

CountryViews

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE COUNTRYSIDE CONSERVANCY



A section of the old trolley right-of-way in Glenburn Township.

Conservancy Acquires Key Trolley Trail Section

The Countryside Conservancy is going full steam ahead on several sections of its planned Trolley Trail along the former Northern Electric Railway route. The latest segment acquired is a 2,600-foot length of the old trolley right-of-way in Abington and Glenburn Townships.

Picturesque old stone structures dot the newly acquired right-of-way, and the route is lined with beautiful mature hardwood trees. This new section connects a Conservancy trail easement to a segment already owned by the Conservancy. Together, these three sections add up to 1.4 miles of future trail, while the Conservancy also holds a trail easement on a half-mile route that loops around the Abington Little League ball complex at Ackerly Field.

Along this whole stretch from Clarks Summit into Glenburn Township, the Conservancy will now press ahead on detailed design and construction of trail sections from Clarks Summit right through Glenburn Township.

The Conservancy hopes to apply for a state grant for master planning, design and construction of this part of the trail in 2010 or early 2011. We can then improve conditions on the trail to make it ready for public use. We hope this area will soon offer pedestrians and bike riders a safe alternative route from Clarks Summit to the Ackerly Field ball fields.

Heading north, the Conservancy is working with several private landowners to secure access to further sections of the trolley right-of-way into Dalton. Meanwhile, at the Factoryville end of the trail, work is underway to secure easements and ownership in the La Plume area. Keep your eyes peeled for a new sign with the Conservancy's tree logo on Routes 6 & 11 in La Plume, marking the Conservancy's property on the corner of West La Plume Road. This property, secured in 2008, contains a third of a mile of the original Northern Electric right-of-way as well as a stretch of undeveloped road frontage along the highway. We hope eventually to create a trailhead and parking area here.

The Conservancy sincerely thanks the Overlook Estate Foundation, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Economic Development, and other donors who have supported our work on the Trolley Trail over the past year. We also thank the many volunteers who are helping us make this long-awaited dream a reality.





Countryside Conservancy

PO Box 55
La Plume PA 18440
(570) 945-6995
www.countrysideconservancy.org
cconserv@epix.net

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So You've Signed a Gas Lease

... or maybe you haven't, but you're thinking about it. What questions should you be asking yourself?

If you have already signed a lease, chances are many key decisions have already been made, whether you know it or not. However, there are still things you can do to protect your interests.

We recommend you have your well tested by a DEP-certified lab before any gas drilling begins in your neighborhood, and again within 6 months after completion of any nearby gas well. This is worth doing if there is gas activity anywhere near you, whether or not you have leased your own land. Testing must be done by a DEP-certified lab in order to be admissible for legal purposes.

Testing for total dissolved solids (TDS), barium, and chloride can indicate the presence of fracking chemicals, flowback water or other substances escaping from the Marcellus Shale formation. If you are willing to pay for a more comprehensive set of data, you can add tests for methane, iron, manganese, total organic carbon, and turbidity.

Call DEP to find out more about well testing and which labs are certified to run the tests that detect substances used in gas production. Landowners in Lackawanna, Susquehanna and Wayne Counties should call DEP's Scranton office at (570) 963-4521. Landowners in Wyoming and Luzerne Counties should call DEP's Wilkes-Barre office at (570) 826-2511 and ask for the Water Supply Program. You can also contact Bryan Swistock of Penn State at (814) 863-0194 or brs@psu.edu for more information on water testing.

If you have leased and gas development is underway on your land, walk the property often and be in regular contact with the company and site workers who are at work there. Be an observant landowner and steward of your own land, and find out whom to contact if you see a problem.

If you haven't yet signed a lease but are thinking about it, you have several options. You can go it alone, or sign up with a landowner group and let them do the bulk of the negotiating for you. A landowner group may be a good approach if you feel that there are too many details for one layperson to grasp, but you need to find a group that shares your priorities, whether that is protecting the land, maximizing your income, or trying to do both.

Whether you join a landowner group or go on your own, we cannot urge you strongly enough to make sure you have a good lawyer on your side. This should be someone who has experience in oil and gas rights and who fully understands what's important to you. Trying to navigate the complexities of a lease without legal advice is just asking for trouble. *(continued on page 3)*

Mission:

The Countryside Conservancy is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to protecting lands and waters in and near the Tunkhannock Creek Watershed for the public benefit now, and for the future.

