

Paxton Creek Watershed and Education Association

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Can You Identify where or when this photo was taken?

E-mail us at info@paxtoncreek.org

Paxton Creek Watershed Joins PA Conservation Rivers Registry

In late fall 2010, Paxton Creek watershed was listed on the PA Rivers Registry. This designation, by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, resulted from the approval of the Paxton Creek Rivers Conservation Plan, and local support (four watershed municipalities & Dauphin County signed the Plan). This Registry status should qualify PCWEA for grant proposals for development (e.g., park studies, creek access points), implementation (e.g., buffers, water trail feasibility studies), and acquisition (e.g., lands, conservation easements).

PCWEA, Again, Set for Wildwood Wetlands Festival on April 30

Almost a spring tradition is participation by PCWEAers in the Wildwood Wetlands Festival, on April 30 at Olewine Nature Center and Wildwood Park in Harrisburg. During the 8 am – 4 pm event, PCWEAer Bryan Genesse will assist at an aquatic critters exhibit, while other watershed association members will display Association materials, and play *Wetland Metaphors* with children. Other activities include numerous walks on the trails and Delta Boardwalk, with talks in the classrooms. The latter include lectures by Kim Van Fleet (bird migrations), Nate McKelvie (reptiles & amphibians), long-time Wildwood supporter Eugene Wingert (vernal ponds for three seasons), Dan Mummert (barn owl conservation), and ZooAmerica (Native PA animals). The day's diversions will also feature bird banding, turtle tagging, food and native plant sales, live music by Tom Jolin, and exhibits by other environmental organizations.

More information is available at www.wildwoodlake.org

Visit the PCWEA Website At:

www.paxtoncreek.org

Midwinter Macros Topic: Bugs Invasive Species

Midwinter Macros, an introduction to water bugs (aquatic macroinvertebrates) had an invasive species theme for HACC students, PCWEAers, and the community on February 23 at HACC Wildwood Campus. Penn State graduate student Sara Giese joined entomologist David Rebeck, and biologist/PCWEAer Kevin Kelly of the PA Dept. of Environmental Protection in (1) discussing foreign species that have become residents in PA waterways with their potential response to climate change, (2) viewing features about groups of bugs, and (3) helping participants inspect them. Five PCWEA members also attended the workshop, Bryan Genesse, Jane Webster, Rob Davis, Gary Smith, and Rhonda Hakundy-Jones.

Genesse displayed fishing flies of critters that he had made. Professor Drannon Buskirk, Jr. pointed out the bugs' place in PA biodiversity, and called attention to a blind, shrimp-like creature -- cave or rock gap dweller (*Stygobromus* sp) -- found by Kelly and Rebeck in Paxton Creek years ago in Wildwood Park.

Can Builders & Municipalities Make Paxton Creek 'Invisible'?

by E. Drannon Buskirk, Jr.

In a front page story (1/29/2011) the *Patriot-News* reported on a claim by PA builders that actions by them & municipalities led to removal of Paxton Creek from a list of impaired streams by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This is remarkable, since 17 miles (about 1/3) of Paxton Creek tributaries, including a reach with 28 old combined sewers in the 'Burg, were found impaired over & over in decades of monitoring by the DEP, and 5 other government agencies at all levels. Apparently the DEP and the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) now consider Paxton Creek "no longer impaired," done with strokes of pens (magic wands that just look like pens?), so say the builders. How did all this come about? Almost 2 years ago the USEPA issued a TMDL - Total Maximum Daily Load (of pollutants) for Paxton Creek, directing the 6 watershed municipalities to decrease sediment and phosphorus, caused by practices of people in the watershed, as transported by excessive stormwater runoff. The latter is from vast expanses of impervious surface (roofs, parking lots, 400 miles of roads) constructed by builders, and allowed/required in municipal ordinances (up to 75% impervious surface in commercial areas). Almost immediately after the TMDL was issued the municipalities, and builders brought a lawsuit against the USEPA. Consultants probably advised them (wrongly) that the TMDL might cost \$100+ millions for a treatment plant on the stream, and so the litigants hammered away at the agencies to get relief, & avoid responsibilities for pollution, flooding, and other miseries from excessive pollution and growing runoff mostly from conventional developments. The builders say the science underlying the TMDL is weak, but the field studies supporting impairment remain strong. So, the parties may have reached an agreement, where the creek is not listed as impaired, and the municipalities & builders think they can ignore the TMDL because Paxton Creek is no longer listed (maybe, officially OK?) Does Paxton Creek suddenly become visible again only then the TMDL is enforced? "Not so," says someone who visited a local combined sewer. "I can still smell it (the odor of sewage)," she said. Could it possibly be more than sewage, with also, a tiny whiff of corruption? "No, it is a big whiff," she said about the "invisible" creek.
[The next newsletters will discuss issue distortions, & how the TMDL can be achieved at low cost]

Education Event Features Doug Tallamy - Author & Naturalist

by Bryan Genesse

Entomologist and ecologist Doug Tallamy spoke about his book, [Bringing Nature Home: How You Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants](#) on April 14 at Lower Dauphin High School, Hummelstown. At the talk, Tallamy discussed the impacts of civilization on land and wildlife around homes. Three decades of research led him to a "jaw-dropping wakeup call" (his reference to suitable habitats for wildlife attractions), which he details in his book. Before and after the presentation, Tallamy talked with fans, and signed his book. PCWEA had a display, and greeted new members of the Andrew Ohrman family.

PCWEA Annual Meeting

On March 31, PCWEA members and Association Partners gathered for the PCWEA annual meeting. We reviewed activities of the past year and discussed upcoming events. Then, with an observance that has become popular, we watched as Adele Sims marked the locations of two new watershed improvement projects on the PCWEA relief map.

Ultimately, the relief map will be displayed at the PA Farm Show Complex as part of the facility's sustainability display. The display will include a changeable panel which provides Best Management Practice (BMP) project numbers coincident with reference numbers on the map. It will be located in the new Farm Show lobby, near information about the wind turbine, currently operating at the facility.

Pat Kerwin, Executive Director of the Farm Show joined us at our meeting and explained his plans for the map and future energy saving plans for the building.

PCWEA membership chairman, Gary Smith, shared information from an ongoing membership drive. Then, investiture of Rhonda Hakundy-Jones, as president of the Association, was celebrated by an infamous yoking ceremony and a toast by Dorothy Grimm.

PCWEA Lifetime Members: Frank & Judy Beskid, E. Drannon Buskirk, Jr., R.D., Tom Embich, Jan Fisher, Fred Heagy, Kevin Kelly, Joe Link, David Sheridan, and Arlen Taylor.