

## Newsletter Spring 2023

Octoraro  
Watershed  
Association



Celebrating 56 years  
of preserving and  
protecting  
the natural and  
historic resources of  
the Octoraro.

### Upcoming Events (See website for details)

#### Photo Contest Drop Off

**March 13 and 14,  
2023 from  
6-8 @ the OWA  
office.**

#### Annual Meeting:

**March 23, 2023  
At Britain Hill  
Winery**

**Please see insert  
for more infor-  
mation**

#### OWA sponsored Clean up:

**Saturday April 15,  
2023**

**@ 9 a.m. Meeting  
place to be an-  
nounced.**

**Stream  
Monitoring:  
Monthly sampling  
runs above and  
below the  
reservoir.**

### President's Message

It is hard to believe that it is coming up on 4 years since I became President. I'll be stepping down at our Annual Meeting on March 23<sup>rd</sup> and want to take this opportunity to thank all those who have worked so hard to make my job so much easier. There are too many to mention by name in this letter, but as you look at what we've accomplished over the past 4 years, there are some names that stand out:

Peg O'Grady, who works behind the scenes, keeping us all organized and on track and making sure we meet our grant commitments in a timely manner. Matt Kehoe, our Treasurer, who keeps us solvent and financially organized. They both administer the Pat Fasano Scholarship.

Mary Kay Phillips, who has taken on the coordination of the Monitoring Program and the all-important equipment calibration which is definitely **not** my forte. She and her husband Jim have also taken the lead on Habitat Assessments and Macro-Invertebrate surveys (the bugs that live in the streams). While reduction of nitrates is a primary focus of the OWA because of the water supply issues, the Habitat Assessments and Macroinvertebrate surveys are a more rounded measure of stream health. Fish and the bugs they feed on need good habitat to live in, and cold-water fish need low temperatures to spawn – best provided by a tree canopy over the stream.

Patty Blakeslee, who has taken on the tree planting program on the stream buffers, to provide that all-important canopy. Patty is a one-stop shop, finding the properties, getting the grants for fencing, trees, tree tubes, stakes, etc. and organizing the volunteer tree-planting parties.

Betsy Harris, who has taken on Ag Outreach, especially in the middle tier of the watershed where Andrews Bridge Foxhounds know the terrain and the landowners so well. Betsy has been working with Adam Mowery of Mowery Environmental to do outreach and technical support to interested farmers, and Adam follows through by getting grant funding for implementation. A huge thanks to all our partners in the government agencies and NGOs who have helped us put the grant packages together. I'm pleased to report that the work that was pioneered by Pat Fasano has resulted in some recent in-the-ground projects in the Bells Run watershed that will not only reduce nitrates but also improve overall stream health.



*Grassed waterway (before & after) and stream buffer planting in Bells Run. Photo Credit A. Mowery*

On the Outreach side, Chotty Sprenkle has been an absolute powerhouse since she rejoined the Board, with the annual Photo Contest, the Library Tour, and our occasional public events such as the Oxford First Fridays.

I'd be remiss if I did not include a shout out to the rest of the Board – Frank Humbert, Anders Alfelt, Todd Pride and emeritus member Linda Swank. We all work on the Annual Reservoir Clean-Up and Fall Picnic, and their sage advice at the Board keeps us centered on our mission. Thank you all, and thanks to our members and friends, funders and partners, without whom we would not be successful.

## Horse Trail Restoration & Preservation *by Betsy Harris*

The Andrews Bridge Foxhounds have been hunting the southeastern portion of Lancaster County and the southwestern portion of Chester County in Pennsylvania for over 105 years. Much of the land has remained agrarian although individual farms have multiplied, and property sizes have been drastically reduced. Foxhunting across this beautiful countryside with horses and hounds is a privilege and is never taken for granted.

