

# SOMERSET COUNTY CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

SPRING / SUMMER 2015

A CHARITABLE TRUST



## NEW SUMMER INTERNSHIP

**By Andy McGann**

This summer the Conservancy is working with a local college student, Jacob Baer, on an 150-hour internship for course credit at UPJ. The internship is required as part of his B.A. in Environmental Studies and, given that he is receiving course credit, the position must be unpaid. (Although we won't allow him to accrue expenses on our behalf.)

At the last board meeting, Dave Mankamyer, Jim Moses, Len Lichvar, and others provided input as to what projects and what work Jacob could do that would be genuinely helpful to us, and that —when all is said and done— we would both have something to show for it. Jacob is a native of Berlin, and he has a strong resume for such a young person, including cartography and geographic information systems, in addition to work experience with water quality sampling and data analysis.

To summarize the proposed internship project, the final product will be a “white paper” report that outlines the main environmental concerns in Somerset County, the priorities of the Somerset County Conservancy, and the historical context of these environmental issues in the County. When completed, we will have a touchstone document that we can publish on our website, to be publicly available. Dave Mankamyer, Jim Moses, Len Lichvar, and I volunteered to work with Jacob so that he can prepare a solid and thorough report, as well as visit our various work sites in the County.

I am especially fond of the idea that this project will transfer some of the knowledge and experiences of our longest-serving and most dedicated conservationists and preserve our history, to be passed along to future generations. If anyone else would like to volunteer to be involved with this project, I would be very happy to accept your contributions. The Conservancy looks not only to our past, but also to our future, and I am glad to welcome Jacob's efforts. Please join me in thanking him.

### In this issue:

A Message From Your President	2	Kimberly Run Natural Area Walking Trails	6
Somerset Lake Action Committee Update	3	Larimer Township Land	8
Educational Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC)	4	Big Day of Birding	9
Give a 'Dam' Fundraiser	5		

## **A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT**

**By Andy McGann**

This past December, I was elected to the position of President of the Somerset County Conservancy. After the initial excitement of the appointment, I quickly realized that I have some enormous shoes to fill, given the tremendous example set by my predecessor, Jim Moses! Thankfully, Jim remains extremely active and his guidance and mentorship are a blessing. Additionally, we are lucky to have a talented and dedicated Board of Directors. This position is a totally new experience for me, and I appreciate all of the patience, guidance and help that I am getting from everyone. I am looking forward to getting to know all of our members as we move forward together.

Please allow me to briefly introduce myself. I grew up in York, PA, where I was keenly interested in nature from a very early age. My primary interest in the outdoors has always been bird-related, but I was lucky enough to gain a well-rounded education by participating in the county Envirothon extracurricular program from 4th through 12th grades. The Envirothon program, for those who aren't familiar, covers the topics of wildlife, forestry, aquatics, soils and current events. I can still identify most of the trees I learned back in middle school!

I've been active in Pennsylvania's birding community before I was old enough to drive, and I began my environmental career working for Audubon Pennsylvania during high school. After graduating, I attended Villanova University and earned a B.S. in Biology as well as an Environmental Studies Concentration. At Villanova, I conducted research on Black-capped and Carolina Chickadees and interactions between the two species, including hybridization. During college, I spent my summers working biology "field jobs," taking me to far-flung projects in northern Vermont and the Panhandle of Idaho. But I returned to the Commonwealth for the 2nd Pennsylvania Breeding Bird Atlas project. After college, I completed an internship with the Ned Smith Center for Nature & Art, capturing and banding Northern Saw-whet Owls.

Next, I moved to southern Virginia to complete an M.S. in Biology at the College of William and Mary. My thesis research examined the winter foraging ecology of Rusty Blackbirds, a declining species of conservation concern. During the summers, I also contributed to field studies of how toxic mercury pollution moves through the food web from insects to birds. That study examined the long-lasting effects of a historic spill into the South River of the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. After graduate school, I spent some time working for environmental consulting firms in Virginia, Pennsylvania and Nebraska.

Currently, I work for SCC board member Mike Lanzone at Cellular Tracking Technologies. Mike and CTT are what brought me to Somerset, and it was he who first invited me to get involved with the Conservancy. I started as a member of the Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) and soon after got involved with the SCC board. I'm now in my third year in Somerset County, and this has been a fantastic chapter in my life. The County is blessed with natural resources, and thankfully also an active group of conservationists. I am looking forward to seeing the fruits of our continuing labor, especially the resuscitation of Somerset Lake. Thank you for all of your support!



