



MEHOOPANY CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

P. O. Box 73 Mehoopany, PA 18629

Spring 2012 Newsletter

WINDY VALLEY PROJECT UPDATE

In February, the Department of Environmental Protection announced that the Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association was the recipient of a Growing Greener grant in the amount of \$661,860. This will enable the Association to complete the next phase of the Windy Valley Project. A request has been made for release of upfront money. In the meantime, the Association will begin to stockpile rock in preparation and the bidding process will begin. It is expected that work will begin in mid-June.

TROUT DAY

Trout Day will be held this year on April 14. Please stop by the Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association's information booth on the opening day of trout season. Despite the devastating flooding of August and September 2011, the booth will be set up on the North Branch at Forkston Four Corners. Coffee, snacks, lunch items, T-shirts, caps, etc. will be available for purchase. Association members will be there to answer questions, greet you, and listen to your stories. This is also a chance to join or to renew your membership. Plan to stop by between 7 a.m. and noon.



Watershed Association Information Booth



The Four Corners As Flood Water Recedes

AUGUST AND SEPTEMBER FLOODS

The flooding of January 2010 was bad but it didn't begin to compare with the flooding of August and September of 2011. The area was hit by the remnants of Hurricane Irene, Tropical Storm Lee, and a third weather "anomaly". But it all boiled down to a lot of rain resulting in flooding beyond anyone's recollection.

We were very fortunate that no lives were lost but some people had to be air-lifted to safety and the resultant damage to homes and roads and the gravel bars, fallen trees, and rocks left behind mean that it will likely be years before things return to "normal" and that will be a "new normal."



Windy Valley Road sustained heavy damage



A zip line carried supplies to isolated residents



The newest bridge didn't make it; nor did its first temporary replacement



A few years ago, this was a corn field

The area was declared a disaster area and became eligible for FEMA and PEMA funds. But there's a lot of red tape and monies are slow in coming. However, recovery efforts are underway.

Teams are working to clean streams and creeks of the many trees brought down by the floods. The Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission is working with CareerLink and TREHAB to accomplish two goals: putting people to work and clearing the waterways of felled trees. Crews are trained in chain saw safety, CRP, First Aid, and OSHA courses. They saw trees into smaller pieces to either be claimed by landowners or washed down stream. It's a good start to preventing further damage from flooding but much more remains to be done.

CRUISING THE WATERSHED

What a thrill to look skyward and see a bald eagle fly overhead. There are now many reports of sightings of the magnificent bird not only along the Susquehanna River, but also along Mehoopany Creek and in other locations in the watershed. The Pennsylvania Game Commission began a seven year restoration program in the early 1980's. At that time, there were only three nests in the Commonwealth. By 2011, 203 nests were identified throughout a 50 county area. Bald eagles were removed from the endangered specials list in 2007. Currently, they are classified as threatened. For more information, visit the Game Commission website at www.pgc.state.pa.us and connect to wildlife.

The Watershed Association has interests in a variety of projects within the Watershed area. In late winter, six members joined with Conservation Coalition members from the Quality Deer Management Association and the Turkey Federation to prune apple trees. Putting chain saws and lopping shears to good use, they cut off dead branches. They also pulled multiflora rose from the trees, a challenging and "thorny" job. The work was done in what used to be an apple orchard between Somers Brook and Becker Brook on the Windy Valley side of the Mehoopany Creek.



The hardy group of volunteers who pruned apple trees

Beware of the pretty pink flowers one sees along creeks, ponds, and road side ditches. Beware of the sweet smelling shrubs one smells in the early spring. Beware of those bamboo bushes with the white flowers along the rivers and streams. The purple loosestrife, the autumn olive, and the Japanese Knotweed are among a long list of "exotic aliens", or as we know them, invasive plants.

An invasive plant is an aggressive plant that replaces valuable native plants that provide nesting sites, shelter, and food for wildlife while in itself having no value for wildlife. Many invasive can be controlled by pulling out the young plants, digging out all roots, cutting the seed heads. However, all must be bagged and destroyed. An exception is Japanese Knotweed. It has been reported that only an herbicide will kill this hardy plant. Round-up sprayed on it at its mature growth in mid-August and early September will kill it. It also works well to cut it back twice by July and by late summer when it has reached maturity, and then spray it. It's a tough one to eradicate!

MARCELLUS SHALE & THE WATERSHED, WHAT'S UP?

Marcellus Shale natural gas development continues to move along within the Mehoopany Creek Watershed. Well operators have drilled and fracked numerous wells located within Wyoming, Sullivan, and Bradford Counties in the last year. Chesapeake Energy and Chief Oil and Gas continue to be the well operators within the Watershed. We are beginning to see gathering lines and waterlines permitted, as well as new impoundment infrastructures built.

The Commonwealth continues to move forward with new regulations and policies that will ensure that all watersheds are adequately protected. Most recently, the Department of Environmental Protection closed the public comment period for both the new policy and permits related to erosion and sedimentation issues. The MCWA participated by submitting a public comment in both periods. The proposed permit will, among other provisions, eliminate the expedited review process for projects that would discharge into EV (Exceptional Value) and HQ (High Quality) waters. The South Branch of Mehoopany Creek is currently designated as an HQ stream.

Act 13 of 2012 provides for a new wellhead setback of 300 feet from a spring, stream, body of water, or wetland greater than one acre in size. The setback provides additional protection along with the existing setback of 100 feet from the edge of the well pad to these same surface waters. The Act also provides for a 750 foot setback regarding the storage of hazardous chemicals and materials used or intended to be used within those same surface water areas where DEP may require additional storage measures. These surface water setbacks pertain to waters noted on the most recent USGS quad maps.

Act 13 also adopted the Federal corrosion control regulations for all classes of gathering lines. This is very important for Watershed residents and the many stream and wetland crossings our area will experience in upcoming years. According to the Office of Pipeline Safety, 25.6% of all incidents during the 2002-2003 period were the result of corrosion.

There are new flood plain restrictions depending on the activity and methods employed on the particular drilling site.

If you are interested in Marcellus Shale development news within the Watershed, feel free to contact Emily Krafjack at daisyodella@yahoo.com.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Trout Day	April 14, 2012
Liming	Spring and Fall 2012
Litter pick-up	Spring and Fall 2012 on Windy Valley Road
Water monitoring	Year-round, weather permitting

Additional help is needed and welcome. If you would like to volunteer to assist with any of these projects, or would like additional information, please contact Rusty Bennett at 570-833-4332.

MEHOOPANY CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

President, Rusty Bennett
Vice-President, Dennis Mingus
Treasurer, Dave Krafjack
Secretary, Marilyn Stark

Meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month (except December) at 7 p.m. in the Mehoopany Township Municipal Building. Meetings are open to the general public.

Many thanks to Marilyn Stark and Emily Krafjack for contributing to this edition.