



## *Overcoming Challenges on the Road to Restoration*



View of the modified mudsill constructed along Mill Creek in Waterford.

Despite what seemed like an endless summer of hiccups, including significant rainfall events and surprise threatened/endangered species, LWA and partners successfully completed several restoration projects in the upper watershed reaches to improve the water quality and in-stream habitat of two area waterways and a lake.

Thanks to funding provided through the PA Department of Environmental Protection's Stream Improvements Program, 400 feet along Mill Creek in the Waterford area was improved with modified mudsills installed as traditional and sawtooth structures, along with a log-framed cross vane. Restoration on additional sections of Mill Creek further downstream continued as part of the second phase of a Growing Greener grant funded effort, as this stream has been a priority area of concern. In particular, near the Ligonier Camp and Conference Center, due to heavy erosion which caused a breach in the streambank between the stream and a pond. This caused the constant

interchanging between warm water from the pond and cool water from the stream within this segment. Ultimately, 700 feet of stream restoration was completed here, with the construction of log-framed cross vanes, rootwad deflectors, modified mudsills, log-framed stone deflectors and a channel block to rebuild the bank entirely between the pond and stream.

A site on Fourmile Run was the final stream project of the summer, with the addition of 800 feet of restoration work. A large log jam that had collected a mass amount of debris over the years was removed to provide better water flow and aide with the sedimentation issues occurring in this section. Log-framed cross vanes, modified mudsills, rootwad deflectors and log-framed stone deflectors were also installed to provide fish habitat, prevent additional erosion and improve overall aquatic health within this subwatershed.

Efforts to assist the PA Fish & Boat Commission with improvements at Donegal Lake over the past several years continued this summer with the completion of lake shoreline restoration work - the first of its kind for LWA. Modified mudsills were installed along 600 feet of shoreline to provide stability and erosion protection near the existing boat launch area. A safe slope for recreationists to reach the water is now in place. In addition, the riparian area was re-planted with over 200 native shrubs and trees thanks to volunteers from First Energy, and a no-mow buffer area will be utilized to protect the restored bank. This unique project was made possible through a grant received from the PA Lake Management Society. As with all of our past stream restoration projects, we would like to thank our incredible partners from the PA Fish & Boat Commission, Western PA Conservancy, Westmoreland Conservation District and John Hardiman Excavating for working with Josh to improve our watershed.



Shoreline restoration along Donegal Lake.



# 2023 Happenings ...



Polar Plunge



Birdseed Fundraiser



Bluebird Society Workshop



Great Ligonier Valley Cleanup



Over the Hill Challenge



Loyalhanna Sojourn



Bootlegger's Ball



Westmoreland Croquet Club Tournament



Harvest Market Dinner & Dance



Art Auction Benefit



## Seasons of Change at LWA



Cathy Johnston (left) poses with an Eastern Hellbender Salamander during a stream assessment with the Western PA Conservancy.

Change is not always easy, especially when it's bitter-sweet. As first mentioned to our members and contributors in our year-end letter, LWA's most senior staff member, Cathy Johnston, has been at the center of the organization for nearly 25 years. Her unyielding dedication and commitment that has kept the organization running smoothly (from her favorite place, behind the scenes) could easily be noticed by anyone who walked into her office. Several years ago, someone came up with the perfect nickname for her - "The Oracle" - as she seemed to always know where things were and when things happened. So much so, we even programmed her office phone to have that name pop up when she would use the intercom! I am sure you will join us by wishing her all the best in this new retirement chapter in her storied career with LWA.



Tara Jellison (right) worked at her first-ever LWA event, the Annual Art Auction Benefit, on November 4.

In preparation for this, we have been fortunate to welcome a new member to our team, Tara Jellison. Tara originally began working with us in the spring alongside Lynne Donnelly, our environmental educator who also retired from teaching this past summer. Tara previously worked for many years as a classroom aide in the Ligonier Valley School District, with additional experience as a small business office manager and tax professional. In this brief time period, Tara has been an incredible asset to both our outreach and administrative operations, and we are pleased to welcome her officially as LWA's new Administrative & Outreach Manager beginning January 1.

Although Cathy will tell you that Tara is her "replacement," all who know her will agree that the shoes she leaves here just won't fit anyone else quite the same.

