

Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association

Winter, 2003-2004

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Green Ribbon Focuses Upstream

Nearly one hundred-forty years after the Fairmount Park Commission began the preservation of land along the Wissahickon Creek WVWA is looking forward to the day that it can tie up the Green Ribbon Preserve. The original goal of protecting both the beauty of the Creek as well as the quality of its water is still what drives the effort today, although the view of water quality has been expanded to include ecological health as well as safe drinking water.

Today, through the efforts of State, City and local governments as well as several non-profits organizations including WVWA, the job of protecting natural land along the entire creek is ninety-five percent complete. When you consider how much time as gone by and how much the watershed has developed, says WVWA President, John Shoher, it is remarkable that the goal of protecting all of the Wissahickon is not only still possible, but actually within our grasp.

By far the longest unprotected segment of the Wissahickon is a three quarter mile stretch upstream of Sunneytown Pike near North Wales. The Watershed Association has twice acquired creekside land in the area. In addition, Upper Gwynedd Township purchased a small parcel bordering the Creek at Sunneytown Pike. This stretch of the Wissahickon is now

WVWA's highest priority for preservation.

The only other unprotected segments of the creek are a handful of individual parcels scattered along the Creek upstream of Ambler.

As WVWA begins discussions with landowners concerning the protection of their properties, the Association will seek funding both from its members and from money that will be available as a result of the recently passed Montgomery County open space referendum. Last November voters approved a \$150 million bond issue for purchase of open space, parks and tree planting. The referendum passed overwhelmingly, garnering support from more than three-quarters of the voters.



Most of the land that still needs to be protected is along a 3/4 mile stretch of the Wissahickon near North Wales Borough.

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New WVWA Staffer To Focus On Water Quality

Since its founding in 1957, WVWA's work has focussed on protecting water quality in the Wissahickon Creek. Some of the first studies of the Wissahickon's health were biological studies conducted by Dr. Ruth Patrick in cooperation with the Association. For many years, Dr. Charles Wurtz, Tom Lloyd and Carol Collier, all water quality professionals working as WVWA volunteers, monitored invertebrate life in the Creek as an indicator of stream health. In recent years, however, that program has been inactive. At the same time State and Federal agencies, as well as the Philadelphia Water Department, have been very concerned about impaired water quality in the Wissahickon. Millions of dollars have been spent in the last five years to study conditions and problems in the Creek.

The Watershed Association has followed all the studies as they progressed. In addition, it periodically convenes a committee of sewage treatment plant engineers, agency officials and water companies to discuss water quality issues. In 2000 the committee highlighted the need for ongoing water quality monitoring of the Wissahickon. It was agreed that WVWA would organize the effort, with other committee members contributing



Dennis Pennington, WVWA's new Water Quality Manager

various services. For two years that undertaking never got going because of the lack of a WVWA staff person to coordinate it.

That changed last spring when Dennis Pennington, a geologist and retired environmental consultant walked into WVWA's

offices seeking volunteer opportunities. Pennington was soon put to work organizing a water quality monitoring program. Since then he, in cooperation with the Philadelphia Water Department, has carried out a complete monitoring of the Creek three times. Pennington is also working with local colleges to institute an ongoing program of invertebrate monitoring for the Wissahickon.

With successful efforts behind him and a growing list of water quality work to look forward to, in November WVWA asked Pennington to join the Association's staff as a part-time employee. He agreed, and now works roughly two days a week. "We are delighted

to have Dennis on board," said Dave Froehlich, WVWA Executive Director. "For years we have understood the need for the Association to have more involvement in water quality issues and now we look forward to playing more of a leadership role in that effort."

Memorial Trees

Board member **Greta Longenecker**, supervisor of the Longenecker Funeral Home in North Wales, has donated trees to WVWA to plant as part of our reforestation program, in memory of the following individuals.

Frank A. Ankenbrand
John E. Baer
Robert M. Burk
Mary E. Delaney
Roberta P. Devlin
Harry Foesig
Michael P. Halata
Harriet J. Harris
Robert N. Harris

Frank M. Hartman
Edna Hazzard
Marie T. Howard
Robert M. Johnson
C. Howard Knapp, Jr.
Charles Kulp, Jr.
Adelaide Magee
James Michael McCabe
Maya Sophia McTaggart

Geraldine V. Organski
Elizabeth M. Rea
Thos.A. Rothwell, Jr.
Charles J. Schiele
Ann Scioscia
James T. Sullivan
Charles W. Welsh
Mary E. Zander

Summer Camp Registration Open

Registration for WVWA's highly popular summer nature camp programs will be open after the first of the new year. This year the "Summer Nature Fun" activities will open June 21 with programs for four-year olds and continue through July with various programs for children age five to twelve.

