



# Penns Valley Conservation Association

[www.pennsvalley.net](http://www.pennsvalley.net)

Fall 2005

## “A PENNS CREEK COMPANION”— PVCA’S NEW BOOK

Sometime in November look for PVCA’s new venture into the world of publishing. In the Spring of 2003, Doug Macneal applied for a grant on our behalf to the Centre County Tourism Bureau. His proposal was to write and publish a guide book to the upper Penns Creek watershed region that would entice tourists, particularly Penn State football game attendees, to stick around a little and smell the roses in our valleys. The more central purpose of the book, as he explained it to fellow Board members, is to sharpen residents’ awareness of the fragile beauty of our natural, ecological, and historical surroundings, and advance the readership of the wonderful Upper Penns Creek Inventory we published three years ago. Though it’s full of colorful maps, photos, and diagrams, and crammed with information on the Web at [www.pennsvalley.net](http://www.pennsvalley.net), few people take advantage of its accessibility.

Admittedly, “A Penns Creek Companion” is an easier read. The tourism grant (paid for by a set-aside of the hotel room tax just repealed) came through and was followed by a grant from Centre County Community Foundation, enabling PVCA to pay for the printing using only \$1500 of our own funds. The 204-page book contains nine chapters, over a hundred photographs (thirty in full color), seventeen maps including a fold-out, and twenty charts and sketches. Is it possible to spend two and a half years writing a book only 204 pages long? “Seems more like five years,” comes Doug’s instant reply.

The book understands the “upper Penns Creek watershed” as Penns and Brush Valleys, the five ‘German’ townships of Centre County: Haines, Penn, Gregg, Potter, and Miles. Its first chapter, telling from a local perspective the geological

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## Introducing Kristen Saacke-Blunk

The Penns Valley Conservation Association has a new Environmental Education Coordinator! Kristen Saacke-Blunk has joined PVCA’s partnership with the Penns Valley Area School District to bring environmental and wetland education into the K-12 curriculum. Kristen is already hard at work, meeting teachers and administrators, developing curriculum, working with the Environmental and other education standards, and making plans for classes and field trips throughout the school year.

Kristen comes to us with outstanding recommendations and with a wealth of experience and qualifications that suit her perfectly for this position.

- Teaching: She has many years of wetland and environmental education experience with preschool through high school aged students at private and public schools in the Centre Region through her work at the Cooperative Wetlands Center, the Millbrook

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**Join us for...**

**“Trash Talk”**

**PVCA’s Fall Membership Meeting**

**Thursday, Nov. 10<sup>th</sup> at 7:00pm**

*See announcement pg 8*



PO Box 165  
Aaraonsburg, PA 16820  
www.pennsvalley.net

## Our Mission

*PVCA serves as a steward of the Upper Penns Creek watershed and all its communities. We work to protect and conserve Penns Valley's waters, farmland, forests, and the heritage upon which its vibrant rural quality of life depends. We do this by organizing and supporting activities that promote healthy natural systems and foster local economies.*

- *PVCA works towards the conservation of Penns Valley's natural resources, historical features and heritage, and economic well-being.*
- *PVCA continues to monitor water quality and to promote public awareness of watershed issues.*
- *PVCA organizes streambank and roadside litter cleanups.*
- *PVCA works with farmers to promote economically and ecologically sound agricultural practices.*

## President's Column

--by Gary Gyekis--

Here it is, Oct 8 already. Only 330 days until CRICKFEST (2006)! I don't know about you, but I look forward to CRICKFEST all year long. Each one seems like it was the best yet, and 2005 was no exception.

Now that the word is out, people are coming from all over for the outstanding, locally grown food, the toe tapping music, the arts and crafts, the workshops, displays, demonstrations and games. Everywhere you can see the kids with smiling faces, wearing their newly created CRICKFEST T-shirts. New friends and old meet under the trees and tents and this year, under the most brilliant blue late summer sky imaginable. What a way to celebrate our watershed and the bounty of the harvest season!

