

Watershed Award

The Quittapahilla Watershed Association was organized in 1997 by a group of individuals who are committed to the quality and preservation of the Quittapahilla Creek. The group includes conservationists and other citizens who had established the Quittie Creek Nature Park in Annville, Pa.

Through their efforts, 24 acres of woods, wetlands and limestone bluffs had been set aside in 1991 to preserve the area's natural and cultural history. After the park's creation, the group realized that they could not maintain the beauty of the creek that ran throughout the park without looking at the context in which the creek existed.

The entire Quittapahilla Watershed is in Lebanon County, and the creek's major tributaries include Killinger's Run, Bachman's Run, Beck Creek and Snitz Creek. The Quittapahilla Creek flows into the Swatara Creek, which flows into the Susquehanna River and eventually the Chesapeake Bay.

A special meeting was called on June 8, 1997 to organize the Quittapahilla Watershed Association (QWA), and in 1998 the group became affiliated with the Swatara Creek Watershed Association, a 501C (3) organization. QWA's goal has been to get interested individuals, organizations and businesses in Lebanon County to help maintain a healthy stream. An early continuing partner has been the Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and within the past two years numerous local organizations have become involved in watershed projects.

Some of QWA's cooperative ventures have included: (1) work with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) on an Adopt-a-Stream Grant in 1998. By joining forces with local citizens, sportsmen, businesses, service organizations, PFBC and the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, the QWA installed deflectors and mud sills to stabilize approximately 900 feet of the stream bank in Quittie Nature Park; (2) organization of stream cleanups on April 25, 1998 and May 22, 1999 with the Boy Scouts, a 4-H group, local school ecology clubs, the local chapter of the Audubon Society and a local church; (3) supervision of high school and college students who on an ongoing basis have tested the water quality in the watershed. The QWA believes that by getting students involved, the Watershed Association is helping to insure that tomorrow's citizens will be better stewards of the environment; (4) In Spring 1998, members of QWA and local volunteers planted over 1,000 trees and bushes along the Quittapahilla and its tributaries, and in Spring 1999 they planted another 6,000 trees and bushes. Through volunteers, involvement and publicity related to the plantings, QWA hoped to create public awareness of the importance of riparian buffers; (5) For the past two years QWA has involved local middle school students in planting trees, mulching trails and learning about water quality in Quittie Nature Park; (6) On April 23, 1998 QWA organized an Earth Day recognition ceremony and generated television and newspaper coverage of the event. The Watershed Association gave awards to three local individuals for their conservation work in the county: the head of a

local dairy who erected stream-bank fencing and planted riparian buffers on the dairy's farms; the General of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard for his help in the stream bank stabilization project; and a retired high school teacher for his ceaseless efforts to maintain the trails in the park. (5) In Spring 1999 a Watershed Restoration Grant allowed QWA to initiate a project to install fencing and create cattle crossings and riparian buffers on farms in the county.

The Quittapahilla Watershed Association continues to address non-point source pollution in agricultural settings by installing over 25,000 feet of stream bank fencing and establishing a riparian buffer by planting trees and shrubs on 12 farms in the watershed. The agricultural land along the watershed is characterized by pasture that extends to the Quittapahilla and its tributaries. The problems that the watershed association confronts include: (1) the lack of riparian cover along the stream, contributing to surface runoff of nutrients and sediment and poor aquatic habitat; (2) the lack of restriction of access to streams by cattle resulting in stream bank erosion and sedimentation, and (3) direct discharge of animal wastes into the streams.

The major goals of QWA's current project to address non-point source pollution are to improve water quality and habitat and to promote watershed stewardship by working with cooperating landowners to improve the management of streams on their properties and to serve as a demonstration for neighboring landowners; the promotion of cooperative planning among municipalities in the watershed; and to make the public aware of the environmental impact of non-point source pollution through programs and contact with the media, schools, individuals, organizations and municipalities.

Representatives on the Watershed Association Steering Committee include: the Lebanon County Conservation District which has been an active partner in the watershed and provides maps and information about farms to help identify landowners and target information for critical areas; the Lebanon County Ground Water Education Team which provides public education about non-point source pollution; the League of Women Voters of Lebanon County which is involved in education about water quality and has provided public information and outreach; and a representative from Carmeuse Pennsylvania, Inc., a large quarry company that has donated more than 135 tons of stone for constructing deflectors and stream bank protection devices.

The Quittapahilla Watershed Association also has access to expertise from the following: the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission; the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service which has provided materials and labor for stream bank fencing; the U.S. Geological Survey which has offered technical assistance to the watershed on water quality assessment; a local college professor with expertise in water quality monitoring whose students have been conducting water quality monitoring; and the local chapter of the Audubon Society which has helped plant riparian buffers and has put up bird houses throughout Quittie Nature Park.

QWA is also planning for special recognition of landowners and volunteers who participate in watershed improvement projects. To keep the public informed, a description of projects and photos will continue be posted on the Swatara Creek Watershed Association web site.

Hi Dave:

Here's the text again.



Repeat of first two pages

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Accomplishments '99