

Volume 36

Sep/Oct/Nov 2014



A View from "The Edge"

"Autumn is a second spring when every leaf is a flower."

- Albert Camus

Editor
Mary Ellen Bard
Amie Fritchman

2014 Family Days

For 2014 we took our two day Family Day event to two different locations. Our first day, held at Duman Lake County Park, yielded a crowd of 160 participants and our second day at the 1889 Park in St. Michael was complete with 140 family members. The weather cooperated and families appreciated the diverseness in having the event at different locations.

We want to thank our supportive sponsors for their donations of snacks, beverage and monetary donation: Coca-Cola, Sheetz, Snyder's of Berlin and the Cambria County Farm Bureau. A big thank you to our wonderful presenters as well who helped to make Family Days a success. We've received many suggestions for next year and we are already in the planning stages for 2015.

Day One

"This was such wonderful fun! Even with a two year old in tow, this was a wonderful day and great memories made."

Paddle Power: The Fish and Boat Commission had their canoes and safety equipment in tow for our canoeing station. Family members learned the importance of boating safety and were fitted with a PFD (Personal Flotation Device). Instructions were given on how to safely enter and exit a canoe and the proper paddling techniques. Cruising the lake was very enjoyable as the current was calm and the water was just the right depth.



Bird Business: Interns from the Pennsylvania Game Commission joined forces to present a program about the Eastern Blue Bird, informing our guests about the personality of the beautiful song bird, and the steps that have been taken to increase the population of the bird in our area by creating habitat through box trails. After the lesson, each person was able to test their hammer skills in putting together a bird box to take home.

Treasure Quest: Have you ever heard of a legend? Not the "story" kind of legend, but a map legend. At this station family members learned how to read a map legend, which helped in finding specific points on a topographical map, aerial map, and park map. After the map lesson we traveled back in time and taught our guests how to use an old fashioned GPS – the compass. After learning how to operate and read direction on the compass, our guests were given coordinates in order to find a hidden treasure in the park.



African Dancing: Members of the Kulani Dance group of Johnstown, enthusiastically led our youth in a vigorous dance routine for the special program on day one. Our instructors taught special African language and dance steps, putting together a full dance that kept the youngsters moving. After the dance, they were all given an opportunity to make their own rhythm on different African drums.

(Continued on pg. 6)

Inside this issue:

Meet the Staff	2
District Picnic	2
AmeriCorps/Interns Comings and Goings	3
Streambank Stabilization Projects	4
Keep Cambria County Beautiful	5
Environmental Education Program	5
Family Days (continued)	6
Cambria Co. Senior Environment Corps	7

Special Dates to Remember

- October 3:* *Board Meeting, 10:30 am*
Legislative Lunch, 12:00pm
- October 4:* *Apple Cider Festival*
- November 6:* *Board Meeting, 10 am*
- Nov 11, 27, 28:* *Office Closed, Holidays*

Meet the Staff

*Each issue we'll introduce you to the wonderful people who serve the Conservation District.
Today, meet our
Watershed Specialist
Bryan Rabish*



Bryan joined our staff as an AmeriCorps member in 1998 where he served two years as a Water Quality Field Technician. In 2000 he was hired full time as a Watershed Specialist. He graduated from the California University of Pennsylvania with a BS in Wildlife Biology. His duties include all aspects of water quality. Within the last few years he has been monitoring several county waterways with dataloggers and relaying information to the municipalities. He is an active member of the Chest Creek Watershed Alliance and the Clearfield Creek Watershed Association. Bryan has a passion for entomology and is a very important member of our education team leading programs in macroinvertebrates and stream health. More recently he has been given additional duties in our Erosion & Sedimentation Department, reviewing plans/permits and conducting inspections. He is a jack of all trades to our office operations and a valuable member of our team.



Conservation District Picnic

On Thursday, August 7, after the evening Board of Directors Meeting the District hosted our annual picnic at the Wilmore Reservoir. The weather was perfect for a picnic and the company was great. Staff, Directors, Associate Directors and their families came to enjoy lovely conversation and delicious food catered by Sassy



Sisters of Portage, and ice cream served up by the Cambria County Dairy Princess, Maria Minor and her Ambassador, Madison Ringler.



