

Currents



Utilizing volunteer labor and heavy equipment, a 2010 project retrofitted a storm water basin on North Wales Road in Upper Gwynedd.

WVWA will continue downstream performing similar work at two additional areas. One program will protect the Upper Gwynedd sewer pipe that was exposed due to erosion, and the other will help preserve a wetland near the Upper Gwynedd Treatment Plant that is being degraded by erosion.

In addition, in an effort to capture storm water WVWA will install a seepage berm on the Green Ribbon Trail. The water should seep down and empty within 24 hours, so as not to disturb the woodland that is flooded. The intent is to provide clean, cool water to the Wissahickon Creek during periods of low flow.



Newly constructed sloping streambanks will be planted with dogwood and willow trees to resist erosion.

WVWA's *Wissahickon From the Top* is the first step in what will continue for decades to come. By starting upstream, the entire Wissahickon Creek will reap the benefits of reduced stormwater damage and a decrease of the sediment in the Creek. WVWA will continue working downstream as funding for the project is secured. If you are interested in supporting this program, please contact Anne Standish at 215.646.8866. 🍁

Four Part Program Focuses on Repairing and Restoring the Banks & Streambed of the Wissahickon Creek

In 2010 WVWA initiated a four-part program, *Wissahickon From the Top*, with the goal of restoring the actual Wissahickon Creek. With this significant project WVWA is now able to focus on the Wissahickon Creek itself after decades of protecting the land surrounding the Creek. The program includes plans to repair damage caused by erosion and flooding, remove structures in the Creek that promote erosion and provide ways to capture storm runoff as ground water. This major enhancement project is made possible through an EPA enforcement action.

In 2010, WVWA retrofitted a stormwater basin located north of North Wales Road in Upper Gwynedd. Working downstream, the project continued on the south side of North Wales Road.

The second phase of the project began with the removal of an abandoned farmer's bridge. The Wissahickon had pushed

around the bridge, eroding the banks and creating an eight-foot gap between the bridge and the stream bank. This allowed sediment to build up in the Creek. Sediment is a major pollutant that carries toxic materials into the Wissahickon and when the water is moving swiftly the sediment gets blasted into the banks causing more erosion.

Once the bridge was removed, WVWA re-graded the sharp, vertical banks restoring them to gentle slopes that will allow floodwaters to pass by, reducing further erosion. To protect the new sloping banks, WVWA installed coconut fiber logs at the base of the slope and planted fascines, which are long tubes of live dogwood and willow cuttings. These water-loving trees will put out roots that will further strengthen the banks. Above the logs, WVWA planted a seed mix, and then protected the seeds with coconut fiber mats. WVWA will plant herbaceous plants in the early spring 2012 to complete the project.



Controlling knotweed requires concentrated labor and careful herbicide application followed by well-maintained replanting.

WVWA KNOTWEED PROJECT

After a Banner Year in 2011, WVWA Looks Forward to Further Success in 2012 in the Ongoing Struggle Against this Stubborn Invasive Plant

WVWA recently completed year three of the Knotweed Project, and thanks to a generous grant from REI and other WVWA donors, 2012 will mark year four of this important project. This landscape-scale project is aggressively targeting Japanese and Giant Knotweed, streamside plants from Asia. This plant was introduced to the United States, as it was able to rapidly establish itself on stream banks and spread out to protect more area over time. In theory, that is logical but in practice it eliminates any native plants that might grow there, with a resulting loss of food and habitat for the animals that need to live there.

In year one of the project WVWA attacked the uppermost infestation of knotweed, located in WVWA's Four Mills Preserve. It is a challenging process that requires using the plant's lifecycle in order to kill this plant in a way that doesn't harm fragile riparian and aquatic ecosystems. In July the knotweed has depleted all the sugars stored over the

winter putting out new growth. This is when WVWA cuts the plant to knee height and hauls out all the cut stalks. This is to avoid the stalks getting covered in flood mud and re-sprouting. This is an extremely labor intensive effort, during some of the hottest weeks of the year. The process then resumes in September, when the plant is beginning to store up sugars again for the winter months. WVWA carefully sprays Rodeo, a form of Roundup that is acceptable to use in streamside areas. This method allows the WVWA team to kill most of the plants without using more potent and damaging herbicides. Finally, the banks are replanted with native trees and shrubs.

Going forward a new technique will be used. Land Manager John Ferro attended the Invasive Plant Conference in West Virginia and came back with a better idea. WVWA will now spray the plants in July with Rodeo, a technique known as herbicidal mowing. This will eliminate hauling out the cut stalks and finding a safe place to let them decay, without re-sprouting.