If you would like to send well-wishes to Cathy or Tara at the LWA office, we will make sure they get passed

## Partners in Education

Fall is always a bustling time for LWA's education programs, both in and out of the classroom. During this time, over 300 students participated in various programs where they learned about apples, owl pellets and everything in between!

One exceptional program effort involves a long-time partnership with the Capstone Class at Greater Latrobe Area High School. Led by veteran teacher Patrick Roberts, senior students at GLHS are exposed to many different opportunities to further their interest in environmental science, including working with LWA staff to electrofish Ninemile Run and exploring the Upper Latrobe AMD Treatment System. We enjoyed hosting Capstone students at the system on October 19, as they worked with 5th graders from Baggaley Elementary to learn about water quality and chemistry by using test kits to determine the health of the water and how passive treatment systems function.





## ***Riparian Buffer Assistance Pilot Program A Success!***



More than 1,100 feet of riparian buffer areas were newly planted along area waterways.

In 2021, the Loyalhanna Watershed Association (LWA) embarked on an ambitious project to re-assess over 100 miles of streams within the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed. The purpose of this effort was to further examine the health of these streams that were identified as “restoration priorities” from the original assessment plan completed in 2005. One common impact to stream health observed on practically every stream segment from this assessment was riparian buffer habitat loss, which led to the development of a new pilot effort by LWA to provide assistance to landowners with property along these key waterway segments.

The Riparian Buffer Landowner Assistance Program involved the development of an educational brochure that contains information on what riparian buffers are, why they are important and steps landowners can take to improve their properties. A total of 31 landowners were contacted along stream segments of greatest concern: Loyalhanna Creek mainstem, Mill Creek, Ninemile Run, Laughlinton Run and Twomile Run. Three sites were ultimately selected for restoration, including the Loyalhanna Creek, an unnamed tributary to the Loyalhanna Creek and an unnamed tributary to Mill Creek.

In total, 50 native trees and 75 native shrub species were planted along 1,130 linear feet of stream riparian area under the direction of BluAcres, LLC.. It is our hope that this project will continue to be offered annually/bi-annually to landowners within the Loy-

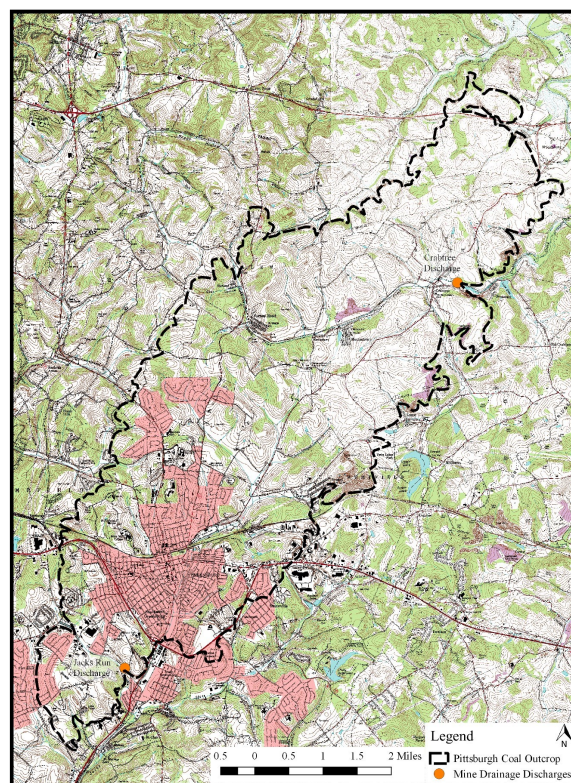
alhanna Creek Watershed. If you are interested in having your property considered for a future project effort, please contact Josh Penatzer, Director of Environmental Projects, at [josh@loyalwater.com](mailto:josh@loyalwater.com) or (724) 238-7560, ext. 2#.

## ***First-Round AML/AMD Grant Awarded for Crabtree Project***

A \$382,909 grant was awarded to LWA in August from the PA Department of Environmental Protection through the recently created Abandoned Mine Land and Acid Mine Drainage Program. This program is a result of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding that came to Pennsylvania, where \$3.7 billion is committed to reclaiming eligible abandoned mine lands and treating mine drainage throughout the state over the next 15 years.

The grant awarded was from the first program round funded by the DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, and will support costs associated with the investigation of pumping treatment alternatives for the Crabtree Creek Discharge, the largest source of AMD pollution in the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed. LWA is pleased to work once again with Hedin Environmental on this effort to further examine the mine pool hydrology contributing to the discharge and determine all viable treatment alternatives, including the potential of pumping the mine water to a site suitable for treatment.