This year the Association is providing several options for registering children for summer camp. First, a registration form will be available on the Association's web site, www.wvwa.org. The form can be printed out and mailed back to WVWA. Those without access to the internet can call the Association at 215-646-8866 to have registration materials faxed or mailed.

Special Events

Walk For The Wissahickon

The 7th annual Walk was held on what was probably the nicest day of the fall. Mud, due to seemingly nonstop rains, did not deter the 270 hikers from their journey down the Green Ribbon Trail. Over 270 hikers made their way along the route. We had 65 members & 197 nonmembers join us for the hike. The ages ranged from 8 months to 93 years.

The leaders of the Walkathon's 21 Mile Challenge Hike also raised the most money in pledges. First place winner, David Fernley, collected \$1,300! Kudos to David Bower, second place winner, and Robert Gottschalk for third place. The Walkathon raised over \$35,000 through sponsorships, pledges and registration fees.



(L. to R.)
Walkathon
Challenge
hikers Ellen
Glendinning,
Dave
Fernley,
Robyne
Kelemen
and David
Bower

Many Thanks to Walkathon Donors

Ambler Theater
Applebee's of Lansdale
Applebee's Restaurant of
North Wales
Arpeggio Restaurant
Bocelli Restaurant
Blue Bell Inn
Carambola Restaurant
Cin Cin
Whole Foods Market
General Lafayette Inn
Genuardi's Family Markets
Joseph Ambler Inn
King Tien Restaurant

Ralph's of South Philadelphia
REI in Conshohocken
Scoogi's
Tex Mex Connection
Trax Restaurant and Cafe
Trax Cafe
Valley Green Inn
William Penn Inn
Zakes Cakes and Cafe
Boy Scout Troops 3, 98 & 422
Morris Arboretum
Philadelphia Canoe Club
Upper Gwynedd Park

Use eScrip for WVWA

The Watershed Association is participating in a fundraising program called "eScrip." Shoppers register their merchant courtesy cards designating WVWA as the recipient of a donation every time a card is used at a participating merchant.

To register your Genuardi's courtesy card or your personal debit, credit or ATM cards please go to www.escrip.com and click on "sign up" or register at the store's courtesy desk. **Our group number is 149362336.**

Serve The Preserve A Great Success

Over one hundred people worked to make WVWA's first Serve The Preserve day a success last October 26th. Participants dug out invasive plants, planted trees, chipped walking trails and

installed new interpretive signs. In 2004 the event will be moved to April 3rd with April 10th the rain date. We will work at Willow Lake Farm in Broad Axe. (See photos on back page)



Some people lent a hand with shovels and pick axes. Paul Sarokwash came with his "Bobcat".



Arcadia University students and alumna pulled multiflora rose.

Above:WVWA President, John Shober and his wife, Betty dug right in to remove invasive shrubs

Serving the Preserve



Calendar For January, February, March, April, May 2004

JANUARY, 2004

Sunday, Jan. 11, 2pm **Tracks and Traces**

Many animals in our area stay busy all winter. We will take a walk in the woods and along the creek to see which animal tracks, homes, or food we can find. Dress warmly! Ages 4 and up

Members-\$1; Nonmember-\$3.

FEBRUARY

Saturday, February 7, 9:30am to 3:30pm **Bird Seed Pickup**

Come for your pre-ordered seed on this date. If you did not get an order form, call the office, ext.10.

Sunday, February 29, 1pm **Maple Sugaring Festival**

The whole family will enjoy learning how maple syrup is made from the sap of maple trees. Participate in the process and have a taste of the finished product on a waffle. A storyteller, will tell Native American stories, and other activities will be going on at this event.

\$4 per person ages 5 and older.

MARCH

Sunday, March 14, 2pm **Reptile Rendezvous**

Meet snakes and turtles and other reptiles from "the turtle lady." You will learn about these interesting animals and the adaptations which make them successful.

Members-\$1; Nonmembers-\$3.

APRIL

Saturday, April 3, 9am to 3pm **Serve The Preserve: Willow**

Lake Preserve

(rain date: Saturday, April 10)

Thursday, April 22, 6pm **Annual Dinner**

You will get an invitation in the mail. Be sure to RSVP.

