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CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

Winter – 2008

Editor – Deb Gehringer

Board of Directors

- John Tautin, Jr.....President
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- John Kemp.....Treasurer
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- Jack Page.....
- Andy Walker.....
- Betty Bailey.....Emeritus
- Fred DeWalt.....Emeritus

More goings and comings among the FCVC Board of Directors

With sincere gratitude and best wishes, we thank outgoing Board of Director member Mark Gorman for his service to FCVC and the French Creek watershed. He has relocated to the Washington, D.C. suburbs of northern Virginia where he will continue to serve natural resource conservation. Mark brought important connections to FCVC through his position as Director of the Northwest Office of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC). His successor at PEC, Andy Walker, will also succeed him on the FCVC Board.

Andy is originally from the Pittsburgh area. He received a BS in Environmental Science from Allegheny College in 2000, and for a short time served as the Business District Coordinator and Market Master for the City of Meadville where he currently resides. In 2001, Andy became Executive Director of the Redevelopment



Authority, a position that he held until his appointment at PEC. Andy brings great organizational skills and community connections to FCVC. Welcome Andy!



New board member Lori Boughton is a native of the Philadelphia area of Pennsylvania. She attended the Pennsylvania State University where she earned B. S. and M. S. degrees in chemistry and environmental pollution control. Since November 2002, she has been Director of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Office of the Great Lakes. Prior to that, she worked twelve years for the federal Environmental Protection Agency in various programs dealing with hazardous waste investigation, regulation, cleanup, and property reuse. Lori and her family are residents of Meadville where she also serves on the Board at Women Services, Inc. She also served as the Treasurer of the

First District PTO for four years. She brings experience in nonprofit organizations and extensive knowledge of environmental protection issues to FCVC. Welcome Lori!

Welcome New Members... James & Patricia Harwood – Donald B. Snyder – Darran Crabtree

Autumn White – Lori & David Boughton – Thomas Hecei – Christine B. Lang

– Mr. & Mrs. Thompson –

FCVC and partners support 2008 Land Trust Alliance Rally

This year, the Nation's largest gathering of land trusts, the Land Trust Alliance's Rally, was held at Pittsburgh, with 1,700 people from around the country in attendance. Project Manager Tim Hecei and Board President John Tautin represented FCVC at the Rally and attended some of the scores of workshops, seminars and exhibits available to attendees. For many attendees, participating in field trips is the highlight of Rally. One of this year's field trips was to French Creek. FCVC Vice President Bob Concilus, along with co-hosts Michelle Chapkis from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy (WPC) and Todd Sampsell from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) organized the trip. Thirty-five people from as far away as Washington, California, and Arizona paid a hefty registration fee and traveled two hours by bus from Pittsburgh to participate in the field trip. They were not disappointed.

The field trip started at Saegertown at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission boat launch on French Creek. Following a brief introductory lecture about French Creek and canoeing safety by TNC's Darran Crabtree, all departed on a canoe trip to Meadville. The water and the weather were just right for a leisurely float. Along the way, the group stopped to learn about the aquatic animals that make French Creek so special. Darran Crabtree netted some small fishes and spoke about them. WPC scientist Charles Bier gave a fascinating and inspirational lecture about the biology and conservation of the mussels of French Creek. TNC's Todd Sampsell stole the show, though, when he caught two large Hellbenders. Most field trip participants had never seen one, and some were surprised to learn of their existence.

The float ended at Meadville just in time for a special lunch at the Market House featuring locally produced, organic foods. After lunch the group was bussed to the Holden Farm at Sugar Creek Landing near Franklin. Allegheny Valley Conservancy President John Holden and others spoke to the group about cooperative efforts to protect the lower stretches of French Creek before they headed back to Pittsburgh for three more days of conference. Feedback from participants and the leadership of the Land Trust Alliance indicate that the field trip to French Creek was a great success.

