in 2006 and 2008.

What does this involve? It's a process of contacting 16 private landowners for their permission to "walk the creek" looking for the purple wonder, before it

blooms, and tagging it for treatment. The field workers, volunteer Jack Williams and myself, learned to juggle our GPS unit, clipboard for notes, camera, lunch, water, and flagging while wading over rocks and fallen logs, through pastures and planted fields, and rolling under electric cattle fences.

Several residents along the creek are interested in establishing a stream stewardship program and enlisting their neighbors and other resources for natural riparian buffer development. It's so nice to meet folks enthused about partnering with the natural world!

(Continued on page 4)

\$170,000 Needed to Protect Wildlife Corridor

The Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor is a step closer to completion, with our receipt of the official grant agreement from DCNR.

Now we need you. Please help us to make this important connection a reality by pledging your financial support! We are more than three quarters of the way to our total project cost of \$737,000, but we still need \$170,000. As you are determining your year-end charitable contributions, please consider supporting this project.

Scotia Barrens is an exceptional ecosystem in our region and one of the highest priorities for protection in ClearWater Conservancy's Nittany Valley Conservation Action Plan. It is an Important Bird Area, an Important

Mammal Area, and is critical to groundwater recharge in the Spring Creek Watershed, feeding Bellefonte's famous Big Spring.

Connecting Scotia Barrens and the Bald Eagle Ridge to the north with the Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor will ensure that this ecosystem does not become an island in a sea of development, cut off from other key natural features. This is the last remaining wildlife passage, and now is the time to secure it permanently.

Be a part of the solution. Make your tax-deductible contribution using the envelope in this newsletter. Write "Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor" on it to save this land and make the connection permanent. Learn more about this featured project on page 8.

Mark Your Calendar!

Monthly Meetings

ClearWater Board of Directors
2nd Thursday, 7:30 – 9 am

Spring Creek Watershed Community
Coordinating Committee
**3rd Tuesday, 7:30 – 9:30 am, Patton
Township Municipal Building**

Spring Creek Watershed Commission
**3rd Wednesday, 7:30 – 9:30 pm,
Spring Township Building**

ClearWater Land Conservation &
Stewardship Committee
4th Wednesday, 5 – 6:30 pm

Special Opportunities

November 16, 1 – 3 pm, Erb Gap
*Please meet at Ferguson Twp. Elem.
School at 12:45 to carpool to the site.*
ClearWater Adventures in Conservation
program: Erbtown and Erb Gap Walk.
This walk will take us to Erb Gap, the
gap in Tussey Mountain just west of
Pine Grove Mills. Historian Bob
Hazelton will lead us on a walk back
in time to a place history almost
forgot. Erbtown is now reduced to one
standing building, but traces remain of
a once thriving village. Limit 25
participants; RSVP at 237-0400.
*Co-sponsored by the Centre County
Historical Society.*

**November 18, 6 pm, State College
Elks Country Club**
ClearWater Annual Membership
Meeting. \$25. RSVP by November 7
to Sarah at 237-0400. Cocktail Buffet,
Election of Board of Directors, Volun-
teer Awards, Silent Auction, and a
Special Guest Presentation by Dr. Tom
Serfass, Wildlife Ecologist from
Frostburg State University on the
Pennsylvania River Otter Restoration
Project.

**November 20, 7 pm, Christ Commu-
nity Church, 200 Ellis Place, State
College**
Public Meeting for the Spring Creek
Canyon Master Plan. All are encour-

aged to attend to learn more about the
progress to date and provide input to
the consultant team and advisory
committees. Learn more at
www.canyonplanning.com.

**November 23, 1 – 3 pm, Alpha Fire
Station behind ClearWater's office**
ClearWater Adventures in Conservation
program: Make Your Own Rain Barrel
Workshop. We will teach you about
water conservation and lead you
through the construction of a rain
barrel for your garden. Participants
will take home a rain barrel, so bring a
vehicle suitable for hauling. Registra-
tion is \$15 to cover materials. Limit 20
participants; RSVP at 237-0400.

*Co-sponsored by the MS4 Partners
(State College Borough, College
Township, Harris Township, Ferguson
Township, Patton Township, Penn
State University, and the State College
Borough Water Authority), the Penn
State Master Gardeners of Centre
County, and the Centre County Conser-
vation District.*

December 30 – January 8
ClearWater Conservancy's For the
Love of Art & Chocolate preview
exhibits at First Night State College.
Watch for window displays at Moyer
Jewelers, Appalachian Outdoors,
Tadpole Crossing, Penn State Down-
town Theatre, Rapid Transit, Happy
Valley Optical, Woodring's Florals,
Kitchen Kaboodle, and Webster's
Bookstore Cafe.