Somerset County Conservancy  
Box 241  
Somerset, PA 15501

Find us on the web at:  
[www.somersetcountyconservancy.org](http://www.somersetcountyconservancy.org)

## **SOMERSET LAKE ACTION COMMITTEE UPDATE**

**APRIL 2015**

**By Jeff Payne**

Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC) has been very busy since last fall. There have been numerous meetings, fundraisers, letters written, website updates and presentations delivered. But progress is being made. We were challenged to raise \$100,000 locally towards the dam repair to show local support. With the offer of a \$50,000 challenge grant from the county, a press release, many letters and a well-attended webcast fundraiser, we met the goal! There have been over 130 donations from businesses, civic groups, conservation organizations and individuals. The local support has caught the attention of our politicians and, with tremendous support from Senators Stefano and Eichelberger and Representative Metzgar, we recently had the Majority and Minority Chairs of both the Senate and House Game and Fish Committees send a letter to the Governor requesting the release of previously approved Capital Budget money. If he agrees to release the money, the rest of the funding for the dam replacement should fall into place. Saving the lake is the first major goal of SLAC.

County Commissioners Vatauvuk, Betta, and Tokar-Ickes have all been very supportive of the second SLAC goal—the Somerset Lake Park idea. We are cautiously optimistic that we are close to getting a lease from the PA Fish and Boat Commission to Somerset County for the establishment of the Park. Presently SLAC is raising additional money to help jump start the Park. The plans include a 5 mile loop trail around the Park, picnic pavilions, improved docks, boat rentals and restrooms. There will be grants to help with some of these projects, but planning and matching money will be needed. We hope to raise at least an additional \$50,000 towards these efforts.

Meanwhile the waterfowl, eagles, gulls and herons are using Somerset Lake on their migration routes. The last weekend in March had 25 species of waterfowl, 3 types of gulls, many Great Blue Herons and several Bald Eagles enjoying the lake. Let us all hope that the stars align and we see the lake saved and improved!

Anyone wishing to make a donation can send it to PO Box 241, Somerset, PA 15501. Alternatively, you can visit the [somersetconservancy.org](http://somersetconservancy.org) website and follow the SLAC links to make an electronic donation.

# EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT TAX CREDIT PROGRAM (EITC)

By Pam Diesel



Somerset County Conservancy is an eligible entity for participation with the Educational Improvement Tax Credit program (EITC). This program is your opportunity to benefit your business while helping your community.

EITC is a PA state program that provides businesses with a 75% tax credit for donation to a non-profit organizational scholarship or educational improvement project. The tax credit increases to 90% if the business commits to making the same donation for two consecutive years. Tax credits can be applied against the liability of the business for the tax year the contribution was made.

Somerset County Conservancy's educational program has been approved again this year. SCC's education program is centered at Kimberly Run Natural Area (KRNA) with an emphasis on stream analysis. KRNA is able to provide a specialized area to enhance the curriculum of the local public schools. Our area provides access to a stream for analysis. Students can complete chemical analysis such as pH, dissolved oxygen levels, alkalinity, acidity, iron levels, etc. The students can also judge stream health by doing a stream health index, collecting and identifying macro invertebrates. These organisms can be pollution tolerant, pollution sensitive or pollution intolerant.

With last year's donation a bay of the garage was converted into a classroom with lights, tables and microscopes for student use. Nets and chemical test kits are available for student use. New paint, wiring, and tables were constructed to complete the renovations.

PA businesses can begin applying for EITC credits through PA Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) electronic single application system. The business application guide ([http://newpa.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OSTC-EITC\\_handbook2014.pfd](http://newpa.com/sites/default/files/uploads/OSTC-EITC_handbook2014.pfd)) explains the process of applying.

Last year biology students from Somerset Area Senior High School used the facility in the spring and fall. Other school districts are invited to use KRNA. Please contact Pam Diesel at Somerset County Conservancy, PO Box 241, Somerset, PA 15501 for more information.





# Give a 'Dam' Fundraiser

For the benefit of Somerset Lake Park

On **June 19th** at **The Hayloft** we will be hosting a *rocking good* time to raise funds for the Somerset Lake Dam and Somerset Lake Park!

There will be *live bands* performing  
Food vendors and alcoholic refreshments on site

Ticket sales for the event will begin May 1<sup>st</sup>.  
Follow us on FB > Give a DAM fundraiser for Somerset Lake Park

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*There are many ways you can support **this** great cause!*

## Basket Donation

In addition to music and good times, we will be holding a **basket party** as part of the event. If your business would like to be a part of the basket party, please complete the information below.

\_\_\_\_ I would like to donate a basket - I will get my basket to my contact person by: \_\_\_\_\_ Basket Value: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ I would like you to create a basket for me/my business – I will provide funds for the basket and marketing materials.

## Sponsorship / Other Donation

If you would like to **sponsor** the event another way or make a direct **donation**, please complete the information below.