WVWA partnered in year two with Eagle Scout candidate and Germantown Academy student Brian Wheatman to remove the knotweed on the banks of the Wissahickon as it flows through the GA school campus. A TreeVitalize grant, a bar mitzvah project and other donors funded the plants and supplies. Together with volunteers, WVWA planted over 150 trees and almost 200 shrub plugs, and protected them from deer and flooding with stakes and shelters.

2011 marked year three and a banner year for this project. A generous REI grant allowed WVWA to tackle the reach from Lafayette Avenue to Skippack Pike. WVWA worked with two Eagle Scout candidates this time due to the length of the work site, which stretched from Lafayette Road to Skippack Pike. The Eagle Scouts are Colin Freedenberg and Troy Pelletier, and their hard work and teamwork made great strides for this project. Even so, there is a small area left in that reach to complete in 2012. Other great and talented volunteers including a group of Coventry employees and WVWA's longtime supporters at Wordsworth Academy must be recognized for their time and efforts for this project.

REI has again funded the Knotweed Project for 2012 and the work will occur in the reach from Skippack Pike to West Valley Green Road.

WVWA welcomes potential donors and volunteers to help continue this important work. Knotweed is a pernicious weed that is a true challenge to tackle. Some say that we are attempting the impossible and to them we say, "If not us, then who? If not now, then when?" WVWA will continue to be strategic, aggressive and persistent and work to eradicate this weed. 🌱

WVWA Annual Meeting

• **Wednesday, January 18 at 8 am**

WVWA members are welcome to attend the 2012 Annual Meeting at WVWA's Four Mills Preserve.

- *Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler*
- *RSVP: info@wvwa.org or 215-646-8866*

Winter Walk at Four Mills Preserve



• **Sunday, January 22 at 1 pm**

Winter is a wonderful time to experience nature. Bring a friend and enjoy a winter walk along the Green Ribbon Trail beginning at WVWA's historic Four Mills Barn. Join us for refreshments following the walk.

- *FREE – Pre-registration requested but not required*

Garden Lecture with Jenny Rose Carey

• **Sunday, January 29 at 2 pm**

- *Temple University Learning Center, Meetinghouse Road, Ambler*

WVWA is pleased to partner with Temple University Ambler to present an inspirational lecture with the Director of the Ambler Arboretum, Jenny Rose Carey.

- *FREE – Pre-registration requested but not required*
- *Follow the Loop Road to the Learning Center located at the back of the campus*

Winter Birdseed Sale

• **Seed MUST be pre-ordered. Order Deadline: Monday, Feb. 6 by 2 pm**

• **Order Pickup: Friday, Feb. 10 -2 – 5 pm or Saturday, Feb. 11 - 9 am - noon**

Order quality birdseed that is appropriate for the birds in the Wissahickon Watershed. WVWA offers two bird seed sales per year. The second sale will be in October.

- *Order form is enclosed in the newsletter or visit www.wvwa.org*
- *Phone-in orders accepted with credit card payment*

Preserve Walk at Armentrout Preserve

• **Sunday, February 12 at 1 pm**

Take a walk through WVWA's Armentrout Preserve in Blue Bell. This beautiful 58-acre preserve defines the term *open space*.

- *FREE – Pre-registration requested but not required*
- *Meet in the parking lot at the end of Beale Road off Penllyn-Blue Bell Pike*

Sustainability Movie Series at the Ambler Theater

WVWA is a sponsor of the Pennypack Farm & Education Center's sustainable movie series at the Ambler Theater. The three films each highlight an environmental issue that affects all of us. Movies are scheduled on the second Tuesday of the months February, March and April.

- *\$10.00 per film or \$24.00 for all three films*
- *Tickets are available at amblertheater.org/pennypack*

• **Tuesday, February 14 at 7:30 pm**
Queen of the Sun:

What Are the Bees Telling Us?

A profound alternative look at the global bee crisis which takes us on a journey through the catastrophic disappearance of bees and the mysterious world of the beehive.

- *More information at queenofthesun.com*

• **Tuesday, March 13 at 7:30 pm**

What's "Organic" About Organic?

With charm and humanity *What's "Organic" About Organic?* leads viewers to examine how organic farming has evolved from a grass-roots movement into a multi-billion dollar international industry.

- *More information at whatsorganicmovie.com*

• **Tuesday, April 10 at 7:30 pm**
PLANEAT

The story of three men's life-long search for a diet which is good for our health, the environment and the future of the planet.

- *More information at planeat.tv*

Fireside Frostbite 5-Miler Race

• **Saturday, February 18 at 9 am**

WVWA is the co-beneficiary of the Ambler Area Running Club's (AARC) Fireside Frostbite 5-Miler. The race begins and ends at the Wissahickon High School. It sold out in 2011, so register early to guarantee your spot.

