

Octoraro
Watershed
Association



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Officers

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Treasurer: Matt Kehoe

Secretary: Anders Alfelt

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Patty Blakeslee

Frank Humbert

Mary Kay Phillips

Todd Pride

Betsy Harris

Newsletter Editor: pogrady314@gmail.com

Welcome to New Board Member Betsy Harris!

As a Joint Master of the Andrews Bridge Foxhounds, Betsy Harris works with numerous conservation and preservation organizations in Lancaster and Chester counties. Over thirty five years ago she and her husband Steve, were the first to put their horse farm in Lancaster Co., which is located at the head of the Octoraro Reservoir, into the Brandywine Conservancy. Her relationship with both English and Amish landowners has provided many opportunities to educate about the importance of preserving and maintaining our waterways and our countryside. With her leadership and dedication, the Andrews Bridge Foxhounds just won the 2020 Conservation Award from the national Masters of Foxhounds Association of America. In addition to horses and hounds, Betsy raises and shows Border Terriers, winning Best of Breed at the Westminster Dog show in 2017.



Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay Offering Cost-share for BMPs *by Jenna Mitchell*

As lead partner for the Octoraro Source Water Collaborative, The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay received a second National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant to support farmers in the Octoraro Watershed with the cost-share of agricultural best management practices to improve the health of local streams. Farmers are supported with 50% of the costs of best management practice implementation such as manure storage facilities, stabilized barnyards, and grassed waterways for a maximum of \$50,000 paid by the Alliance toward a total project cost of \$100,000. For questions or to get involved contact Mauricio Rosales (mrosales@allianceforthebay.org, 717-517-8698) or Betsy (sbhbam@comcast.net, 215-519-0154).

If you are interested in planting trees next to your property's stream, the Alliance also has funds available to pay for 100% of costs to plant and three years of maintenance. Contact Jim Kauffman (jkauffman@allianceforthebay.org, 717-517-8698) or Patty Blakeslee (peb@ueavet.com preferred, or 610-656-2859).

Celebrating 54 years of preserving and protecting the natural and historic resources of the Octoraro

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President's Message From Rupert Rossetti

Happy and Healthy New Year to the members, friends, and partners of the Octoraro Watershed Association. First of all, thanks to you, our members for your dues and donations, and to the Joseph Robert Foundation for the generous grant which helps to keep the organization running.

2020 was an unusual year in almost all respects. Our events and activities had to be postponed, cancelled, or changed, and yet we and our partners still accomplished a remarkable amount, as you will see from some of the articles in the newsletter. With apologies to anyone I might have missed, a quick look back over the year.

Near and dear to my heart, we still managed to monitor our streams, after a 3-month hiatus and some changes in procedures. A shout-out to all our volunteers, and to Anita and Jen at the **Chester Water Authority** lab, who were able to fit us into their schedule even though their work hours had changed. And a big thank you to board member Mary Kay Phillips, who has taken on the task of coordinating the monitoring volunteers and helping me with the science. MK and I even went back to school in the Fall, auditing a graduate course in Watershed Hydrochemistry at the **University of Delaware**.

Thanks to Zoom and the help of Emily Smedley from **Lancaster Clean Water Partners**, we were able to hold our first virtual Annual General Meeting – in August, not March. During the meeting, we bid a fond adieu to Linda Swank, who stepped down from the Board after 16 years – and now has emeritus status. And we welcomed Betsy Harris, Joint Master of Foxhounds for **Andrews Bridge** (see Betsy's bio). Betsy has a wide range of contacts in both the Amish and English communities in the middle tier of the watershed and is now doing landowner outreach with her neighbors. We also added Karl Melchior, **West Nottingham Academy's** Environmental lead, as an associate board member (see his article about the tree planting program at WNA)

Pat Fasano is still helping us out when he can, but he and the Amish Liaisons have been unable to conduct their normal outreach because of the Covid-19 restrictions. Instead, Pat, a licensed forester, is spending time out in the woods assessing trees. In Pat's absence, we've engaged Adam Mowery of **Mowery Environmental** to work with Betsy in the Bells Run subwatershed, where we have an active Growing Greener grant. Thanks to **PA DEP** for the 1-year extension to make up for the 2020 hiatus. Thanks also to the **Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay**, who continue to find implementation funding for the Octoraro (see Jenna's article).