**Please visit our website at
www.clearwaterconservancy.org
for more details!**

Volunteer Needs

People to staff ClearWater exhibits at
other events out in the community

Volunteers to work at a concession
stand fundraiser at the 2009 PSU
football games (8 home games, 15+
volunteers needed per game - we are
trying to gauge whether there is enough
interest for us to commit; please call if
interested in helping at one or more)

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS!

June 28 - October 23, 2008

Steve & Shirley Lupis
Beverly Harader
Jill Wood & Eric Helfen
John & Marilyn Furry
Robert Williams
Lori Shapiro
Molly Schwartz
Jeffrey Rasmussen
David Henrie
Matt & Diane Vidic

January 23, The Penn Stater (free valet parking), 6:30 – 10 pm, \$30

For the Love of Art & Chocolate.
For a ticket price of just \$30, you'll get
an impressive assortment of chocolate
delicacies, the opportu-
nity to view and bid on a
variety of art
works in-
spired by
nature, and
the chance to
win some
fabulous door
prizes. There will also be a live jazz
band, Jazza-Ma-Phone. All proceeds
benefit ClearWater Conservancy. To
purchase tickets in advance call Sarah
at (814) 237-0400. Tickets may also be
purchased at the door, but advance
ticket holders can walk right in.



Wish List

Postage stamps
10x10 or 10 x 20 tent canopies for
outdoor events
Empty inkjet and toner cartridges
Black oil sunflower and niger seed or a
gift certificate to Wiscoy
high-capacity stapler
gift cards to offset needed supplies
silent auction items
dehumidifiers for basement at office

A Note From Your President



Where does the time go? After two years as president of ClearWater this is my last newsletter message to you. As I write, I only can think of two things to say: thanks and help!

Thank you for the honor of serving as your board president, thank you to a world class staff, thank you to a most excellent Executive Director, thank you to all current and past board members - you've all made serving a joy. Thank you to the committee members and volunteers - your dedication is an inspiration!

Thank you to all project partners and funders - you help us accomplish our mission. Thank you to all donors and sponsors - we couldn't do it without your help.

Help us to continue to advance our mission! Get involved and stay involved. Volunteer for an event, a project, or with other duties. Serve on one of the many committees, fundraisers, outreach programs, or the board of directors. Donate by becoming a member, increase your level of membership, give directly to the Campaign for Conservation, or include ClearWater in your estate planning. We need YOUR help to continue to protect the beauty and natural resources in the heart of Pennsylvania for all generations to come!

THANK YOU

Fisher Farm Celebration volunteers: **Dorey Hilshey, Jeff Sturniolo, Jackie Hook, Jean Bemis, Ziggy Coyle Bauchspies, Carolyn & Elwood Hatley, Tom Benner, Jennifer Kane, Mary Alice Graetzer, Richard Wylie, and Joan Coraor.**

Tsultrim Datso for leading our purple loosestrife and Japanese knotweed eradication initiatives this summer through our Riparian Conservation Program.

George & Annie Lesieutre and **Jim & Sue Tumlinson** for donating sunflower seed.

Katy Whalen and **Katie Layman**, our fall PR interns and **Greg Garthe**, who provided outstanding maps and data organization as our GIS intern.

PA Department of Community & Economic Development, Bikes Belong in partnership with the Centre Region Bike Coalition, and the **Kodak American Greenways Award Program** for grant funding for the Musser Gap Greenway.

THANK YOU

Candidates' Forum for Regional Environmental Issues committee: **Bob Eberhart, Denny Hameister, Amy Story**, and forum moderator **Kristen Saacke-Blunk.**

Jim Baird, Jeff Dice, John Gaudlip, Randy Swope, and Larry Fennessey for constructing a new Growing Native plant propagation area on PSU land along Fox Hollow Road. Also to the **MS4 Stormwater Partners** (State College Borough, College, Harris, Ferguson, and Patton Townships, and Penn State University) for funding this project.

Adventures in Conservation: **Richard Morgan** for guiding a tour of Rhoneymeade, **Jack Moore** and **Don Runkle** for teaching our bird-dog demonstration at Scotia Barrens, **Kathy Gipe** for leading the Spring Creek Canyon hike, and **Bob Hazelton** for spearheading the Erbtown and Erb Gap hike.

