

THE CATALYST

SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION MONTHLY ACTIVITIES UPDATE

NEXT MEETING: 7 pm on 3/14/19 at Jennings Environmental Education Center, pizza and pop provided.
2/14/19 meeting attendance: J. Belgredan, C. Denholm, M. Dunn, L. Furst, B. Kuban, S. Smith, W. Taylor, F. VanAtta, S. VanDerWal

History Comes Alive at Annual Cherry Pie Hike

Dozens of guests visited Jennings Environmental Education Center (JEEC) on Saturday, February 23rd to commemorate young George Washington's travels through the area 265 years ago. The annual Cherry Pie Hike featured guided nature walks, history hikes, re-enactors, memorabilia of the time period, and of course delicious cherry pie and hot chocolate for all who joined in! SRWC participants **Shaun and Melissa Busler** enjoyed the days' activities, along with their three children. The Busler family had fun taking part in two guided walking tours. During the history hike, participants tromped through the trails near Jennings' woods to learn about Washington's 1753 mission and saw re-enactors portraying Washington and his guide Christopher Gist, as well as the Native American the two encountered. The three reenacted the gunshot that could have ended Washington's life when he was just 21. This attempt on Washington's life happened on Dec. 27, 1753 near today's Evans City. Washington and Gist had spent the night before camped in the snow somewhere close to where Jennings is now located.

The Busler family also enjoyed a guided nature walk, led by JEEC environmental education specialist **Brandi Miller**. Brandi shared lots of cool information about several of the neat habitats at Jennings, including vernal pool, wetland, woodland, and prairie. She explained to hikers about the unique features found in the prairie, as well as shared information about the PA endangered rattlesnake which calls the prairie home: the massasauga. The massasauga, a small shy snake, has reached its carrying capacity for the amount of prairie available at Jennings. After several years of careful study, the prairie habitat is being expanded from its current 20 acres to approximately 40 acres. This years-long prairie improvement project involves manmade disturbances to mimic natural prairie disturbances. For example, workers have cut down trees and brush, and will oversee a prescribed fire to burn much of the cut wood. Natural prairies are exposed to regular natural fires, as well as elk and bison grazing, and since none of those occur in western PA, they will be simulated by the prairie improvement project. In addition to the prairie update, Brandi also shared information about beaver activity that created a new wetland area, and showed several ash trees which had been sadly killed by the invasive species the emerald ash borer. Other guided hikes that day included a 7-mile "long hike" led by members of the Butler Chapter of North Country Trail Association.

SRWC participant **Wil Taylor** was also on-hand to answer visitors' questions about the park and its new exhibits inside the building. Over a dozen all-new learning stations, many with hands-on interactive science and nature activities, give Jennings a "science center" feel that guests of all ages will certainly appreciate and learn from. Park visitors can get up close and personal and touch a snake skin, view macroinvertebrate life stages under a microscope, look at birds out the windows with binoculars (the youngest guests can play with small stuffed animal birds matching what is often found in the feeders just outside the building), look at a live bee colony behind glass, touch a life-like replica of the massasauga rattlesnake, even climb in an "underground" tunnel for a snake's eye view in the prairie! One new large exhibit showcases the beauty and biodiversity of the prairie in bloom, with crawl-through tunnel, and amazing replicas of prairie wildlife including the monarch and swallowtail butterflies, blazing star flower, terrestrial crayfish, praying mantis, blue bird, goldfinch, massasauga rattler, and many more, with illustrated "lift-the-flap" learning stations. Additional exhibits feature learning opportunities about the area's geology, climate, glacial history, coal mining history, abandoned mine drainage, historic artifacts, natural resources, and much more! If you haven't seen the new indoor learning displays yet, be sure to do so soon!

The annual Cherry Pie Hike and historic commemoration was generously sponsored by **Washington's Trail 1753, the Butler Chapter of the North Country Trail Association, Historic Harmony, Butler County Tourism and Convention Bureau, North Country Brewing, and Jennings Environmental Education Center**. Thank you, sponsors, for giving dozens of visitors a fun and informative day!



Dozens of visitors came to Jennings Environmental Education Center for the annual George Washington Cherry Pie Hike! It's always fun to see history come alive! (See front page article)

The Slippery Rock Creek Watershed is Growing Greener!