It is impossible for me to thank everyone who made this event happen, because there are so many of you and my memory is faulty and this newsletter is using up enough trees as it is. But I would like to thank everyone who contributed lots of time planning, setting up and cleaning up, cooking, as well as the donations of money, knowledge, items for the silent auction, music, etc... All of this volunteer effort is what CRICKFEST is all about. Thanks also to all the hundreds of folks who turned out to have a good time. You can be proud of your contributions, from which all profits go to help support PVCA's Environmental Education Program in the Penns Valley community and in the School District.

Special thanks go out to Mother Nature, for providing the most perfect weather, to the CDT for very good coverage of the event both before and after, and especially to Barbara Lange, "Boss Lady of the Kitchen", Ian Smith, "Grillmeister", and all the others that helped to grow, cook and serve the awesome food. Noteworthy also were the fabulous MacGillicuddies, who brought us the irresistible Zydeco beat from Louisiana by way of Ithaca.

Planning for the next CRICKFEST, which will be held Sunday, September 3, 2006, has already begun. If you would like to be involved with planning and participating in this and other public outreach events organized by PVCA, please contact me, Gary Gyekis, at [gyekis@uplink.net](mailto:gyekis@uplink.net), for information about meetings of the fun-loving Community Outreach Committee.



--Gary Gyekis

Find your place on the planet. Dig in, and take responsibility from there.

--Gary Snyder

## The Wetlands at Cooke Tavern

--by Kristen Saake-Blunk

In the short time that I've served as PVCA's environmental education coordinator, I've heard a dozen or so different names for the beautiful floodplain area on Greg and Mary Kay Williams' property behind Cooke Tavern. This newly restored wetland area is the result of a partnership between the Williams, PVCA, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Ducks Unlimited. The Williams have generously made this resource available to Penns Valley's school-aged children for outdoor wetland classroom programs.

What will be the name of this special place? In a conversation with Mary Kay last week, I learned that she and Greg are eager to hear ideas from the students who study there on what to name this wetland. From past experiences I've had in the field with students suggesting names for natural features, it is always heartening to hear that their tendency to name geographic features is based more on what they observe or sense and not on the current or past ownership of a site. As adults, it's common that we refer to an unnamed geographic feature based on who owns it – "oh, that's Taylor's creek," or "the Jones' sinkhole". For children, however, natural resources like creeks and wetlands are places they know by experience, not places they know by who the owner is. Here in central Pennsylvania, I've heard suggestions from children for unnamed tributaries or wetlands like "Bug Heaven", "Muddy Place" or "Teasel Town".

Here lies a wonderful opportunity to involve the students in the naming of an important natural resource and geographic feature in the Penns Valley watershed. The lesson that could accompany this might include a look at how natural features are historically named in this area. What makes a running body of water a creek? A run? A stream? What makes a wet area a wetland? A marsh? A bog?

I've visited the wetland at Cooke's Tavern only

*Penns Valley 5<sup>th</sup> graders studying the wetland*

three times so far. It's uniqueness – some of it good, some of it a management challenge – all present possibilities for how we refer to this place. Some of the features I've noticed include:

\* *Mainstem floodplain* – The area immediately adjacent to Penn's Creek has many features of a wetland that is referred to as a "mainstem floodplain" by scientists using the HGM (hydrogeomorphic) wetland classification system. The wetland adjacent to Penns Creek is influenced primarily by overflow of the creek under storm or high flow conditions.

\* *Riparian depression* – The restored wetland area that has become open water or ponds can be referred to as riparian depressions mostly because they have a low area, and they are influenced by water coming from the stream system.

\* *Slope wetland* – In at least two areas of the restored wetland, there are swaths of green where it appears that water is moving either across the land or close to the surface of the ground, providing hydric soils for assorted sedges and wetland grasses to grow. Interestingly, the non-native plant, purple loosestrife, has not overtaken these areas.

\* *Purple loosestrife* – The restored area has become a purple loosestrife haven! While this has resulted in beautiful waves of purple flowers that bloom profusely from August into September, it has also choked out other herbaceous wetland plants, namely sedges, from flourishing there. Past efforts to control

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## PVCA Receives Stream Bank Fencing and Ag BMP Grant

--by Tom Doman

The Penns Valley Conservation Association has been awarded a grant by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to continue the stream bank fencing and agricultural best management practices initiative. The \$40,000 grant was obtained by the PVCA Watershed Committee through the Chesapeake Bay Small Watershed Grants program of the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The goal of the project is to reduce non-point source pollution and improve water quality in the Upper Penns Creek Watershed by increasing the number of farms using agriculture Best Management Practices (BMPs). Stream bank fencing, riparian buffer stabilization and control of storm water run off from farms with emphasis on management of nutrients and manure will be employed to achieve water quality improvements.