\_\_\_\_ Gold sponsor      \$250  
\_\_\_\_ Silver sponsor    \$100  
\_\_\_\_ Bronze sponsor    \$50

\_\_\_\_ I would like to make a donation directly to Somerset Lake Action Committee

*\*Receipts will be provided for all donations for your accounting purposes.*

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person: \_\_\_\_\_

Please submit registration form with check payable to "Give a Dam Fund." If you have any questions, or would like more information, please contact:

Cassie Moon [First Commonwealth Bank]  
814 279 1259  
2040 North Center Avenue, Somerset, PA 15501  
Email: cmoon@fcbanking.com



The walking trails have become quite popular, as evidenced by the number of walking sticks that are accumulating at the Kiosk. When we opened the walking trails in the Fall of 2012, we were optimistic that trail use would become a “destination place” for anyone wanting to stretch their legs, walk a dog or just get some exercise. That’s exactly what is happening in the warm weather months, and in winter snowshoeing and cross country skiing are popular.

There are almost four miles of well marked trails to choose from. They range from one-half mile to about three miles in length and are marked with rectangular Blue or White vinyl blaze markers that are visible from both directions so it doesn't matter what direction you are walking. There are strategically placed benches and shelters along the trails as well as bridges over Kimberly Run. In the coming months some additional trails are planned as well as improvements to existing trails. The improvements to the trail surface will help to eliminate some of the muddy areas that show up each spring in the wet season.



## NATURAL AREA

## G TRAILS

## a Moses



The Red-Dog Trail (2/3 mile) is a wide, well maintained road bed with gentle grade changes and a cement bridge popular with folks that prefer a less challenging route. It is a dead-end trail, so you must go down and back over the same route. The Blue Trail (3/4 mile) is only slightly more challenging with some steps up to the wooden bridge and a few rocky areas to negotiate. The White Trail (2 miles) is more challenging with rocky and wet areas to cross. Both the Blue and the White Trails are continuous loop trails so there is very little backtracking on either of them.

**Come out and give these trails a try; we're sure you will enjoy them.**





## **LARIMER TOWNSHIP LAND**

**By Lester Brunell**

Jacqueline O. Sung, a long-time resident of New York City, is a native of Larimer Township. Ms. Sung owns a 67.686 tract of land there. In addition to being almost completely forested, the land may have important values; two designated biological diversity areas are nearby. The Keystone Clay Mine BDA and the Sand Spring Landscape Conservation Area (5,000 acres) are habitats for animal species of special concern. Ms. Sung's land could also be habitat used by those species.

Ms. Sung has maintained strong ties to her home area. Over the years, she has expressed much concern about environmental degradation that could take place near or on her land and elsewhere.

To act on her concerns, Ms. Sung has donated the mineral/gas rights of her land to our Conservancy. Her belief is that by doing so she will prevent the most likely causes for its degradation. She has chosen the most feasible way for her to provide a degree of protection. In addition to the mineral/gas rights, she has donated a generous sum of money to the Conservancy to support our long-term monitoring of activity on the land.

As fellow environmentalists, we are pleased to assist Ms. Sung in advancing our mutual concerns.

### **A FEW MORE PICS FROM KRNA**







## **2015 Somerset County Conservancy's** **BIG DAY OF BIRDING** **Fund Raising Event**

The Somerset County Conservancy is starting an annual fundraising event to raise monies for our annual expenses and needed projects. This year's proceeds will go towards replacing the roof on the cabin at Kimberly Run Natural Area.

Several teams of birders will fan out across Somerset County on May 9<sup>th</sup> (National Migratory Bird Day) from 5:00 am until 7:00 pm to count as many species of birds that they observe as possible. They will meet at the end of the day and count the total number of species found by all teams combined. The Conservancy will receive the pledged contributions from all team totals and the team with the most individual species counted will get the "BRAGGING RIGHTS for 2015."

We promise a good effort and exciting follow-up report. Can we count on your generous pledges to spur us on? Thank you in advance!!

\*\*\*\*\*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

I wish to pledge:

10 cents \_\_\_\_\_ 25 cents \_\_\_\_\_ 50 cents \_\_\_\_\_ \$1 \_\_\_\_\_ \$2 \_\_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_ per species

I prefer a straight pledge of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to support: Somerset County Conservancy

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Please send to: Somerset County Conservancy

P.O. Box 241

Somerset, PA 15501-0241

Somerset County Conservancy  
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Somerset, PA 15501

**HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!**

Pass this newsletter on to a friend and ask them to join.

Enclosed is: ☐ \$ 15

Individual Member

☐ \$ 25

Family Member

☐ \$ 75

Sustaining Member

☐ \$100

Patron, Club, Organization Member

☐ \$750

Lifetime Member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Somerset Co. Conservancy  
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SEND ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR  
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