



The newsletter of

THE ALLEGHENY VALLEY CONSERVANCY

Spring 2017

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Officers and Board of Directors 2017

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Vice Pres: Lance Bowes
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An Update by our President

The Allegheny Valley Conservancy (AVC), working quietly since 2002, is providing assistance to landowners in the Allegheny and lower French Creek watersheds in northwestern Pennsylvania. Our mission includes promoting good land use through the protection, conservation and management of lands important to the ecological health of the waterways and the scenic, recreational and economic importance to the residents of the region. AVC also provides public access to open space, forested, biologically diverse and historic resources through lands that we own.

AVC is non-profit land trust governed by a volunteer Board of Directors with diverse backgrounds, life experiences, and also with the expertise to provide permanent protection of important natural resources. As a registered 501(c)3 non-profit, the Directors and volunteers can concentrate on the mission and goals of the organization. We have elected officers and have officially adopted the Standards and Practices of the national Land Trust Alliance. But this mission cannot be accomplished through one small group of people so AVC partners with other like-minded organizations to further conservation and recreation projects. Most importantly, we invite memberships from those that wish to support these projects, and in 2017, AVC will provide the public more opportunities to get involved.

The major tool of the Conservancy is the conservation easement, a voluntary legal agreement between the landowner and the Conservancy that specifies what activities may or may not occur on a particular property. These agreements address such things as timbering, constructing buildings, drilling, farming and so on. Each property owner may make the determination about which of these rights will be placed into protection. Once a legal conservation easement has been negotiated, it is permanent and stays with the land even if it is sold. The AVC currently holds three easements on properties still owned by the original owners and owns three properties in fee. We also provide recreational access to local waterways and improve streams through conservation projects. We also educate people on the importance of protecting the ecological functions and conservation value of their lands.

Good land use is essential to clean air, clean water and livable communities. Public access creates a connection and sense of stewardship. AVC is made up of local people with the knowledge and ability to provide assistance. With your help, we can continue to work with you and on your behalf in northwestern Pennsylvania. If you have questions, would like to visit one of our properties or would like to talk with us about preserving your property, please contact us. Your support through membership is also appreciated.

Sincerely,

Deb Frawley,
President

Our Featured Landscape: The Allegheny River

by Andy Turner

With each newsletter we feature one of our properties and explore its human history, natural history, and the values it conserves. In this issue we turn our focus to the Allegheny River. The Allegheny isn't a property per se, but instead is a shared resource that offers our community benefits that include clean drinking water, varied recreational opportunities, and outstanding scenic values. It is also a hotspot of biological diversity, and is the last stronghold of species that have become endangered elsewhere. Because the conservation of these benefits and values is a core mission of the AVC, it is worthwhile to understand better the character of this remarkable river.

The Allegheny River is perhaps best known for its scenic beauty. The middle and upper segments of the river corridor are only lightly developed, and some reaches have no road access and minimal development. Steep forested slopes rise from the river and climb to the plateau above, large portions of which is publically owned. Bald Eagles are a common sight along the river, as are beaver, deer, turkeys, and other wildlife. The Seneca name for the river, the O-hee-yo, is said to mean "beautiful river". Centuries later it remains a popular destination for outdoors enthusiasts attracted by its spectacular scenic values.

The Allegheny River derives its beauty in part from its youth: geologically speaking, it is an infant, born at the end of the last ice age, about 15,000 years ago. For eons the major rivers of the region originated in the Allegheny Mountains to the east and flowed northwest. As glaciers advanced into Pennsylvania from the north at the height of the last ice age, they blocked river flow, and large lakes formed in western Pennsylvania and persisted for hundreds or perhaps thousands of years. The lakes eventually spilled over the edges of their basins and in catastrophic floods scoured new canyons through the bedrock at right angles to the existing valleys. These flood carved channels, along with segments of older streams, form the modern Allegheny, with its steep-sided valley deeply incised into the plateau.

Less visible than its scenic appeal, but perhaps even more notable, is the biodiversity of the river. The Allegheny River is one of North America's great biological treasures, as its clear and productive waters are home to nearly 100 species of fish and about 30 species of bivalve mussels. A half dozen of the mussel species are Federally listed as threatened or endangered due to declines in other portions of their range, but their Allegheny River populations are robust. Individual riffles may contain up to 50 species of minnows, darters, suckers, and other fishes. Remarkably, given the history of land use and industrialization in the watershed, the fish and mussel community are nearly intact, with relatively few invasive species and few local extinctions.