After the meal, Robb Piper explained the improvements at the Reservoir from Streambank Restoration Projects that were completed within the last year at the upper and lower ends of the dam, and along the fishing area/boat launch at the picnic area on Law Road.

AmeriCorps and Intern Comings and Goings

AmeriCorps member, Becky Bard, completed a 300 hour stint at the district beginning in April. She was instrumental in assisting with our annual tree sale, newsletters, awards banquet, family days and many other assignments that came up throughout the spring and summer. Her volunteer hours allowed her to gain an education award that she will use while attending Mount Aloysius College. The months of April through August are quite busy at the district and Becky's assistance was greatly appreciated. We wish her well in her last year at Mount Aloysius and her future endeavors.



Diane Thomas completed her AmeriCorps term in August. While with us she was responsible for coordinating and conducting education programs and assisting with the care of our education center and its inhabitants. Diane was also given the opportunity to work alongside our other staff to learn more about monitoring dataloggers, manure management, erosion and sedimentation controls, and streambank stabilization. Diane's passion for the outdoors made it quite easy for her to put together programs of interest for our school children. We want to thank Diane for her help and wish her the best as she seeks employment in the environmental science field.

During the summer we were fortunate to have three interns from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown. Kevin Ross, Travis Gates, and Aaron Keilman, began in May. One of their first duties was to assist with an outdoor education program for the Greater Johnstown 6th grade. Projects that they completed for their credits include: farm visits – informing farmers of new regulations and handing out materials for Manure Management, assisting with our pasture field day, putting together a map/compass program for a Family Day station, making identification buttons for our event participants and assisting with stations during the Family Day event. While we had extra manpower, they helped load many tires for the Keep Cambria County Beautiful tire collection. All three interns successfully completed their internships. While Travis and Aaron will continue with studies at UPJ, Kevin has graduated and moved to Vermont for employment. Thanks for your help!



Kevin Ross, Travis Gates, Aaron Keilman

As we lost AmeriCorps and Intern help, we gained two new AmeriCorps members at the end of August. We are thrilled to have two full-time members: Amie Fritchman and Noah Kolar.



Amie comes to us from the eastern part of the state, as a graduate of Lock Haven University, where she received a BS in Marine Biology. She has an expansive list of experience in working with people in many different aspects and is sure to be an asset in working as one of our Environmental Education Specialists. Her background in biology and her interests in fish and wildlife are sure to be assets in putting together education programs and projects.



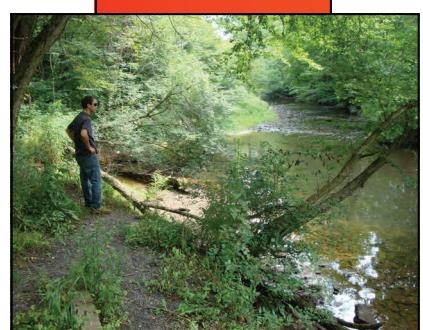
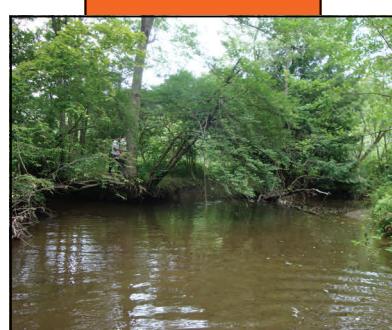
Noah is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown where he earned a BA in Geography and Political Science and a Masters degree in GeoEnvironmental Studies from Shippensburg University. As a native of Cambria county, Noah is familiar with some of the environmental issues facing our area and has an interest in finding solutions to those problems. He is currently a member of the National Guard, a specialist in the 1/104 ARB.

