



**West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Coalition  
Meeting Report  
Tuesday, June 12, 2012**

**Opening**        This meeting of the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Coalition was called to order at 6:30 pm by Amy Wolfe. The meeting was held in the KCNet Community Room, Lock Haven, PA.

**Present**        The meeting was attended by: Becky Dunlap, Nicole Lundgren, Melissa Tesauero, Amy Wolfe, Rachel Kester, Rebecca Holler, Carl Undercofler, and Kelly Williams.

**Information and Discussion Items**

Item 1: Introductions: All meeting participants introduced themselves and the group they were representing.

Item 2: Amy Wolfe, Trout Unlimited, introduced this year's summer interns: Nicole Lundgren and Melissa Tesauero both recent graduates of Juniata College, along with Zeb Buck (starting June 18<sup>th</sup>) who is a recent graduate of Lycoming College. All three interns will be assisting with field work related to the PFBC Unassessed Waters Initiative and TU's AMD Technical Assistance program.

Item 4: Amy Wolfe, gave a PowerPoint presentation about the WBSRC, how and when it was formed, major milestones and accomplishments, and the need to examine where the group is headed now. She then led a discussion centered around the needs of the group, ways to re-engage member groups, and how we can attract new members to the WBSRC. It was decided that a pig roast might be a fun way to get everyone together and re-energize all of the volunteers. It was also decided that Amy's presentation should be made available to everyone who was not in attendance at this meeting and that a survey should be sent out requesting feedback regarding meetings, the newsletter, and the symposium to get a feel for what the members want to see and what would be helpful/useful to member groups.

Item 5: Rachel Kester, Trout Unlimited, updated the group about upcoming grant deadlines. The group is reminded that funding opportunities are posted on the WBSRC website at [www.wbsrc.com/amdtech.html](http://www.wbsrc.com/amdtech.html). Anyone wishing to submit a grant opportunity for the website should email Rachel Kester ([rkester@tu.org](mailto:rkester@tu.org)).

Item 6: Rebecca Holler, Trout Unlimited, updated the group about the new DEP Environmental Education Grant that was recently awarded to TU and will be used to adapt TU's new AMD curriculum for use by watershed associations and other organizations interested in expanding their youth education programs. Both Rebecca and Becky Dunlap (Trout Unlimited) also talked about new education initiatives that TU is working on in partnership with the WBSRC: the AMD and Trout Youth Camp to be held in 2013 and the T.R.Out (Technology Reaching Out) initiative to engage youth in coldwater conservation and AMD restoration through technology.

Item 7: Amy Wolfe spoke to the group about her recent meeting with DEP Bureau of Conservation and Restoration Chief, Glenn Rider. Some of the items that Amy discussed with Mr. Rider are highlighted below. Amy also stressed the need for other volunteer groups working on AMD restoration to contact Mr. Rider and let him know if they too feel these are important issues to address.

- Growing Greener Grant Program: [1] Approved QHU eligibility criteria should be removed; [2] Growing Greener should be used to help support monitoring and operation and maintenance requirements for passive treatment systems as these tasks are investments toward ensuring optimum performance and longevity of treatment systems; [3] All AMD proposals should compete equally with non-AMD watershed projects across the Commonwealth, or even be given priority, because AMD is the Commonwealth's largest source of non-point source pollution and because Growing Greener is a critical source of funding to leverage other major sources of funds to remediate AMD.

- Qualified Hydrologic Units: [1] The draft guidelines for scoring and developing watershed restoration plans for consideration of becoming qualified QHUs do not fit all watersheds. For instance, the Babb Creek watershed (as well as countless others across PA) already has in place a DEP-developed watershed restoration plan where the majority of the remediation has already been accomplished and removing streams from the 303d list has already been achieved. To redo an existing (albeit a plan developed by DEP themselves) watershed restoration plan just to follow the new draft guidelines to become a QHU and be eligible for Title IV AMD Set-Aside Funds (especially to keep systems working properly in order to keep the restored streams off the 303d list) is a waste of everyone's time and money. DEP should be more accepting of watershed restoration plans that are already in place, many of which were funded using Growing Greener funds, and simply approve the watershed as a QHU to allow Title IV AMD Set-Aside Funds to be spent in watersheds where groups are actively and successfully engaged in AMD remediation. [2] Furthermore, the current draft guidelines utilize a treatment scoring matrix that would have prevented the majority of the successful passive systems in Babb Creek from ever being funded. DEP needs to revisit how it evaluates passive treatment design because the technical experts have proven that if passive systems are sized properly (based on contaminant loading and not number of cells and contaminant concentration and flow), and are properly operated and maintained, passive technology can absolutely be utilized to effectively treat a variety of AMD types - not just low flow alkaline AMD or ALDs for low flow acid discharges.
- West Branch Susquehanna Task Force: The DEP-led Task Force has served to work in conjunction with the citizen-based West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Coalition to increase the collaboration and partnership between state and federal conservation agencies, county conservation districts, regional and national conservation organizations, and local watershed organizations toward the restoration of the West Branch Susquehanna River watershed and we strongly encourage the DEP to continue with this Task Force.
- Title IV AMD Set-Aside Fund: The congressional reauthorization of the Title IV AML Fund was due largely to the tireless efforts of citizen groups throughout Pennsylvania and as such, citizen groups should continue to have a role in the AML Fund by way of being able to receive funding to implement and operate/maintain AMD remediation projects, as well as having being kept up to date on the DEP's decisions on how it plans to spend the funds. The latter could be easily accomplished through some sort of stakeholder group whereby the DEP would maintain a public transparency regarding its spending decisions and plans and allow for some dialogue with stakeholders.
- Overall, a main message is that DEP has been severely limiting the amount of funding available to watershed groups that have proven to be very effective and successful at addressing mine drainage pollution across the state. The limited availability of funding is resulting not only in discouraging many watershed groups from continuing with efforts, but it is also greatly affecting the availability of other sources of funding from private foundations, federal grant programs, and other sources that have been critical to helping fund AMD projects.

Item 8: It was discussed amongst members present that perhaps a pig and veggie roast could be held in lieu of the September WBSRC quarterly meeting. Kelly Williams, Clearfield County Conservation District, said she was going to hold a similar picnic on September 8<sup>th</sup>, following their annual Conservation Celebration so perhaps the two events could be combined. This possibility will be explored and more details will follow.

Item 9: "Round-the-table" watershed updates were provided by those present on behalf of the organization(s) that they represent.

A pig roast may be held in lieu of the next meeting in September in Clearfield County. Details on the event and the exact location will be announced closer to the meeting time.