

Spring Newsletter

Welcome to Spring 2022. We know it's been a long and cold winter as attested to by these pictures of the early February ice breakup on Sleepy Creek at Johnsons Mill and downstream at Burnt Mill, and Mother Nature is not quite done yet. We also appreciate, too, that it has been close to a year since you have received a newsletter from us. As with many of you and your families, the COVID pandemic put a hold on many of our SCWA yearly activities. We are now hopeful that the coming year will be a return to some semblance of normalcy and with your help, we'll be able to continue our mission "to protect the watershed and assist community members to improve this irreplaceable natural resource for future generations" and to accomplish the near-term planned activities outlined in this newsletter.

Sleepy Creek at Johnson's Mill

Sleepy Creek downstream at Burnt Mill

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Saturday, March 26th.

We'll kick off the 2022 tree planting season with an approximate 110 tree riparian buffer planting at the Keith and Donna DeShong property, **3127 Spohrs Road, starting at 10 AM**. Trees will be planted along both Sleepy Creek and Yellow Spring Run. Planting holes will be previously dug, so the task at hand is to properly plant and stake the trees for future growth. Family participation is welcome and we ask that you dress properly for the weather and bring along a spade, shovel, or garden rake, as well as water and snacks for your personal consumption. A small selection of gloves will be available and a light pizza lunch will be provided. If you are interested in helping out, please submit your name, phone number, home address, and the number of family members coming via email to info@sleepycreekwatershed.org or to kbisom@wvca.us not later than **Tuesday, March 22nd**. That way we'll be able to notify you of any change in plans due to weather or renewed COVID restrictions.

Saturday, April 2nd.

Once again we'll participate with other state-wide organizations in the annual WV "MakeltShine" litter clean-up campaign. This year we'll be working at the **Spruce Pine Hollow Park**, on the right about ½ miles past the bridge crossing Sleepy Creek on Rte. 9 East. We'll start working at 10 a.m. and should finish by Noon. Litter bags will be provided for collection, but you bringing a pail and lawn rake along to facilitate collection would also be helpful. Again, dress for the weather and bring along personal refreshments. No advanced registration is required and your help is sincerely appreciated.

Tuesday, April 12th.

We will be conducting a small early-week riparian buffer planting of approximately 50 trees on the John Mesner property, **4916 Winchester Grade Road**, starting at **10 a.m.** Again, all holes will be dug beforehand and we're looking for a few people to help plant. Once again, we ask that you dress for the weather, bring personal snacks and refreshments and a spade, shovel, or garden rake to facilitate planting. Likewise, no advanced registration is required for this planting, and your help is appreciated.

Saturday, April 30th.

Our biggest tree planting of the spring season will be held at the **Cacapon Resort State Park** starting at **10 a.m.** Details of this planting are still being worked out, but at least 150 trees will be planted in cooperation with the park staff and other volunteer organizations. As with our other plantings, holes will be previously dug and the task at hand on the 30th is to properly plant and stake the trees for future growth. Family participation is also welcomed and we ask that you dress properly for the weather and bring along a spade, shovel, or garden rake as well as water and snacks for your personal consumption. A small selection of gloves will be available and the Park will provide lunch to all participants. Again, if you are interested in helping out, please submit your name, phone number, home address, and the number of family members coming via email to info@sleepycreekwatershed.org or to kbisom@wvca.us no later than **Tuesday, April 26th**. That way we'll be able to notify you of any change in plans due to weather or renewed COVID restrictions.

master gardens

Friday and Saturday, May 6th & 7th.

See you at the Fair! Happily, the Morgan County Master Gardeners are in process of planning to hold their annual plant fair at the Berkeley Springs State Park these two days. If the event comes to fruition, we plan on being there both days to provide you and attendees information and handouts about environmentally projects you can accomplish on your property, our association, and no or shared-cost programs available to watershed residents to improve their property value and the natural environment of the Sleepy Creek Watershed for themselves, future generations, and wildlife. See you there!

Other News Items

Septic Pumping and Repair Financial Assistance Still Available for Watershed Homeowners

The Sleepy Creek Watershed Association and Eastern Panhandle Conservation District continue to offer an opportunity for Sleepy Creek Watershed homeowners to apply for financial reimbursement of 50% (up to \$150) of the cost of having their home septic system pumped. Limited additional funding is also available to assist with septic system repairs when needed. The applicant's property must be within the Sleepy Creek Watershed, and all applications must be approved before the septic system is pumped or repaired. Contact Kristen Bisom at the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District to determine your eligibility and receive your formal application. You can reach Kristen at 681-247-3011 or email kbisom@wvca.us. Mail-in application forms are also available at the Morgan County Health Department; **137 War Memorial Dr., Berkeley Springs**. Don't delay in submitting your request as funding is limited. Completed applications are approved on a first-come first-served basis.