As a give back to the community and the land, friends and members of the club are dedicated to protecting water quality, promoting sound land use practices, and raising environmental awareness in our hunting territory. Many of the members are active volunteers with the Octoraro Watershed Association. We have members who sit on the Board, volunteer to conduct monthly water testing, participate in the annual reservoir clean up, plant stream buffers, and one member is an attorney and volunteers his professional services when needed.

Whether pleasure riding or foxhunting, trail erosion is always an eventual problem. After decades of use and heavy rains, main trails on steep slopes severely erode. About 4 years ago the club initiated a program to install railroad tie stair step systems on steeper slopes to control this never-ending issue. To date we have installed four separate trail systems which are working extremely well. Instead of continued deep erosion, trails appear well maintained and no longer have deep crevices and stone washouts at the bottom of the hills. The hunt has used these trails immediately following 2 hurricanes and the footing was perfect. We are no longer just repairing bad trails but are installing them preemptively as well. Conservation and preservation are key ingredients to keeping our countryside happy and healthy for hikers, horses and hounds.



## Buffer Planting Update! *by Patty Blakeslee*

We at OWA continue to pick away at small stream Riparian Buffer projects on the tributaries of the Octoraro Creek. In May, we planted 225 trees on the West Branch above Noble Road. With 25 volunteers, we managed to finish 2 hours before the rain started. Although it did cut into our cake and cocoa! In November, we performed maintenance on an Amish farmer's meadow off of Bartville Road. Five years ago, the head waters of Bell's Run meandered through his mule pasture and eventually emptied into the Octoraro Creek. It was a muddy swamp, but now that the mules are fenced out, the grasses have returned and we found several invertebrates that are indicative of cooler, healthier water. Once the trees are mature then providing shade and depositing nutrient loaded leaves, the 'bugs' will really flourish. We replaced trees that did not survive from the last planting and filled in treeless gaps. We also planted blueberry and aronia berry bushes around the edge of his pond. Hopefully they will provide food for humans and birds alike. We plant species that are wet tolerant such as White Oak, Sycamore, Black Willow, River Birch, Tulip Poplars, Paw Paws and shrubs such as Serviceberry, Elderberry and Viburnum. This year I made excellent jelly and syrup from our creek berries and the Viburnum flowers were lovely in flower arrangements. A huge thank you to **ALL** of the volunteers from OWA and Andrews Bridge Foxhounds. From all of the smiles and laughter, you would not know that we were working. If you would like to volunteer, please contact Patty Blakeslee at [peb@ueavet.com](mailto:peb@ueavet.com).



## 2023 Octoraro Watershed Association Photography Contest

**Who May Enter?** - This contest is open to photographers of any age. There are three age categories – **Adults** (18 years of age and above), **Youth** (13 to 17 years of age), and **Youth 2** (12 years of age and under).

**What to Enter?** - All photographs must be taken within the Octoraro Watershed which encompasses the following townships: Eden, Bart, Sadsbury (in both Lancaster and Chester counties), West Sadsbury, Highland, West Fallowfield, Upper Oxford, Lower Oxford, East Nottingham, Little Britain, Fulton, East Drumore, and West Nottingham, and the boroughs of Atglen and Christiana, Pennsylvania and Cecil County, Maryland. All photographs must be identified with their location within the watershed (county, township, borough).

Photographs may be color or black and white. Photos will be entered and judged in four categories:

Wildlife – plants, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, invertebrates, fungi (please, no domestic animals)

Landscapes – sites, scenery, historic buildings

Agriculture - farm-related activities and/or farm landscapes

Trailcam – interesting photographs captured on your trailcam

**How to Enter?** – All photographs will be submitted in printed format: 8”X11” or larger hard copy mounted on foam/hard cardboard. Only mounted hard copies will be accepted at the OWA office, located inside the West Fallowfield Township Building, Suite 7, 3095 Limestone Road, Cochranville, PA 19330. Photos may be dropped off on March 13 and 14, 2023 between 6:00 and 8:00 PM each evening. If you are unable to make those dates, please contact Chotty Sprenkle for alternate arrangements (contact information below). Required information should be on the back side of the mounted photo: 1.) photo category 2.) name 3.) address 4.) phone 5.) email 6.) where the photo was taken in the watershed. **All photos must be received by March 14, 2023. No virtual submittals – hard copy only.**