Our Fabulous Fall French Creek Float took place on Saturday, October 11th where over thirty folks including FCVC members, board members, and a few hopefully soon-to-be members participated in a scenic float down French Creek in all its autumn glory. We made quite the flotilla during our journey while putting in at the Saegertown boat launch and taking out at Bicentennial Park in Meadville. Along the way, a variety of bird species were scared up including a bald eagle, several great blue herons as well as a few fishermen who were out enjoying the beautiful morning on the creek.

Many participants had specific agendas - one high school student brought along insect collection materials so she could add more "bugs" to her project. Luckily, she found plenty, and fortunately not the biting kind. Others shared information relating to "great spots" in the watershed for boating, birding or just enjoying nature.

We would like to give a well-deserved thank you to the boaters who reached the take-out first and stayed to help the rest of us get ourselves and our boats out of the water. The take-out was slippery and treacherous but with so many helpful hands we all made it out in one piece.

If you couldn't join us this year, please make a point to join us next year. The Conservancy encourages everyone to get out and enjoy the beauty of French Creek!



Photo by Wendy Kedzierski

Allegheny Students Pitch in and Clean up for Make a Difference Day 2008

This year's Make A Difference Day in Crawford County was held Saturday, October 18th. Tim Hecei, French Creek Valley Conservancy Project Manager, had the occasion over the summer to meet landowners inquiring about stream cleanups. When the new landowners purchased property a few years earlier, they knew some cleanup was going to be necessary...they just didn't know how much. The couple had a "five-year" plan to do the work themselves, but were struggling with the enormity of the task, and began to wonder if ten years might be more realistic. Tim suggested a possible organized cleanup work session with volunteers.

Once recommended to the FCVC board, several members agreed that this undertaking would be a great Make A Difference Day project. Tim contacted the United Way and began making cleanup arrangements. After the site was reviewed and approved as a suitable project, students were then given the opportunity to participate in the cleanup. Two sororities and two fraternities from Allegheny College signed up to volunteer, and volunteer they did—with about sixty students showing up! In addition to the huge Allegheny student turnout, a few members of the community also gave a helping hand.

It took several hours of sweat and sore muscles, after which the field road that runs through the property showed several piles of discarded scrap metal, auto and tractor parts, and old tires. Also visible were piles of assorted garbage that had been lying nearby in or near a small stream that flows into the West Branch of Cussewago Creek.

To say the least, the landowners were ecstatic with the results. A huge thank you goes out to all of the volunteers and to the United Way for organizing this much needed site cleanup.



*Pictured at left:
Allegheny
College students
clean up debris
on Shadeland
Road property
located in
Cussewago
Township*

Highlights of the FCVC 12th Annual Membership Dinner

On Thursday, October 2, 2008, forty-seven members and guests joined us for an enjoyable evening as Riverside Inn hosted our annual membership banquet. After social hour and a wonderful dinner, honor awards were presented to two community leaders in appreciation for their dedication and conservation efforts towards the preservation of French Creek. The *Friend of French Creek Award* was presented to Jim Palmer, and the *Bailey Lifetime Achievement Award* was presented to Jonathan Helmreich. This year, an informative presentation entitled "*Fish as Indicators of Stream Health in Small Tributaries in the French Creek Watershed*" was delivered Dr. Scott Wissinger of Allegheny College. Lastly, we held our raffle drawing. Congratulations to our winners Betsy Sauers — Pandora Necklace; Rich Eakin-12 gauge Benelli Shotgun; and Cheryl Smith — the Wilderness Kayak. Thank you to all who attended and we hope to see you again next year!

*Pictured from
left to right:
Jonathan
Helmreich,
FCVC
President John
Tautin, and
Jim Palmer*



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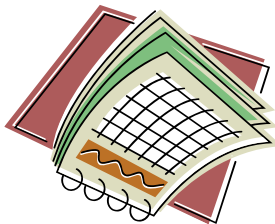
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Calendars are \$10 each and available for purchase at:

- FCVC Office
- The Market House
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- Pennsylvania Environmental Council



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