- *Many volunteers are needed for the race*
- *Register: <http://www.aarcclub.com/frostbite> - You can also volunteer at this site*
- *WVWA volunteers contact: Carol DeLancey at carol@wvwa.org*

Beekeeping Lecture with Scott Bartow

• **Thursday, February 23 at 7 pm**

Join Erdenheim Farm's, Scott Bartow, as he shares his passion for beekeeping and the many benefits of honey.

- *Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler*
- *RSVP: info@wvwa.org or 215-646-8866 - Space is limited*



Maple Sugar Festival at Four Mills

• **Saturday, March 3**

Learn all about maple syrup from

the tree to the tap to the table! This is a fun and informative program that is ideal for families, scout groups and anyone curious about the maple sugar process. Choose a specific time as guides take small groups through the woods to see the tapped trees, and then watch it being boiled into sugar. End your walk at WVWA's Four Mills Barn with hot chocolate and a warm waffle with maple syrup.

- *Tours from 10:00 am – 2:00 pm • Fee charged*
- *Call 215-646-8866 or register online: www.wvwa.org*
- *Pre-registration fee: \$5 per person*
- *Day of registration fee: \$10 per person*
- *Park in Ambler, by the post office. Walk over the Butler Avenue Bridge and turn into the Green Ribbon Trail.*

Make Your Own Rain Barrel Lecture and Workshop

• **Wednesday, March 14 at 7 pm**

Learn about the benefits and use of rain barrels. WVWA will have the materials on hand and will work with you to create your own rain barrel that you will take home that evening.

- *Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler*
- *\$30.00 for materials and workshop, registration required*
- *Limited to the first 18 participants per class*

Preserve Walk at Briar Hill

• **Saturday, March 17 at 1 pm**

Enjoy a walk on the loop trail through WVWA's Briar Hill Preserve. Well-behaved leashed dogs are welcome.

- *FREE – Pre-registration requested but not required*
- *Meet in the parking lot at the Prophecy Creek Park off Skippack Pike*

Adopt A Tree Program Celebrate Mother's Day with a Native Tree

• **Ongoing**

Support WVWA's efforts to eradicate invasive plants and reforest the Wissahickon Watershed with native trees. Honor a mother, wife or friend, make a memorial donation, or purchase a native tree/s to be planted at the Willow Lake Farm on Serve the Preserve Day, March 31. You can plant the tree or let WVWA volunteers plant it for you. You can also join WVWA on Mother's Day, May 13, for a walk of this preserve.

- *Purchase online, mail a check or call with your credit card to WVWA; \$30 donation per tree*

Spring Serve the Preserve Day

• **Saturday, March 31 at 9 am**

Spend a rewarding morning at Willow Lake Farm that includes planting trees and invasive removal. Ideal for scouts, service projects and anyone who wants to make a difference in the Wissahickon Watershed. Bring gloves, a hat and a shovel, if possible. Snacks and tools will be provided. Busy that day? Purchase a tree/s through WVWA's

on-going Adopt-a-Tree program.

- *Contact Bob Adams at bob@wvwa.org*
- *Groups welcome - please include name, estimated size and ages of group in your email*

Evans-Mumbower Mill Open House

• **Sunday, April 15 from 1 – 4 pm**



This will be the opening day of the 2012 Mill season. Visitors of all ages are welcome to experience the operations of this 19th century

gristmill. A tour with costumed guides and a DVD program about the history of milling in the Wissahickon Valley provides a thorough understanding about the operation and the role that mills played in our local history.

- *Swedesford and Township Line Roads, Upper Gwynedd*
- *Free of charge but donations accepted*

Sustainable Gardening & Working with Native Plants Lecture

• **Friday, April 20 from 6:30 – 8:30 pm**

Suzanne Smith-Oscilowski will present a dynamic talk about sustainable gardening practices and the importance of using native plants in your home landscape. She will focus on hands-on techniques and how to pick the right plant for the correct spot in an effort to have an environmentally friendly garden. You will also have an opportunity to purchase plants and talk with WVWA's staff. Refreshments will be served.

- *Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler*
- *RSVP: info@wvwa.org or 215-646-8866 - Space is limited*

WVWA Native Plant Sale

• **Friday, April 20 from 2 – 5 pm - WVWA Members Only Afternoon**
• **Saturday, April 21 from 9am – noon - Open to the public**

By popular demand, WVWA is bringing back the Native Plant Sale. High quality native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and ferns will be available on a first come, first serve basis.

Knowledgeable gardeners will be on-hand to assist you with your selection.

Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler

Wissahickon Creek Clean Up

• **Saturday, April 28 starting at 9 am**

WVWA and the Friends of the Wissahickon Creek will clean the entire Wissahickon Creek from top to bottom! Hundreds of volunteers clean sections of the Creek and its tributaries, and then enjoy the Talkin' Trash Picnic in Fort Washington State Park.

