



Celebrating 47 years of preserving and protecting the natural and historic resources of the Octoraro.



President's Message

Linda Swank, President

It feels as if Spring is finally here, and I'm sure you are looking forward to seeing the spring flowers and leaf-out on the trees as much as we are at the OWA. We did a lot of planting last fall in Rising Sun's Triangle Park and are anxious to see what comes up this year—and also what wildlife is attracted to the new habitat.

I also participated in the creation of a 70 acre Savannah Grassland which you can read more about on pages 2 & 3. We're very excited because it will not only restore an important habitat but also protect the waters of the Octoraro. We'll be out there quite often to see how our plantings fared over the winter!

Staying with the planting theme, our Annual Dinner and Fundraiser is coming up fast and we're very fortunate to have Lamonte Garber of Stroud Water Research as our guest speaker. During his tenure at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Lamonte worked with us on several stream-bank fencing projects and he'll not only talk about those, but also let us know about the wider, vegetated buffers he is now installing with Stroud. These wider buffers have a much greater water quality benefit and are much preferred where space allows.

Please note that the Dinner is on April 24th, a week later than advertised in our Fall Newsletter due to an overbooking at Black Rock. At the Annual Dinner, which is also our Annual General Meeting, we'll be electing four new or returning Board members. The Board's slate of nominees includes three familiar names and one new name. Walt Todd is probably equally well known to many of you, and if not, his brief bio is on the back page. If approved by the membership, he will bring a much needed municipal perspective to the table.

One of the projects Walt is working on right now is the implementation of a new stormwater ordinance for Colerain Township. This was required by Pennsylvania's Act 167, the State law which governs stormwater management regulations. Walt's insights will be most helpful as we discuss how the OWA can best help Colerain and the other PA municipalities to put the new regulations into practice. You can read a little more about Act 167 below Walt's bio on the back page!

Finally, please join me in congratulating board member Rupert Rossetti. On Jan 30th, at the Senate Office Building in Annapolis, Rupert was acknowledged for his work on water quality. The Chesapeake Bay Trust presented him with the 2014 Ellen Fraithe Wagner Award., which was created in 1998 in honor of Ellen Fraithe, whom the Trust called "a tireless advocate for the Chesapeake Bay and the environment".

Rupert is a very worthy recipient. Aside from all the volunteer work he does for us, he actively participates in the Cecil County Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Advisory Committee, is chair of the Upper Western Shore Tributary Team, and just stepped down as vice president of the Chesapeake Stormwater Network, which has a Baywide brief. Well done Rupert!



Rupert receives the award from Jana Davis, Executive Director of the Chesapeake Bay Trust

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OWA Annual Dinner Meeting Thursday April 24th



Guest Speaker: Lamonte Garber, Watershed Restoration Coordinator at Stroud Water Research Center

"Streamside Buffers"

That is now this! The Conversion of a White Pine Monoculture into a Savannah Grassland Linda Swank

Savannah grassland – what is it? In our part of the world it is an early successional habitat including native grasses intermixed with soft mass shrubs and trees or old field shrub lands. This type of habitat is severely lacking in our area due to intensive clean farming practices. The habitat is very beneficial to many types of wildlife including cottontail rabbit, white-tail deer, American woodcock, pheasants, turkey and many species of song birds such as whip-poor-will, brown thrasher, yellow breasted chat and others.

In 2011 the PA Game Commission received \$3.1 million in federal funding through the Voluntary Public Access and Habitat Improvement Program to complete habitat projects on private property. Early successional habitat was the focus. Land Managers were told to come up with projects to spend this one-time funding available to us. The Game commission was looking for projects that were between 10 to 200 acres. One such project was established on Chester Water Authority property off Worths Bridge Rd in Chester County.

The Chester Water Authority has been a public access cooperator with the commission for several decades and they were a good fit for such a project. A proposal was put together and submitted to their Board of Directors. It was a gutsy project to clear 70 acres of primarily aged white pine and converting that 70 acres to native grasses and shrub lands. The Board approved the project! It was time to hit the ground running because the project had to be completed by June 30, 2013.



