

WVWA's Mission is to protect the quality and the beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the watershed by:

Protecting and enhancing open space.



Promoting awareness of environmental issues through education.



Promoting wise land use.



Preserving historic sites important to the history of the Wissahickon.

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THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

By P. Randolph Gray, Executive Director

WVWA was founded fifty years ago to protect the Wissahickon Creek. Its focus was, and still is, the Creek and the lands that surround it; the Watershed.

The Board of Directors has used the past year, during which the organization celebrated its fiftieth anniversary, to reflect on WVWA's mission, its strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges it faces in the future.

Our mission remains the same: to protect the quality and beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the watershed. But the world has changed around us. The world of not-for-profit organizations is evolving in such a way that they must be managed as though they are small businesses, reliant on effective use of the support you give us. It is critical that the community feels well-served and is very aware of the organization's mission and its programs.

With that in mind, the Board has decided to take several steps to ensure that the Association will be financially viable and that it will be able to continue protecting the Wissahickon for many years to come.

Beginning in 2008, the Association will be restructured into two primary "divisions." The Stewardship Program will focus on the land, its protection, and the maintenance of land we have protected, as well as water quality. The Outreach Program will encompass community educational programs, special events, resource development, and marketing and public relations, and will support the Stewardship Program.

Our greatest assets are the natural treasures we protect; the land and the water in the Wissahickon Watershed. In order to ensure the best management outcomes for each property, detailed maps and stewardship plans for each of the preserves and trails owned and maintained by WVWA will be completed by the end of 2008 and will be updated regularly. Our trails have never been better maintained, and we intend to build on this standard.

Parcels in the watershed that are appropriate for eventual protection will be listed and located on a digital watershed map. This will help the Association in deciding what direction to take when specific parcels become available.

We will expand our water quality monitoring program in order to help us identify critical parcels for protection and to give us a report card regarding our land protection work. Reporting to the community on the health of the Creek will help residents of the watershed understand the importance of the land conservation work we do.

Community education will include programs for all ages, and will be

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OUR TRAILS LEAD US FORWARD

by Bob Adams, Director of Stewardship

A year ago we set out to make WVWA trails and preserves more visible and easier to use. With major support from the Stratton Foundation, an anonymous donor, REI and Pennsylvania's Department of Community and Economic Development, and the employees of Merck in West Point, our Stewardship team has worked to make it easier for community members to understand our conservation mission by enjoying the lands we have protected.

We installed 16 new bridges and boardwalks to get walkers over wet spots in all of the trails. Eagle Scout Chris Smith and Lansdale Scout Troop 303 put in about 120 feet of boardwalk in the Kings Woods section of the Green Ribbon Trail.

One of the new mile markers on the Green Ribbon Trail

Photo by Bob Adams



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A HIDDEN GEM SPARKLES ANEW

Penllyn Natural Area, the first preserve acquired by WVWA, has been “spruced up” through the generosity of several employees of Merck & Co., Inc. at West Point. Marci Kary and Bob Lukas of Merck were awarded a Merck Champions of the Environment grant which they used to design and install 13 educational signs at our Penllyn Natural Area. Marci and Bob were joined by a dozen of their colleagues on December 1 at the site on Lantern Lane. Also participating were three young men from Students Teaching Environmental Protection, a group founded and run by local middle school students.



L-R: Ivette Caro-Aguilar, Oscar Gonzales, Flavio Cabrera, Elijah Kuchar, Bob Adams, Bob Lucas, Julie Krueger, Marci Kary, Suzanne Cole, Sean Smith, Jim Cook, Angela Scafonas, Mark Miller



L-R: Judith Gratz, Charlie Bromberg, Derek Cavanaugh, and Tyler Sherman. Photo by Carolina Bromberg

These wonderful volunteers have enhanced the preserve with signs along the trail that help visitors understand what they are looking at along the trail. The Penllyn Natural Area is a great place for an walk. It is adjacent to Penllyn Woods, and is accessible from Lantern Lane. There is ample parking along the shoulder of Penllyn Pike.

A guided walk of the Penllyn Natural Area scheduled for January 27 (see Guided Walks). Please join us and get to know this jewel.*

NEW CHALLENGE GRANT FOR LAND ACQUISITION

The McLean Contributionship has awarded a grant of up to \$150,000 for the Land Acquisition Fund, provided the Watershed Association raises an additional \$100,000 by the end of 2009.