Joe Bishop, Ford Stryker, Pat Morse, Laurene Keck, Roger Garthwaite, and Steve McKenna for organizing a very successful Otto's

THANK YOU

Golf-Fest, raising over \$38,000 for ClearWater Conservancy! Please see www.clearwaterconservancy.org/golf.htm for a full list of the many generous sponsors and donors.

The Hershey Company and the **Dominion Foundation** for their respective \$5,000 and \$2,500 donations to ClearWater's Connections program to send students to Millbrook Marsh Nature Center for hands-on outdoor environmental education.

Keystone Conservation Trust for featuring the Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor project on their website. See it at http://keystoneconservation.org/featured/Halfmoon_Corridor. KCT works to grow conservation philanthropy in Pennsylvania.

Matt Dallos for taking photos of Scotia Barrens for the KCT website and also the Elks Club riparian restoration work for a feature story about the Elks on The Environmental Institute for Golf website.

United Way Day of Caring volunteers for replacing our roof this year!

PURPLE LOOSESTRIFE AND JAPANESE KNOTWEED... CONTINUED

JAPANESE KNOTWEED SURVEY

In August, pairs of volunteers floated and walked major parts of Spring Creek, Logan Branch and Thompson Run, looking for the plant nicknamed “killer bamboo.” Big broad leaves adorned with a floppy spike of white flowers supported by fast-growing segmented stems mark this plant. Originally used for ornamentation and erosion prevention, it has completely taken over river and creek banks in parts of Pennsylvania, such as the Poconos and Pine Creek canyon.

This time our coordination was with a variety of private and public groups: from SEDA-COG to fish hatcheries, water treatment authorities, the penitentiary, and a streamside inn. While probing with a pole, one devoted volunteer “took a dive” into a deep, hidden pool in Spring Creek. He and his GPS unit, cell phone and camera were all submerged. In fact, he had to go under the 55-degree water again to find the GPS on the streambed. Fortunately, Canon sent a camera upgrade within a few days... and now all systems are go. Only after safety was assured by the volunteer and his partner, did the laughter begin.

From what we can tell, Japanese Knotweed is mostly downstream from Shiloh Road, along the two tributaries, and in other spots around the county, identified by ClearWater friends and members in response to a group email. Thanks for all those active eyes and ears! ClearWater will be seeking grant funds for the active treatment of Japanese Knotweed next season.

COOKE TAVERN WETLANDS EDUCATIONAL CENTER BECOMES MUDDY PAWS MARSH

How can you fall in love with a marsh? Let me count the ways.

1. Have your breath taken away by five acres of brilliantly blooming purple loosestrife, as you take an almost aerial photo of the marsh from a northern ridge.

2. Listen to the hum of omnipresent bees, the squawky cries of a great blue heron family landing to feed, or the rhythmic, bass notes of bullfrogs as you bushwhack following your GPS to a monitoring plot, buried by 8-foot tall plants.

3. Meet the unbelievable micro world of the fruit of a native grass, a pinhead in my hand, yet an amber-colored orb with tendrils under a 10X hand lens provided by our botany instructor. And the list goes on and on (seriously).

As one visitor put it, “It’s like another world out there.” Imagine the awe and wonder, the excitement of school children as they feel, hear, and see these wetlands. Thanks to owners Mary Kay and Greg Williams they can. Led by their dog, Max, they discovered that their “big field” had at one time been a marsh, and they proceeded to gather forces to restore the area to its near natural state.

Penns Valley Conservation Association, PA DEP, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Ducks Unlimited, Centre County Conservation District, and ClearWater Conservancy all have had a hand in the process, which was celebrated in June by a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the newly named Muddy Paws Marsh. A new and carefully constructed boardwalk winds out into the marsh and culminates in an octagonal viewing deck. Looking down, the rich black mud is imprinted with a variety of animal tracks and dotted with tiny bright green plants and fallen purple flower petals. Quite exquisite.

But what about the purple invader? What to do? After a good deal of investigation, it seemed best to use a biocontrol. Following the lead of 11 other states such as New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota, beetles that feed on purple loosestrife were released in Muddy Paws Marsh last summer. The benefit of this kind of biocontrol is that once established, the control is ongoing: the purple loosestrife and the beetle population come

to equilibrium. The loosestrife is minimized without the use of pesticides, and the natural plant community can flourish once again, with all of its animal habitats.