Streambank Stabilization Projects

In late summer 2013, with project funds provided through THE FOUNDATION FOR PA WATERSHEDS via GenOn Settlement Funds, (www.pennsylvaniawatersheds.org), the Conservation District completed several projects stabilizing areas of stream banks and providing fish habitat along the North Branch of the Little Conemaugh River and Howell's Run. The original plans were to stabilize four areas, three sites along the North Branch and one on Howell's Run. There was an additional project done to stabilize the shoreline at Wilmore dam along the pavilion point. Patrick road, which is the entrance on the Munster Township side of the reservoir, received underdrains and French mattresses to control erosion. We received two grants for these projects. The first grant came from the Foundation of Pennsylvania Watersheds for \$58,000 and the second grant was from the Southern Alleghenies Conservancy in the amount of \$45,000. Here is a view of our projects a year later.

North Branch of the Little Conemaugh

Before



After



Before



Wilmore Dam Pavilion Point



Patrick Road

After



**C
S
A**



Keep Cambria County Beautiful



KEEP
CAMBRIA COUNTY
Beautiful

FALL 2014 TIRE & APPLIANCE COLLECTION

Passenger & Lt. Truck Tires*

Off Rim: \$1.00

On Rim: \$2.00

Household Appliances

Freon Containing: \$6.00

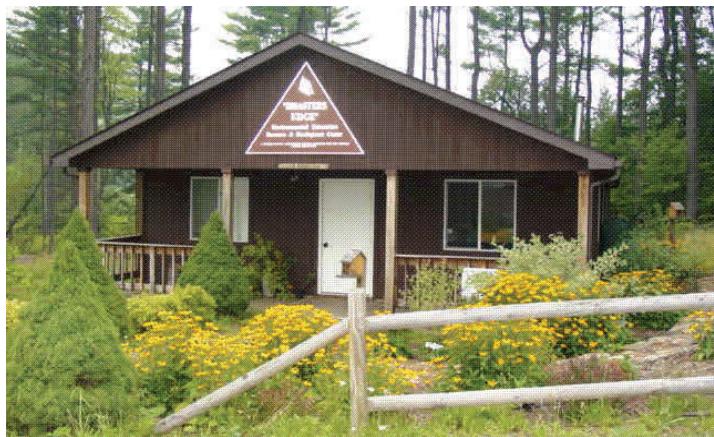
FALL COLLECTION DATES AND LOCATIONS (8:00 am to 1:00 pm):

Sept. 20, 2014—Summerhill Township—Take Rt. 869 East to Beaverdale, left onto Irvin St.—Building on left.

Sept. 27, 2014—Tunnelhill Borough Municipal Building located at 808 Portage St., Gallitzin.

*Call our office at 472-2120 if you have any questions.

Environmental Programs



In School Programs—\$2.00/person
Programs at Disaster's Edge—\$1.00/person

The District offers Environmental Education programs for area Schools, Scouts Troops, and Clubs at a minimal cost. Programs can be brought to you or you can come to our Environmental Education Center in St. Michael. Here is a sampling of the education curriculum currently being offered for the fall.

Pumpkin Process—Students learn about germination and pollination with hands on work in measuring, calculating, and determining how pumpkins develop in size and color. (Edge)

The Miracle Bean—Students discover how soybeans are grown, processed and used in many of their everyday items. Special experiments aid in understanding the process and benefits of the bean. (Edge)

Corn Craze—Students will learn how corn gets from the “Tassle to the Table”, with hands on games and experiments. A history lesson is involved as they learn where corn originated. (Edge)

Wetland Ecology—Students tour a local wetland as they learn about the characteristics and function of wetlands and the important role they play for wildlife and humans. (Edge)

4.1 Watersheds & Wetlands; 4.2 Renewable and nonrenewable Resources; 4.3 Environmental Health; 4.6 Ecosystems and their Interactions

Migration Mysteries—We'll investigate bird habitats, adaptations, and the mysteries of migration. (Edge or in classroom).

4.3 Environmental Health; 4.6 Ecosystems and their Interactions; 4.7 Threatened, Endangered and Extinct Species, 4.8 Humans and the Environment.

Go Green with Trees—Students learn the effects of trees on the ecosystem, learn how to identify tree species, and determine the stage of succession of a woodland or forest. (Edge).