Agriculture is the dominant industry and land use in the watershed. Surface and groundwater quality are highly influenced by agricultural practices. Agricultural BMPs are identified as one of the six strategies for implementation by the *Upper Penns Creek Watershed Assessment*, completed by PVCA in 2002. The current proposal is a continuation of two highly *Cooke Tavern Wetlands*, continued from p. 3

the purple loosestrife at this location have likely helped but not solved the problem. There are a number of management options for controlling the purple loosestrife population that we'll be exploring with the students this year including the possible introduction of beetle species that eat only purple loosestrife roots and leaves.

I look forward to learning more about what makes this wetland unique – particularly through the eyes of our children who will study there. And I suspect that the right name for this special place will be made apparent through these children's observations.



*A PVCA stream bank fencing and livestock crossing project, established in 2002 on the Jason Lehman farm near Woodward.*

successful projects, the *Stream Bank Fencing Initiative* and *Assessment Implementation Strategies*, which received funding through PADEPs Growing Greener grant program.

A Project Coordinator will be hired to conduct outreach, perform on-site evaluations of farms for ranking score, and enroll farmers in the initiative. Priority will be given to farm lands along waterways on the DEP 303 d list. PVCA will attempt to provide participating farmers with 100% cost coverage for fencing, manure diversion or manure runoff controls, riparian buffer restoration, etc. through partnering, leveraging funds, donated materials and volunteer participation. Working under direction of a designated PVCA Watershed Committee liaison, the Project Coordinator will obtain landowner agreements, all necessary permits, direct construction of stream crossings, and installation of fencing and supervise plantings.

A requirement of the grant is contribution by PVCA of matching funds, in-kind services or materials totaling \$15,000. Additional funding for the Stream Bank Fencing and Ag BMP Initiative is being sought through foundations, government agencies and private sources.

The anticipated start date of the project is spring of 2006. The project will continue through two growing seasons. To volunteer for the Fencing and Ag BMP project please contact the Watershed Committee chair, Tom Doman via email at [jtd1@psu.edu](mailto:jtd1@psu.edu) or phone at 814-364-9142. Landowners interested in participating in the project should also contact the Watershed Committee.

**Introducing Kristen Saake-Blunk, continued from p. 1**

Marsh Nature Center, and the Clearwater Conservancy. She has also provided a variety of teacher training and continuing education programs. Kristen comes to us highly recommended as an excellent teacher with the ability to engage students at all age levels, and to work effectively with teachers, administrators and the community.

- **Environmental Outreach:** Kristen was the first Executive Director at the Clearwater Conservancy. She established their first permanent office and new staff positions, a watershed newsletter, and a variety of environmental and watershed projects. Later, she developed programs and funding for watershed protection through the Spring Creek Watershed Commission. For the past five years she has been an Associate at the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center where she developed an integrated assessment of the aquatic condition of the Spring Creek Watershed and conducted community outreach programs on wetland and watershed education for school, university, businesses and NGO's.

- **Education:** Kristen has a B.S in Biology from Virginia Polytechnic and State University, and recently completed a Masters of Forest Resources (M.F.R.) in Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at Penn State University.

**Grant writing:** Kristen has written numerous successful grants for a wide variety of environmental and other initiatives. Funders have included PA DEP Growing Greener, National Fish & Wildlife Foundation, Centre

Community Foundation, the EPA Environmental Education Grant program, Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay(outreach) and others.

- **Other:** She has developed a local celebration for the international World Wetlands Day Programs. She participated in the start-up of a unique Tennessee State program for pollution prevention by business and industry, helped establish benchmarks for toxic emissions and authored a white paper for the Tennessee Legislature on environmental justice. She also served as an environmental planner and managed a biological monitoring program.

