

# Newsletter Spring 2015

Octoraro  
Watershed  
Association



Celebrating 48 years  
of preserving and  
protecting  
the natural and  
historic resources of  
the Octoraro.



Pat Fasano & Levi Fisher  
on a Farm Visit

## Inside this issue:

Amish Outreach 2 &  
Grants 3

Stream Clean- 4  
ups

## NEW VENUE!

The Annual  
Dinner Meeting  
will be held  
at  
Memorial United  
Methodist  
Church,  
Quarryville  
on  
Thursday 16th  
April 2015

Guest Speaker:  
Pat Stabler,  
Chester Water  
Authority

## President's Message

Linda Swank, President

Wow, what a winter it has been in the Octoraro Watershed. We have had cold, rain, snow, ice and did I say cold? Hopefully it is time to leave that behind for this winter season. There is a lot to think about for the Watershed Association as we move into spring. We are organizing a spring clean up to pick up trash along part of our watershed area near the lake. Look for details later in the newsletter.

Also later in the letter you will see information about our grant programs and how we are working to change how people think about water. These grants are geared toward our continuing successes in the Plain Sect Outreach Program. We are still working to communicate with farmers to ensure that they have conservation plans for their farms. These plans have been required by law since 1972, yet we still have farms that are not in compliance. We are also revisiting farms that now have plans and working with them to encourage continued compliance and taking the next step toward implementation. A major milestone on that front was recently highlighted in an article in the Lancaster News. For the first time in our watershed, an Amish farmer accepted direct federal grant funding to establish costly best management practices on his farm. This is a new direction in thinking and greatly applauded by the Watershed Association. Hopefully this breakthrough will lead to more participation, and improve the rate of implementation of BMP's throughout the watershed.

In other news of note related to BMP's, Sen. John Rafferty (R-Montgomery) recently introduced Senate Bill 560, which would authorize municipalities to adopt regulations requiring riparian buffers, and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to enforce a 100 foot stream buffer requirement. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation's Pennsylvania Executive Director Harry Campbell applauded the introduction of SB 560 saying, "Pennsylvania has over 19,000 miles of rivers and streams that are considered impaired due to pollution. Forest buffers are one of the most cost effective practices to reduce pollution and protect water quality." The Octoraro Watershed Association stands ready to work side by side with municipalities if Senate Bill 560 becomes law. Education about the new regulations will be a key component to achieving the intended impact upon our waterways, and our Association stands ready to use our established relationships with landowners in the watershed toward that end.

Another area in which the Watershed Association intends to work with municipalities is with the continued emphasis on Act 167 requirements. We talked about this briefly in our last news letter, but basically the law requires property owners to hold the first inch of rainwater on their property to reduce runoff and erosion into our streams. In this effort, education will again be a key component to achieving compliance.

Funding is a major factor in the Watershed Association's ability to facilitate the previously mentioned projects, and we are continually seeking grant monies to support our efforts. However, the availability of grant funding is very tight and competitive, making it very unpredictable. That is why your membership and the contributions of our local businesses, organizations, and municipalities is so very important. The Association thanks those who have supported us in the past, and encourages those who have not to consider including us among the organizations to which you will choose to contribute this year. In spite of the funding challenges, the Board of Directors remains committed to moving forward with programs that benefit our water quality.

**Amish Outreach: Recent grants build upon existing work**

At time of writing, Amish Liaison Henry Beiler and OWA Project Coordinator Pat Fasano are scheduled to receive the Watershed Volunteer Award from the Lancaster County Conservation District at their annual dinner on March 19. Henry began visiting farms with Pat in 2001, after Pat came up with the idea of having an "Amish Liaison" accompany him on farm visits to Amish farmers. It is safe to say that we would never have achieved the success we have had with the Amish community without Henry's help. Well done Pat! And well done Henry!



Pat Fasano & Jeff Stoltzfus

They, and our current Amish Liaisons David Fisher, Levi Fisher and Jeff Stoltzfus are able to do what they do through the generosity of our grant funders. Here is a snapshot of our current and recently completed grants and what they accomplish.



The first step is to build relationships with local farmers, and over the years, a series of grants from Alcoa, Claneil and some other foundations who prefer to be anonymous, have enabled us to visit Amish farms to promote the adoption of "best management practices" and stressing the importance of having a conservation plan. Each week, Pat goes out with David, Levi and Jeff to farms in Lancaster (David or Levi) and Chester (Jeff) Counties. He estimates that he has visited over 900 farms in the watershed over the last fourteen years many of them multiple times.

Once a relationship has been established, grants from the USDA/NRCS, the PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the Pennsylvania Foundation for Watersheds and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) have enabled us to continue to work with the farmers and commission the preparation of Conservation Plans. To date, we have assisted watershed farmers and our partners with the preparation of close to 100 Conservation Plans. So far, we have secured grants to pay for 62 of the Plans, 55 of which have been completed with 7 more under way.