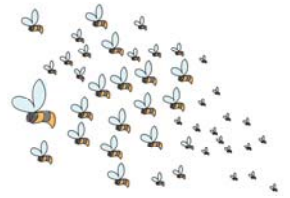
The SRWC and Stream Restoration Incorporated are excited to announce the complete funding of about \$1 million of a PA DEP Growing Greener Plus grant! The Slippery Rock Passive Treatment Rehab & Maintenance project is a watershed protection grant that will focus on the maintenance and rehabilitation of several passive treatment systems in the Slippery Rock watershed. Some of the earliest passive treatment systems installed by the SRWC and its partnering organizations were constructed on Pennsylvania State Gamelands #95 property including Big Bertha, Ferris, SR81, SR96, SR101A, SR109, SR114, and SR115. These 10 passive systems not only are collectively neutralizing 400,000 lb of acidity per year and removing nearly 200,000 lb per year, but they range in age from 16 to 23 years old. As would be expected of systems of this age, most of these systems are currently in need of some level of maintenance/rehabilitation and several, if not all, of the systems will likely need the treatment media replaced in the relatively near future. It is imperative that these systems continue to effectively treat the AMD in order to sustain the improvements in water quality that have been achieved. In some cases, there will be an opportunity to improve treatment effectiveness over the current system design that will hopefully lead to further improvements in water quality. Thanks to the Growing Greener Plus funding, the project will allow us to complete design work, permitting, and construction related to the rehabilitation of 5 of these passive treatment systems which include Ferris, SR81, SR101A, SR114B, and SR114D.

Since 1994, the Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition (SRWC) has been actively working as a public-private partnership effort to restore the severely degraded headwaters of Slippery Rock Creek. Much of the work completed by the SRWC to date has been based upon background data collected by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) Knox District Mining Office (Knox DMO), as published in the 1998 Slippery Rock Creek Watershed Comprehensive Mining Reclamation Strategy (CMRS) Reclamation/Remediation Plan for a 27-square mile area of the headwaters. The partnership effort has resulted in the installation of over 20 passive systems for more than 30 abandoned mine discharges. These passive systems are currently treating over a billion gallons of mine drainage per year, eliminating more than 700 tons of iron, 55 tons of aluminum, and 900 tons of acidity annually from Slippery Rock Creek and its tributaries. This reduction in pollution loading has significantly improved streams, with fish being observed in at least 6 miles of streams for the first time in over a century. We are excited to use the new Growing Greener Plus grant funding to make an even greater impact in the watershed!



The KIDS Catalyst

SLIPPERY ROCK WATERSHED COALITION FUN ACTIVITY



Animal Groups Word Unscramble

You probably know a group of fish is called a school, and a group of bees is called a swarm. But did you know a group of crows is called a murder? And a group of rhinoceroses is called a crash! Below are the names of groups used for 9 animals. The letters of the animal answer are scrambled up. Rearrange the letters to spell an animal name. Some of the group names are pretty strange or funny! If you mail us your completed paper, we'll send you a \$1 credit to Amazon through a parent's email address. Credits can be saved up to buy something extra special. We hope you have fun with this month's word puzzler!

TOWER _____

R I S E F G A F

NEST _____

K A S E S N

PRICKLE _____

C R P I E U P O S N

SCURRY _____

L R S S Q I E R U

STENCH _____

K U S S N K

LEAP _____

O L E P A D R S

BUSINESS _____

F R T S R E E

CARAVAN _____

L S A E M C

PARADE _____

L P E E A T N H S

Name _____ Age ____ Parent email address: _____



Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition c/o Stream Restoration Incorporated
A PA Non-Profit Organization
434 Spring Street Ext.
Mars, PA 16046

Thanks to The William & Frances Aloe Charitable Foundation, Environmentally Innovative Solutions, LLC, Dominion Peoples, Amerikohl Mining, Inc., Quality Aggregates Inc., Drs. Ron & Kathy Falk Family, BioMost, Inc., Allegheny Mineral Corporation and PA DEP for their support. For more information contact: Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition, c/o Stream Restoration Incorporated (PA non-profit), 434 Spring Street Ext., Mars, PA 16046 (724)776-0161, fax (724)776-0166, sri@streamrestorationinc.org, www.srwc.org. March distribution: 240 copies

March Meeting of Butler Outdoor Club Special Feature: **SRWC's Shaun Busler to Present on Jennings' Prairie**

The **March 6th** Butler Outdoor Club meeting will feature an SRWC participant as its guest speaker! Shaun Busler of the SRWC will be leading a PowerPoint presentation on a review of historical aerial photos of the prairie at Jennings Environmental Education Center. The prairie at Jennings is a unique ecosystem currently undergoing an improvement project (*see front page article and photos below*). The Butler Outdoor Club meets on a monthly basis, on the first Wednesday of each month. Meetings begin at 6:30 PM with a socializing time, following by announcements at 7:00 PM, then the program promptly after. There is a featured speaker each month or outdoor recreational program, with all meetings and activities open to the public.

Meetings are usually held at the Butler YMCA, lower level meeting room, 339 N. Washington Street, in Butler, but the March meeting will be held at Jennings Environmental Education Center (2951 Prospect Road, Slippery Rock, PA 16057). The Butler Outdoor Club promotes outdoor education and provides year-round outdoor activities in Western Pennsylvania and surrounding areas. These activities are geared for all levels and are designed to provide recreation and foster a better understanding and responsible use of the outdoors. Their activities include hiking, backpacking, biking, birding, canoeing, kayaking, cross country skiing, snow-shoeing, camping, and trail maintenance.

