



Who We Are

The Conodoguinnet Creek bisects the County from west to east. Its watershed is much of the County. The Creek is a very valuable economic, recreation, and environmental resource.

Much of the Creek is still guarded by a buffer of trees and plants, providing wildlife habitat and a scenic setting for uses of the Creek including swimming, boating, wildlife watching, exploration, fishing, hunting and other recreation. It is also a drain and reflects the human activity thereon, good and bad. Water quality is good although fertilizer and sediment loads can be excessive. Water is still pure enough to be feed water to public water supplies serving perhaps 50,000 residents.

The Conodoguinnet Creek Watershed Assn (CCWA, www.conocreek.org) is the private non-profit organization dedicated to improving and protecting the Creek and watershed.

Our Challenges

Managing critical activities on the watershed. These activities include development, farming and urban contributions. Development may cause sediment to enter the Creek. Increased impervious surfaces such as roads and roofs divert rainwater from percolation and replenishment of groundwater. The increased storm runoff causes increased flooding, and with its greater momentum, damages Creek banks and bottoms, and damages the buffers. Improper farming practices can also lead to Creek sediment and the introduction of excess fertilizers into Creek waters. The same need for fertilizer management applies to golf courses and suburban

lawn care. Excess nitrogen and phosphate can damage Creek ecology by over-stimulation of aquatic plants. The Association cannot determine whether these efforts have improved water quality. Based on the sampling and testing some idea has been established, suggesting an average load of about 5 parts per million nitrate, about ½ that suggested by others as an upper limit. The County Conservation District is working hard to control nitrogen and other animal wastes, and sediments in farming. Its approach of recruitment of farmers is well-received.

Increasing impervious surfaces. Hard surfaces such as structure roofs, and highways and parking lots reduce watershed quality unless stormwater is captured and percolation encouraged. These strategies are called Best Management Practices. If development is to continue, municipal agencies must insist on the most and best BMPs, and ultimately place a limit on imperviousness.

Waste Management. Some municipalities have yet to implement regular door-to-door waste collection. Municipal solid waste is disposed of in a landfill on the watershed. The county offers some collection of hazardous wastes but more needs to be done to encourage proper disposal by making disposal more convenient and better-known. The Assn encourages the proper management of all such wastes.

Riparian or vegetative buffering. A 200 foot protective band of trees and native plants along the Creek is critical. More needs to be done to encourage the establishment and preservation of these areas.

Creek Cleaning. An important activity is trash removal at outings during the summer. Tires are particularly prevalent. This is a joint effort of many environmental organizations in the County and probably results in recruitment of more than a few new young environmentalists. The municipalities recruit additional volunteers and assist with waste disposal.

Disappearance of shad, eel and native mussels. The reasons are complex but can all be traced unfortunately to human activity.

Groundwater Management. The watershed is fortunate in receiving nearly four feet of precipitation annually. About half this is estimated to enter the ground. The area is interesting in offering many nice springs from which groundwater emerges. Extreme low creek flow is moderated by the contribution of groundwater emitted by the springs. With growth we must develop a management strategy to manage and protect groundwater from excessive withdrawal.

Public awareness and cooperation. Another important activity of the Assn is increasing public awareness and appreciation. It has established a top-quality website (www.conocreek.org)The Assn interacts with public agencies such as the County Conservation District, Planning Commission and the Waste Authority, and is on-call to the municipalities. The Assn works with those agencies, both private and public by encouraging private initiatives that preserve and enhance the watershed, such as open space preservation.

Water Trail Guide. Together with the County Planning Commission and the Cumberland Valley Visitors Center, the Water Trail Guide was updated and republished for free distribution and sharing on-line.

In the early 2000's, the Association conducted, with State of Pennsylvania support, a Rivers Conservation Plan study, that focused on the Creek middle reach. The work defined activities on the watershed that could be improved, that would otherwise negatively impact the Creek and has provided an improvement checklist.

September 12, 2012