

West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Coalition

Summer 2009



The West Branch Susquehanna and the Chesapeake Bay

It's easy for residents who live in the West Branch Susquehanna watershed, far upstream of the Chesapeake Bay's Blue Crab populations and tidal areas to disassociate themselves with the Bay's struggle for ecological balance. Put simply, Blue Crabs, albeit important, aren't the topic of the majority of environmental-related conversations in the West Branch. Instead, here in the heart of Pennsylvania's bituminous coal seam, discussions often revolve around abandoned mine drainage.

The West Branch of the Susquehanna watershed

located in north-central Pennsylvania has more than 42,000 acres of barren land-scape from abandoned coal mines and more than 1,200 miles of polluted streams and rivers as a result of water draining from these lands. What's more is that it has been determined that between \$110 million to



Streams like Cooks Run in Clinton County have a negative impact on the Chesapeake Bay

\$453 million in capital expenditures will be required to fix these problems. Given these daunting numbers it's not surprising that dead streams and treedevoid landscapes sometimes takes precedence over the struggles of the Bay in the West Branch Susquehanna.

Fixing abandoned mine drainage pollution related problems in the West Branch Susquehanna watershed will cause obvious improvements ecologically — and a recent study has shown that these ecological improvements will also translate to economical

improvements. For instance, the watershed could generate \$22.3 million in fishing revenues every year if its streams were free of pollution and remediation efforts could generate up to 4,000 green-collar jobs.

But what does abandoned mine drainage reclamation in the West Branch Susquehanna watershed mean for the Chesapeake Bay? Polluted streams are likely to be a direct conduit for nutrient, namely nitrogen and phosphorus, transportation downstream. Healthy streams and their adjacent floodplains are able

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AMD Education Tours Coming to your Watershed!

One of the highlights of the recently published Economic Benefits Analysis is that 50% of willingness-to-pay for remediation mail survey respondents living in the West Branch Susquehanna watershed were not aware of the severity of AMD-pollution in the watershed.

This disheartening statistic demonstrates a need for more diversified and far-reaching education programs throughout the watershed. So – that's exactly what we are doing.

Instead of hosting the annual West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium this year, Trout Unlimited and the WBSRC will be hosting a series of six abandoned mine drainage education sessions and bus tours.

2009 West Branch Susquehanna AMD Education Tours

July 12th—Beech Creek Watershed
July 16th—West Branch Headwaters
August 15th—Anderson Creek Watershed

August 21st—Moshannon Creek Watershed

September 12th—Babb Creek Watershed

September 19th—Clearfield Creek Watershed

Each of these programs will feature a WBSRC-partner group and will highlight the important work being done to reclaim our polluted waterways.

Check the WBSRC website frequently for updates about these six programs.

If you would like to attend one of these programs or volunteer contact 570-748-4901.

New Summer Brings New Faces to the WBSRC and TU

Three new interns have joined ranks with the WBSRC and TU for the summer. Lori Smith and Zack Bassett, both pursuing a B.S. degree in Biology,

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Interns Aaron Furgiuele, Lori Smith, and Zack Bassett examine insects collected as part of the West Branch Recovery Benchmark project

The West Branch and the Chesapeake

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to assimilate nitrogen and phosphorus by simply passing them through their foodchain. A stream devoid of aquatic life and subsequently a food chain channels the nutrients downstream. In essence, ecological balance upstream in the West Branch Susquehanna watershed promotes ecological balance downstream in the Chesapeake Bay. Look for this article, by Becky Dunlap, in the next edition of Pennsylvania Forests!

New summer brings new faces to the WBSRC and TU

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work from TU's Lock Haven office. Aaron Furgiuele works from the Clearfield County Conservation District.

Of Note:

DEP Awards \$1.8 Million Contract to Reclaim 146-acre Surface Mine in Clearfield County

2009 Growing Greener grant round opens. Submittal deadline, July 17, 2009

Celebrate A Decade of Growing Greener Watersheds, Earn \$250 For Your Watershed Group.

See www.wbsrc.org for more information

Not a member of the WBSRC?

It's easy to join—see our website for more information:

www.wbsrc.org

Deer Creek Restoration on the Horizon

Not so long ago, if you left the main highway (SR 879) near Frenchville and traveled down Deer Creek Road toward the river, you would have been saddened to see a rather picturesque stream with one apparent problem: the reddishorange hue of abandoned mine drainage (AMD) that coated the rocks. Drive this same stretch of roadway today and you will see a different picture. Thanks to some remining in upstream reaches, Deer Creek is beginning to look a little less red and a little more like it might be able to support aquatic life.

Over the past year and a half, members of the Deer Creek Watershed Association (DCWA) have been taking water samples and collecting flow and habitat data along Deer Creek and all of its tributaries. Preliminary results show that Deer Creek is beginning to see some improvement in water quality in the lower reaches and will hopefully continue to improve as remining continues upstream.

Although remining has been successful in alleviating some of the AMD problems in the watershed, there are others that will have to be restored through active or passive treatment systems.

This is where the DCWA comes in. By identifying all of the AMD discharges in the watershed and prioritizing areas for treatment projects, the group is formulating a plan that will lead to the even-

tual restoration of the watershed. In fact, the group plans to submit their first project proposal for funding this year.

Hopefully, as the DCWA begins to implement these restoration projects in the next few years, brook trout that are found in Buck Run and the headwaters of Deer Creek will once again be able to populate the entire length of the stream. Looking ahead, that day is not too far out on the horizon.

The Deer Creek Watershed Association meets on the third Monday of every month in Frenchville at 7:00 pm. For more information, please contact Lee Hebel at (814) 263-4286 or Kelly Williams at (814) 765-8130.

