



Fall 2017

Newsletter

Somerset County Conservancy A Charitable Trust

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org



"Being Like Them"

By Roger Latuch

As I struggle for content for a Land Conservation article, my thoughts keep rolling back to "people", those that have made it happen. The efforts of board members of the County Conservancy and the very generous contribution from the Elizabeth Peirsol Trust has made possible the protection in perpetuity of the Kimberly Run Natural Area.

During the Great Depression, it was a small group of "people" that came together to create a group now known as the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Their goal was to alleviate widespread unemployment through public works programs that would create positive impacts on the regions natural resources. Since that time, the WPC has protected more than 250,000 acres of Western Pennsylvania. Recently their efforts have secured several properties adjoining Laurel Hill Creek, the Casselman River, and the Great Allegheny Passage.

It was "people" of vision that created so many of our National Parks. The mornings first sun lands on Cadillac Mountain of Acadia National Park; a dream made possible by the generosity of philanthropist J.D. Rockefeller Jr. and that of George Dorr, who spent most of his adult life bringing the park into being with a vision and passion that ensured lands would be set aside for protection and preservation for years to come.

Looking far west, we find another great story! That of the California redwoods. Long before the region became Redwoods National Park, there was a grassroots movement know as "Save the Redwoods League". With an original donation of \$100 the effort had begun. There are few life experiences that rival the inspiration of standing in a grove of Redwoods. With logging pressure threatening the dwindling number of ancient trees, it was quite obvious something needed done. Despite 100 years of their efforts only 5% of the virgin timber remains. Unfortunately, today the work needed to protect the redwoods and all of our remaining natural areas is more complex than ever. Whether the cuts come from the saw, or the federal budget, the threat is always there.

These are just a few of the many remarkable achievements to remind us that we all need to step up in some way..to be inspired by the Conservationist of the past.. however little, "being like them".

Save the Redwoods League Founders Madison Grant, Henry Osborne and John Merriam. Since 1918 the league has preserved more than 200,000 acres of redwood forests.



2017 Lakefest

Since our last newsletter, SLAC (Somerset Lake Action Committee) sponsored Lakefest with the theme “The Last Chance to See the Old Lake”. The event was in August right before the PA F&BC started the big drawdown. We had a day of short rain storms, but had a steady stream of 100’s of people coming out for the free canoe and kayak experience, family fishing, folk sing by Keith Largent, birding, and of course, great food. A good time was had by all, and even a Bald Eagle and Caspian Tern flew by to check out the event!

Somerset Lake Nature Park Fall 2017 Update

Somerset Lake is being drawn down in preparation of repairs to the dam to commence in the spring of 2018. As this is being written a fish salvage is being conducted by to PA Fish & Boat Commission using electro-shocking to stun the fish to facilitate netting and transport in special fish trucks to several regional lakes. Large walleyes, muskellunge and bass as well as numerous panfish are being moved.

Meanwhile, the Somerset Lake Action committee is participating in talks about Park development at the north end of the lake away from the pending dam reconstruction activities. Ryan Kieta, a landscape architect, has been hired to conceptualize and put on paper design elements for the planned picnic pavilion, tables, improved handicap accessible trail segments, and parking lot improvements. SLAC will be working closely with Somerset County Parks and Recreation Board in developing these plans. SLAC, with much work done by Cassie Moon and Angie Tenant, facilitated a \$100,000 grant with matching money to come from SLAC (thank you to all our supporters!) which will be used by the County for this portion of the Park project. We hope to see this project to fruition by next summer and it will be useable even before the lake is refilled.

Another potential project that is being pursued by SLAC is to do habitat work in the lake bed while the water is drawn down. The idea will be to add structure to the bottom of the lake that will be beneficial to fish and in addition can benefit birds, amphibians, mammals, and other taxa that depend on emergent wetlands or sporadic exposed mud. Somerset Lake has been identified as an Important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society and the total number of species recorded at the lake exceeds 250 species. Finding habitat improvements that increase emergent wetlands, creating islands, and having shallows that may be exposed during low water events will ensure good habitat out of the water for many of these bird species, while deepening adjacent areas to borrow fill material will add fish structure. Stay tuned for future updates.

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.