However, biocontrol is slow to get established. It requires great faith and patience... or at least, patience based on information and data! That’s where we come in. This summer we created a plan for monitoring and began gathering measurements of the extent of the purple loosestrife. Next spring, we will also measure the presence and abundance of the beetles. For the first 3-4 years, the impact may be slight, but by years 4, 5, and 6 the health and flowering of purple loosestrife should diminish. Meanwhile, you and the honeybees have a few more years to enjoy those purple blooms. Muddy Paws Marsh is just east of Spring Mills on Route 45 at Cooke Tavern Bed and Breakfast. It is open to the public by appointment; to visit, call 422-8787.



Tsultrim Datto with a 12' bamboo pole to mark the purple loosestrife monitoring plots located 10 meters from the beetle release sites. Many thanks to Tsultrim for her excellent work this summer!

The Little Beetle With The Big Bite

By Sarah Miller, Senior Research Assistant with the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center and ClearWater volunteer

Looking out across Muddy Paws Marsh, a visitor to this restored wetland in Centre County is at once captivated by an infusion of colors: the subtle white of bonesets and water plantains, the bright yellow of buttercups and primroses, the cornflower



Tsultrim Datso

While not too impressive here in black and white, go to the newsletter on the website to see the extent of purple loosestrife in the Muddy Paws Marsh in full color.

blue of the forget-me-nots contrasting with the deep blue of vervains. But what really draws your attention is the profusion of deep pink and purple hues, most of which can be attributed to the multitude of showy flowers borne of a single plant, the highly invasive, non-native wetland species, purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*). Although quite pleasing to the eye, purple loosestrife's beauty belies its destructive nature. While the European import caused few problems when it was first introduced, it now poses a serious threat to native emergent vegetation in wetlands throughout the northeastern and northcentral regions of the US.

Purple loosestrife was first brought to North America in the early nineteenth century by European settlers who valued it as a medicinal herb and may have used it as livestock feed or bedding. The common practice of

using soil as ship ballast also introduced millions of stowaway seeds that were then easily spread by water, wind, wildlife, and humans. By 1830, purple loosestrife was well established along the New England seaboard. Increasing development, commercial distribution of horticultural cultivars, and regional propagation for bee forage furthered its expansion beyond its original coastal climes. Today, it is found in all 48 contiguous states except Florida, and all Canadian provinces.

When purple loosestrife invades a wetland, it quickly takes over. The result is a homogeneous stand of plants that precludes the establishment of native wetland species and diminishes wildlife habitat. Once established, purple loosestrife is prolific, producing millions of seeds each year. Eventually, the wetland's structure and function are permanently altered. In the US, an estimated 190,000 acres of wetland and riparian area are affected each year at an estimated cost of millions of dollars. In PA, purple loosestrife occurs particularly in the Susquehanna River Basin and south central counties.

Previous control measures for purple loosestrife included mechanical removal, water level manipulation, burning, or the use of herbicides. Although these techniques may continue to prove successful for small, localized stands, they are often costly, labor intensive and may cause more damage than good to wetland habitats.

In the last ten or so years, a new and promising method for controlling purple loosestrife has emerged that is not only cost effective, but requires little effort to deploy. It's a tiny insect with a voracious appetite, a leaf-eating beetle of the genus *Galerucella*. The beetle, which has been approved by

the US Department of Agriculture as a biological control agent, specifically targets purple loosestrife, thus it won't harm native marsh vegetation. Once its food source is more or less gone, beetle populations either decline or move on to other infestations, meaning there are also no long-term impacts to native plants and animals from the insect's introduction.

In 2007, ClearWater's partners released *Galerucella* beetles into Muddy Paws Marsh in an effort to control purple loosestrife populations there. Based on studies from other areas of the country where the beetle has been used, there is good reason to expect success. In Michigan where biological control has been ongoing since the early 1990s, populations of purple loosestrife have been reduced by up to 95% and native plants are making a comeback. Massachusetts and New Jersey have noted similar trends.

Following the beetles' introduction, ClearWater will monitor the marsh for five years. Although it generally takes that long to see a dramatic reduction in purple loosestrife populations, interim measures of success should be evident within the first two to three years. These include a decrease in stem height and a reduction in the number of flower heads with a co-occurring increase in native plant production.

For more information, please contact Katie Ombalski at 237-0400.



Tsultrim Datso

ClearWater **Newsbriefs...**

FAREWELL GEOFF!

It is with sadness that we announce the departure of Geoff Smith, our Water Resources Coordinator at ClearWater Conservancy for the past year and a half. Geoff is now the new Susquehanna River Biologist with the PA Fish & Boat Commission, a great career opportunity for him.