4.2 Renewable and nonrenewable Resources; 4.3 Environmental Health; 4.4 Agriculture and Society; 4.6 Ecosystems and their Interactions; 4.7 Threatened, Endangered and Extinct Species; 4.8 Humans and the Environment.

Seeds & Frogs—Students investigate the life cycles of plants and animals, recycle a plastic bottle to create a miniature terrarium, and observe the various stages of tadpole development (Edge or Classroom)

4.1 Watershed & Wetlands; 4.3 Environmental Health; 4.4 Agriculture and Society; 4.6 Ecosystems and their Interactions; 4.7 Threatened, Endangered and Extinct Species.

Dirt...you got to Dig It—Students learn the secrets of soil composition, percolation and the effects these qualities play on the local ecosystem. (Edge or outdoor classroom area at school).

4.3 Environmental Health; 4.4 Agriculture and society; 4.6 Ecosystems and their Interactions; 4.8 Humans and the Environment.

NOTE: We can design a program which fits your needs, and is aligned with PDE Environment & Ecology Standards. All activities are geared toward the age and skill level of our participants. Please call our Education staff for more information.

District Office (814) 472-2120

Disaster's Edge (814) 495-4380 or 243-5069

Family Days (cont.)

Day Two

"It was awesome! The day was just too much fun! I am glad to come back Friday!"

Water Works: DEP Educator, Jack Farster, quizzed our families on their water saving knowledge, and then led them on a water scavenger hunt. As kids tried to find the correct water saving items, Jack explained how each item was used to conserve, or recycle water. They learned how they could use water barrels, living walls, and plants to filter water. Many water saving times and household items were shown to the parents as well to help reduce water consumption in the home, ultimately reducing cost.



View the Clue: Seth Mesoras, Wildlife Conservation Officer for the Pennsylvania Game Commission , along with interns, led our visitors on a crime solving spree, looking for the culprits of a deer poaching crime and turkey talking outlaw. The children were involved in looking for clues and details to consider when putting the investigation pieces together. After the crimes were solved, the interns introduced the families to many animal pelts from species that are found in our area and told some interesting stories about the animals.

Ready to Rock: Do you ever wonder how the earth splits, or moves during earthquakes, or how fossils are formed? After this session, our students could simulate plates of stone moving by using graham crackers and icing. Special rock specimens were shared and viewed up close, with explanation of each specimen by our staff geologist, Jackie Ritko. After understanding how fossils are formed, each person was able to create their own fossil to take home.



"The Bugman": Our special program for day 2 gave our children and parents alike, a chance to squirm or scream, as Ryan Bridge, better known as "The Bugman" did an awesome entomology lesson. During his lesson he pointed out the parts of insects, and the differences between moths and butterflies, beetles and spiders and the like, all the while stressing that bugs are "Just trying to live another day." After his lesson, he had many specimens to look at and many large insects for the children to handle. It's not every day that you get to hold a tarantula or giant grasshopper!

"We all love Family Days and look forward to it and the years to come."



We are so appreciative to all presenters and volunteers for sharing their time and expertise, helping to make Family Days the fun-filled, affordable, and educational event it has become. We want to thank the 2014 Dairy Princess, Maria Minor, for stopping by both days to meet the campers and give them a delicious ice cream treat! Thank you to our District Staff, AmeriCorps members, Interns, and volunteers for making these two days the best days of summer.



We especially want to thank the following businesses for their generous donations:



Check out our Facebook page to see more Family Days pictures!

Cambria County Senior Environment Corps

The Cambria County Conservation District has recently partnered with Nature Abounds, a national non-profit organization based in Pennsylvania, to establish a Cambria County chapter of the Pennsylvania Senior Environment Corps.

The Senior Environment Corps (SEC) program engages volunteers mostly aged 55 and over. SEC volunteers are engaged in numerous activities from water quality monitoring, stream habitat assessment, storm-drain stenciling, environmental education, community gardening, wildlife surveying, marking abandoned oil and gas wells, and cleaning up parks and trails.