**Judging and Display** – a local professional photographer will judge the photographs. All entries will be displayed, and the winners will be recognized at our OWA Annual Membership meeting, March 23, 2023, Britain Hille Winery, 790 Little Britain Road N, Quarryville, PA 17566, 6:00 PM. After the annual meeting we will feature the collection in a show traveling to various institutions (libraries, historical society, banks, schools) in the watershed. Winning photographs will also be featured in the OWA newsletter and on our website.

***PLEASE, NO PHOTOS CREATED WITH PHOTOSHOP.*** The definition of “CREATED” is putting something in the photograph that was not present when you took the photograph. For instance, you cannot place a moon in the photograph if it was not present when you took the photograph. Programs that allow you to enhance a photo for color, clarity, exposure, etc. are acceptable.

### **Prizes**

First Place, All categories – Ribbon and Monetary Prize (\$15)

Second Place, All categories – Ribbon and Monetary Prize (\$10)

Third Place, All categories – Ribbon and Monetary Prize (\$5)

Best of Show – Ribbon and Monetary Prize (\$50)

People’s Choice – Ribbon and recognition

We look forward to your photographs showing the beauty and wonder of the Octoraro watershed. For more information, please contact Chotty Sprenkle directly at [csprenkle9@gmail.com](mailto:csprenkle9@gmail.com) or 610-593-2808 or text 484-888-5416.

**Octoraro Watershed Association, 3095 Limestone Road, Suite 7, Cochranville, PA 19330**

[octorarowa@gmail.com](mailto:octorarowa@gmail.com) [www.theowa.org](http://www.theowa.org)

Octoraro  
Watershed  
Association



PO Box 75  
Cochranville, PA 19330  
484-947-9390  
octorarowa@gmail.com www.theowa.org

#### Officers

**President: Rupert Rossetti**  
**Vice-President: Chotty Sprenkle**  
**Treasurer: Matt Kehoe**  
**Secretary: Anders Alfelt**

#### Board Members

**Patty Blakeslee**  
**Frank Humbert**  
**Mary Kay Phillips**  
**Todd Pride**  
**Betsy Harris**

**Newsletter Editor: [pogradys314@gmail.com](mailto:pogradys314@gmail.com)**

## Water Quality Monitoring *by Mary Kay Phillips*

Look what crawled out from under a rock! Streams are home to tiny creatures known as macroinvertebrates, which live under rocks and among fallen leaves. They include the larval (immature) stages of many insects, as well as snails, clams, and crayfish. Macroinvertebrate surveys and habitat assessments are monitoring activities that determine whether a stream is healthy enough to sustain a wide diversity of these organisms. After being captured from the stream bottom with a kick net, the critters are sorted, identified, and counted. Scoring is based on the variety of species found and their relative abundance.

OWA has an active water quality monitoring program, with teams of loyal volunteers that sample 14 different locations monthly. Many thanks to these volunteers! We measure several parameters, including physical dimensions, nutrient concentrations, oxygen content, and pH. These factors indicate the kinds of pollution that may impair a stream and make it unsuitable for diverse life forms.

Adding habitat assessments and macro surveys to our monitoring program will answer the question of whether our waterways are life-supporting for bugs (and ultimately for humans). Several of our volunteers have attended training on completing these surveys, and we hope to involve more volunteers in 2023. Scheduling will be flexible, with evening and weekend opportunities available.

Please contact [mkphillips077@gmail.com](mailto:mkphillips077@gmail.com) if you are interested in helping with the new assessments, or with the ongoing monthly sampling.

Our findings are reported to databases used by many organizations, from government departments to non-profit groups dedicated to preserving and improving the quality of our precious shared resource.