Geoff has been a wonderful asset for ClearWater Conservancy, and he will be missed by many parts of the organization and some of our sister efforts: the Water Resources Monitoring Project, the Watershed Cleanup Day Committee, the Spring Creek Watershed Commission and Watershed Community, the USGS modeling team, and others, I'm sure. Thank you for your service to ClearWater Conservancy, Geoff and best of luck in your next adventure. You will be missed!



Brad Shearer

A volunteer team from Blue Mountain Quality Resources plants trees at the PSU Sheep Farm restoration project for Arbor Day.

THE SHEEP FARM RIPARIAN RESTORATION PROJECT

The Penn State Sheep farm received a riparian overhaul in 2008. Restoration efforts include nearly a dozen instream fish habitat enhancement structures, approximately 3,800 linear feet of new streambank fence, and 4.8 acres of newly planted forested riparian buffer.

The riparian buffer planting was conducted in two phases. The first phase was part of Evan Gover's Eagle Scout Project and was planted in conjunction with ClearWater's 2008 Beatty Memorial Arbor Day Celebration. Evan successfully coordinated the planting of 225 hardwood trees along Spring Creek.

Nearly 20 volunteers from Blue Mountain Quality Resources, Inc. also volunteered as part of a company volunteer service day and planted approximately 600 native shrubs grown by ClearWater's own Growing Native plant propagation program.

The second phase is being planted this fall as part of Kyle Surovec's Eagle Scout Project. Kyle is coordinating the planting of 125 hardwood trees along Spring Creek.

The Penn State Sheep Farm Riparian Restoration Project was made possible through the donated services and generous support from Penn State Office of Physical Plant, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences Farm Services, Penn State Horticulture Department, Penn State School of Forest Resources, PA Fish and Boat Commission, PA Department of Environmental Protection, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Centre County Conservation District, Spring Creek

Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Art Gover, Evan Gover, Kyle Surovec, and nearly 75 volunteers!

The Sheep Farm Restoration Project will be completed in summer 2009 after the final instream fish habitat enhancement structures are installed by PA Fish and Boat Commission.

MCCOY DAM UPDATE

The first phase of the instream restoration effort at the former McCoy Dam site was completed in August by PA Fish and Boat Commission and Trout Unlimited volunteers.

These fish habitat enhancement structures not only diversify instream habitat, but they also help to stabilize the newly established streambanks.

Remaining restoration activities at the former McCoy Dam site include construction of additional instream structures, planting the riparian buffer, and installation of interpretive signs. These activities will be completed by ClearWater Conservancy and its partners in 2009.

ELKS CLUB INTERPRETIVE PANELS INSTALLED

Three interpretive panels were created by ClearWater Conservancy and installed at the State College Elks County Club to highlight ClearWater's riparian restoration projects at the course, just in time for the Otto's Golf-Fest.

Members of the Club and their visitors will now be able to learn about the importance of riparian buffers while they play a round of golf.

A big thanks to one of our newest volunteers, Alex Novak, for generously donating his time and creative talents to this project!

2007 State of the Water Resources in the Spring Creek Watershed: *The Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy*

By **Bob Carline**, Chair of the Spring Creek Watershed
Water Resources Monitoring Project



During the past few years, we have selected a water quality theme for our annual report. In so doing, we have tried to better inform our constituents on these vital issues and show how our monitoring project relates to contemporary water resource challenges in the Spring Creek Watershed. Judging from the responses of our readers, this approach seems to have been successful.

We chose the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy for this year's theme, because the current state of the Chesapeake Bay is a national tragedy, and because the Tributary Strategy is well intentioned, but complex.

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary on the east coast and was once the most productive one. Owing to the cumulative effects of pollution from Colonial times to present, the production of finfish and shellfish has plummeted to nearly inconsequential levels. Recovery of the Bay is predicated on the reduction of nutrient pollution – the goal of the Tributary Strategy.

Nitrogen and phosphorus, the nutrients of concern, enter our waterways via (1) point sources such as wastewater treatment plants and industrial discharges; and (2) non-point sources such as runoff from urbanized areas, suburban developments, and agricultural operations. Nearly all point sources are regulated through a permit system administered by the Department of Environmental Protection.

The Tributary Strategy consists of five elements designed to reduce nutrient pollution; the sixth element relates to fish passage. Perhaps the most stringent regulation is the imposition of a maximum permissible total load of nutrients that can be discharged by wastewater treatment facilities and other industries. While these permitted discharges can be readily regulated, we need to recognize that they represent only 19% of the total load of nitrogen entering the Chesapeake Bay and 22% of the phosphorus. Hence, to achieve substantial reductions in nutrient pollution, non-point sources must be addressed.

