



SCWA Newsletter

ISSUE 1

MAY 2009

**Sewickley
Creek
Watershed
Association**

*Working Together
For A Better
Environment*

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**Thomas W. Keller,
Executive Director**

SCWA & Iron Oxide Recovery, Inc. Win Governor's Award



The 2008 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence was presented to the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association and Iron Oxide Recovery, Inc. at a ceremony held at the Marchand Passive Treatment System site in Lowber on April 21st. Members and friends of SWCA were on hand to enjoy the presentation made by DEP Regional Director, Ken Bowman.

The Lowber Project is the result of a joint effort of the Sewickley Creek Watershed Association and Iron Oxide Recovery, Inc, a local company owned by Robert Hedin, whose goal is to construct self-sustaining mine drainage treatment systems utilizing the profitable production of iron products.

In 1999, SCWA and IOR joined together to find a solution to treat the abandoned Marchand Mine Discharge located in Lowber, Westmoreland County. The abandoned mine had been discharging up to 2,500 gallons per minute of iron-laden, polluted water into Sewickley Creek for decades. As a result, large deposits of iron sludge already existed on the site, deemed by Hedin as ideal for supporting iron oxide recovery experiments.



Iron Oxide sludge will be recovered from the settling ponds every 5-10 years.

The \$1.3 million dollar Marchand Passive Treatment System that was developed through SWCA's and IOR's partnership was funded entirely through the Growing Greener program.

Since the system went online in October 2007, the following environmental achievements have been reached:

- Recovery and recycling of 4,000 tons of iron sludge, saving \$150,000 in landfill disposal costs.
- Successful treatment of 1,400-2,200 gallons per minute of mine water containing 70-85 mg/L of iron.
- Retention of over 400 tons of iron solids that would have entered Sewickley Creek.
- Creation of 13 acres of open water and wetland habitat for fish, amphibians & reptiles, aquatic insects, and water fowl.

The Lowber site is the first and only commercially successful resource recovery project in Pennsylvania. This project is also the world's first and only known self-sustaining mine drainage treatment system.

The Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence is awarded to select PA businesses, government agencies, educational institutions, non-profit organizations, individuals, farms or agri-businesses engaged in efforts to promote environmental stewardship and economic development.



A view of the expansive wetland area at the Marchand System.

Record Number of Volunteers Clean Up Illegal Dump



Ninety-six volunteers turned out for the cleanup event on April 25th.

On April 25, SCWA partnered with Westmoreland Cleanways, the borough of Youngwood’s fire department, recreation board and employees, and the PA Resources Council to celebrate the Great American Cleanup of PA 2009 by picking up roadway litter and cleaning an illegal dump site in the area. The event was part of the fifth annual statewide event promoted by *Keep PA Beautiful*.

Partnering organizations, along with students from Wendover Middle School, Boy Scout Troop 465, and local residents, focused

on Buncher Park, Youngwood Borough, Youngwood-Armbrust Road, Fairgrounds Road and a large illegal dump site near Hunker. A total of 96 volunteers collectively picked up 353 bags of trash, 233 tires, and an assortment of other discarded items including car parts.

“This was the largest turnout of volunteers we’ve ever had for the annual cleanup,” reported Larry Myers, SCWA Board member and cleanup organizer. “We really appreciate the hard working volunteers who gave up a Saturday morning to make the area roadways a little cleaner and safer. It’s very unfortunate that we have to clean many of the same roadways year after year.”

The group was very appreciative of the refreshment items available at the cleanup, sponsored by Jioio’s Restaurant, Shrimpo’s Pizza, Starbucks, New Stanton Sheetz, Youngwood Sunoco, New Stanton Eat n’ Park, Walmart, and Giant Eagle.

See you at next year’s event!

Watershed Assessment and Restoration Plan Moves Forward



Bank erosion issues and stability issues.

In order to develop a sound approach on how to proceed with restoration work within the Sewickley Creek Watershed, SCWA applied for and received DEP funding to complete a watershed assessment by the Western PA Conservancy Watershed Conservation

Program (WPC.) WPC is working to develop a plan on where future restoration work would create the most positive impact in the watershed. SCWA can then use this information while applying for future restoration project funding.

WPC staff began assessing the Welty Run sub-watershed this past winter and continued through early spring working their way downstream to look at the north branch and the headwaters of the main branch of Sewickley Creek. Some sections have been outstanding in quality, while others have severe sediment and erosion issues, as well as abandoned mine drainage impacts.

Throughout the rest of 2009-2010, WPC will be making their way to the mouth of Sewickley Creek, collecting data and making evaluations as they go. The field team is happy to speak to anyone they meet about the assessment, so if you see them along a stream in the area, give them a wave! Look for more assessment up-dates in future newsletters.