Pat Fasano & Henry Beiler

Richard Hertzler/New Era

|   |  |
|---|--|
|  USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service<br>Lancaster County Conservation District<br>1383 Arcadia Road<br>Lancaster, PA 17601-3149<br>717-299-5361  |  William J Rogers<br>Conservation Planner<br>agricultural, environmental & technical consulting |
|   |  |
| Operator:   | Owner:   |
| <b>OBJECTIVES</b><br>The Conservation Plan addresses best management practices for sustaining and improving the natural resource base on the farm. It is the responsibility of the land user to obtain all necessary or appropriate permits. All practices are to be maintained to ensure that their intended purposes are achieved. No significant cultural resources are known to exist on the farm. The following practices will improve or enhance soil conditions and eliminate or reduce soil erosion while at the same time improving water quality on your farm. This holistic farm plan will meet the PA Clean Streams Law requirements. |  |

*An Excerpt from a recently completed Conservation Plan*

The NFWF Grant has also provided funds to help us identify the farms with the greatest need for installation of BMPs, and will allow us to focus on them in the coming years. This work, which was originally being done by John Shuman, is now being completed by Michael Rhanis, a researcher at Franklin and Marshall College. He is using a combination of aerial photographs and LIDAR to classify the farms, and help us establish our priorities for farm visits and BMP implementation.

Our most recent grant is from the PA Department of Environmental Protection through the State’s Growing Greener Program. This grant , which is restricted to the Nickel Mines and Meetinghouse Creek subwatersheds, enables us to revisit the farms for which we have Conservation Plans and secure commitments to implement the BMPs outlined in those plans.

The end goal is to put practices “in- and on-the-ground” which improve water quality in our headwater streams, the reservoir, the creek and ultimately the Bay, and many of those practices are actually installed by the owner / operator and one or more of our partners. These include the Lancaster and Chester County Conservation Districts, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, and the Technical Service Providers who design the practices and assist with the construction. We thank all the owners, operators, Amish Liaisons and our partners, without whose interest and collaboration we would not be able to fulfill our Mission!

We cannot do all this work without some funding for administrative functions, and most of the grants are very tightly limited, or have no funding in this regard. We are fortunate to have received an annual donation from the Steinman Foundation that is unrestricted, and augment that with cash and/or in-kind donations from the Chester Water Authority, Econ Refuse, Colerain Township and some private individuals and foundations, some of whom also prefer to remain anonymous. Last but by no means least, our annual membership dues are a very welcome infusion of cash every April, near the end of our fiscal year (July 1—June 30). We thank all of our members, donors and grantors—without your support, we could not continue to function as an organization!

Note: In Cecil County, Maryland, we are currently operating with a slightly different model—and will be highlighting that model in our Fall Newsletter.

**Definitions:**

**Best Management Practices (BMP)** is a term used to describe both structural or engineered control devices and systems (e.g. retention ponds) to treat polluted stormwater, as well as operational or procedural practices (e.g. minimizing use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides).

**LIDAR** is a remote sensing technology that measures distance by illuminating a target with a laser and analyzing the reflected light. LIDAR is popularly used as a technology to make high-resolution maps, with applications including geomorphology and contour mapping.

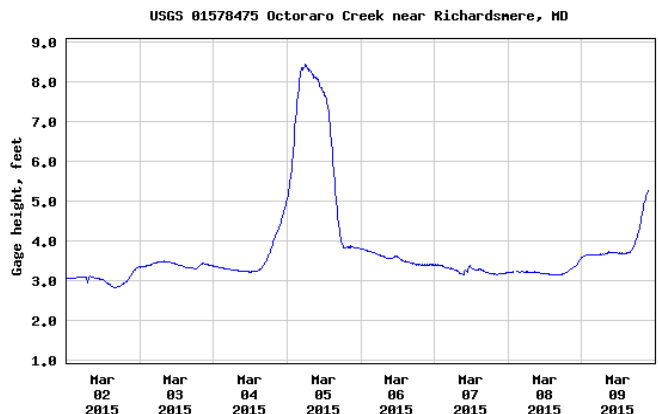
**Did You Know?**

The drainage area for the Octoraro Reservoir is 139 sq. miles. Did you know that 1 inch of rainfall would completely fill the reservoir to spill point, if it were empty to start with. In the summer, the run-off is attenuated by vegetation and infiltration, but in the winter, with frozen ground, CWA often sees this type of rapid influx - and of course, the reservoir is never empty, so the surplus goes downstream just as rapidly!

**Pat Stabler, our Guest Speaker at the Annual Dinner Meeting, is full of facts like these!**  
**Join us on April 16th to hear more from Pat!**

**Gage height, feet**

Most recent instantaneous value: 5.26 03-09-2015 21:45 EDT



*The Gauge Reading at Richardsmere after ~1 in. precipitation*



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### Join us this Spring for one of our Stream Clean-ups, or start one of your own!

You can find out about clean-ups in your area by using the interactive map at <http://cleanstream.allianceforthebay.org/>. Zoom in to our area and click on a pin to find out more information or to sign up as a participant. If you have a stream reach of your own that you'd like to clean-up, you can create an event of your own.

For those of you in Pennsylvania, the Clean-ups are being organized by Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful and the Great American Cleanup of PA. Their direct website is <http://www.gacofpa.org/>, though the interactive map is still the easier way to get started!

Our OWA Clean-ups are at:

- Veterans Park in Rising Sun on Saturday April 25th. This is in the Stone Run subwatershed in Cecil County. We are partnering with the Town of Rising Sun and a group from Moore's Chapel.
- Octoraro East Branch at Scroggy Road on May 2nd. We are partnering with the Chester Water Authority.

At time of writing, there are also clean-ups planned at:

- Octoraro Mainstem at Richardsmere (Cecil County) on April 11th
- Nottingham County Park on April 15th

Also see our Fall 2014 Newsletter at <http://theowa.org/>