The Land Acquisition Fund provides money to secure parcels that become available for purchase or for protection through conservation easement. The Fund has been used for many WVWA projects, including the Armentrout Preserve and Briar Hill Preserve, and has been replenished each time in readiness for the next project.

The McLean Contributionship has supported the Watershed Association in the past by helping the organization build the McLean Loft on the second floor of Four Mills Barn, by contributing to the construction of a steel bridge at Four Mills Nature Reserve and by contributing \$150,000 towards the endowment fund during the Campaign For the Wissahickon.

We're grateful for this important, continuing support, and for the challenge that motivates us to widen our search for community support.*

RESTORATION NEWS

By Bob Adams

Upper Dublin High School student Nick Johnson brought about 25 of his friends on Saturday, December 1 and carried out a nice piece of restoration work as his National Honor Society project. The work took place on WVWA property between Swedesford Road and Route 202 in Lower Gwynedd. Stewardship Assistant Chris Bergerson supervised the planting of about 90 trees and shrubs on two acres of land that had been cleared for restoration last summer.

These trees were paid for through our innovative Adopt-A-Tree program, through which interested members and others contribute money for purchasing plants for our restoration projects. Adopt-a-Tree has resulted in well over a thousand native trees and shrubs in the ground over the years.

The Swedesford Road planting will help provide high quality food and habitat for our local animals in the years to come, and hopefully prevent the return of the invasive plants we worked so hard to remove. This site lies near a project we completed a year ago, where we removed invasive plants from 1000 linear feet of a stream buffer area and replanted a total of 474 native trees and shrubs to restore it to an ecologically healthy condition.*

SERVING THE COMUNITY BY TEACHING THE TEACHERS

by Judith Gratz, Director of Environmental Education

The environmental education staff at WVWA has been privileged to work with public school teachers because of money donated through the Educational Improvement Tax Credit, a state program that encourages businesses to donate part of their taxes to suitable nonprofit institutions for the purpose of improving education in Pennsylvania.

Cheltenham, Hatboro-Horsham, Springfield, and Wissahickon school districts are partnering with WVWA for the benefit of their teachers. WVWA provides in-service training for the teachers in their schools and follows up by demonstrating, during class field trips to WVWA preserves, how to teach environmental concepts outdoors. Our staff provides material for both teachers and students for use before and after the field trip lessons.

Examples of lessons the teachers learn to teach are “Wetlands and Watersheds,” “Renewable and Non-renewable Resources,” and “Ecosystems and Their Interactions.” All lessons presented to teachers are based on the Pennsylvania Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology, and are part of the standardized testing required by law.

The greatest benefit derived from teacher training is the ripple effect: each teacher reaches hundreds of students over his or her career. This makes the EITC program a successful tool in this environmental educator’s tool kit.

Your business can participate in the EITC program. Call Donna Middleton to discuss how: (215) 646-8866 ext. 15, or e-mail her at donna@wvwa.org. If you would like to participate in programs as a volunteer, e-mail me at judith@wvwa.org to request more information.*



GRIST FOR THE MILL

by H. Kirk Horstman

When one particular acorn sprouted over 100 years ago in a forest in Halifax County, Virginia, little did it know that it would grow tall and vertical and one day end up in a grist mill in Pennsylvania. How could it have been aware that Benjamin Hassett (our millwright) would one day scour the countryside for just such a trunk?

What Ben found was a seasoned log that had been felled approximately 18 months before. The log was just right; not too green and not too dry. Its girth was up to 30 inches in diameter outside the sapwood (i.e., not including bark). More importantly, the trunk was long and straight.

White oak is preferred because of its tight grain, which makes it less susceptible to the ravages of water. White oak timbers are also very strong, and they will not crack as much as other types of lumber. These features are nec-



essary to endure the high stresses generated by running machinery. Unfortunately, such trees are not as common as they once were in the eastern U.S.

Ben brought the prize log back to his shop where he crafted it into a 16-sided drive shaft for Evans Mumbower Mill. He shaved it down to its final dimensions of 21-feet long and 22 inches in diameter. Iron fittings (known as gudgeons) were added at each end. Upon initial testing Ben expressed satisfaction at just how "true" the shaft turned out.