Educator Workshops Offered Through Westmoreland Conservation District



Classroom teachers, recreation staff and others are invited to participate in these exciting, six-hour workshops facilitated by Dana Rizzo, Extension Educator, Water Quality & Resources

Project WET

- Tuesday, June 16, 2009. 8:30 am—3:00 pm
- Elementary and Middle School Focus
- \$30.00 fee for breakfast, lunch & materials
- Act 48 credit

Project Learning Tree

- Tuesday, July 14, 2009. 8:30 am—3:00 pm
- Upper Middle & High School Focus
- \$30.00 fee for breakfast, lunch & materials
- Act 48 credit

Questions, or to register, contact Dana at (724) 837-1402

Vandals Put Water Quality at Risk

Over the past ten years, SWCA and its partners have been working diligently to control and treat a large abandoned mine discharge near the small town of Brinkerton located in Mount Pleasant Township. An 8-acre treatment system was recently constructed, and brought online in October, 2008 to treat the largest discharge in the Sewickley Creek Watershed. The system is working as expected, removing nearly 80% of the iron from the more than 2,000 gallon per minute discharge flowing into Sewickley Creek. Unfortunately, this successful system has become the site of some very discouraging events as of late.



This water elevation control box was recently vandalized at the Brinkerton treatment system site.

In a period of five short months, careless individuals have plugged outlet pipes, shot water control structures, stole newly planted trees, destroyed gate posts, and trespassed with ATVs and other off-road vehicles. Not only are motorized vehicles prohibited in the area, they are causing disturbance to the ground surface that is actually damaging the integrity of the entire system. These acts of carelessness and disregard are threatening to dissolve the thousands of dollars and countless man hours it has taken to create the treatment system.

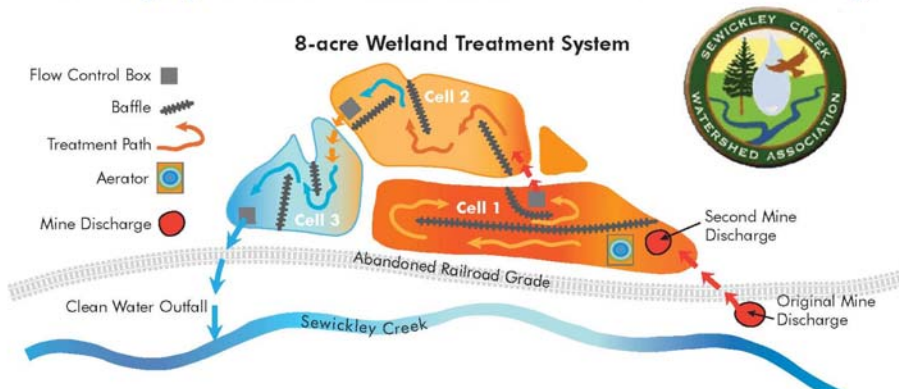
SCWA is exploring possibilities to acquire electricity to the site to power aerators in the treatment system designed to accelerate the removal of iron from the water. Currently, these plans are on hold for fear of additional vandalism to the proposed electrical components.

If you have any information pertaining to illegal activity occurring at the Brinkerton mine drainage treatment system, please contact the PA Fish and Boat Commission at (814) 445-8974 or the PA Game Commission at (724) 238-9523.



Continued disturbance to the narrow berms at the Brinkerton site may cause damage to the existing settling ponds.

Cleaning up the BRINKERTON Abandoned Mine Discharge



Become a Part of SCWA!

The Sewickley Creek Watershed Association continues to grow by leaps and bounds, taking on more projects and community initiatives to expand our goal of promoting the conservation of natural resources, improving water quality, and advocating wise land use practices in the watershed. But we need YOUR HELP!

Your membership in SCWA directly supports our projects and programs. Please consider becoming a part of SCWA today! Membership forms can be obtained by calling our office at (724) 925-3621 or visiting our Website, www.sewickleycreek.com to download a form.

Business Levels:

Platinum	\$1,000
Gold	\$500
Silver	\$250
Bronze	\$100

Organization Levels:

Platinum	\$100
Gold	\$75
Silver	\$50
Bronze	\$25

General Membership:

Family	\$25
Individual	\$10

In addition to nominal contributions, volunteers are always needed for the following activities:

Fundraising	Presentations/Teaching
SCWA Event Help	Environmental Studies
Cleanups	Tree Planting
Fish Stocking	Water Sampling
Trail Maintenance	Construction Projects

Sewickley Creek Watershed Association
PO Box 323
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www.sewickleycreek.com

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Sewickley Creek Watershed Association

*Working Together For A
Better
Environment*

**Join Us At Our Next
Monthly Meeting!**

Every Third Thursday at
7:00 pm
WCCC Business and
Industry Center
Room 4104

Open To All!