The Countryside Conservancy is a tax-exempt organization as provided by IRS regulations. A copy of the official registration and financial information may be obtained by calling toll free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

So You've Signed a Gas Lease *(continued from page 2)*

We can't tell you what should be in your lease – there are too many variables that may be specific to your land or your needs. But you should educate yourself as thoroughly as you can. There are many websites out there to look at, some sponsored by the industry, others by anti-drilling groups, others by anyone with an interest. We can provide weblinks and information on request (call Mary at (570) 945-6995), but always, let the reader beware!

A “no development” lease, also known as a “non-surface” or “no surface disturbance” lease, is well worth considering if preventing impacts to the surface of your land is important to you. This type of lease prohibits the gas company from entering the surface of your property for any purpose: well drilling, running a road or pipeline, or anything else. The lessee only has the right to drill horizontally under your property and frack to extract the gas. Many landowners have pursued this option successfully with different companies, and depending on the size and location of your land, it may not have much effect on your leasing bonus.

If you decide to sign a gas lease that permits surface disturbance, the lease should require landowner approval for specific activities on your property, for example through a written surface agreement between you and the gas company. This will help you maintain some control over specific activities and where they take place on your land.

If you sign a lease that permits surface activity on your land, be mentally prepared. Gas drilling is an industrial activity. In most of our rural and suburban region, industrial activities are usually confined to a few designated sites. With gas drilling, industrial sites will sprout up all over the countryside. They bring with them heavy traffic, industrial equipment and chemicals, noise and disturbance.

We also recommend you talk to your municipal officials to make sure they are prepared for the impacts of gas drilling: for example road damage, and new demands upon EMS personnel and facilities. Once gas activity begins in your area, be an intelligent observer, stay observant as to what's going on, and report problems to DEP if you see them.

One final consideration (at risk of being self-serving): if you are facing an increased income-tax bill for 2009 thanks to income from gas leasing, please consider local charities (such as the Conservancy) that might benefit from your generosity in what continues to be a challenging economic time.

The Conservancy's mission is to protect lands and waters, and in furtherance of that mission we want to help landowners have the best information possible on such important topics as natural gas. Please contact the office at (570) 945-6995 with questions on this or any other land management topic, and we'll do our best to help you.

Hunting Season

Three of the Conservancy's properties will be open to deer hunting for two weeks after Thanksgiving and three weeks after Christmas. The properties are: Ziegler (on Route 438), Messimer (on Grist Mill Road), and Quarry Ridge (on Route 407 but accessed from within Lackawanna State Park). The dates for hunting this season will be Nov. 30-Dec. 12, 2009 for rifle season and Dec. 26-Jan. 9 2010 for flintlock and bowhunting. To apply for a permit to hunt deer here on these dates, please call Rylan at the office at 945-6995. Hunting is not permitted on any other Conservancy-owned properties, including Meadowsweet Preserve on Lily Lake Road.

Hunters and non-hunters, people and dogs alike, please remember to wear your orange while in the woods during hunting season this fall and winter. Stay alert, be aware of your surroundings, be courteous to other users of the landscape, and above all be visible!



Bring Home “The Northern Electric”

For your Christmas shopping list: We suggest *The Northern Electric*, Norm Brauer's history of our favorite local trolley line. The book tells the story of the Northern Electric Railway through over 200 pages of photos, history, anecdotes and business records, plus foldout maps. The Northern Electric once served communities from Scranton to Clarks Summit, Factoryville, Lake Winola, Nicholson, Hop Bottom, Brooklyn and Montrose. The book sells for \$33.39 including sales tax (shipping and handling are a few dollars more). A great holiday gift for any history or rail buff. Call (570) 945-6995 to order your copy! Book sales support Conservancy operations, including the development of parts of the old trolley line into a recreational trail.

Summer and Fall Events

A highlight of the fall season this year was our Fifteenth Annual Tailgate Picnic on September 20. We'd like to recognize a few of the leading lights who made it an excellent event: Picnic chair Ellie Hyde who oversaw the whole shebang, roast-corn wranglers Will and Pat Acker, Margaret Hull and Ben and Jake of Spring Hills Farm for wagon rides, Mike Lambert and Bob Strunk of High Falls who provided the music, Gayle Muller for kite-making and spoon races, Amy Broadbent for the ever-popular sack races, and Jack Muller and Caroline Seamans for lending a hand and general support. Our apologies to anyone we've forgotten to mention. As always, a great time was had by all!

The morning before the Picnic saw a string of mountain bikers gather at the Meadowsweet Preserve trailhead on Lily

Lake Road for a bruising cruise over some of the great trails around Lackawanna State Park and neighboring Conservancy lands. Thanks to Bill Booth for organizing and leading this event! Also thanks to Bill, we now have bike bands you can strap on your bike frame that identify you as a "Trail Friend" for the 2009-2010 season. Bands are available at the Conservancy office for \$20. Strap one on and show your support for the Conservancy that makes its protected lands available for bikers (and the volunteers who build those awesome trails).