As the Tributary Strategy unfolds, many new questions will emerge. For example, how well are new regulations working and how can nutrient pollution be further reduced? Our water monitoring program has been in place for about 10 years, and we have good measures of nutrient output from the watershed. Perhaps more importantly, we will be able to track future changes in nutrient output and provide data needed to better manage our watershed.

The future of our monitoring program depends upon strong local support. As new information needs emerge, the Water Resources Monitoring Project will continue to respond to these needs.

This report is now available online at http://www.clearwaterconservancy.org/CWC%20files/2007_WRMP_Annual_Report_10082008.pdf or in hard-copy format from the Water Resources Monitoring Project through the ClearWater Conservancy office at 237-0400.

Special thanks to the members of the Spring Creek Water Resources Monitoring Project Committee: Bob Carline, Bert Lavan, Jason Brown, Susan Buda, Hunter Carrick, Ann Donovan, Rebecca Dunlap, Larry Fennessey, Todd Giddings, James Hamlett, Mark Ralston, Kristen Saacke-Blunk, John Sengle, David Smith, Geoffrey Smith, Rick Wardrop, Doug Weikel, and Dave Yoxheimer.

The Nittany Valley Conservation Action Plan: Conservation *Forward*

Spotlight on Scotia Barrens and the Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor Acquisition

ClearWater Conservancy is working with the community to complete a critical conservation project. A pocket of ecological treasures, the Scotia Barrens is an exceptional ecosystem of rare natural community types. Many of the wildlife species which call the Scotia Barrens home would disappear from the region if the barrens habitat were lost. Because of its close proximity to the growing community of State College, residential development threatens to consume large pockets of this rare habitat and isolate it from other nearby nature areas. To balance this growth and to maintain our community's sense of place, ClearWater Conservancy has initiated the *Scotia Barrens Conservation Project* to prevent isolation of Scotia Barrens from encroaching development, to increase the size of protected barrens habitat, and to educate the community about this valuable resource.



Katie Ombalski

Pink lady's slipper

As part of the larger *Scotia Barrens Conservation Project*, we are working to maintain natural connections between Scotia Barrens and Tussey and Bald Eagle Mountains. Significant development pressure from the north imminently threatens to isolate the Barrens from the large forested tracts of Bald Eagle Mountain, itself an important natural resource. Even though there appears to be open space remaining as one makes the drive from Route 322 west along Route 550 towards Stormstown, the fact is that future developments are on the books for all but a sliver between Scotia Barrens and the ridge.

Ecological isolation of Scotia Barrens threatens viable populations of wildlife, including many neotropical bird species. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Western Pennsylvania

Conservancy, Audubon Pennsylvania, and Partners-in-Flight, connections between Scotia Barrens and Bald Eagle Mountain must be maintained to allow wildlife populations to flourish within Scotia Barrens.

Time is of the essence. There remains only one potential wildlife corridor connecting Scotia Barrens with Bald Eagle Mountain. ClearWater recognized this opportunity and has been working diligently over the past several years to proactively lay the foundations for land acquisitions to ensure that this wildlife corridor is maintained and protected. ClearWater Conservancy now has the opportunity to protect 106 acres of this last wildlife corridor through a combination of land purchase and the Halfmoon Township Open Space Preservation Program through the lease of development rights. Protection of this 106-acre property is key to protecting two additional adjacent properties.



Matt Dallos

Scrub oak

Earlier this year, ClearWater Conservancy applied for and received \$367,000 in matching funds from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. More recently, in June, Halfmoon Township amended its Open Space Preservation Program, allowing the Township to contribute up to an additional \$200,000 to the project. This leaves \$170,000 for ClearWater to raise to get this project done. We are three quarters of the way to our goal. Now, we need your help. Please make a pledge using the attached envelope today. We need you to commit to protecting Scotia Barrens and keeping this last potential wildlife corridor open for the free flow of wildlife to maintain healthy populations within Scotia Barrens.



Matt Dallos

Aspen, pitch pine, and scrub oak are key indicators of the unique barrens plant community. This distinctive shrub-scrub habitat hosts several extremely rare species, including golden-winged warbler, Appalachian cottontail, barrens buckmoth, and northeastern bulrush and has been recognized as an Important Bird Area by Pennsylvania Audubon, an Important Mammal Area by the National Wildlife Federation, and as a Biological Diversity Area by the Centre County Natural Heritage Inventory conducted by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. The Barrens also provide a haven for rare insects, pool-dependent amphibians, and large numbers of neotropical songbirds.