Crabtree has been the focus of our AMD restoration efforts since 2017, with a goal after the completion of this project, to develop the most effective system for both water treatment and long-term operation & maintenance.



# 2024 Upcoming Events

## JANUARY



**Polar Plunge at  
Keystone State Park**  
**Saturday, January 6**  
**10:00 am start**

Plunge into 2024 and start the New Year off with a “cool” 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](http://www.latroberecreation.org)
- Deadline to register is January 2



## MARCH

### PA Bluebird Society Workshop

**Saturday, March 2**  
**10:00 am - noon**



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

- Nimick Family Education Center at the Watershed Farm
- Free! One bluebird box per household, limited to the first 50!
- To register, contact Susan Huba at [susan@loyalwater.com](mailto:susan@loyalwater.com) or (724) 238-7560, ext. 1#

## APRIL



**Over The Hill Challenge**  
**Saturday, April 20**  
**10:00 am start**

Calling all Challengers! The third 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 over a 5K course. Come join us and our partners from Greater Latrobe Parks & Recreation for this one-of-a-kind outdoor event.

- \$30 per adult; \$15 for students
- Register Online at <https://OTH2024.eventbrite.com>



**53<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
Membership Dinner**  
**Friday, April 26**  
**6:00 - 8:30 pm**



LWA's annual membership dinner is a great time for camaraderie and reflection on our recent accomplishments in conservation. Join other LWA members for a delicious buffet dinner by Simply Good Catering and fabulous entertainment in the Barn!

- Invitations will be mailed in April
- For more information, contact Tara at [tara@loyalwater.com](mailto:tara@loyalwater.com) or (724) 238-7560, ext. 3#



**Great Ligonier Valley  
Cleanup**  
**Saturday, April 27**  
**9:00 am - noon**

Celebrate Earth Day 2024 by volunteering for our annual Great Ligonier Valley Cleanup! Individuals and groups of all ages are able to participate in this spring community cleanup event of state and township roads throughout the Ligonier Valley!

- 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 [josh@loyalwater.com](mailto:josh@loyalwater.com).

## MAY



**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Loyalhanna Sojourn**  
**Saturday, May 18**  
**9:00 am start**

Paddle 9 miles of the Loyalhanna Creek from Latrobe to New Alexandria in this exciting on-the-water event! Shuttle transportation, insurance and a commemorative t-shirt included.

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

**DETAILS COMING SOON!**

**Jeep Rally in the Valley**  
**Sunday, May 19**  
**The Watershed Farm**





## ***LWA Honored as Nonprofit of the Year***



From L-R: Susan Huba, Hugh Brallier, Kim Bellas, Tom Smith, Wilma Light and Josh Penatzer attended the Ligonier Chamber's Annual Dinner to accept the Nonprofit of the Year Award.

**L**WA was honored by the Ligonier Valley Chamber of Commerce as the Nonprofit of the Year at their 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Dinner held at Foggy Mountain Lodge on April 27. Members of LWA's board and staff were joined by over 100 other guests celebrating the recognition of the organization, as well as other businesses and individuals from the Ligonier Valley. Executive Director, Susan Huba, Project Manager, Josh Penatzer, and Board Members, Hugh Brallier, Kim Bellas, Wilma Light and Tom Smith, accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

One of the Association's greatest accomplishments has been the ability to work with so many different groups of people, businesses and organizations from throughout the Loyalhanna Creek Watershed and the Ligonier Valley headwaters area in particular. These partnerships are what has made the organization what it is today.

LWA would like to again thank the Ligonier community for this incredibly meaningful award!

### ***Board of Directors***

Thomas Smith, Esq., President

Wink Knowles, Vice President

David Miller, Treasurer

Daryle Fish, Ph.D., Secretary

Kim Bellas

Hugh Brallier, MD

Roger Brown

Conrad Bures, MD

Alan Christianson, MD

Brian Jones

Wilma Light, MD

JoAnn Thistlethwaite, Ph.D.

Donna Wenzel, Ph.D.

### ***Staff***

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**Tara Jellison, Administrative & Outreach Manager**

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Want to become more involved with LWA as a volunteer or committee member?

Contact us today!



Instagram