Devi Constantine and Margaret Hull get Ben and Jake ready to load up passengers



Kites courtesy of Gayle Muller Kite Designs

Other summer and fall events for the Conservancy included attending Celebrate Our River Day and Lake Carey Day in Tunkhannock in July, Forest City's Old Home Week in July and August, a visit to Little Rocky Glen by the Endless Mountains Nature Center in August, an evening kayak outing at Lackawanna Lake in September, attendance at Nicholson Bridge Day in September, and in October the Elk Mountain Fall Festival and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic's Crescendo Family Concert. We met hundreds of new friends and visited some great parts of our watershed.

Print Raffle a Success

This summer and fall, we offered a free "raffle" of prints to attract new names and faces to the Conservancy.

A pair of framed fishing-fly prints from a 19th-century fishing manual were raffled off at our July and August events. The lucky winner was Kim Tavernia of Somerville, Massachusetts, who originally hails from the Tunkhannock area. Kim was back in town this summer for Old Home Week in Forest City.

A pair of framed botanical prints were raffled off during our September and October events in Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties. These went to Bob and Diane Burchell of Lakeside.

Thanks to all participants in our raffle, and thanks to Board member Caroline Seamans for coming up with the raffle concept and for donating the prints and framing.

Stewardship Update

The Conservancy held successful stewardship days on two of its preserves this fall.



Volunteers from Walmart take a break after cleaning up the Miller property (photo: Mary Felley)

On October 9, a team of over 20 volunteers from Walmart descended upon the Miller Preserve in La Plume Township to clear brush from the old trolley right-of-way, pick up litter along Routes 6 & 11, and tidy up the place. Some of the most energetic volunteers loaded up pickup truckloads of stone that was left on site prior to the Conservancy's ownership, and transported them to Little Rocky Glen for use in trail stabilization.

On October 10, a second team from Walmart joined over 20 Prudential volunteers at Little Rocky Glen to shift rocks and improve drainage on the trail, sand down the rustic picnic tables at the picnic shelter, and cut back invasive multiflora rose which continues to dot many of the fields on this property. Cutting back the rose is a particularly thorny task (pun intended), which must be done year after year as millions of seeds continue to sprout up each spring.

Our warmest thanks to Michael Williamson for arranging the Prudential volunteer effort. This is their third straight year assisting the Conservancy with stewardship tasks. We also warmly thank Jim Brown of Walmart for arranging the Walmart volunteer teams, as well as Scott Reinhart of Ducks Unlimited and Bob Cook of Keystone College for putting Mr. Brown in touch with us.

The Conservancy owns about 260 acres of land that require various types of maintenance throughout the year, and we depend very much on volunteers to manage these areas. We try to set up several stewardship volunteer days each year, and can provide volunteer opportunities for groups of all skill levels and interests. Please let us know if your company, church, school, club or Scout group is looking for a volunteer opportunity!



Prudential volunteers at Little Rocky Glen (photo: Michael Williamson)

You can also download a volunteer application from our website. Visit www.countrysideconservancy.org and click on the "Support Us" link, then on the "Volunteer Form" link.

Search and Shop Online for the Countryside

Countryside Conservancy continues to benefit from the Goodsearch and Goodshop websites. GoodSearch (www.goodsearch.com) is a search engine you can use to raise money for the Conservancy simply by searching the Internet. Go to the GoodSearch site, enter Countryside Conservancy in the box headed "Who do you GoodSearch for?", and search away! Each search you do will earn an estimated penny for the Conservancy. You can even add GoodSearch to your toolbar and make it your default search engine – what could be easier? And just think of how many web searches you do each day.

GoodShop (www.goodshop.com) is an online shopping gateway that directs a portion of your purchase to the charity you select. The website connects you to online stores and ensures that up to 37 percent of each purchase is donated to your favorite cause. You can get to your favorite online stores including Amazon, eBay, iTunes, Best Buy, PriceLine and more through the GoodShop portal. Every time you place an order, these stores will donate a percentage of the sale to your selected charity. You pay nothing extra for accessing their store through GoodShop. Just go to www.goodshop.com, enter Countryside Conservancy in the box headed "Who do you support?" and click on the button for the online store of your choice. Tell your friends and family, too, and make a difference painlessly!