We continued our tree planting program (see Patty's article). If you have a stream that you would like to have buffered by trees or would like to help us plant, please get in touch with Patty. The biggest tract of trees (6000+) was planted at WNA and our role in that process was simply putting our partners at the school in touch with Craig Highfield at the **Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay's Chesapeake Forests** division.

And that's how I'd like to sum up this year. A time for working with and through partners. The relationships we've built over the past few years really helped us in 2020. We have had a very productive long term partnership with the **Chester Water Authority** and more recently with the **Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay**, and the three of us are lead partners in the **Octoraro Source Water Collaborative**, which has brought new energy and funding to the watershed and we continue to work with the **Cecil, Chester and Lancaster Conservation Districts**. Through the Collaborative, we are now engaged with the **Lancaster Clean Water Partners** in their Countywide Action Plan (CAP) for nutrient and sediment reduction and are a target area in their grant applications for implementation funding; we are participating in the **Chester CAP**, which is just getting started, and are a long term member of the Cecil County team. The **EPA** and **PA DEP** have just initiated a long-term project to model the watershed and its water quality and this will eventually provide us with a state-of-the-art targeting tool. The **Chester County Water Resources Authority** has invited us to join their Water Plans Steering Committee and the **Oxford Regional Planning Committee** continues to promote our work. Lastly, we've joined with several other watershed and educational organizations in a newly formed "**Head of Chesapeake Watershed Alliance**" whose members share common interests in improving the health of the waters at the Head of the Bay, educating the public and creating greater visibility with funders.

This has definitely been a year for planning and "Zooming" with a few visits to the streams to stay connected with the watershed. I know we are all hoping for a different year in 2021, and I look forward to getting back to more "doing" rather than "planning", and to seeing you in person at one of our activities or events.

West Nottingham Academy School Sustainability Programs *by Karl Melchior*

The school's sustainability programs are focused on action and encouraging the development of life-long environmental ethics in students. As part of WNA's Sustainability Strategic Plan, the school community is taking specific aim at reducing its overall greenhouse gas emissions. This program has made a significant dent in WNA's carbon footprint and will continue to foster a focus on and action regarding climate change in the wider community. The Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay was especially excited about accepting WNA into the reforestation project because of the built-in opportunity for education. "A project like this one reaches into the next generation of young people who need to understand the value of conservation programs like this to solving challenges to the health of our lands and waters," affirmed Craig Highfield, Director of Chesapeake Forests for ACB. Trees absorb large quantities of water for growth, thereby consuming storm water. Trees are excellent at filtering and regulating water flow, so any water that is not absorbed, will be slowed and filtered. Woody plants, such as trees, are fantastic at removing nutrients and contaminants from soil and water. The roots of the trees also serve as fortification for stream banks. The reforestation of the campus will not only serve as a mitigation effort for the watershed, but will also increase habitat for local animals. Songbirds, insects, deer, and small mammals will thrive in this newly created habitat. By planting their campus, WNA will be increasing the biodiversity of its campus, and decreasing its impact on local ecosystems.