The search committee for our new environmental educator included Tim Bowser, representing the PVCA Board, Kathy Kapinus, elementary teacher at Rebersburg representing the Penns Valley Area School District, and Loanne Snavely, PVCA's environmental education grants coordinator. Members of the PVCA Board, Greg and Mary Kay Williams (owners of the wetlands used in our educational programs and field trips) and Dave Long (wetlands grant coordinator) also had the opportunity to participate in the interview process and provide input. We were fortunate to have outstanding candidates in our search for the Environmental Education Coordinator. Although the choice was difficult, the PVCA Board and the search committee and participants were unanimous in their decision to welcome Kristen Saacke-Blunk as our new Environmental Education Coordinator.



*Yes! I would like to support PVCA activities to preserve and protect our beautiful region! Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation.*

\_\_\_\_\_ \$10      \_\_\_\_\_ \$25      \_\_\_\_\_ \$50      \_\_\_\_\_ \$100      \_\_\_\_\_ Other

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Company/Farm** \_\_\_\_\_

**Mailing Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email** \_\_\_\_\_

*Please complete this slip and mail with your contribution today!*

**Thank You for Your Support!**

Penns Valley Conservation Association

PO Box 165, Aaronsburg, PA 16820 [www.pennsvalley.net](http://www.pennsvalley.net)

Please send me information on:

**Volunteer Opportunities**

**Committees**

My personal areas of interest are:

*tubing—one of Penns Valley's many attractions*

agonies out of which our land emerged, is surprisingly readable and possibly accurate. Loving photographs of the Karoondinha gorge—Penns Creek's course between Coburn and Weikert—stake our claim for having Pennsylvania's Less Grand Canyon. Tom Doman contributed a friendly chapter on trout fishing. "Thinking About Roads" follows Native American paths to immigrant roads, then turnpikes, then to a buggy network whose fringes have decayed to tempting hikes and bike rides today. Our single railroad and Penns Creek Navigation receive their celebration as well. Other chapters strip the clapboard from bicentennial log farmhouses and expose the unexpectedly varied ages of our town facades, describe the stages of loss and recovery our forests have passed through, and let six local writers open windows to the changing life in the valleys in six different generations.

"A Penns Creek Companion" is more than a guidebook. Like the German *Heimatsbuch* that is its model, the book in the author's words "has all the starts, rushes, anxieties, and returns of a set of lovers meetings." But it has another, more purposeful dimension. "My purpose, freely avowed," says Macneal, "is to fan in you such regard for these superb valleys and their special stream that you join me in the only way to conserve their natural, ecological, historical, and cultural resources in all their fragile variety. Neither law nor policing can avail against the encroachments of "innocent" greed or the apathy that scatters righteousness like trash out a car window. Only a conspiracy of love to protect these resources and this heritage, fed by infusions of recognition, can move us to become sensitive stewards of our global birthright."

**CREP buffers: Cash for Conservation, with Management Benefits on Top**

-by Frank Rohrer, *Chesapeake Bay Foundation*

Could you use some extra farm income while doing good conservation? Stream buffers via USDA's CREP may be something to consider. Stream buffers can put cash in your pocket (\$12,000 to \$30,000+ above costs for each half mile of stream) while boosting management options, stream health and wildlife habitat.

For livestock producers, improved options for pasture management are a major benefit. CREP (Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program) will provide quality fencing, stabilized crossings and alternative water sources as part of buffer projects. Landowners with no grazing livestock are also eligible to enroll streamside areas. Finances are very attractive, paying 90-140% of project costs, and adding annual rental payments on top. Total payoff, above costs, for a typical 50' buffer on ½ mile of stream runs \$12,000 to \$30,000+. Buffers wider than 50' earn even more profit.