A Tree for Burr

The following members of the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition made donations to plant a tree in memory of our departed member Burr Hamilton: John and Rachel Baidon, Mary Felley, Esther Friedmann, Dale Holen, Ellie Hyde, Angela Lambert, Gretchen Ludders, Arlene McHale, Jack and Gayle Muller and Jack Stroud. Members of the Mehoopany Creek Watershed Association, of which Burr was also a member, also contributed. The funds went to the Tunkhannock Tree Association, which will plant an American Sycamore at Riverside Park in Burr's memory. This tall and sturdy tree, so characteristic of our creek and river banks, seems a fitting tribute to a man who loved the outdoors and our local waterways.

Burr also received a posthumous Watershed Conservation award from the Wyoming County Conservation District at its annual banquet in October. Burr's wife Joan accepted the award.

Gifts in Honor, Memory, and Celebration

We offer our thanks to the following individuals who have made gifts to the Conservancy in honor of friends passing a special milestone in their lives, or in memory of friends and family members who are no longer with us. These gifts are placed in the Conservancy's Land Fund to support our land protection activities throughout the region.

In memory of Theresa Petula:

Lucille Banick
Ann Chamberlin
Marlene Demming
Richard James
Carol Karpovich
Cindy Lewis-Kessler
Pam Long
Carla Menago
Paula Ralston Nenish
Janice Warrick

In memory of Theresa Petula and Ron Cianni:

Kathleen and Phil Graff

In memory of Robert and Louise Hull:

First Presbyterian Church of Clarks Summit, Women's Association

In honor of Don and June Felley's 60th anniversary:

Haydn and Joanie Samuel
Heather Suraci and Tim Phelps
Linda Suraci
Michael and Emily Walsh
Howard and Karen Wyandt

In memory of William Lawson Chamberlin, Whitney Lawson Chamberlin, Ann Kip Reilly, and William Belin Braddock:

Kathleen and Phil Graff

Giving for the Long Term Countryside Conservancy Endowment Funds

In 2007 the Countryside Conservancy established an endowment fund with the Community Foundation of Susquehanna and Wyoming Counties. This fund is held and managed by the Foundation and the Conservancy receives only income, leaving the principal to continue growing forever. The endowment fund is intended to be permanent and to grow in value over time through prudent investing, providing ever-increasing financial assistance to the Conservancy's work in land and water conservation.

Tax-deductible donations to this fund can enhance the level of annual revenue granted from the fund. If you support conservation for the long term, making a gift to this endowment fund is a great way to show that you want the Countryside Conservancy to be here, protecting our lands and waters, forever.

Supporters of the Conservancy can also remember the organization in their estate planning through a simple clause in their will, either by supporting the existing endowment fund or creating a new, named fund to benefit the work of the Conservancy.

The Community Foundation is dedicated to keeping local philanthropic gifts in the local community, just as the Conservancy is dedicated to conserving our local lands and waters for future generations. For more information on the Countryside Conservancy Endowment Fund, Legacy Societies, or to make a donation, contact Peter Quigg, President, The Community Foundation, 36 Lake Ave. Montrose, PA 18801, or call (570) 278-3800. Information on the Community Foundation can also be found at www.community-foundation.org.

For those whose heart lies in Lackawanna County, the Conservancy has also created an endowment fund with the Scranton Area Foundation. Gifts to this fund may be sent to the attention of Ms. Jeanne Bovard at Bank Towers Suite 608, 321 Spruce Street, Scranton, PA 18503. For more information on the Scranton Area Foundation, please call (570) 347-6203 or visit www.safdn.org.

IRA Charitable Gift Option Extended to End of 2009

Through the end of 2009, a charitable gift made directly from your traditional or Roth IRA to a nonprofit organization such as Countryside Conservancy will not be taxed as income, provided that the IRA holder is age 70½ or older, the gift totals \$100,000 or less per year, and the withdrawal goes directly from the IRA to the charity. (You do not need to itemize your income taxes in order to take advantage of this opportunity; however, if you do itemize, you cannot also take the contribution as a deduction.)

Please contact your tax advisor or accountant, or call the Conservancy at (570) 945-6995, if you'd like to explore this giving option.

Year-end Appeal Open Now

You may have received a "Harvest Appeal" letter from the Conservancy in October, outlining what the Conservancy is doing to protect our lands and waters in a rapidly-changing world. We invite you to make a year-end gift in support of our work. Donations before the end of 2009 are much appreciated as we approach the end of a challenging year. Thank you for your response!

Watershed Events:

News from the South Branch Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition

The South Branch Tunkhannock Creek Watershed Coalition is an arm of the Conservancy that focuses on raising awareness, connecting people with the watershed, and encouraging them to protect water resources.