A Surprise Donation to OWA *by Chotty Derr Sprenkle*

In August, 2020, OWA received the donation of some artwork from a very unlikely source. The artwork was three large panel murals, painted with tempera paint on plain brown butcher block paper, featuring the Octoraro Watershed Association. The murals were painted by Ken Derr, who happened to be my Dad, now deceased several years. In his life career, he was a watch dial designer for Hamilton Watch Company, Lancaster, PA, designing the first digital watch called the Pulsar, and logo/commemorative dials for football teams and corporations. In his spare time, he provided security for school and the fairgrounds during events. He was an artist and enjoyed oil and acrylic painting of portraits and scenery, of which all decorated the walls of our family home. I attended the Solanco Fair every year growing up, and I can still clearly remember the OWA stand. I was amused at the older gentlemen who would sit behind a table, no background art or anything of note, and the few brochures that would be on the table inviting you to join the organization. Usually, it was manned by Kenny Shoemaker (farmer) and Henry Martin (worked at Newswanger Furniture) and I would see him every day on my daily trek to elementary and junior high school. These great men were involved in many community organizations like the Southern Lancaster County Sportsmen's Club and the Groundhog Lodge to name a few. My Dad talked to everyone at their stands in the tents while patrolling the grounds at the Solanco Fair. I am not certain, but I can bet that he would spend time talking to Kenny and Henry while they sat at the OWA stand. He probably suggested that they consider some inviting background or artwork to educate fair participants and attract members. Again, I am not certain, but I can imagine that Kenny and Henry asked my Dad if that was something that he could provide for them. I found out that Dad had also painted similar murals for the Sportsmen's Club and the Groundhog Lodge. The murals are dated 1976. Fast forward to August, 2020, John Chase, whose family owns Newswanger Furniture contacted OWA concerning something he found in the basement of the store. John felt that OWA might want to take ownership of the item. John gave OWA a photocopy of my Dad's obituary so that he would have some background of the artist. Rupert then sent photos of the murals and the obit to the Board members. I could happily inform everyone that I knew the artist; he was my Dad. My brother, sister, and I had no idea that he had ever done this. It was and is so heartwarming and surprising for us to see his artwork. The murals have been temporarily returned to the Derr family, completing this interesting circle of life. Once protected and preserved, they will be happily donated to OWA for use at community events.



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 in Eden, Bart, Sadsbury (in both Lancaster and Chester counties), West Sadsbury, Highland, West Fallowfield, Upper Oxford, Lower Oxford, East Nottingham, Little Britain, Fulton, Colerain, East Drumore, and West Nottingham, Pennsylvania and Cecil County, Maryland. All photographs must be identified by location within the watershed.

Photographs may be color and/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, farmland
- Outdoor Recreation – show how people interact with the Octoraro Creek and its tributaries
- Trailcam – interesting photographs captured on your trailcam

How to Enter? – **Due to COVID-19 precautions**, photographs will be in digital form and emailed to csprengle9@gmail.com. All information should be included with the email with the photographs as an attachment to the email. Information includes: 1.) photo category, 2.) name, 3.) address, 4.) phone, 5.) email, and 6.) location of photograph in the watershed – where the photo was taken in the watershed.

If you are unable to utilize a computer, please contact Chotty Sprengle 610-593-2808 or text 484-888-5416. We can work out a means to get your photographs entered. **All photos must be received by March 14, 2021.**

Judging The photographs will be judged by a professional photographer prior to March 25, 2021. Zoom details will be determined closer to the date and provided to all those who enter. All entries will be displayed virtually for the dinner meeting and become the property of the Octoraro Watershed Association. After the annual meeting we will hope to feature the collection in a traveling show to various institutions (libraries, historical society, banks, schools) in the watershed. Winning photographs will also be featured in our newsletter and on our website. **PLEASE, NO ENHANCED PHOTOS WITH PHOTOSHOP.** The definition of enhanced 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. Many programs allow you to enhance a photo for color, clarity, exposure, etc. and this is perfectly 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



For more information, please contact Chotty Sprengle :

csprengle9@gmail.com

Phone: 610-593-2808 - Text: 484-888-5416.

New Buffer Plantings *by Patty Blakeslee*

As with almost everything else in 2020, planting buffers was put on hold. Though..... with 140 heeled in trees, a captive husband, and a children home from college, this was a golden opportunity for family bonding. Mark, Liam and Patrick good naturedly went along. It took several weekends but those trees filled in a nice section of the West Branch of the Octoraro River and are thriving. I have been collecting trees that have been generously donated by Jim MacKenzie of the Octoraro Native Plant Nursery, Penn State Ag Extension, Unionville Equine Associates, the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay (see Jenna's article) and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The next project is to plant the source of Bells Run which runs through a mule pasture. We are presently waiting for the funding for fencing. We are also looking for other sites to plant buffers and of course volunteers. If you know of a stream or are interested in volunteering, please email me at

peb@ueavet.com.