

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

Wetlands Now Part of State Game Lands 313

You did it! You (through your support of NPC) added 27 acres to State Game Lands 313!

The wetland complex known locally as The Muck, or Morris's Marsh is the headwaters of Marsh Creek, a major tributary to Pine Creek. The wetlands complex is known to be an American Bittern nesting site (1 of only 2 in the state) and to have Marsh Wrens (species of concern). There are also two plants of significance that have been found in the wetlands.

The landowner NPC worked with purchased 6 acres approximately 20 years ago and the other 21 acres last year. His intent was to conserve the area and help expand the public land so the Muck and its inhabitants (the birds and all the other wildlife) can be enjoyed by everyone. NPC purchased the acreage from him this Spring.

Over the summer the Game Commission worked through their acquisition process. One of the steps in their process is surveying the property. The dry summer helped the surveyors get done more quickly.

The final paperwork, conveying the property from NPC to the Game Commission, was signed the last week in October. The paperwork was delivered to the Game Commission the same day, and it was filed at the County Courthouse shortly after.

Having the funds available to cover the early project costs allowed this project to move from an idea to an acquisition project. There are

always costs beyond the actual purchase price of the property. Thanks to our members, the Buck Land Acquisition Fund, the Tiadaghton Audubon, the Charles Knox and Margaret Etner Foundation, the Ernest L. Sweet and Mildred Roberts Sweet Foundation, and the Packer Foundation the funds needed were in hand, or quickly obtained.

Thank you for helping get it done!

Big Changes

The following is an excerpt of an article Jaci Harner wrote for the Northumberland County Conservation District's Fall newsletter. Jaci coordinated a number of projects this summer that were part of the stream restoration partnership, including the two she outlines here.



Conserving working farms and forests

When we do a stream improvement project we want the end result to accomplish both restoration and conservation. The stream will function normally if we return it to its original state, but we also have to manage the stream to prevent as much future damage and erosion as possible. Over time, we have learned to observe stable stream sites in nature to understand how to properly implement a stream improvement project. Mother Nature is a great teacher.

Stable stream sites often have many of the following components:

Continued on page 2

Big Changes *Continued from front page*

- vegetation along the banks and adjacent land area of the stream
- connection to the floodplain
- shade from tree canopies
- gravel or cobble stream bottom
- variety of aquatic habitats
- meanders or curves throughout the stream

In August, we tackled a large project along Brush Valley Road, just south of Sunbury, to return it to a more natural state by adding some of the previously stated components. This is an unnamed tributary that drains directly into the Susquehanna River. Stream improvement work had been completed upstream in 2014. It made sense to continue working downstream to improve stream corridor conditions as they approached the Susquehanna River.

Some portions of the stream have a mature riparian buffer that grows between crop field/ meadow and the stream. Other sections of the stream are used as pasture for an active cow/calf operation. As we walked the stream to design the project, we observed a variety of issues: erosion jeopardizing a local roadway, 3' – 7' vertical streambanks, a large debris jam, livestock exposure, and gravel bars. We knew if the site was to be properly restored, all aspects would need to be addressed.

Adding fish habitat structures help stabilize streambanks to reduce erosion and increases the quantity and quality of fish habitat.



Before the project the stream was eroding toward a heavily used road.



After the project, the bank has been regraded to reduce erosion and restore functionality during high water.

Regrading banks will reconnect the stream channel with the floodplain; this allows high flows to escape the stream channel and spread out across a wider area. The water's energy is reduced and causes less damage.

Streambank fencing limits livestock access to the stream, reducing animal pressure on the streambanks allows natural vegetation to grow and limits erosion activity.

Finally, the stabilized livestock walkway and crossing allow animals to utilize the pasture and stream for food and water purposes while also limiting environmental degradation.

Easement Inspection Highlight

September 6: During the inspection of the Morgan Valley Road easement I looked down and saw a "leaf" slowly crawling across the road. It was the caterpillar of the hag moth. The hag moth is a common resident of eastern forests. The caterpillar is extremely well camouflaged as a dead leaf; the adult is a rather non-descript moth that resembles hundreds of other species of gray/tan moths.



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to all those who continue
to support the work of the
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Easement Inspection Highlight

October 25: On a steep sidehill on the Crisanti easement there's an overhanging rock ledge that would be impressive in its own right, but what's even more impressive is the pile of porcupine droppings beneath the ledge. From the extent and depth of the droppings, porcupines must have used this den for an extremely long time. What looks like soil spread out beneath the ledge is actually a spreading mound of dung – perhaps an expert on porcupine dung could give us a good estimate of how many generations of porkys have used the den.



Crisanti

**If you have included the NPC in your will,
please let us know so that that we may
thank you during your lifetime.**

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy

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