ETIC is a Pa state program that provides businesses with a 75% tax credit for donation to a nonprofit organizational scholarship or educational improvement project. The tax credit increases to 90% if the business committees 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 (KNRA) with an emphasis on stream analysis. KNRA 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 macroinvertebrates. 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 ETIC 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) 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 KNRA. Please contact Pam diesel at Somerset County Conservancy, PO Box 241, Somerset, Pa 15501 for more information.

Education Programs of the Somerset County Conservancy

By Pam Diesel

On May 23, 24 30 and September 27, 2017 biology classes from Somerset Senior High School came to Kimberly Run Natural Area with their teacher, Jennifer Brougher. Students completed an analysis of Kimberly Run by collecting specimens and running water quality tests. Stonefly, mayfly and dragon fly nymphs, crayfish, salamanders, frogs, Dobson fly and midge larvae were found indicating a healthy stream population. Water quality tests such as dissolved oxygen, pH, alkalinity, acidity, chlorine, salinity and iron levels were completed. These also indicated the good health of Kimberly Run.



Somerset Area Senior High Advanced Biology (AP) students completed their analysis of Kimberly run on September 19, 2017 with their teacher, Karyn Verhosek. Good water quality was again found through identification of macroinvertebrates and water quality tests. After collection, students are able to take the organisms to the Kimberly Run classroom for identification. Organisms are identified by the use of microscopes and magnifying lenses and organism keys. Somerset County

Conservancy provides the materials for a successful environmental experience. Conservancy board member, Pam Diesel and conservancy intern Logan Lichvar assist the classes with the educational experience.

Plans are being made for grade 6 students from Somerset to attend Kimberly Run with the aid of high school students trained to assist in environmental education. These students are members of the high school environmental education club.

Somerset County Conservancy

Reprinted from the Somerset Daily American

By Len Lichvar

The Somerset County Conservancy is a non-profit land trust that is managed by an all volunteer board of directors. The Conservancy owns and manages several hundred acres of land in Somerset County that range from undisturbed natural landscapes of the Kimberly Run Natural Area to abandoned mine drainage (AMD) treatment systems on scarred, but also recovering open space.

The Conservancy has always maintained public access to all their properties in order for the public to utilize them for recreation such as hiking, bird and nature viewing, trapping, fishing and hunting.

The Conservancy Board of Directors have always welcomed and encouraged low impact recreation by the public on their land. The board also is vigilant about being good stewards of the land and water resources they protect and manage.

A few years ago the Conservancy adopted a catch and release carp fishing regulation at Mallards Rest which is home to the AMD abatement treatment system known as the Boswell Passive Treatment System. Last year the Conservancy posted signs on their properties encouraging and reminding hunters to pick up their spent shell casings during hunting excursions. This is something that far too few hunters take the very short time that is required to do.

This year the Conservancy has taken their resource protection initiatives to another level by posting signs requesting, not mandating, that hunters on Conservancy property utilize one of the now many non-toxic shot alternatives to lead when pursuing game. Lead is a natural occurring element, but over exposure of it to wildlife, as well as humans, has been linked to illness and in some cases death especially in wildlife. The Conservancy is aware that this is still a debatable subject in certain circles.

However, waterfowl hunters have been required to utilize non-toxic shot for years even though no such mandate exists requiring it for other game. That may change at some point in the future and as Conservancy President and Land Manager as well as ardent hunter himself, Jim Moses points out, "The Conservancy board made this recommendation to reduce the opportunity for the poisoning of wildlife and we believe this practice will be more widely accepted in the future, but for now the Conservancy land is a good place to start that trend."

Lead shot accumulates and does not degrade and can and is picked up by birds, both game and non-game species. According to Conservancy board member Jeff Payne, who is an expert birder as well as a bird hunting enthusiast, "Although waterfowl have been singled out to be protected from lead poisoning land birds are not immune to the exposure. The other real problem is wounded wildlife crippled by lead shot that is then consumed by scavengers that also consume the toxic lead. These scavengers include eagles among others."

As just one example one of the first eaglets brought to Pennsylvania in 1987 recently died as a result of consuming lead from a woodchuck that was killed with lead.