At the Coalition's August meeting, Professor Bob Cook of Keystone College spoke to an audience of about 100 on the topic of natural gas and groundwater. He reviewed the geology of natural gas genesis in the Marcellus Shale formation, and the process of getting it out of the ground. The story as he told it started 385 million years ago, but audience interest and follow-up questions focused on the process of natural gas extraction today. A number of people expressed disappointment that methane from a gas well had contaminated groundwater in the Dimock area of Susquehanna County within the past year, even though the industry techniques that Professor Cook described should make this an extremely unlikely event.

Professor Cook acknowledged that the only defense against poor practices by gas operators is vigilant inspection and enforcement. As many audience members stated, if regulators are short-handed, members of the public must do their part to be aware of activities in their area and keep an eye out for problems. Professor Cook also recommended that landowners test their water wells for a range of possible contaminants in advance of gas drilling in their area (see page 2 for notes on well-water testing).

In other natural gas news, gas companies have received permission to withdraw water from the main stem of the Tunkhannock Creek in Lenox and Gibson Townships near Route 92 and in Tunkhannock Township near Route 6, from the South Branch of the Tunkhannock Creek in Benton Township downstream of Lackawanna State Park, from the Susquehanna River, and from several municipal water supplies. All withdrawals from creeks and rivers must be permitted and metered. If you see a tanker taking water from the

stream at a site where there is no visible Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) sign displaying a permit number, call Eric Roof of the SRBC at (717) 238-0425, ext. 209 or email him at eroof@srbc.net.

Extracting gas from the Marcellus Shale requires a great deal of freshwater for drilling and fracking. Several hundred thousand gallons per well will be returned to the surface, containing large quantities of brine and small quantities of other substances from the shale layer and the fracking process. While this wastewater is disposed of in some parts of the country by injecting it into underground cavities, treatment and discharge into surface waters as per the Wyoming County proposals is probably the right approach; it will force us to clean it properly if we know someone downstream may be drinking it later.

There are no wastewater treatment plants closer than Sunbury that are permitted to handle the flowback water from gas wells. It would be sensible to have local treatment plants to serve local wells, provided that the water discharged by those plants will not harm the receiving river or stream. Coalition members attended public hearings in October about two separate proposals for discharge of treated gas-drilling wastewater in Wyoming County. One proposal is for the Susquehanna River in Eaton Township, the other for Meshoppen Creek in Lemon Township. Members submitted statements to DEP on both proposals.

In response to public concern over the potential increase in salty discharges into our waters, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) convened a workshop in October to propose a real-time water quality monitoring system for 30

tributary streams in the Susquehanna River Basin that are undergoing Marcellus gas exploration. The Tunkhannock is one of the streams proposed for monitoring. The monitoring system would track levels of total dissolved solids (an approximation of salt content) and other key parameters, to permit a rapid response to problems that might arise. The monitoring network is an excellent idea, and the relatively modest cost of \$23,000 per site would be a sound investment by local and state governments and private sources. These data would fill an enormous gap in our knowledge of stream conditions on key Susquehanna River tributaries. We thank the SRBC for their proposal and look forward to assisting them with this effort.

In non-gas news, DEP reported results of the Coalition's bacteria monitoring on two sites in the upper South Branch of the Tunkhannock Creek this summer. Both sites were in Scott Township, one in Montdale and the other near I-81. Results indicated that the creek is meeting DEP's standards for recreational use at both sites.

Elections held at the Coalition's November meeting returned the incumbent officers for another year: chair Ellie Hyde, vice chair and water quality chair Dale Holen, education chair Alana Roberts, and secretary Mary Felley.

Other Coalition activities continued through the fall, including litter pick-up on Route 632, cutting back Japanese Knotweed at Riverside Park, and water quality and macroinvertebrate monitoring. All Coalition water quality monitoring data are now posted on our website; read all about it at the Coalition's home page at <http://www.countrysideconservancy.org/sbtwc.htm>.

**Join Countryside Conservancy's efforts to preserve the fragile natural beauty of our area.
The future depends on us. Please join us today.**

_____ Family \$50

_____ Friend \$100

_____ Founder \$150

_____ Patron \$250

_____ Benefactor \$500

_____ Trust Partner \$1,000 and up

Please tear off and remit with your check or VISA/MC charge to Countryside Conservancy, PO Box 55, La Plume, PA 18440.

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Consider a gift to the Countryside Conservancy in honor of someone you care about. The gift of conservation will last forever.
For more information contact Mary Felley at P.O. Box 55, La Plume PA 18440. (570) 945-6995 or cconserv@epix.net



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