



CVC Annual Report – 2021

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UPPER BASIN ACTION

Efforts to develop the Johnstown Inclined Plane Riverside Park moved forward at a rapid pace in 2021.

This park will be a major regional tourism destination and a great place for area residents to enjoy the revitalized Stonycreek River, to boat, fish, ride bicycles, maybe swim or tip their toes in the water.

Planning, preparation, and grant writing was completed throughout 2021, and in 2022, the access trail from Washington Street to the Inclined Plane should be rebuilt as Phase 1 to deal with drainage problems. This trail will serve as an access road for Phases 2 and 3. A major grant application was submitted to build an ADA-compliant walkway to the river's edge and a boat ramp as Phase 2. Larger grants are being pursued for Phase 3, which is an elevated, ADA-compliant walkway from the bridge over the Stonycreek to the hillside, where it will meet the Phase 2 walkway. Total project costs will be about \$3 million.

CVC is coordinating and managing the project, which is projected to be completed by 2024. Key partners include the City of Johnstown, which is the conduit for a \$225,000 grant from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources; Cambria County, which is applying for a \$1 million grant from the U.S. Appalachian Regional Commission for Phase 3; and Bens Creek Canoe and Kayak Club, which will build the boat ramp.

Meanwhile, Friends of Inclined Plane Trails developed and maintained more mountain-bicycling trails down the hillside. A planned loop of the September 11th National Memorial Trail will cross the Inclined Plane hillside and link through downtown Johnstown.

CVC also is an active supporter of ongoing projects to develop the 9/11



National Trail through Johnstown. Cambria County Conservation and Recreation Authority and the City received grants for nearly \$800,000 to do detailed engineering and construction of mostly on-street bicycle-pedestrian links between existing off-road trail segments, and for engineering of mostly on-street bike-ped links from the Jim Mayer Riverswalk Trail to the Path of the Flood Trail. Progress on both projects will continue into 2022.

CVC's sister organization, Stonycreek-Quemahoning Initiative, continued work on Quemahoning Lake Mountain Bicycling Trails. Phase I established a 17-mile loop

around the entire reservoir. Phase II section 1 opened in 2020. Work is underway on Phase II Section 2 and two grant applications are pending that will enable SQI to complete the 6 to 6.5 miles of trail designed in Section 2.

WEST PENN TRAIL

Local citizens and visitors continued to enjoy our 15-mile West Penn Trail between Saltsburg and Blairsville throughout the year. Trail use increased during 2020 as a result of nature-seeking associated with COVID, and that increased use was sustained throughout 2021.

Our fantastic volunteer crew continued maintenance work, logging nearly 300 hours of service. We also welcomed new volunteers to both work crews and our West Penn Trail Council. Thank you to Paul Zyhowski, Dan Deforno, Doug Dudzik, Ted Kepple, John Levrio, and Mark Kirkland. Many of these new volunteers have been doing light maintenance work on the trail prior to 2021, so we're glad to be able to acknowledge their support.

We welcomed Mike Keltz, Jack Ruebel, Damien Boudreaux, and Bevan Day to the Trail Council. The council is responsible for monitoring trail conditions, managing maintenance projects, and promoting the trail. For years, council members have discussed the need for recruiting new volunteers, so we were delighted to have new faces and voices join us in 2021.

WPT Council

Jack Maguire, Trail Engineer-Manager
Jerry Seitz, President
Cliff Wissinger, Vice-President
Jack Maher, Secretary-Treasurer
Damien Boudreaux
Bevan Day
Mike Keltz
Jack Maher
Jack Ruebel
Bill Rodgers
Barry Tuscano
Kitty Tuscano
Cliff Wissinger

Thank you 2021 Mile Marker Sponsors!

Nature's Way Market
The Lumber Store and More
Chan-Soon-Shiong Medical Center at Windber
Cycle Sport and Ski
Saltsburg Borough

We also acknowledged long-time and outstanding supporters to our mile marker program – we thank you!

Tuscano Agency
Steel City Undercoating
Speals Tavern

Trail Volunteer Fund

Thanks to a generous donation from the Pittsburgh Foundation's Trail Volunteer Fund, volunteers completed repairs and resurfacing on 4.5 miles of trail. The grant paid for stone and equipment rental and the work was completed on the Saltsburg section of trail, and the Newport Road access area near Blairsville.

Pollinator Project



Long-time nature photographer and West Penn Trail enthusiast Dorothy Pierini-Rodgers lead a project that will provide a wonderful benefit to the trail. Through the Pennsylvania Master Naturalist program, a statewide partnership initiative that aims to connect people with their local ecosystems through intensive natural science training and local conservation service work, Ms. Pierini-Rodgers established a pollinator planting area at the Newport Road WPT trail head near Blairsville.



