

Buffalo Creek Water Trail

For the past year a sub-committee of the BCWA board and friends has been working to create a water trail for Buffalo Creek. The water trail idea is designed to increase the public's use of the creek as well as their knowledge of the creek and its health.

The group has been working on issues such as legal constraints, insurance issues, and looking at possible sites where boaters could access the creek. Most of its time and effort has been devoted to meeting with access site owners, and designing a brochure that explains the history, geography and access points of the creek, as well as safety tips for boaters navigating the creek.

Four access points were decided upon by the group, and approval of each landowner for public access has been obtained. Those sites are at Cowan (near the church/public meeting hall, Mazeppa (at the ball field), the Dale Engel Walker House and property (at Strawbridge Road bridge) and the St. George Street public access point (on the Susquehanna below the mouth of Buffalo Creek).

Due to legal issues, the group decided not to improve the sites and not to put up signage at the sites. There will be directions on site location and use in the Buffalo Creek water trails brochure.

The Susquehanna Greenway organization granted BCWA \$500 for the printing of the brochure, but the funds were originally tied up with BCWA having to obtain an official state water trails designation from the PA Water Trails Partnership. The Partnership recently freed up the funds for BCWA, stating that Buffalo Creek did not fit with their series of requirements for larger bodies of water, and the funds were released for the printing of the brochure.

The water trail from Cowan to the Susquehanna is navigable from spring rains in April and May and just after strong rains during the summer. Brochures will be available in spring at a variety of local businesses and on the Buffalo Creek Watershed website and facebook page.



Kayaking on Buffalo Creek

Bacteria in Union County Creeks

During the summer of 2009 and 2010, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and area volunteers conducted testing for bacteria in three Union County watersheds: Buffalo Creek, Upper Penns Creek and Limestone/ Bull Run. This testing did not differentiate between human bacteria from sewage treatment plants and septic systems, and animal bacteria from farming and wild and domesticated animals.

The DEP, through the Pennsylvania County Conservation Districts, is required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to make every effort to reduce bacteria, or "fecal coliforms" as the technical term, to below 200 cfu/100 ml (# of colony forming units per 100 milliliters of stream water).

The BCWA has as its central purpose to encourage ecologically responsible stewardship of Buffalo Creek, its tributaries, and the environment within its watershed.

Test results in 2010 showed that the bacterial count on Buffalo Creek at two different sites (downstream at Hoover Road Bridge and upstream at Forest Hill Road Bridge) in early summer and late summer to average 850 cfu/100 ml and 630 cfu/100ml). Both of these results are well above the “average” bacterial count allowed by the EPA of 200. As a result, Buffalo Creek is in the highest “impaired for at least one recreational use” category (there are categories 1-5).

In Limestone Run/Bull Run, tested in 2009, the geometric mean was 2083 cfu/100ml downstream and 1299 cfu/100ml upstream. These high bacterial numbers gave the Run the same “impaired for recreational use” label.

Upper Penns Creek (in Union County) demonstrated high water quality with lower bacterial numbers (35 cfu/100ml and 20 cfu/100ml) and so is classified in category 2 “streams with attaining one or more protected uses (aquatic life, fish consumption, potable water, recreation). The greatest geographic difference between Upper Penns Creek and Buffalo Creek/Limestone Run is the number of farms and size of population in the watersheds.

With any high level of impairment, DEP is required to reduce bacteria to an average reading below 200 cfu/100ml, the “recreational use” standard. The Union County Conservation District has been developing plans to reduce these bacterial counts by working with area polluters in these two watersheds.



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BCWA Sponsored Kayak Trips

Merrill Linn Conservancy is celebrated its 10th year of Caring For Communities events that it has held during April of each year in conjunction with Earth Month. BCWA has participated in these events by sponsoring canoeing/kayaking trips on Buffalo Creek with Canoe Susquehanna providing it's expertise by leading the trips. With Union County celebrating its bicentennial, we are offering three trips, each one on a different section of Buffalo Creek and each looking at a different historical structure on that section. The trips are: Cowan to Mazeppa with a look at Johnson Mill, Mazeppa to Strawbridge with a stop at Grove's Mill, and Strawbridge to St. George Street with a look at Hubler Covered Bridge. Details are being developed to finalize each trip. Look for information and registration details in the near future on BCWA's website, facebook page and on Canoe Susquehanna's website. We look forward to you joining us this year for these events.



Hubler Covered Bridge

BCWA's Facebook Page

BCWA is now on Facebook. Check out our new site at
<http://www.facebook.com/BufaloCreekWatershedAlliance>

Do You Know:

Union County has five covered bridges. How many of these are within the Buffalo Creek watershed?