The Allegheny offers visitors an unparalleled variety of recreational opportunities. Anglers speak in hushed tones of the opportunities to catch trophy brown trout in the tailwater of Kinzua Dam, or of the monster muskellunge lurking in middle Allegheny. Bicyclists enjoy a well-developed network of trails that run alongside the Allegheny and several of its tributaries. Summer weekends find the river crowded with canoers and kayakers. In the fall, recreational focus shifts to the forests, where there is an abundance of deer, bear, and small game. The watershed contains large expanses of public lands including the Allegheny National Forest, state game lands, state forests, and state parks.



The river is a mecca for watersports, including fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and paddleboarding.

It should also be noted that the river provides those of us who live in the region with one of the most precious commodities of all: clean water. Municipalities up and down the river draw their water supply from the river directly or from wells driven into the glacial sediments along its banks, which in turn are hydrologically linked to the river. Commercial users also draw water from the river for various uses. Our communities are completely reliant on the river to provide us with this stable supply of clean water, and the Allegheny performs this task admirably well.

Clearly, the Allegheny River is a hugely valuable resource that deserves wise stewardship. The Allegheny Valley Conservancy places a high priority on conservation of riparian lands because of the broader benefits of protecting the river corridor. A healthy, forested riparian buffer is essential to clean water and protection of biological diversity. An intact riparian zone also attracts the outdoors enthusiasts that support an increasingly important part of the local economy. Thus, we are seeking to conserve riparian lands in order to protect water quality, recreational opportunities, scenic values, and biological diversity on a broad scale, and for generations to come.



The Sheepnose Mussel, one of a half-dozen mussel species listed on the Federal Threatened and Endangered list.



The River of the Year!

In recognition of its many exceptional values, the Allegheny River has been designated the 2017 Pennsylvania River of the Year. The Penn Soil Resource Conservation and Development Council (Penn Soil RC&D) is responsible for the winning nomination and will receive a \$10,000.00 leadership grant from the PA DCNR and the PA Organization of Watersheds and Rivers (POWR) to help coordinate and plan the River of the Year Celebration. The Allegheny River is among the most biologically diverse watersheds in Pennsylvania and is a federally designated National Wild and Scenic Recreation River. A series of public events will be held at various locations from the source of the Allegheny River in Potter County all the way downstream to the confluence with the Monongahela River in Pittsburgh. For a list of events, find more information on Penn Soil's website at www.pennsoil.org.

This informational piece was adapted from the Penn Soil RC&D press release authored by Wes Ramsey Executive Director of the Penn Soil RC&D Council.

Allegheny River Clean Up Set for August 26

The Allegheny Valley Conservancy (AVC) is planning to co-sponsor a public event with the Penn Soil RC&D. AVC, Penn Soil RC&D, and their partners will be hosting a river clean-up from Oil City to Franklin on August 26th, 2017. Participants can either walk or bike the trail alongside the river or they can choose to float the river and collect trash along the way. The event will start at 9:00 a.m. at the marina in Oil City. The event will end at the Salt Box trail head in Franklin. Pre-registration is requested but not required and can be done by e-mailing avcinfo@windstream.net, pre-registration deadline is August 18, 2017. Registration can be done the day of the event at the Oil City marina. Prizes will be awarded to the participants who collect the most trash, find the largest object and the most unique object. Everyone is welcome; children must be accompanied by an adult. Come prepared to get wet, get dirty and have fun!



For information about all of the activities of the Allegheny Valley Conservancy, check out our website at avc-pa.org. There you will find a list of our current easements, maps, photos and other details about our organization. Be sure to like us on FaceBook, too.

www.avc-pa.org

<https://www.facebook.com/alleghenyvalleyconservancy/>

Become a member of the Allegheny Valley Conservancy

Membership in the AVC benefits both you and the conservancy. The Allegheny Valley Conservancy has been working on identifying and protecting important areas in the watersheds of French Creek and the Allegheny River for many years, providing residents of the region with access to some of the most beautiful properties in the country. Helping landowners to preserve their open and natural spaces increases the quality of life for everyone. Complete and return this membership form with your check to P. O. Box 96, Franklin, PA 16323.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ St _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Membership Category:

Individual \$20 _____ Family \$25 _____ Patron \$50 _____

Benefactor \$100 _____ Lifetime \$1000 _____

Are there volunteer projects/skills you would like to contribute to the AVC, such as easement monitoring, research, fundraising, publicity, outreach, education?

Please return form with your check to the Allegheny Valley Conservancy, P.O. Box 96, Franklin, PA 16323.