Ms. Pierini-Rodgers designed, secured resources, planted and developed the site. The results of her hard work will come to fruition throughout 2022. Fellow PA Master Naturalist trainee Paulette Irwin donated seeds and organic compost, and Derry Township assisted with earth moving.

CVC thanks everyone involved for their commitment to the trail and to environmental stewardship.

WPT Triathlon



Through the inspired leadership of Kitty and Barry Tuscano, the West Penn Trail Triathlon made a triumphant return on October 9. The boat-bike-run, chip timed event is based in Saltsburg, and the spirit of the event was as high as ever despite not having an event in 2020. More than 140 people participated and more than \$6500 was raised for trail maintenance. This event remains one of the most entertaining and gratifying ways to showcase the fantastic natural, historic, and recreation resources of the Kiski-Conemaugh river basin.

Mark Your Calendars for the 2022 West Penn Trail Triathlon – Saturday, October 8!



Thank you to our sponsors and partners!

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TMR Roofing
Nature's Way Market
Deglau Family Chiropractic
Shelly Drilling
Hammer Nutrition
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US Army Corps of Engineers
Two Dam Kayak Rentals
Saltsburg Kayak and Canoe Outfitters
Lifestat Ambulance Service
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Tunnelton Volunteer Fire Department



(Right) Denise Maher created a quilt from the t-shirts from all the Triathlons over the years as a gesture of gratitude toward founding organizers Kitty and Barry Tuscano, shown here holding the quilt. Triathlon volunteers added signatures and notes of thanks.



STONY-KISKI-CONEMAUGH RIVERS SOJOURN



We returned to the river for our (almost) annual Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh Rivers Sojourn on June 3-6. While the 2020 event had to be canceled, we were even happier to welcome 75 old and new friends for this 44-mile, 4 day paddle from Johnstown to Apollo. The sojourn always fulfills its purpose of re-introducing the river as a resource to area residents and inviting those residents to engage in stewardship to conserve that resource. In 2021 we were particularly pleased to see new faces from some of the Kiski-Conemaugh river towns, as well as participants from Virginia, Ohio, Michigan and New York.

Mark Your Calendars for the 2022 Sojourn – June 2-5!

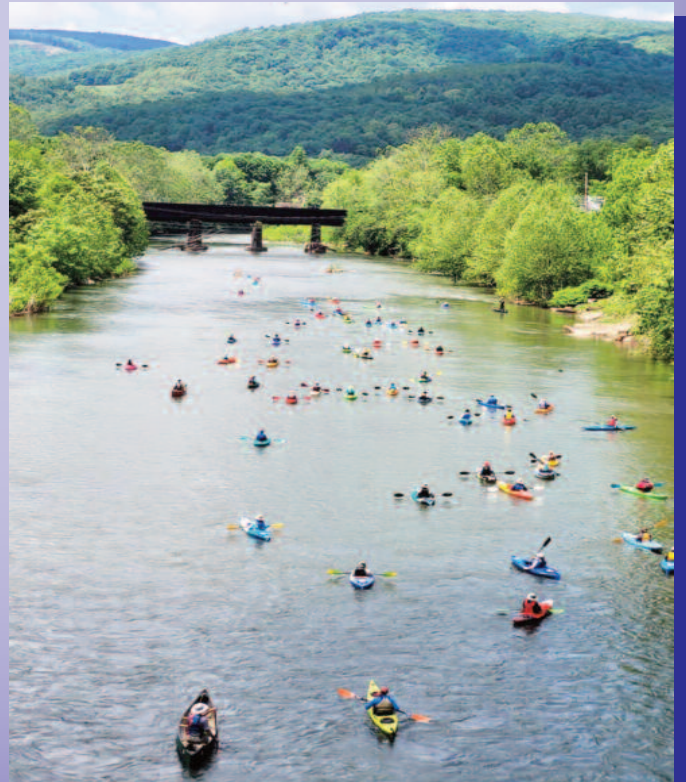
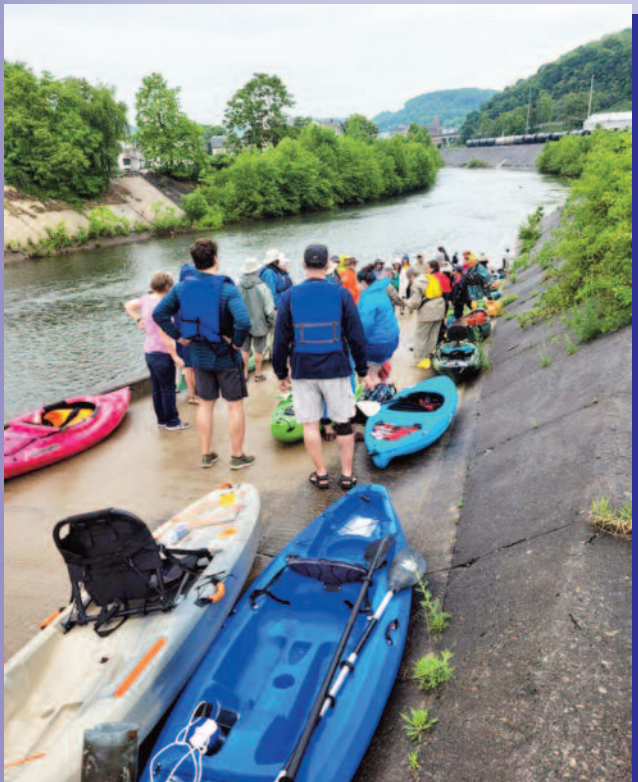
Many thanks go out to everyone that makes this event possible:

Sojourn Committee

Mike Burk, Chair; Margaret Golik, Coordinator; Brenda Mahoney; Laura Hawkins; Bryan Mahoney; Clark and Emily Fisher; Rick Bloom; Michael Mance; Mark Shank

Sponsors and Partners

PA DCNR-PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers - Ameri-Serv - InFirst Bank - Indiana County Tourist Bureau - Community Foundation for the Alleghenies - Brett Insurance Agency - Spangler Subaru - Gibson-Thomas Engineering - Western PA Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation - Friends of the Blairsville Communities – Leonard S. Fiore, Inc. – Berkebile Chiropractic



GREENWAY COORDINATOR COMPLETES RIVER ACCESS AT SEWARD



The Kiski-Conemaugh Water Trail was designated as an official PA water trail decades ago by CVC, and is now managed through Allegheny Ridge Corporation's Pittsburgh-to-Harrisburg Main Line Canal Greenway. Greenway Coordinator Laura Hawkins worked with CVC to establish a new river access on property that was donated to CVC many years ago in Seward. The primary purpose of the project was to clarify property boundaries and direct river users to places to park, fish, and paddle. Not so secret: river otters have been seen at this location.



This project was funded by grants from the Robert Waters Economic Development Fund of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, the Canoe Access Development Fund administered by Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the Boating Facilities Grant Program of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The access site was developed with technical assistance from Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts and Westmoreland Conservation District, and CVC particularly wishes to thank Watershed Program Manager Chelsea Walker, who truly went above and beyond the call of duty.



Pictured at the Seward Fifth Street River Access Ribbon Cutting: Western PA Conservancy's Kelly Horrell, St. Clair Township's Todd Vetere, Westmoreland Conservation District's Chelsea Walker, CVC's Rick Bloom, and St. Clair Township's Chris Steiner.

STREAM TEAM

The Kiski-Conemaugh Stream Team program experienced staff turnover throughout 2021, but we were able to maintain the basin-wide water monitoring work on a limited basis. A dozen volunteers invested 248 hours and contributed nearly 1,200 driving miles to sample up to 146 sites throughout the Kiski-Conemaugh basin, for a value of more than \$7,300 toward assessing the health of our recovering waterways. We cannot thank our volunteers enough for their incredible commitment during this transitional period for the program.



The samples are analyzed by the Department of Environmental Protection, illustrating water quality from a number of standards. The results are reported back to partners managing treatment systems, funders of those systems, and others.

The transition presented an opportunity to conduct a preliminary evaluation of the program and bring together information about program management that had previously been unfocused. The Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds generously funded the production of a Stream Team Operations Manual. Main Line Canal Greenway Coordinator and water trail manager

Laura Hawkins conducted key person interviews, researched and organized documents, and secured feedback from former Program Director Melissa Reckner to produce the manual, which will provide guidance and consistency in program management regardless of staff turnover.

The process granted new insights to the remarkable work of watershed organizations that simply don't get enough recognition for how much they continue to improve our region's quality of life. A snapshot of some of that work:

During 2021, Somerset Conservation District updated the Oven Run Treatment Systems that contributed mightily to the recovery of the Stonycreek River over the past 25 years, breathing new life into the systems. CVC initiated a \$1000 challenge to help raise money toward a legacy fund housed at the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, so that ample match monies are available for future system maintenance. The Somerset Conservancy then issued their own challenge with a \$5000 goal. The legacy fund continues to grow, making the restoration work sustainable.