The final weight of the shaft was 3,700 pounds. It was quite a trick to back the trailer down the narrow passageway on the side of the mill. It was even more of an accomplishment to lift and maneuver the finished log through the original opening and into the wheelpit located inside the basement of the mill. But Ben accomplished it with just one helper, John. They will be the first to admit that they utilized a few modern contrivances. Inch by inch, they used chain hoists and a come-along to move the shaft into its final resting place.

In the coming months Ben will be constructing the waterwheel and the pit gear and will fit them onto the new shaft. These components will also be made from white oak. To get planks of sufficient size, Ben had to contact suppliers in Connecticut who provide lumber for shipbuilding at Mystic Seaport. So much for buying local produce!*

The Next Fifty Years, continued from page 1

designed to increase our visibility and to educate the community about conservation and sound environmental practices. Youth and teacher education programs will be evaluated to make sure we are serving the community in the best and most effective way. We are developing a curriculum for community outreach programs to be delivered throughout the year that will include lectures, workshops and guided trail walks. WVWA's website and printed material will be redesigned to be more effective at informing the community about who we are and what we do.

Evans-Mumbower Mill demonstrates the importance of the Wissahickon Creek to industry in the 17th and 18th centuries. It is located in the upper portion of the Watershed, where the Wissahickon is less well known than it is within the boundaries of Philadelphia. The Mill will be promoted as another means of introducing people to the Creek and to the Watershed Association. Near-term plans for the Mill include returning it to an operating condition, a significant challenge.

Let me express here my admiration for the dedicated men and women who serve on the Board of Directors. They have spent many difficult hours crafting a plan that will enable us to move forward with confidence into a challenging future. Thanks, also, to all of our members, sponsors, and funders, who are vital to the success of our mission. All of us are partners in this effort. I look forward to working with all of you as we move ahead.*

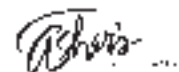
WALKATHON SUPPORTS WISSAHICKON STEWARDSHIP

The annual Walk for the Wissahickon is a terrific opportunity for people to get acquainted with both the Wissahickon Creek and with WVWA's Green Ribbon Trail. On September 29th more than 200 hikers enjoyed walking on all or part of the Trail as they helped raise money for WVWA's Stewardship program. This year's hike included a tour of the Evans-Mumbower Mill for the 2.5 mile hikers, a picnic at Four Mills Barn for the 8-milers and a hoagie supper that was greatly appreciated by the tired and hungry team that walked all 21-miles.

We are grateful to the people who raised pledges, to the volunteers who helped with registration and hike support, and to our wonderful corporate sponsors, listed below. Working together, we can really make a difference! *



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BRIAR HILL PRESERVE RECEIVES GREEN FUTURES AWARD

Representatives from municipalities throughout Montgomery County and from Chester County gathered at the William Penn Inn on October 30, 2007 to celebrate the recipients of the 2007 Montgomery County Green Futures Achievement Awards. The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association, Whitpain Township, and Carole Haas Gravagno, along with Montgomery County and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, were honored for their roles in preserving Briar Hill. Over 62 acres have been preserved through a series of conservation easements and another 38 acres have been protected through outright acquisition by the Watershed Association. This project connects over 200 acres of open space, including Prophecy Creek Park in Whitpain Township. Another 80 acres nearby are protected as the Armentrout Preserve and Camp Woods. ❄

Our Trails Lead Us Forward, continued from page 1

Eagle Scout Lucas Janes and Upper Dublin Scout Troop 542 cleared over 300 feet of new trail below Swedesford Road. Stewardship Assistant Chris Bergerson put his extensive trail building know-how to work and built several water bars to direct excess storm water off the trail, eliminating some serious erosion problems. And our intern Sean Duffy lent us his hardscaping expertise and built a beautiful dry-laid stone staircase to get walkers up a steep section of the Green Ribbon Trail in King's Woods.

Improved signage is also a big part of this project. We have now marked every mile of the Green Ribbon Trail and some of the preserve trails with attractive mileposts, so that walkers can have a sense of how far they have gone. We also installed directional markers in those parts of the trails where the way was not clear. These markers, used in conjunction with our brand new Green Ribbon Trail map, will ensure that a casual walker will be able to stay on the trails, and keep their feet dry, too!