For more information about this project, please contact Bill Hilshey at 237-0400 or bill@clearwaterconservancy.org. ClearWater staff are eager to meet with interested donors to describe the project and its benefits in greater detail.

With your help, ClearWater is moving Conservation *Forward*...

Spring Creek Day Family Festival



photos by Katie Layman, PR intern



To view the entire event program, visit www.clearwaterconservancy.org/springcreekday.htm.



10th Annual For the Love of Art & Chocolate

Mark your calendars now for ClearWater's classic benefit to support natural resource conservation. The flavor-filled event includes a vast array of chocolates and desserts as well as a silent auction of nature-inspired artwork. Guests can taste all of the chocolate they please while they enjoy and bid on the talented artists' work.

For the Love of Art & Chocolate will be held at The Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel on Friday, January 23, 2009. Tickets are \$30 each and can be purchased at 237-0400 or sarah@clearwaterconservancy.org. Raffle tickets may also be purchased for \$10 each for a 10' x 5' Persian Rug donated by Desert Rug Company or a commissioned oil painting of the Fisher Farm donated by artist Jennifer Kane. The drawing for both of these special items will take place at the event on January 23.

Everyone in the community is welcome to attend, enjoy, and support ClearWater Conservancy! Corporate sponsorships are also now available. If interested in this promotion opportunity for your business, contact Jennifer at 237-0400 or jennifer@clearwaterconservancy.org.

Join us for the ClearWater Conservancy Annual Meeting

At 6pm on Tuesday, November 18 ClearWater Conservancy will hold its annual meeting. Following a cocktail buffet, we will elect the 2009 Board of Directors, showcase some special volunteers, commend several other community groups for their conservation accomplishments, award our Don Hamer Leadership Award and Barbara Fisher Volunteer of the Year Award to two very deserving individuals, offer a silent auction, and conclude with a presentation by our special guest, Dr. Thomas Serfass. Dr. Serfass is a Professor of Wildlife

Ecology at Frostburg State University and will share the story of the Pennsylvania River Otter Restoration Project. To attend the annual meeting, please RSVP to Sarah by Friday, November 7 at 237-0400. Tickets are \$25.



Joining Board incumbents Dan Crust, Bob Donaldson, Kelleann Foster, and

Dave Sweetland on the slate of candidates will be four new nominees: Michael Allen, Bill James, Holly May, and Andy Warner. From their bios, their varied experiences are evident. But getting to know each of them personally has revealed passion and energy that will be equally important to ClearWater Conservancy as we navigate these uncertain economic times and focus the community's attention on protecting the most important land and water resources in central PA through the Nittany Valley Conservation Action Plan.

ANDY WARNER has more than 20 years of experience working on river conservation and environmental issues. For the past nine years, Andy has worked for The Nature Conservancy's Global Freshwater Initiative, providing technical and policy support to dozens of Conservancy river projects across the United States, Asia, Latin America, and Africa. He has previous experience working on watershed restoration at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and as an environmental consultant to state and federal government agencies. Andy has lived with his wife and two daughters in Centre County for the past eight years and enjoys hiking, running, and cycling the woods around State College as well as paddling the region's many rivers and streams.

MICHAEL ALLEN joined Kish Bank in January 2008 as Executive Vice President and Regional Market Manager, responsible for overall growth of the bank in the Centre County region. Allen, who has worked in banking for over 20 years, was previously Executive

Vice President and Head of Banking for Mercantile County Bank, a \$1 billion community bank located in Bel Air, Maryland. He is a native of Lewisburg, PA, a Penn State alumnus, and has been active in a number of community charitable and economic development organizations. He currently resides in Pleasant Gap with his wife and daughters, and his son is a student at Penn State.

HOLLY MAY has served as a natural resource specialist at the nonprofit, state and national levels. After earning a degree from the Warnell School of Forest Resources at The University of Georgia, Holly worked for the Wildlife Habitat Council in Silver Spring, MD. She later worked on the Eastern Shore as a forester and GIS specialist for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Forest Service. Then, as a wildlife biologist focused on land and water conservation for the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, she worked out of Hollidaysburg, PA. Holly is currently engaged as a contract biologist for the Wildlife Habitat Council. She lives in Park

Forest with her husband Erich and their son Henry, who is expecting a little brother in January.

