

# The Flyline



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## President's Message

*by Randy Buchanan*

In the last newsletter, if you remember, the Chapter was going to do three habitat projects on local waterways. Well, we got two out of three done; not a bad percentage.

Soap Hollow Run was rained out in 2018, but this year Greg found a few weeks of dry weather and the instream devices were placed. Greg had a blank canvas and created habitat that trout are already using.

Howell's Run was Butch's project and was a continuation of a previous project. Fish from Lake Rowena will now be able to move upstream when the lake warms to find cold water refuge and overhead cover.

Potter Creek was rained out and we will try again next year. I would like to thank everyone who came out to help and to make these projects move very smoothly.

During the summer months Gary held a wrap up meeting of last year's banquet and planning for next year's banquet has already begun. Twelve Days of Christmas tickets will be going out soon.

Missy has been alerting schools that

participate in the Trout In The Classroom program to get their tanks ready for an early shipment of eggs. The eggs will be arriving early because the program is switching from brook trout to rainbow trout eggs.

George and John have been busy with stream monitoring and training new people to help with this project. I will be giving a shout out to the new people as they move along with this project and easing their job.

This will be the last newsletter before the winter fly tying classes. Check out Gary's article about some new changes to the class.

Come out to a meeting and learn how you can lend a hand.

Catch one!

*Randy*



Late August is a time of change. It's hot, but most people don't seem to notice. Look around and listen. All of a sudden leaves have turned brown and litter the ground. Goldenrod turns the fields into seas of bright yellow broken by stalks of tall, pink Joe Pye weed and the deep purple of ironweed. Most of the earlier summer flowers have bloomed and wilted. At night, the constant chirp of Katydid serenades the ears. Some nights the sudden chill is due to the passage of a cold front, welcome relief from the humidity of late summer and a harbinger of the coming autumn. The wild browns have donned shades of gold and brown and seem restless. Soon they will spawn and then feed up for the long winter. Squirrels are gathering acorns and deer are gorging on the plenty of summer. Soon food will grow scarcer. For the angler, the heat of summer will soon give way to cooling waters and fall hatches. Tie some olives and buggers for after the hatches. The change comes gradually, but soon it will be fall. Don't miss it. It's the best season of the year!



## Banquet Committee Hard at Work

*By Gary Cooper*

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It seems that the banquet committee is always working on a banquet. I know that we only have one a year, but each banquet takes a lot of work. After wrapping up last year's banquet, all of a sudden we were at Randy's house in July for a review of last year's banquet. We had our best banquet ever in 2019. If we are to repeat that success, we'll have to get off our butts and work hard. This year's banquet will be on April 4, 2020 at the Holiday Inn in downtown Johnstown. Mark that date on your calendar now! Literature for sponsors, banquet ads, professionals, and ticket letters for those attending are being prepared and reviewed. Plans for prizes are being looked at. There is much to do. Tentatively banquet committee meetings are scheduled for October 24, 2019 and November 20, 2019. Any changes will be announced. All meetings are at the Buchanan residence at 7:00 PM. We welcome new committee members, so if you would like to join and help out, show up at any meeting. We will put you to work.

This winter, MLTU will offer its popular beginning fly tying courses in January and February. Interested persons may choose from a Saturday course from 9 am until 12 pm or a Monday evening course from 6 pm until 9 pm. Courses are held at the Richland Municipal Building. Each course lasts for five weeks, but six dates are scheduled in case of inclement weather or extra time is needed. Tentative dates for the Saturday course are January 4, 11, 18, and 25 and February 1 and 8. Tentative dates for the Monday night course are January 6, 13, 20, and 27 and February 3 and 10. These dates are subject to change pending room availability and instructor schedules. The courses are free to the public. Tools and materials will be supplied by the chapter. In order to sign up, call Gary Cooper at 814-266-4763. Pre-registration for the course is mandatory so that we know how much material to have on hand. All interested persons should be signed up by December 31, 2019.

A new twist this year is that the chapter is considering offering an intermediate course to people who already know how to tie. Here are some of the things required of potential students:

- ◆ You must have your own vice and tools.
- ◆ You must use your own materials to practice at home.
- ◆ You must have mastered:
  - ◇ The pinch technique
  - ◇ The loose loop
  - ◇ The whip finish
  - ◇ The right angle technique
  - ◇ Using two hands in concert to tie off material and to measure material.



We are trying to gauge interest in this course. The course will cost \$25.00 per student. We have not set a time yet, but are considering Saturday afternoons. I know there are a lot of you out there who have been tying a while. If you want to improve your skills, consider this course. We are working out the course among ourselves. When more details are available, we will let you know. Please call Gary Cooper at 814-266-4763 by mid-December if you have interest. Your response will determine if we offer the course.

