



Cheers to 50 Years!



Pictured L-R: Senator Kim Ward's District Administrator, Dottie Staffen; Board President, Wink Knowles; Executive Director, Susan Huba; and Westmoreland County Commissioner, Sean Kertes at the Association's Annual Dinner.

It was a spectacular “golden” anniversary for LWA in 2021, as the Association celebrated an incredible milestone—50 years—of working to conserve, protect and restore the natural resources of the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed. Although a committee of long-time members and supporters of the Association, including Hugh and Nancy Brallier, Conrad and Nancy Bures, Daryle and Caryl Fish, Rich and Roxana Flickinger, Wink Knowles and Patricia Slack started working in early 2020 to develop a plan for a year-long celebration of events, no one anticipated the huge impact Covid-19 would continue to have on us all through 2021. However, while some planned indoor functions like a speaker series and history dinner could not take place, several new outdoor events drew participants from near and far.

LWA was honored by two official proclamations commemorating its 50th Anniversary by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and Westmoreland County. These were presented to the organization at the annual membership dinner held on May 7 at Rizzo's

Malabar Inn, Crabtree, by Senator Kim Ward's District Administrator, Dottie Staffen, and County Commissioner Chairman, Sean Kertes. Other events held throughout the year included the first-ever “Over the Hill Challenge,” complete with a guest appearance by the Grim Reaper himself, multiple family education programs, and community favorite's like the Loyalhanna Sojourn, Loyalhanna Brewfest and Harvest Dinner.

Fifty amazing years in the making, LWA continues to be one of Pennsylvania's leading environmental groups focused on a regional watershed framework to advance its goals of conservation and community improvement. People living and working in the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed enjoy exceptionally high quality natural assets, as well as experience some of the most challenging environmental threats. Because of this, our primary objectives remain to protect and improve our area waterways, conserve land parcels and riparian corridors as green, open space, provide educational opportunities on our environment to students of all ages and backgrounds, and foster a watershed stewardship ethic in the communities we serve.

We continue to be proud of what we do, where we started, and where we hope to be thanks to all of our past and present members and supporters. Here's to another great year ahead!



A group of “Challengers” pose with the Grim Reaper at the top of the Watershed Farm during the Over the Hill Challenge race on March 20.

LWA Happenings...

Great Ligonier Valley Cleanup

An amazing group of volunteers from the Ligonier Valley community came out in force on April 24 for LWA's annual roadside cleanup event. Over 100 individuals and members of area clubs and organizations including Webelos from Pack 370, Bethlen Communities, and Pat Piper's official "Fourmile Run Crew" picked up litter from over 30 miles of roadways throughout the Valley.



7th Annual Loyalhanna Sojourn

Nearly 200 paddlers took to the water on a cold May 1 morning at the 7th annual Sojourn. Despite temperatures in the low 30s at the start of the event, colorful kayaks and canoes could be seen floating down nine miles of the Loyalhanna Creek from Cardinal Park, Latrobe to Gray Wing Park, New Alexandria. Participants enjoyed another great day on the water thanks to the efforts by fellow planning committee members from Greater Latrobe Parks & Recreation and Keystone State Park.

Loyalhanna Brewfest 2.1

The best summer party this side of the Loyalhanna Creek was back this year! On June 26, over 200 attendees enjoyed Brewfest festivities, including sampling more than two dozen varieties of beer, cider and distilled favorites along with scrumptious fare from Big Black Grille and Rosemary's Wood Fired Pizza. "Right Turn Clyde" provided the musical entertainment for attendees to dance the summer evening away!



6th Annual Harvest Dinner

The community favorite farm-to-table dinner in partnership with Ligonier Country Market was once again held "picnic" style on August 7. Attendees enjoyed a relaxing summer evening sampling favorite appetizers, main dishes, desserts and spirits from a variety of market vendors, as well as participate in a butterfly release and raffle drawings. All proceeds from this event were graciously donated by the Ligonier Country Market to benefit LWA's family education programs.

37th Annual Art Auction Benefit & Pop-Up Gala

LWA's largest annual fundraiser was held virtually again this year, with a twist! A new "Pop-Up Gala" welcomed guests to G Squared Gallery, Ligonier to view and place bids on five auction pieces unveiled during a party and reception on October 1. Over two dozen other original works highlighting the theme of "Nature's Surprises" were available for bid during the week prior. Thank you to the amazing folks from G Squared who allowed their gallery to be taken over in support of our organization!



Lake and Stream Projects Improve Area Waters



Bank stabilization along an unnamed tributary to Mill Creek.

A private, landowner-funded project was completed along an unnamed tributary to Mill Creek in Ligonier Township, after the homeowner had a large section of an old stone retaining wall fall into the stream. Broken sections of the wall were re-used to stabilize the eroding streambank, and the bank was graded to achieve a 3:1 slope to help water run away from the house and back towards the stream. The opposite side of the stream was also graded to open up the floodplain for high water flows.

