



Somerset County Conservancy

A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org

Newsletter

Fall / Winter
2013

Update on Trails

Considerable trail work was accomplished by the Conservancy and trail usage is way up. The trail on the west side of Somerset Lake is approximately 1.3 miles long and starts from the parking lot just north of PA Fish and Boat Commission SW Headquarters on Wood Duck Rd. To build this trail the SCC first obtained all the necessary permits from PA F&B, obtained insurance and hired a contractor to brush out the basic trail. Several work parties of SCC members then grubbed out roots, trimmed branches, and placed some stepping logs. The last step was to place signage along the trail for people to follow. The initial contracting expenses were paid with part of the memorial funds from Retta Payne, DVM — regulations keep us from acknowledging this with a sign on the trail. Retta loved the lake and its birdlife and would heartily approve of this trail. In addition, a private individual is paying for the insurance to which we extend sincere thanks.



The 3 1/2 miles of trails at Kimberly Run Natural Area have new signage at all the major intersections. The kiosk has a large map with overview of all the trails and length of the trails. (Hint: if you have a cell phone with camera you can photograph the map for constant reference.) There is a smaller map on posts at all the intersections and the blue and white trails are well marked with colored markers on the trees. No one should get lost—at least not for long—so we encourage everyone to get out and enjoy an autumn hike through these beautiful woods and fields! We are seeing daily visitors to the trails and encourage people to come back and, if not already members, to join the Conservancy.



Lastly, a word of thanks to all the volunteers and our summer intern, Chris Payne, for all the trimming, digging, and weed whipping necessary to keep the trails maintained. A job well done and

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2013 SCC Membership Picnic



Somerset County Conservancy held its annual picnic on September 22, 2013 at the Cabin on Kimberly Run Natural area grounds. Approximately 35 members attended the festivities. Good Food and Interesting hiking along the newly completed trail system and a roaring camp fire had everyone enjoying the beautiful weather.

Dave Escherich,

By, Lester Brunell

Dave has been a member of the Conservancy for many years. I first met him many years ago through Walt Bowen, a mutual friend. Walt operated a photo studio in Somerset. Dave and Walt were birds of a feather, you might say; they were both deep into photography, especially of nature.

Dave began his working life in the big city; he was employed in administration in the F.B.I. Office in Pittsburgh. Apparently, the lure of his home turf must have been strong because he returned. He was trained in taxidermy and engaged in that business for a time.

Dave's church arranged for a fitting tribute to one of his enduring pursuits. Before the memorial service began, they screened color slides of his photo collection. It is likely that I was seeing some of them for the second or third time.

Native son Dave was an outdoorsman, sportsman and a lover of nature.

Bill Zoller, a longtime member and supporter of the SCC, passed away in September. Bill had been a part time resident of Somerset for many years and actively backed the Conservancy's work nearly since its inception.

Donations in Memoriam

or

Dave Escherich
William Zoller

Lester Brunell

Jeff Payne

Jim & Meg Moses

Conservancy Supports Education

Stream Health of Kimberly Run

On September 12, 2013, Somerset Area Senior High School AP (Advanced Placement) biology class evaluated the stream health of Kimberly Run. Water Chemistry indicated a healthy stream and observed species also indicate the same.

This is the second year that students in the AP Biology class assessed stream quality at Kimberly Run. Twenty students were accompanied by Karyn Verhosek, teacher and Pam Diesel, Somerset County Conservancy.



Abiotic Test	Test Data	Range For a Healthy Stream	Overall Conclusion (Healthy, Moderately
Temperature	20°C	0°C - 30°C	Healthy
Dissolved Oxygen	7mg/L	6 – 8 mg/L	Healthy
pH	6.8 - 7.8	6.5 – 8.5	Healthy
Iron	0	0 – 0.5	Healthy
Alkalinity	95-100	100-200 ppm	Moderately Healthy
Chlorine	0	Less than 150mg/L	Healthy
Hardness	7	4-100	Healthy

Table 2: List of Observed Species

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Other organisms
5 Female Crayfish		3 Water Mites	3 Frogs
2 Male Crayfish			14 Water Striders
12 Caddis fly Larvae			
1 May Fly Nymph			
12 Dobson Fly Larvae			
3 Riffle Beetles			

Treatment of the Eastern Hemlock of Kimberly Run Natural Area

In the Spring of 2013 we discovered that the Hemlock trees were being infested with Woolly Adelgid (as described in our Spring 2013 Newsletter). To address this problem the board began a study to conduct formal survey to map the extent of the infestation. We have hired an intern, Chris Payne, a student at WVU, to conduct this work. Because of the expense and the sheer number of trees, we focused our efforts on trees bordering the field toward Rt. 219 and around the pavilion. This area showed the heaviest infestation suggesting this as the point of origin.

We elected to treat with Zylam Liquid Systemic Insecticide using a Bark Banding (trunk spray) method because this method provided the least amount of collateral damage to unintended targets. We added a surfactant to aid in the penetration of the insecticide into the bark where



it was rapidly transported upwards in the vascular system to where pests feed. Treatment began by measuring the diameter breast height (DBH) and calculating the proper dose to be applied. The measured amount was then sprayed on the trunk from the DBH mark to the ground. Treated areas and selected larger trees were marked with aluminium numbered tags so that we will be able to monitor the effects of treatment over future years.

We are optimistic because we could see results after 4 weeks after application and after 8 weeks there was about a 90% reduction in visible infestation. Actual results cannot be determined until Spring when we will have measured results available.