←
*The
White Pine
woodland*

→
*June 2012
Clearing the
trees*



The first objective was to clear the 70 acres of the pines. A contract was entered into with Glatfelter Pulp Wood Co. to harvest the usable trees. Necessary permits for sedimentation and erosion were obtained from the county as well as clearance from the US Fish & Wildlife Service for impacts on any possible endangered or threatened species and their habitats. It did not take long for Glatfelter to clear the trees. Wow, did the area look different! Once trees were cleared it was very apparent that the debris from the timber cut had to be dealt with.

The next step was to contract for the clearing and making windrows of the timber debris. Because this was a pretty big job a bid process had to be used. Bid proposals were prepared and placed on the state website. A contractor from Dauphin County was low bid. By this time it was February of 2013. The contractor rented some big equipment and in a few weeks the acres were cleared and the debris was pushed into windrows. It was important to get the land cleared pretty quickly because there were other parts of the project that were seasonally related.



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Timber
Debris

→
Clearing
and
Creating
Windrows
Feb 2013



Weather always plays a factor in these projects and the spring and early summer of 2013 were no exception. Going into this project it was well known that disturbing land in this neck of the woods always means dealing with invasive, non native plants. It was important to have green up, for invasive plants to begin growth, so that they could be sprayed with herbicide before planting the desired species of grasses, forbs and shrubs. One particular invasive plant, mile-a-minute was the biggest challenge. This highly invasive plant did make an appearance over about 80% of the project area. The timing of spraying, and then planting had to be mixed in between the rain drops that spring. Plus the soil moisture had to be pretty close to ideal to get a good result from the planting.



The Savannah
Grassland
October 2013

Another bid process was completed for the planting of the native grasses, forbs and shrubs. The seed mix for this project included a complex mix of five grasses, ten forbs/ wildflowers and three seasonal grain mixes as a cover crop. The mix had to be planted by June 15 with a drop dead date of June 30th. The shrubs were planted and then tubed so they can be sprayed around. The timing of the various components of the project fell into place but not always under ideal conditions. Despite the curves from Mother Nature a pretty good growth of grasses did establish in the first year.

A social challenge on these projects is that they do not always look nice at first. It takes about three years for the native grasses to completely establish and they often look messy to humans. The point to remember is how the fields look to wildlife.

The Chester Water Authority and the PA Game Commission have committed to this project. It will take ongoing maintenance to deal with invasive species, but the first year after completion the project looks great and many species of wildlife have been seen there.

Stormwater Education

If you would like to learn more about stormwater and what local governments and homeowners can and are doing, take a look at these two recent webcasts:

MS4—Putting the Pieces Together. This webcast explains stormwater permit requirements and describes resources available to help local governments and communities comply with them. www.bit.ly/1jt0PcN

Homeowner Stormwater Controls. This webcast provides tips on how you can convert your property into a beautiful habitat that helps restore the Bay watershed. www.bit.ly/1ILVT4k



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Meet Walt Todd, Board Nominee



Walt Todd is a lifelong resident of Colerain township and neighbor of the west branch of the Octoraro watershed. In years past he has helped with fish stocking efforts and restoration activities on the west branch, including stream bank stabilization efforts in the early days of the OWA. Walt has been a supervisor for Colerain township for the past 18 year. In the past, he was a member of the Lancaster County planning commission and past president of the southern Lancaster county inter-municipal association.

Walt is a firm believer that agencies and municipalities need to work together. Each has different experiences and needs. Working together they can achieve more, and more efficiently. For example Walt is leading local municipal efforts in Stormwater Management (Act 167) Ordinance compliance.

The PA Stormwater Management Act (167) - a very brief update for Lancaster County

In November 2013, PADEP approved the Lancaster County Model Stormwater Management Ordinance. The purpose of the ordinance is to control runoff rates associated with impervious areas of newly developed and redeveloped properties and, in addition, to improve the quality of the stormwater runoff and to promote groundwater recharge. It is now up to the municipalities to put their local Act 167 stormwater ordinance into effect by May 7th 2014 or face compliance issues.

One of the biggest impacts for residents is a requirement that, for all new construction and renovations resulting in over 1000 sq ft new impervious area, the first 1 inch of rain must be retained on the property rather than allowed to run off as stormwater. Retention options include reuse, evaporation, transpiration and infiltration using a variety of practices.