WILLIAM JAMES has been Executive Director of Foxdale Village, a Quaker-directed not for profit continuing care retirement community located in State College, since September 2000. Bill has been actively involved in community service since moving to State College with his wife Sally and two of their four sons. He is presently board chair for Friends Services for the Aging, a national organization representing Quaker organizations that provide services for older adults. Other community service includes membership on the boards of directors for State College Area YMCA and Sunrise Rotary Club, Leadership Centre County Alumni Campaign Committee, co-chair (with wife Sally) of the State College March of Dimes March for Babies, Chefs on Stage Event Committee, Centre County Community Foundation Projects Committee, Special Olympics, Centre County Affordable Housing Coalition Workforce Housing Committee, and United Way Day of Caring.



A NOTE FROM JENNIFER

Hello Friends...

This time I'd like to feature a new partnership that ClearWater is just starting to develop with the non-profit Keystone Conservation Trust. KCF administers a tool called the Legacy Property Fund, which was created to boost conservation donations, working with homeowners at the time they sell their property. This allows home sellers to give an important gift to ClearWater Conservancy and to do so at no cost to themselves.

The Legacy Property Fund generates philanthropic gifts out of standard property sales transactions, enabling sellers to become major donors at no cost. The gift transaction provides an income tax deduction and, analogous to donations of appreciated securities, reduces capital gains taxes. The choice is the seller's: pay more in taxes or create a meaningful gift for ClearWater Conservancy.

In addition to working with nonprofits to boost private donations, KCT also operates a land conservation fund, raising the profile of exemplary conservation projects with prospective donors. ClearWater Conservancy is looking to use this fundraising technique to raise additional funds for the protection of the Scotia Barrens. One key project in the Scotia Barrens, the Halfmoon Wildlife Corridor, which is described further on page 8 of this newsletter, is also featured online on KCT's website, www.keystoneconservation.org.

Private contributions can be essential to the success of such projects, closing funding shortfalls that slow the completion of even the highest priority projects. We hope the Legacy Property Fund will be a source of new gifts to ClearWater Conservancy in the months to come. If you know of any friends who will soon be selling their homes, let them know about this important new opportunity. Or if you are about to sell your own home, consider using LPF and in the process become an important contributor to our Campaign for Conservation. Call us and we can tell you more.

In Her Own Words

ClearWater Founder and Board Member Reflects on Protecting Her Land

By Barbara Fisher

A conservation easement is a puzzle waiting to be solved, is enhanced by knowledgeable mentors, and takes lots of people who are dedicated, creative and persevering. We have been so blessed because we had all three topped off by the newly formed partnership between the Heritage Conservancy and ClearWater.

It's not just about a landowner's contribution. It's the gift of time and effort. Jeff Marshall and Bill Hilshey valiantly led us through a maze of hurdles, giving us continual encouragement, direction, and moral support. Always patient and sensitive to our needs, no question was unimportant. And there were many questions!

We were assisted by the outstanding help of ClearWater's Land Conservation and Stewardship Committee, our Patton Township Manager, Doug Erickson, and Zoning Officer, Ken Soder, our landscape architect, Dan Jones, our trusted accountant, Harry Sickler, and attorneys Terry Williams, Dan Paci, and Steve Moyer.

Now that the conservation easement is registered in the courthouse, it has become a part of the colorful history of this land which began more than 5,000 years ago, as evidenced by spear tips found on the site. In the 1790s it was called "Blooming Spring Garden". The house we live in today was built somewhere between 1840 and 1860. It's known to have ghosts that graciously greet everyone who enters!

This conservation easement is only one small step in an ongoing journey we all need to make in helping cherish our valley's landscape.

ClearWater Conservancy beckons every one of us to help link the corridors, guard the ridges and recharge areas, and protect the wildlife habitat for the generations that follow.

Someone recently sent me this quote by Marianne Wilson, and it seems most appropriate as we join together to protect the things that matter most in our community:

"In every community there is work to be done; in every nation there are wounds to heal; in every heart there is the power to do it."

OUR MISSION

The mission of the ClearWater Conservancy is to promote conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania through land protection, water resources protection, and environmental outreach to the community.

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**deceased*

Fall 2008

ClearWater Conservancy is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation under Section 501(c)3 of the I.R.S. Code. Donations are tax-deductible. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained from the PA Department of State by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, (800) 732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Thank you for your support!



Stan Crilly

Everyone Working Together to Conserve Natural Beauty
and the Environment in the Heart of Pennsylvania

ClearWater Conservancy

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