Special thanks to JCPenney and Brittany Fresh for contributing to MLTU. Brittany volunteers with MLTU in many ways, including, but not limited to banquet assistance, mailing of our newsletters, TIC Release Day field trips, and more! Because Brittany volunteers at least 10 hours a quarter and works for JCPenney, she may apply for a \$150 grant each quarter for the 501(c)3 non-profit organization with which she is volunteering. Brittany may also submit activities of a non-profit in which other associates could volunteer. Each associate is able to participate. Because of Brittany's dedication, MLTU received \$300 from JCPenney this year. Thank you!

Greenhouse Park, located in Conemaugh Township Somerset County, is a well known and popular outdoor recreational destination point. The park is used for a variety of organized as well as everyday public low impact recreation. Aside from the green space, pavilions and other amenities, the major draw is the Stonycreek Whitewater Park on the Stonycreek River that attracts countless kayakers and other boating and white water enthusiasts to the man made rapids. It is also a staging point and put in area for float tubers and others who want to enjoy a fun float to takeouts in Johnstown a few river miles away.

The primary reason that the park can attract outdoor users is the historic improvements to the water quality of the Stonycreek River over the last 20 years. A principle organization that has been responsible for that improvement, the Somerset Conservation District, is now leading the enhancement efforts of the other waterway in the park, Soap Hollow Run.

The small stream, which flows alongside State Route 403 before entering the Stonycreek, is inconspicuous and often goes unnoticed. However, only a few years ago the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, under its unassessed waters initiative, surveyed the stream and confirmed the existence of a wild reproducing brown trout population that made the Commission's Class A listing that signifies the resident trout population is at a high level and that the water quality is also cold and clean.

Despite this positive data, Somerset Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Greg Shustrick, noted that the waterway in the park was choked with knotweed and also held minimal holding water for the trout. The District discussed the issue with some young leaders out of the Johnstown Chamber of Commerce, the Conemaugh Township Supervisors and then brought the need for a potential improvement project to MLTU.

The result has been the formation of a partnership of these local entities to improve Soap Hollow Run in and near Greenhouse Park. Over the past two years, the Conservation District, Natural Biodiversity, MLTU and other volunteers physically cut and then sprayed the knotweed along the banks several times, successfully reducing its growth and survival.

Also during that time, Shustrick, through his role with the District, designed a habitat improvement project and also applied to numerous funders to implement the in-stream projects and replant with native vegetation. The success of that Conservation District led effort secured funding from National Trout Unlimited's Embrace -A-Stream Grant Program, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited's Forever Wild Mini Grant Program, and Pennsylvania Environmental Council's Laurel Highlands Landscape Initiative Grant Program. Additional funds were also provided directly from MLTU and from the Johnstown Vision 2025 River Capture Team initiative.

The funding combined with in-kind contributions from the Conemaugh Township Supervisors, the Conservation District and MLTU has led to the currently underway effort of stabilizing the streambank and creating habitat for the trout with the construction and placing of log vanes, mudsills, root wads, j-hooks and random boulders.

*Continued on page 5 "Soap Hollow"*



## Soap Hollow continued

Volunteers from MLTU, using their own equipment and manpower, installed root wads and mudsills that will compliment the work of the District's contractor, Blackner Excavating, who was the primary contractor for the project.

Native species vegetation in the form of live stakes and trees will be planted to restore the streambank to a more natural state and the wild trout population should prosper even more from the habitat created.

The Conservation District and MLTU plan to use the high profile area as showcase and example of the existence and significance of the wild trout resource and how it can both coexist and increase the economic and recreational opportunities of the more man-made attractions at the park as well as in other locations throughout the region.



*Left, Greg Shustrick directs habitat work at Soap Hollow Run. Right, a wild brown trout was caught and released in the stream. Photos courtesy Len Lichwar.*

### *Budget—continued from page 7*

To potentially make matters worse - if that is possible - the state Senate recently passed SB 619 by a 26-24 vote. Although this is not part of the budget, this legislation would make major changes to the determination of water pollution under the state's Clean Stream Law effectively making spills and discharges to waterways no longer pollution and most likely taking away the ability of PA DEP and the Fish and Boat Commission to even enforce current pollution laws. The bill now goes to the state House for consideration.

Pennsylvania used to be a nationwide leader in conservation and there still are legislators and others today who lead in that direction, but not as many as in the past. A few previous examples of many include the environmental awareness of the nation being created by Pennsylvania's own Rachel Carson. Maurice Goddard almost made good on his promise of a state park within 25 miles of every Pennsylvanian and former governor Tom Ridge's administration originated Growing Greener.

Perhaps someday PA will be great again in the stewardship of its natural resources that are the foundation upon which its economy and pride of place is built. However, today is not that day.

Soon, some of you will receive Twelve Days of Christmas tickets. If you get them, please either sell them or purchase them yourself. We need the money that this ticket raises for our banquet. We sell 500 tickets, and we have 12 winners for December 1-12, 2019. We make about \$1200.00 for the banquet.