Nature Abounds provided water quality monitoring kits and initial volunteer training in collaboration with the Blair County chapter in May of 2014. Members of the newly formed Cambria County SEC are currently monitoring streams in the Little Conemaugh and Blacklick Creek Watersheds, measuring temperature, stream flow, pH, alkalinity, nitrates, dissolved oxygen, sulfates, and conductivity monthly. Twice a year macroinvertebrate counts will be made. This data will be used by the conservation district to develop new restoration projects and evaluate the effectiveness of existing projects.

Members will meet periodically for training, quality control instruction, data analysis, and to explore cooperative projects with the Cambria County Conservation District.

Since 1997, SEC volunteers in Pennsylvania have contributed over 2,000,000 hours, and their contribution is estimated to be of value to the state at over \$3 million per year. If you are interested in learning more about the Environment Corps, please contact Jackie Ritko at (814) 472-2120.

Cambria County Senior



Cambria County Senior Corp members, Greg McDonnell, Dave Lehman, Nick Molnar and Ron Muldoon are learning about water sample protocols and equipment.



401 Candlelight Drive
Suite 229
Ebensburg, PA 15931

Phone: (814) 472-2120
Fax: (814) 472-0686
Email: cccd@co.cambria.pa.us

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Ebensburg, PA 15931

Return Service Requested

- If you wish to be added or removed from our mailing list, please contact the Cambria County Conservation District office at (814) 472-2120.
- If you would like to help conserve resources and receive your newsletter via email, send your email address to bard@co.cambria.pa.us
- Help us get the word out—"like" us on Facebook and ask your friends to do the same!

www.co.cambria.pa.us/conservation

and



Where is Disaster's Edge Environmental Education Center?

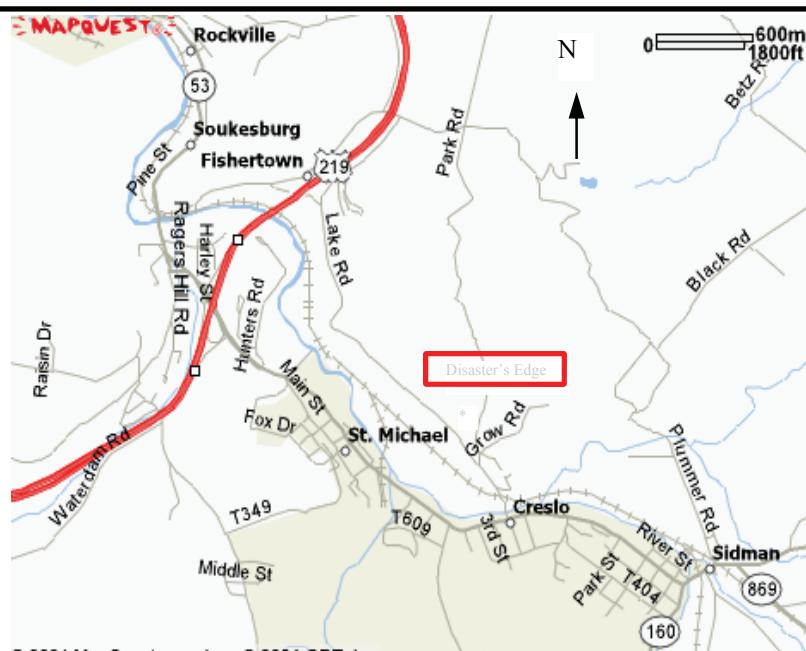
Take Route 219 North/South to the Sidman/St. Michael exit. At the bottom of the ramp, turn onto Route 869 toward Sidman and the Johnstown Flood National Memorial. Travel approximately 3 miles. Turn left onto Lake Road, traveling over the bridge then over the railroad tracks and entering the 1889 Park. Disaster's Edge Environmental Education Center will be on the right across from the baseball field and the coal miners museum.

Call Jackie Ritko at the Cambria County Conservation District Office to schedule programs or to discuss events.

**138 Park Road
St. Michael, PA 15951**

Mission Statement

The Cambria County Conservation District educates and assists the public through programs, projects, and leadership in the stewardship of natural resources to sustain and enhance the quality of life.



© 2004 MapQuest.com, Inc.; © 2004 GDT, Inc.
Road Map to The Disasters Edge Environmental Education Center.