Somerset Lake Action Committee

Somerset Lake's dam has been listed as a high risk dam by PA Department of Environmental Protection. The lake has been drawn down 5 to 6 feet and will remain there or be further drained until the dam can be replaced. Unfortunately many other dams in the Commonwealth are also in the same predicament and there are only limited amounts of funds to repair or replace these dams. This leaves our lake in limbo.

At a recent meeting with PA Fish and Boat Commission officials it became evident that an involved citizen's group is essential to prioritize our lake's plight with our elected officials, the governor, and the press. No other group to date has taken up the banner to lead this effort so the Board of the SCC has elected to form a subcommittee to take on this challenge. The name under which we plan to unite concerned citizens, elected officials, agency personnel, sportsmen's groups, civic and business groups, bird watchers, hikers, boaters and all other folks who value the outdoors is the Somerset Lake Action Committee (SLAC).

Why is this important? Somerset Lake is a jewel in our backyard with convenient fishing, boating, birding, and hiking opportunities all within a half mile of downtown Somerset. Both residents and the many visitors to our abundant motel rooms can take advantage of some aspect of this beautiful 200 acre lake. Warm water fishing experiences can be superb, non-motorized boating opportunities are splendid and underutilized, bird watching is incredible with over 240 species of birds found in 2012 on the Lake and surrounding woods and fields, and the new birding/hiking trail constructed by the Somerset County Conservancy this spring is enjoyed by many hikers and dog walkers daily.

The Somerset County Conservancy is committed to preserving and conserving the important outdoor areas and resources of our county. Somerset Lake has been identified as a Biological Diversity Area in the Somerset County Natural Heritage Inventory; furthermore it is an Important Bird Area due to its bird diversity, nesting Osprey, and incredible waterfowl migrations in spring and fall. The SCC has a stake there with our trail and its educational potentials in getting adults and children both into the outdoors to experience nature.

Somerset Lake can be saved. Other lakes across the state have been rebuilt. It will take the concerted effort and support of many to make this happen. The committee is now being set up (watch our website for links to this effort) and soon everyone will be encouraged to become SLACers!

Wetlands at Kimberly Run Natural Area Included in Study on Diseases in Amphibians

Trish Miller

In early June I escorted Dr. Jim Julian and two of his students out to the Louis Beech Wetland complex at the Kimberly Run Natural Area to sample amphibians. As I marveled at the plant diversity, Dr. Julian dunked his dip net into the mud and pulled out a few squirming tadpoles and exclaimed, "Oh, this is going to be easy!" He went on to explain that at mitigation wetlands, like those in the Louie Beech complex, amphibian populations may be lower than in naturally occurring wetlands. He was excited that this was not the case at Kimberly Run!



Dr. Julian of Penn State Altoona along with colleagues at Penn State University Park began looking for fungal infections in amphibian populations in 2013 with a grant from the Wild Resources Conservation Program. Amphibian populations world-wide are declining at unprecedented rates. In addition to habitat loss, infection from two diseases, a fungal infection, chytridiomycosis, and a viral infection, ranavirus, are thought to be the primary causes of these declines. In the US, 42 species of frogs, toads, and salamanders have been affected in 25 states. A recent study published in PLoS One noted nationwide declines of amphibians at a rate of 3.7% per year. Already imperiled species are declining by as much as 11.6% per year. In Pennsylvania, one population of red-spotted newts is known to



have been affected; however, scientists consider 22 amphibian species in the Commonwealth to be at risk from these diseases. Dr. Julian and others want to better understand the distribution of the diseases in Pennsylvania to improve conservation efforts. So he and his students are collecting tadpoles from wetlands throughout Pennsylvania. On his visit to the wetlands at Kimberly Run, Dr. Julian collected green frog tadpoles. He explained that, "Green frogs are an excellent species to study diseases because they have extended exposure time as tadpoles." In fact, they can spend up to two years as tadpoles before transforming into frogs, whereas other species may spend only a few weeks as tadpoles. Dr. Julian and his students collected about 50 tadpoles in various stages of development and took them back to the lab at Penn State where they processed the frogs to determine infection rates. We are looking forward to seeing their results!

Summer Help for the Conservancy

Chris Payne

This summer, I have done work for the SCC at two locations, Somerset Lake and the Kimberly Run Natural Area.

The work at Somerset Lake consisted of trail building and maintenance. I first removed stumps left behind by the brush hog that was used to clear the trail. Some had to be dug by hand and others cut with a chain saw. Once the stumps were out I weed whipped the entire length of the trail on two separate occasions.

The rest of my work this summer has been at Kimberly Run Natural Area. Through the month of June I worked on the Woolly Adelgid project. I first did bird surveys at twenty four separate GPS grid points on the property. I then went back and recorded general health of the Eastern Hemlocks at the 24 grid points. I counted and recorded leaflet litter in a one square meter block at each grid point. This in-



formation will be used to evaluate the success of the Woolly Adelgid Treatment program. We also used this information to determine the most heavily infested areas so that they could be targeted first. My trail work at KRNA consisted of installing posts and trail map signs at each trail intersection as well as weed whipping the entire white trail twice. I removed a large amount of trash from the garage and cleaned the bays. I assisted in replacing a rotten garage door and painted the remaining three garage doors and the inside of one of the bays. I power washed the garage and cabin exterior and cleaned the cabin interior. I stained the Kiosk and helped construct the handicap access around the driveway gate. The final job was to measure the trees to be treated and calculate the amount of insecticide to be applied to trees in the Woolly Adelgid Project. During my Christmas Break from school this year I will be analyzing the data collected over the summer project.

Somerset County Conservancy
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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

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