Tickets are not hard to sell, so please hop to it. Return your ticket stubs with a check to:

Randy Buchanan  
1745 Regal Drive  
Johnstown, PA 15904

If you have any questions, call Randy at 814-467-4034. Thanks for your efforts!

## Howell's Run Project

*By Butch Kerchenske*

On August 23 & 24, the MLTU completed a stream and fish habitat improvement project on Howell's Run near Manor Drive in Ebensburg. The project site is located behind the Lion's baseball field on property owned by Ebensburg Borough.

A GP-1 stream enhancement permit was obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission thru the efforts of MLTU and the Cambria County Conservation District.

The design of the project was completed by Phil Thomas, Habitat Coordinator for National Trout Unlimited. Earthshapers, LLC was the contractor for the project. The project was entirely funded by MLTU.

Volunteers members from MLTU were on site to install the structures. In attendance were Randy Buchanan, Eric Fabrizio, Jack Gilbert, Jassim Hasson, Butch Kerchenske, Mark Lee, Shane Rudnick, Mike Vranich, Bob Wardrop, and David Wright.

Drone video of the completed project can be viewed at:

[www.skypixel.com/pilot/videos/share/mltu-stream-improvement-project-on-howell-s-run?account=rud4757](http://www.skypixel.com/pilot/videos/share/mltu-stream-improvement-project-on-howell-s-run?account=rud4757)

*MLTU volunteers help place habitat structures in Howell's Run. Photo courtesy Dave Wright.*





Financial budgets by their nature are always difficult and challenging and no one is ever 100% satisfied because there will always have to be compromises. However, the recently passed Pennsylvania state budget compromises natural resource conservation to level that is both inequitable and inappropriate.

To set the stage, Pennsylvania's most recent water quality report verifies that 40% of its 86,000 miles of waterways are in violation of the state's water quality standards due primarily to sediment runoff and abandoned mine drainage (AMD). The state's commitment to reach its Chesapeake Bay pollution goals by 2025 is woefully behind in its efforts, and portions of the Susquehanna River were finally declared impaired by the PA DEP, verifying that the largest conduit to the bay, slicing through the heart of the state, has been and continues to be severely impacted by pollution. There is a one billion dollar backlog in state park and forest maintenance. Public agencies, which are on the front lines of resource protection, such as Conservation Districts and the state Fish and Boat Commission, have not seen their funding increased since 2005 and that forces them to operate with 2019 expenses on 2005 incomes severely limiting their programs and capacities. The PA DEP has had its funding slashed up to 30 % in the past that continues to limit their ability to perform their many oversight and assistance providing roles. Locally and across the state aging AMD passive treatment systems, such as the ones on the Stonycreek and Casselman Rivers, in Somerset County are in dire need of maintenance and complete rehab yet still no dedicated funds have ever been created to cover the long term costs of these critical water quality improvement facilities.

Apparently underfunded and understaffed public sector agencies and shrinking numbers of overwhelmed watershed group and non-profit volunteers are supposed to just continue to protect and conserve our natural resources that our recreational, eco-tourism, business, industry and agriculture industries require for their sustainability and every citizen depends on for their livelihood and quality of life.

That is because the state legislature, instead of adding to the empowerment of these dedicated stewards of our resources, provided the ability to cut 16 million dollars from the Environmental Stewardship Fund that funds the Growing Greener Grant Program, AMD abatement and the preservation of essential farmland and other conservation initiatives. The state's recycling fund was also given a 10 million dollar capacity to be slashed. The money can now be redirected toward sustaining the day to day operations of DEP and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources rather than using funds from the general fund for that purpose.

Instead of restoring conservation funding to appropriate levels the budget plays a difficult to follow funding route shrouded by a shell game that clearly demonstrates that conservation is not a priority in Pennsylvania.

Of course the push back is always that if these agencies and programs were funded properly taxes would have to be raised. NOT SO. Innovative new sources of money, that is not tax money, from such sources as the Governor's proposed Severance Fee and or even better, a nominal fee on water usage that would raise millions if not billions of new capital, without undue burden on the providers, never get any serious consideration.

*Continued on page 5*

**Mountain Laurel  
Trout Unlimited**

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## Save-the-Dates

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- October 3 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- October 24 – Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM at Randy & Pat Buchanan's house
- November 3 – Yellow Creek Coalition Meeting, 2 PM at Bowser's Cabin
- November 7 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- November 13 – Board meeting to discuss by-law revisions, 6:30 PM at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- November 20 – Banquet Committee Meeting, 7 PM at Randy & Pat Buchanan's house
- December 5 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- December 31 – Deadline to register for fly tying classes
- January 2 – MLTU meeting 6:30 PM Directors, 7 PM Members at Richland Municipal Bldg.
- February 28-29 – Keystone Coldwater Conference, State College