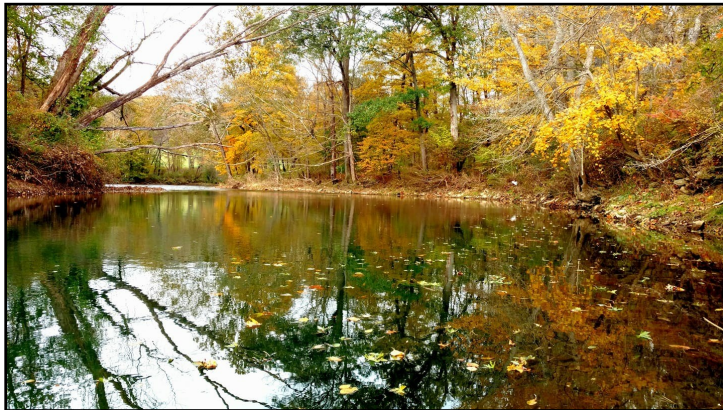
In July, LWA Project Manager, Josh Penatzer, assisted the PA Fish & Boat Commission install



Vertical plank boxes to be installed in Donegal Lake.

100 short vertical plank structures and 45 catfish spawning boxes as Phase 1 in a five-year overall habitat improvement plan on Donegal Lake. This Phase was funded through the PA Fish & Boat Commission's CHIP (cooperative habitat improvement program) and voluntary bass stamp funds. Funding dependent, over the next few years, additional types of fish habitat structures and turtle platforms will be installed, as well as shoreline stabilization to restore existing eroded sections and prevent future erosion from occurring along the lake's shore.

Watershed Priority Assessment & Restoration Plan Completed



Over 100 miles of waterways were re-assessed in this project.

The Loyalhanna Creek Watershed Priority Assessment & Restoration Plan was completed in June, and it takes a second look at more than 100 miles of area streams within the upper, middle and lower sections of the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed. These stream segments were identified as "priority" sections for restoration in the original watershed assessment plan completed 15 years ago.

Since 2006, numerous water quality improvement projects have been completed on our area streams as a result of this initial overview. Most of these projects aimed at solving impacts from abandoned mine drainage (AMD), riparian buffer and in-

stream habitat and bank erosion issues within the watershed. The focus on the upper watershed reaches involved protecting and improving headwater areas by remediating erosion and sedimentation issues, while streams within the middle watershed saw improvement from the construction of new AMD treatment efforts. Impairments within the lower watershed still pose the most challenge, as access issues, heavy sedimentation and AMD all contribute negatively to the water quality in the lower reaches.

A common impact observed on nearly every stream during this re-assessment is riparian habitat degradation and invasive species management. Outside of areas where a healthy stream buffer was present, additional landowner education on how to better manage streamside properties could help greatly. By simply not mowing up to the stream edge, and installing native grasses, shrubs and trees, these measures will drastically help reduce erosion and sedimentation, which is quickly becoming the most significant and widespread impact within the watershed.

The original assessment helped identify previously unknown issues present throughout all 2,500 miles within the watershed. Now, 15 years later, this re-evaluation highlighted significant areas of improvement as well as new impacts that still need addressed. This Plan will act as a roadmap for future remediation work by LWA and partners in the years ahead. The project was generously funded through a grant by the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

Education Programs Adapt to Meet Community Needs and Challenges

Although concerns from the lingering Covid-19 pandemic still persist and continue to re-shape how we approach many of our fundraisers, projects and programs, the need to provide free, quality education on our environment for future watershed stewards also still remains a cornerstone of our mission. Thanks to the creative efforts of LWA Educator, Lynne Donnelley, and partnerships with other groups including the Ligonier Valley Weeders & Seeders and PSU Master Gardeners, a variety of virtual, as well as hands-on programming both on the Watershed Farm and in classrooms, were offered throughout the year to students of all ages.



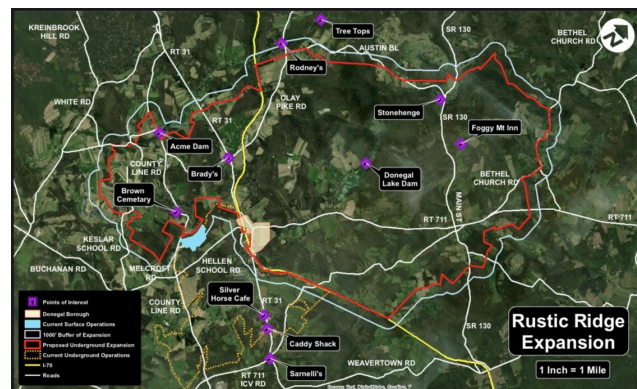
An excited preschooler participates in a program about soil during the summer “Tadpole Tuesdays” program.

Family-oriented programs on Bluebirds, plastic waste recycling, fireflies and over-wintering animal habitats were successful in virtual and in-person settings, with over 100 people attending. New this summer, a series of “Tadpole Tuesdays” and “Watershed Wednesdays” day camp programs welcomed over 50 children in preschool - sixth grade for hands-on lessons and activities. LWA also partnered with Greater Latrobe Parks & Recreation on their summer day camp and Creekside education programs, which were developed and instructed by Lynne, as well as supported summer programming efforts with the Ligonier Valley Library.