CREP's forested stream buffer (called CP 22) is the most popular buffer practice, chosen by about 90% of landowners because of its high financial payoff, pasture management gains, and conservation benefits. The minimum buffer width from top of stream bank is 35', for a total width of 70'. For buffers 35-50' wide, 90% of the costs of planting trees and shrubs, fencing, crossings and watering system are covered. There is also an annual rental payment for the acreage placed in the program for 10 or 15 years. *If you choose to give at least an additional 15' (50' min. width), the state provides an extra incentive equal to 50% of typical costs. The total reimbursement (140% of typical costs) is a big part of the financial payoff, since anything over 100% is profit. Generous annual rental payments add additional rewards. Most landowners install at least 50' and many see the financial sense of enrolling the maximum allowable – 180'.* CREP's forested stream buffers can put a jingle in your pocket while aiding farm



## PVCA Tackles a Spring Restoration and Riparian Buffer Planting in Coburn

--by Dave Long

Early last spring the PVCA was approached by Butch Sasserman, Penn Township Supervisor, about partnering on a spring restoration project. The spring location was on his son, Warren Sasserman Jr's., property just outside of Coburn. Fifty years or more ago the water flowing from the spring was dammed to create a pond. The impoundment deteriorated over time and Warren Sasserman Jr. wanted to restore the spring to a more natural condition.

Because the project lies in the Exceptional Value waters of the Pine Creek drainage a more extensive approval process was required. The approval process is multilayered, involving the Centre County Conservation District (CCCD), Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (F&BC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental (PADEP). The Sassermans had contacted the PADEP and the CCCD concerning their project approval. The PVCA has successfully worked with all of these regulatory agencies over the past few years on projects throughout the Upper Penns Creek watershed including a few on Exceptional Value waters. The PADEP and the CCCD encouraged the Sassermans to seek our help with the spring restoration project.

The spring restoration appealed to not only the Sassermans, but also to the regulatory agencies and the PVCA. In this spirit of cooperation, a partnership was formed. The PVCA agreed to coordinate the approval process for the Sassermans and the Sassermans agreed to partner with the PVCA to establish a riparian buffer planting around the restored spring. The PVCA would continue its conservation work utilizing Growing Green funds for the riparian buffer planting.

Through the summer the PVCA worked on the approval process. A site work plan and Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan were developed, submitted and approved. A Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index search was conducted and conflicts were resolved. Finally, all the documentation was gathered and submitted to the DEP. Warren Sasserman Jr. was granted approval by the DEP to restore the spring on his property to a more natural condition on September 9, 2005.

The Sasserman spring restoration is now in the construction phase. A contractor hired by Warren Sasserman will install and contour the fill material. Once this is completed the PVCA will establish a riparian buffer. The riparian buffer planting should be accomplished by the end of spring 2006.

This project would not have been possible without the help and guidance of Jim Coslo, Centre County Conservation District and Steven Means, Aquatic Biologist, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. The PVCA was able to facilitate the approval process through the efforts of Tim Bowser, Nell Hanssen, Dave Long and John Oleksa, whose technical and professional expertise were invaluable.

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***Crep Program***, continued from p. 6

management, wildlife habitat and stream health.



If you are interested, the next step is to call the Farm Service Agency office at 570-726-3196 ext 2 and ask to make an appointment to sign up for CP 22, the forested stream buffer. Signing up puts you under no obligation to enroll in the program, but starts the conversation and holds a place in line for you. There are limited acres to enroll, and demand is great. There are also other practices available via CREP that may be of interest to you. Another plus for forested buffers is that they may qualify you for an additional 50% state cost share on non-buffer practices. If you have any further questions about the program please do not hesitate to call the Natural Resource Conservation Service at 570-726-3196 ext 3, or Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Frank Rohrer at 570-295-6164.

*Calendar Items*

## TRASH TALK!

***Let's get into it at PVCA's next Quarterly Meeting***

***Special Guests and Displays, Useful Information***

➔ **Date:** November 10th, 2005

➔ **Time:** Doors open 7:00 PM. Meeting starts promptly at 7:30 PM.

➔ **Place:** Penns Valley Elementary/Intermediate School Cafeteria.  
This is the expanded school directly across from PVHS!

**TRASH: Practicing the R's to minimize waste**

**Refuse ~ Reduce ~ Reuse ~ Recycle (and compost!)**

**BURNING: How fires affect health and the environment**

**Current laws and municipal ordinances**

***Please come out, bring your friends and neighbors, your ideas and questions, and a dessert to share, if it is convenient. We will provide coffee, tea, and cider.***

**Change is in the air ~ Let's talk some TRASH!**

*and speaking of garbage...PVCA Roadside Cleanup ★ Sunday, November 13<sup>th</sup> ★ 1:00pm at  
Burkholders Market*



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