Participation in USGS Climate Impact Study

Our association helped the United States Geological Survey (USGS) conduct a climate impact study in the three counties of the Eastern Panhandle. The focus was on water temperature differential in karst and non-karst geography in the counties. Members of SCWA implanted self-contained water temperature thermometers at 14 locations throughout Sleepy Creek and its tributaries with the cooperation of site landowners. The

thermometers were implanted in late May of 2021 and removed in late December. Data from all three counties are currently being analyzed by USGS, Leetown, WV, and will be made available to the public in late spring or early summer this year. It is our plan to coordinate with USGS to hold a public presentation of their findings. We will let you know the date and location of this presentation as soon as it's finalized.

Volunteers Needed

The Sleepy Creek Watershed Association is a 100% volunteer-run organization. We always welcome your volunteer assistance in all we do. At the present time, we are short members on our Board of Directors and would welcome you volunteering to join the board. We generally meet on the second Tuesday of each month from **10 – 11 a.m.** at **First United Methodist Church, 49 S. Green St., Berkeley Springs.** Board members are also encouraged to participate in all SCWA activities when available. If you are interested in joining the Board or in other opportunities to help in association activities, don't hesitate to call Chuck Marsh, President, at 304-258-2605 or talk to us at our booth at the **Master Gardeners' Plant fair on May 6th or 7th.** All are welcome to help out in any of our activities and attend our Board meetings.

A 10-Year Wrap-Up

Sleepy Creek Watershed Association celebrated its 20 Year Anniversary in 2019. Since 2009, the Association has received federal government funding administered by the Eastern Panhandle Conservation Agency for environmental improvement actions because of the Environmental Protection Agency's designation of Sleepy Creek as 'impaired' due to contamination with fecal coliform bacteria. In a recent request for renewal of this funding, we identified the environmentally friendly actions we have taken with this federal funding to improve the water quality of Sleepy Creek and the living environment for watershed residents and wildlife. We thought you will find them of interest as well:

- Partially financially assisted 183 homeowners to pump their septic systems and 60 homeowners to repair their failing septic systems
- Planted trees in 15 cumulative acres of urban areas to absorb rain runoff
- Planted 10 cumulative acres of riparian buffers to absorb rain runoff and stabilize stream banks
- Converted 3/4 acre of gravel roads and parking lots to porous pavement to absorb rain and avoid run-off of sediment and other contaminants

- Contracted repetitive scientific stream monitoring to identify levels of fecal coliform contamination along the main stems of Sleepy Creek in Morgan County. These results can be seen at:
<https://sleepycreekwatershed.org/water-monitoring-ecoli-study/>
- Accomplished stream restoration project at Autumn Acres and Winchester Grade Roads eliminating the yearly unwanted introduction of 82 tons of sediment, 186 pounds of nitrogen, and 85 pounds of phosphorus into Sleepy Creek as well as the downstream Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay Watersheds and their river-sourced municipal drinking water filtration plants
- Provided annual recurring contracted scientific sampling of Sleepy Creek for bacteria contaminant levels

Funding for these projects and others will continue for the foreseeable future. If you are interested in learning more about these opportunities or have ideas for other environmental improvement projects, don't hesitate to contact us via email at infor@sleepycreekwatershed.org We'd be happy to talk with you.

Parting Thoughts

As mentioned at the beginning of this newsletter, the last two years have been difficult for the Association, its volunteers, and watershed residents. We look optimistically to the remainder of this year and beyond as we try to live up to our motto of "Our Watershed, Our Resource, Our Responsibility." I encourage you to join in our activities and help out where you can. I also encourage you to contact us with any questions at info@sleepycreekwatershed.org I assure you we will respond to assist you.

In closing, I want to thank all of you that responded so favorably to our annual appeal by renewing your membership and making donations to continue our operations. If you have not done so already, we encourage you to renew your annual membership and/or make a financial contribution toward our continuing efforts in the watershed. Please complete your mail-in form today or go to our secure online donation portal at www.sleepycreekwatershed.org/join to renew and contribute. We need your support.

Chuck Marsh
President

Sleepy Creek Watershed Association

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors generally meets on the second Tuesday of the month
WVU Extension Office at 10 a.m. All are welcome to attend.
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