With the return to in-person instruction at many area schools, the fall season was filled once again with field trips and requests for classroom visits, a welcomed sign that things are slowly getting back to normal. One thing’s for sure, as long as there is a need and interest in learning about the many facets of our environment, we are happy to meet that challenge!



We were pleased to once again partner with PA DCNR-Forbes State Forest on a successful Youth Conservation Corps Summer Internship Program! This year, we welcomed five area college students who worked alongside DCNR staff to complete valuable trail and other public access improvement projects, as well as participate in a variety of outdoor experiences. At the conclusion of the program, interns were each awarded a \$2,500 scholarship thanks to the generosity of the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation who has supported this unique effort for over three decades.



Potential Coal Mine Expansion

Our southern partners from the Mountain Watershed Association have been working to inform landowners within the Donegal and Stahlstown communities about a proposed amendment to the existing Rustic Ridge #1 coal mining permit by LCT Energy. The amendment was originally posted to the permit renewal sent to the PA DEP and includes the possible expansion of 1,411 additional acres within much of the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed, including the headwaters of both the Loyalhanna Creek and Fourmile Run. We will continue to follow this and will pass along any new information that we learn. In the meantime, if you live within the proposed area of expansion and are concerned, please reach out to Stacey Magda, Community Organizer with MWA, who is taking the lead on assisting property owners with any questions they may have. Stacey can be reached at (724)455-4200 or stacey@mtwatershed.com.

2022 Upcoming Events

JANUARY



**Polar Plunge at
Keystone State Park**
Saturday, January 8
10:00 am start

Plunge into 2022 and start the New Year off with a “cool” new tradition! Join LWA, Greater Latrobe Parks & Recreation and Keystone State Park for a fun-filled morning of music, winter refreshments and a quick dip in the Lake if you dare. Families are welcome and a commemorative gift (and warming hut) are included!

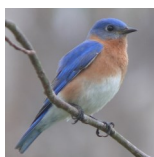
- \$15 per person
- Register Online at www.latroberecreation.org
- Deadline to register is January 5



MARCH

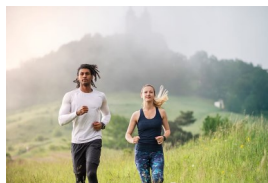
**PA Bluebird Society
Workshop**

Saturday, March 5
10:00 am - noon



Join Wilma Light and other members of the Bluebird Society of PA for an informative program on the Eastern Bluebird, including an opportunity to make your own bluebird box to attract these colorful thrushes to your home!

- Program is planned to be held in the Nimick Family Education Center at the Watershed Farm
- Free! One bluebird box per household.
- To register, contact Susan Huba at susan@loyalwater.com



Over The Hill Challenge

Saturday, March 26

10:00 am start

Calling all Cross-fitters! The second annual Over the Hill Challenge will take place on the INFAMOUS steep hills of the Watershed Farm, and will feature crazy obstacles, physical challenges and tons of muddy fun! Come join us and our partners from Greater Latrobe Parks & Recreation for this incredible outdoor event!

- \$25 per adult; \$10 for kids 12 and under
- Register Online at <https://overthehill2022.eventbrite.com>

APRIL



**Great Ligonier
Valley Cleanup**

Saturday, April 23
9:00 am - noon

Volunteers are needed for our annual Great Ligonier Valley Cleanup! For over 15 years, thousands of volunteers have helped to remove tons of roadside litter from miles of state and township roads throughout the Ligonier area. Individuals and groups of all ages are able to participate in this spring community cleanup event!

- All supplies, including bags, safety vests and gloves will be provided
- For more information or to register, contact Josh at (724) 238-7560, ext. 2# or



MAY

8th Annual Loyalhanna Sojourn

Saturday, May 14

9:00 am start

Paddle 9 miles of the Loyalhanna Creek from Latrobe to New Alexandria! Shuttle transportation, insurance and a commemorative t-shirt included!

- \$25 per person
- Register Online at www.latroberecreation.org
- Need a kayak? Contact Two Dam Kayak Rentals for boat rentals (724) 541-7447



JUNE



**Loyalhanna
Brewfest 2022**

Saturday, June 18
5:30 - 8:30 pm



The Loyalhanna Brewfest is the perfect way to kick off your summer! This fun outdoor festival held on the grounds of the Ligonier Country Market will feature local craft breweries, distilleries and scrumptious food vendors and live music for a 21 and over crowd.

- \$25 per person
- Tickets will be available online through Eventbrite, www.eventbrite.com.



Loyalhanna Watershed Association

2022 Membership Application

Name: _____ Company/Organization: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone & Email: _____

~Membership Level~

All Contributions are tax-deductible

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| _____ \$20 - \$49 Friend | _____ \$250 - \$499 Sponsor |
| _____ \$50 - \$99 Donor | _____ \$500 - \$999 Steward |
| _____ \$100 - \$249 Patron | _____ \$1,000 + Benefactor |

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable and mail to: Loyalhanna Watershed Association, 6 Old Lincoln Highway West, Ligonier, PA 15658

Name as it appears on card

Card Number

Expiration Date

CVV

Zip Code on Acct.

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Want to become more involved with LWA as a volunteer or committee member? Contact us today!