Now that we've made the trails easier to use and enjoy, we want to tell the world where they are. So look for bright, attractive new signs at all the places the Green Ribbon Trail crosses our local roads. They should be up by next spring. Also look for signs identifying all our nature preserves. You may have already seen the Armentrout Preserve sign on Morris Road; there will be more just like it. A committee of volunteers is working to post downloadable preserve maps and trail information on the WVWA website.

We believe the land we've preserved is one of our greatest assets, not only because it serves to protect the Wissahickon Creek, but also because when people experience the land directly they come to understand why it is so important to protect it. We are working hard to make WVWA preserves and trails easy to find and use. We hope you will come on out and enjoy them! ❄

STAYING IN TOUCH

From time to time we send email to our members announcing important conservation projects or events in the Watershed. Make sure we have your most current email address by sending a message to info@wvwa.org. We want you to stay up-to-date!

❄ All photos are by Jamie Stewart unless otherwise noted. ❄



GUIDED WALKS

Sponsored by a grant from REI

Amy Johns will be leading walks from 1–2 pm on the last Sunday of each month beginning in January. Each walk will be on a different WVWA preserve. These walks are suitable for adults and young people age 6 and older. There is no fee. You may call ahead for information or to register at (215) 646-8866, or on the day of the walk at (215) 872-5772.

Sunday, January 27

PENLLYN NATURAL AREA

Park on Penllyn Pike at Lantern Lane

Sunday, February 24

ARMENTROUT PRESERVE

Park in the lot at the end of Beale Road, off Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike

Sunday, March 30

CROSSWAYS PRESERVE

Park in the lot off Cathcart Road

Sunday, April 27

KING'S WOODS

Park at Gwynedd Valley Septa Station on Plymouth Road. We will walk up to Route 202 and back.

AMBLER ART EXHIBIT

FEATURES

JAMIE STEWART'S PHOTOGRAPHY

Jamie Stewart will be the featured artist in Ambler's "Art-in-the-Storefront" exhibit in the windows at 41 E. Butler Avenue, next to Denny's Electric, beginning January 18 through March 14.

*Please join Jamie for a Sidewalk Opening
in front of the exhibit on
Friday, January 18
from 5:30 – 7:00 pm.*

Many of Jamie's photos were featured in the book, *Wissahickon: Worth Preserving*, a photographic tour of the Watershed. Jamie's interest in nature grew from his early childhood memories of playing in the Wissahickon Creek. He is a member of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association's board of directors.

VOLUNTEER REQUEST

How can you help to bring historic Evans-Mumbower Mill back to life?

At one time, Henry Mumbower operated his mill full time with only a couple of workers. Now it takes many of us to open it once a month, and we have yet to produce a single sack of flour! As we install our new waterwheel and plan the water system to run it, we need all kinds of help to restore the building and to demonstrate the ways in which it served the community. Your time commitment can range from a few hours per month to whatever you care to offer.

You do not have to be an expert. Any and all skills are welcome, from baking to carpentry to historical research. In particular we need more folks to help out with open houses. Training sessions for new greeters and mill guides are slated to start in late March in preparation for the 2008 season. If you would like to receive a handout explaining the types of assistance needed, please contact Kirk Horstman at (215) 699-6011 or horstman1@prodigy.net.

SUMMER ECOLOGY CAMP 2008

Summer ecology camp has been a favorite of many children since its inception in 1980. Last year camp was held off-site for the first time – at the wonderful Penllyn Woods in Lower Gwynedd Township. The site was so popular that we will return to Penllyn Woods again this summer with two consecutive, two-week sessions in July.

Children will learn how to make and report scientific observations as they explore the extensive woods, the Wissahickon Creek, and a pond. They will explore a wetland as they walk through it on a boardwalk.

Something new this summer is the addition of two consecutive, one-week sessions at the end of August.

To learn more about camp, visit our website, www.wvwa.org. There you will find dates and times and a registration form. You may also call the office, (215) 646-8866 Monday through Friday, from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and talk with Judith (ext. 13) or Lisa (ext. 10).