BIRDWATCHING CLASSES April 17—May 22

Birdwatching classes for both the beginner and those looking for a refresher or a chance to meet fellow birders. See description on the reverse side of this page.

HIKING

Guided hikes along the Green Ribbon Trail will be scheduled from May through September. If you would like to learn to be a hike leader, contact the WVWA office at 215-646-8866

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

Don't forget that parties are held at WVWA year-round. Schedule a party for a child age 5 or older by calling the office at 215-646-8866. We will organize activities for your child according to his or her age and interests.

MAY

Saturday, May 1, 9am - Noon **Creek Clean Up**

Contact Properties Manager, Bob Adams, to be assigned an area to clean.

Friday, May 7 and Saturday, May 8 **Birdathon**

Join a team or form your own team - we will help you with this - and bird the watershed the hours that suit you. Then join the other teams to share a light meal and report your sightings. This is a major fundraiser for WVWA and it is a huge amount of fun. Call Carol DeLancey, at 215-646-8866 to discuss your role in the event either as a birder or behind the scenes with mailings, food, or other support. Ext. 15.

Sunday, May 16, 2pm **Fish Adventure**

We will use a variety of nets to catch fish in the Wissahickon. Some may end up in WVWA's aquarium for a year-long visit. Ages 5 and up.

Members \$1; Nonmember \$3

BIRDING CLASSES IN THE WATERSHED

All Birding - All the Time - All Levels

Join leaders Amy, Jamie, Judith and other knowledgeable birders for one, two, three or four birding classes this spring. All classes will be held in the field so you will learn and practice as you go. Don't know how to use binoculars? No problem! There will be plenty of individualized attention for beginners, advanced beginners, and seasoned birders. You will learn how to bird by ear too.

Spring is a great time to see migrating birds on their way north. Many will be in their most beautiful plumage. And many will be birds which pass through quickly and can only be seen a few days of the year in our area. Perhaps we will catch a glimpse of local birds building nests or feeding young.

DATES:

Saturday, April 17, 8:00 - 10:00 a.m.

Meet at the Hawk Watch, Fort Washington State Park

Saturday, April 24, 7:30 - 9:30 a.m. Meet at Prophecy Creek Park

Saturday, May 10: Join a Birdathon team

Saturday, May 15, 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. Meet at Armentrout Preserve.

Saturday, May 22, 7:00 - 9:00 a.m. Meet at Four Mills Nature Preserve

FEES: nonmembers—\$10 per class
Members:\$10 per class, \$30 for all four classes.

Register in advance to reserve your place with one of our leaders. To register, send your check to WVWA with a note listing the dates you will attend. Be sure to include your name, address with zip code and phone number. Your e-mail address would also be helpful.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Learn To Teach Maple Sugaring

Monday, February 2, 2004 - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

Come prepared to tap the maple trees. Learn the history behind the sweet stuff, the process to make it, the different products, and the significance both now and in olden days, of maple syrup. Volunteers can

learn to teach this program in a short time, then team teach with an experienced guide, and finally take small groups on their own. We need you. Maple sugaring begins February 3 and ends March 2nd.

Learn To Teach Seasonal Topics

Monday, March 29, 2004 - 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

With Spring comes a change in topics teachers choose for their students. Come learn a few of these

toady. *If you'd like to socialize before the training session, bring a brown bag lunch at Noon.*

Learn To Teach Creek Lessons.

Monday, April 7, 2004 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

The most frequently chosen activities for students is "Creek Peek" for younger children and "Creek Study" for older children. . These are easy and

effective programs to lead, with a great deal of learning packed into them. Wear waterproof boots to the training if you have them.

Learn To Teach "Insect Detectives."

Friday, April 30, 2004 9:00 - 12:00 p.m.

All the third grade students from the Cheltenham Township School District will be participating in this program during the month of May. The program is designed to teach them about insects and about some

of the features of integrated pest management. We will need lots of help in May. If you like children and insects (or at least feel comfortable around insects), please call to volunteer. Fun is guaranteed!

Call Judith Gratz to explore these and other volunteer opportunities: (215) 646-8866 ext.13. All programs are written to meet the various Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology, which will be presented to volunteers during training.

Volunteer gardeners needed. We have a garden we use for educational purposes. It will need some attention when spring begins. If you are willing to weed and plant, please call the office.