There also continues to be debate over the effectiveness of non-toxic alternatives such as steel, bismuth, tungsten and others. The good news is all of these alternatives have proven to be very effective hunting loads and are now readily available from many manufacturers. In the case of steel for pheasant hunting simply increasing the shot size to 2's or 3's boost pellet energy and effectiveness putting it on a par with lead shotshells.

The bad news is the non-toxic alternatives are more expensive than lead and older fixed choke shotguns are not always safe to shoot with harder alloys such as steel.

Regardless of the pros and cons and perceptions and misperceptions the Conservancy is determined to look to the future in conserving wildlife to its optimum on its properties and is simply asking sportsmen to do their part in achieving that goal.

To learn more about the Conservancy and its properties visit :

www.somersetcountyconservancy.org.

Logan Lichvar, left, and Somerset County Conservancy President and Land Manager Jim Moses install a sign at the Kimberly Run Natural Area requesting the use of non-toxic shot during the upcoming hunting season.



The Conservancy's Property is Open to Hunting

Dan Yoder, left, and Logan Lichvar, along with his dog Dixie, after a successful Pheasant hunt recently at the Kimberly Run Natural Area. The pheasants are stocked by the Pennsylvania Game Commission because the Somerset County Conservancy is a hunter access cooperator through the Commission. Although pheasants are a non-native species the habitat improvement work done by the Game Commission as well as through the Conservancy's efforts also benefit the native wildlife such as woodcock, grouse, turkey, deer, bear and countless non-game species that also inhabit the Conservancy owned property.



Kimberly Run Natural Area Trail improvements

This spring's wet weather was taking quite a toll on some of the hiking trails at KR. The mud was everywhere and very slippery. On the Blue Trail our Intern Logan Lichvar was able to transport and spread fill material to make the slippery spots much safer.

The White Trail however was a different story. The muddy spots were more than a mile from trailheads that we could get to and transporting material would all have to be done by hand. Berlin Boy Scout Troop 135 came to our rescue. Logan King organized a work party of about 10 Scouts and 5 troop leaders who worked tirelessly most of the day to transporting by hand 16 foot long 2X6 lumber almost a mile back to the work site. Once there the Scouts built boardwalks to navigate the soggy spots in the trail. They did a incredible amount of work in one day to make our trails safer.

A few weeks after construction we painted the bridge decks and boardwalk surface with antiskid deck restorer so they won't become slippery.

Whenever you have a chance to hike the White Trail give a little thanks to Troop 135, Berlin, PA.



Left to right: Logan King, Alex Hay, Sean Foy, Jackson Hay and Gram Hoover

An Invitation to our Annual membership Banquet

The Somerset County Conservancy

Wednesday, December 6, 2017

Cocktails at 6:30 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m.

Somerset Trust Company's Meeting Room

**The Trust Building at the corner of N. Center Ave. & Union St.
Enter through the Union St. side door entrance (post office side)
131 North Center Avenue
Somerset, PA 15501**

**Come and enjoy dinner "Under the Dome"
Catered by Chuck Wagon Restaurant
And a Presentation on
"THE EARLY PENNSYLVANIA DUTCH FARMSTEAD"
By Fred Will**

\$25.00 per person at the door

Reservations required

E-mail: mail@somersetcountyconservancy.org

Or phone Jim at:

814-445-4850

We Need You!



Please remember that the entire operating budget of the Somerset County Conservancy, the Kimberly Run Natural Area, and the Trail on the West Side of Somerset Lake are maintained by Memberships and Contributions. If you have already renewed your Membership for 2018 we thank you, if you have not or would like to become a new member Please fill out the form on the last page of this Newsletter and send it in.

We can't do it without you!!



"Fall in line and share your glorious autumn photos on the Conservancy's Facebook page."

We would like to make an attempt to keep our Facebook page as active as possible and are looking for any or all photos and/or stories to share on our page! Please feel free to post on our timeline, or text your items to Martin Hurl at 814-279-2893. Let's do all we can to spread the word about the great works of the Somerset County Conservancy!



Somerset County Conservancy
Box 241
Somerset, PA 15501

HELP US SPREAD THE WORD!

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

Enclosed is: \$ 20 Individual Member

_____ \$ 30 Family Member

_____ \$ 75 Sustaining Member

_____ \$100 Patron, Club, Organization Member

_____ \$750 Lifetime Member

Name: _____

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