- *Registration required for a section of the Creek*
- *Contact: Bob Adams at bob@wvwa.org*
- *Groups welcome – Include name, estimated size and ages of group in your email*



Wissahickon Warbler Walk

• **Sunday, April 29 starting at 8 am**

WVWA experienced birders, Jamie Stewart and Amy Johns, will lead this popular early morning bird walk along the banks of the Wissahickon.

- *Bring binoculars and a birding book, if available and wear suitable shoes. All ages welcome*
- *Four Mills Barn, 12 Morris Road, Ambler*
- *RSVP: info@wvwa.org or 215-646-8866 - Space is limited*

Archeological Dig at the Evans-Mumbower Mill

• **Ongoing – Thursdays from May through October, weather permitting**

WVWA volunteer archeologists will continue 2011's excavation of the blacksmith's shop, located behind the Mill on the banks of the Wissahickon Creek. Volunteers will be taught on-site how to dig, sift, clean and sort the artifacts. Dress to get dirty and bring your hat, gloves and sun block. You can work all or part of the day. Bring your own lunch and beverages.

- *9:30 am to 3:00 pm – come for all or part of the day*
- *Children must be 8 years or older; the site is very close to the edge of the Creek*
- *Located on Swedesford Road near Township Line in Upper Gwynedd*



WVWA is the proud recipient of the 2011 PennSuburban Chamber of Commerce Non-Profit of the Year Award!

Our Mission

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association's Mission is to protect the quality and 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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Rose Rubenstein Crossing Finally Complete!

The Rose Rubenstein Crossing, WVWA's latest stepping stone crossing on the Green Ribbon Trail, is finally completed! Experience this wonderful crossing which is located on WVWA's Four Mills Preserve near the intersection of Morris Road and Sheaff Lane, near Germantown Academy. This is WVWA's longest stepping stone crossing with 21 stones across the Wissahickon, and connects WVWA's Four Mills Preserve to Germantown Academy and beyond.

It is a heavy flooding area, but happily the first few installed stones weathered Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee shortly after the construction began and came through with flying colors. Due to all of the rain and high waters this fall, the construction team, including Kenney Excavating and Paving, had to delay the stone installation until low flow and dry weather returned.

Saly Glassman and Allan Syphers made this long time WVWA dream a reality in memory of the late Rose Rubenstein, who died in 2010. In spring 2012 WVWA will complete the project with the installation of a set of steps and the planting of pink and purple wildflowers. These were Rose's favorite colors and these plantings will beautify and restore the site.

WVWA has now installed five stepping stone crossings along the Green Ribbon Trail, beginning in Upper Gwynedd and now down to Fort Washington. These crossings allow walkers, hikers and runners to cross the Wissahickon without getting their feet wet. The original stepping stone crossing at Plymouth Road that was removed as part of the Plymouth Dam removal project in 2011 will be replaced in 2012, thanks to the generosity of several donors. 🌸

WVWA needs YOU!

WVWA NEEDS VOLUNTEERS to assist with numerous programs. If you are available or know of a group that may want to participate in any of these programs, please email us at info@wvwa.org or call 215.646.8866 and tell us which projects interest you.

Race Marshalls: WVWA needs volunteers to help on the morning of February 18 for the Frostbite Race in Ambler. The work is fun, short and requires no meetings!

Maple Sugaring Day: On Saturday, March 3, WVWA hosts its wonderful Maple Sugar Program. If you want to give tours, assist in the kitchen or with registration, we need your help with this fun program!

Evans-Mumbower Mill: Volunteers are needed for short periods of time throughout the year for hands-on work and Mill Open Houses.

Stewardship Projects: WVWA needs people who can spend a morning digging and planting trees for our two Serve the Preserve Days, annual Creek Clean Up, Walkathon Trail preparation, or hefting birdseed for our two birdseed sale days.

Hike Leaders: WVWA needs people who love to walk/hike, to be trained as leaders to assist with the Wissahickon Walk and Trail Run and Preserve Walks. 🌿



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Fireside Frostbite 5-Miler Benefits WVWA



Once again the **Ambler Area Running Club (AARC)** has selected WVWA to be the co-beneficiary of the *Fireside Frostbite 5-Miler*. The 2012 date is Saturday, February 18.

AARC AARC's support of WVWA's mission goes far beyond running. As AARC members are frequent users of the Green Ribbon Trail, many members have volunteered to assist with WVWA trail maintenance or stewardship projects. In addition several AARC members dredged the mud out of the Evans-Mumbower Mill wheel pit in November 2011. All of the WVWA team is very grateful for their support.

Register early to guarantee a spot and your shirt size. This is a very popular event with a limited race size. The 2011 race sold out well in advance, so visit www.aarclub.com today!

Volunteers are needed as well. Please contact carol@wvwa.org or call 215.646.8866 if you are available to help with the race.