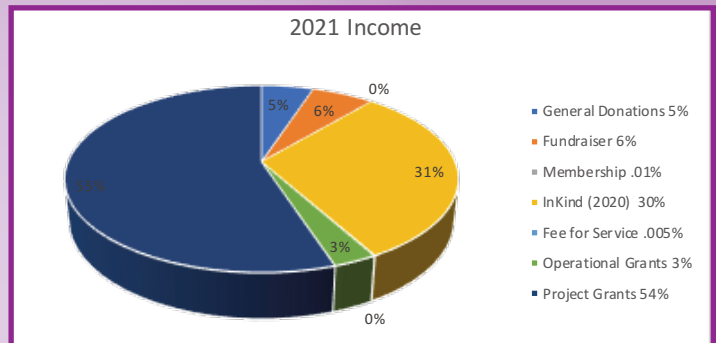
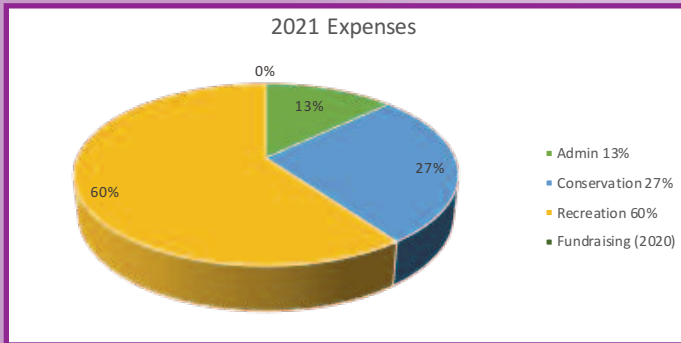
Aultman Watershed Association for Restoring the Environment (AWARE) and Stream Restoration Incorporated completed a qualitative watershed assessment on Aultmans Run, Indiana County, which collected data at 17 instream monitoring points and 21 abandoned mine discharges. Several discharges impact Aultmans Run tributaries, including Neal Run and Coal Run, making them some of the most impacted tribs in the basin. The assessment establishes a baseline for continued development and enhancement of treatment systems. This dynamic set of systems and the little-known work of AWARE is worth following, which you can do at aultmansrun.org.

When CVC notified partners that we would have limited Stream Team capacity in the latter part of 2021, Blacklick Creek Watershed Association rolled up their sleeves and took over sampling all of the sites in the sub-watershed – more than 40 sites! Further, this sub-basin is also quite dynamic. BCWA identified several changes that were needed in their sampling plan – advocating for removal or addition of sites with a strong rationale for each change. Great work by John Ferraro, Mark Domenick, Tim Kania, Janis Long, and 2019 Stream Team volunteer of the year, Dennis Remy.



We particularly want to acknowledge CVC Board member and long-time Stream Team volunteer Michael Burk. Mike spent untold hours supporting staff and volunteers as we tried to navigate program management, locate sample sites, and understand and implement all the steps involved in sampling rounds. He volunteered to sample additional sites where there was no other coverage and trained staff and volunteers on sampling methods. He mapped sites that were previously difficult to find. And he did it all with a calm, positive demeanor. For this, and so much more, we honor Mike Burk as our 2021 Stream Team Volunteer of the Year. Thanks, Mike.

FINANCIALS



WAYS TO GIVE

Like what you've read here? Join us! There are many ways to support our conservation and recreation work – membership, donations, event sponsorship, contribution toward the endowment, and more. For more information on any of the support options or to donate on-line, visit www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.com

The official registration and financial information of the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free, within Pennsylvania, 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Endowment

The Community Foundation for the Alleghenies houses an endowment for longer-term financial security for Conemaugh Valley Conservancy initiatives. The endowment has primarily been built through Kitty Tuscano and Nature's Way Market's participation in the 1% for the Planet program. The CVC endowment currently exceeds \$300,000. The Board of Directors welcomes your participation.

CVC encourages Planned or Major Gifts including Bequests, Gifts of Retirement Funds, Charitable Gift Annuities, and Gifts of Life Insurance Policies. Any planned gift should start with a discussion with your financial advisor, who can assist you in finding the best tool to meet your charitable goals. For more information, or to contribute to the endowment, contact Mike Kane at the Community Foundation at mkane@cfalleghenies.org or visit www.cfalleghenies.org

Become a member!

You can become a member on line, or select your membership level below and return this form to CVC/P.O. Box 218/Johnstown PA/15907-0218.

Name _____ Email _____ Phone _____

Address _____

- ☐ Individual - \$25
- ☐ Supporter - \$50
- ☐ Sponsor - \$100
- ☐ Patron - \$250
- ☐ Champion - \$500



Please direct my gift to: _____

Many thanks to our members, donors, and sponsors!

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Janice Eastbourn Bloom & Rick Bloom
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Randy Caber
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Mary Ugoletti
John Varnecky
Von's United Beverage
W.N. Tuscano Agency
Mary Shaw & Roy Weil
Western PA Sports Medicine & Rehabilitation Clinic
Susan Wilson
Windber Borough
John Yerger
Norman & Deborah Ziemer



