

*"Improving Our Quality of Life"*



**Newsletter, #46  
Summer 2017**

[www.evergreenconservancy.org](http://www.evergreenconservancy.org)

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## **Our Rainy Annual Picnic**

The Evergreen Conservancy Annual picnic and meeting was held June 22 at Tanoma in the midst of a downpour that resulted in flooding in many members' homes and in the area.

Our annual picnic broke the record for amount of rain during the event. About 6 board members showed up to get set up an hour before the scheduled picnic. As it began to rain harder and harder we realized there was a good chance no one would show up and there was no real good way to cancel at that point. So we were hungry and decided to go ahead and start the grill! As we were cooking people actually began walking in the rain to the pavilion. All told about 16 hardy souls showed up and we had a grand time having a picnic under the pavilion as we watched Crooked Creek strain its banks. We had a brief business meeting and Cindy recounted our accomplishments of the past year. We voted to retain the current board members and welcomed Nicole Kelley as a new board member. Before people got called away to pump basements we gave the Evergreen Award to Art Grguric of Blackleggs Creek Watershed Association and Trout Nursery, a long time steward of the water and land. Later we gave a certificate of appreciation to Ed Patterson in honor of the 50 year celebration of Parks and Recreation in Indiana County, a very well-deserved honor. We called it a night and headed home. Thanks to all the folks who braved the weather to turn out... We will try and reserve a better weather day for next year!

The usual collection of dues for the upcoming year was put off. Members will receive a letter concerning dues for our fiscal year 2017-18.

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## **Save The Date For September 29<sup>th</sup> – Are Our Forests In Danger?**

Evergreen Conservancy will be presenting its fall program, "What's Buggin' Our Trees: Challenges to Our Forests' Health" on Friday September 29<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Blue Spruce Lodge at Blue Spruce Park.

Come learn about how our forests are changing in response to invasive pests and how we can respond. The program will include an introduction of some relatively recent attacks we have seen in western PA such as the disappearance of American chestnut from our upland forests and the rapid decline of American elm and ash. We will also look at threats to our state tree the "eastern hemlock" and current efforts to restore American chestnut back to our forests.

The program will be presented by Dr. Mike Tyree. Mike is an Assistant Professor of Plant Physiological Ecology in the Department of Biology at IUP.

Sometimes trees take on a special significance. The blue spruce trees that gave our local county park its name are threatened. Park director Ed Patterson reports, "The trees are affected by a type of fungus... especially trees older than 15 to 20 years. Many of the trees that are dying were planted in the 1970s when the park was being landscaped. We will be removing many of the dying trees this fall and winter".

We hope you will come September 29<sup>th</sup> at 7 pm to the Blue Spruce Lodge to learn about dangers to our forests and what is being done to save them. There will be light snacks and a report on Conservancy activities.



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## **Board Members**

Cindy Rogers - President • Malcolm Hermann -Vice president • Becky Snyder -Treasurer  
Tara Binion - Secretary • Dan Boone • Bob Lankard • John Dudash • Mike Tyree  
Paul Yacovone • Stacey Robertson • Tim Slippy • David Janetski • Nicole Kelley

## **OUR MISSION:**

**To advance the preservation, protection and stewardship of Natural, Cultural and Historical Resources in and around Indiana County, PA**

## Membership Benefits

We are pleased to announce the following partners who have supported Evergreen Conservancy by giving discounts to card-carrying members of Evergreen Conservancy. Visit them, get your discount, and thank them for supporting Evergreen Conservancy!

Spaghetti Benders	15% discount	<a href="http://spaghettibenders.com">spaghettibenders.com</a>
Michael B's Shoe Store	\$10 off any purchase	<a href="http://www.michaelbshoes.com">www.michaelbshoes.com</a>
Plant-it Earth	15% discount	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/The-Plant-It-Earth-Greenhouse-And-Gardens">on FaceBook The-Plant-It-Earth-Greenhouse-And-Gardens</a>
Doughnut Connection/ Portia's Bistro	15% discount	<a href="http://www.portiasdonutconnection.com">www.portiasdonutconnection.com</a>
Little Mahoning Creek Pottery	10% discount	<a href="http://www.nancysmeltzer.etsy.com">www.nancysmeltzer.etsy.com</a>
		<a href="http://littlemahoningcreekpottery.blogspot.com">littlemahoningcreekpottery.blogspot.com</a>
Homemade Restaurant	10% off total bill	<a href="http://www.thehomemaderestaurantpa.com">www.thehomemaderestaurantpa.com</a>
Artist Hand Gallery	12 oz. drip coffee \$1	<a href="http://theartistshandgallery.com">theartistshandgallery.com</a>

**JOIN OR RENEW your membership TODAY if you have not already done so for 2017-2018.**



## ECO Tour Update

The Eco Tour Committee has been hard at work preparing for our upcoming GeoTrail. A GeoTrail is a series of geocaches that center on a common theme – in this case, the environment. Participants will receive an official passport containing a list of all 20 caches, with a blank line for code words, found in each cache. Participants will then travel around Indiana County to find all the caches on the trail, filling out each code word as they go. Each cache will be located at a site that showcases positive environmental initiatives in the county in one of five categories: conserving land, conserving water, wildlife habitat, sustainability, and healthy communities. When all 20 geocaches have been found and the code words have been recorded, the passport can be turned in at the Tourist Bureau and other participating locations in exchange for a trackable geocaching coin. We are currently in the process of creating these geocaches and making sure each box will have a few paragraphs of rich information about the site so participants can learn about what they are seeing.

We are very excited about our GeoTrail and are hoping to have it launched sometime late fall. We have been working hard to showcase some of the best environmental locations in the county, and hope you will participate!

## Art Grguric Of Saltsburg Received the Evergreen Award For 2017

Art Grguric of Saltsburg was presented the 2017 Evergreen Award at the annual membership meeting on June 22. He attended with his wife, Donna.

Art lives in Saltsburg with his wife of 47 years. They have four adult children: Mellissa, Art, Amy and Nicholas. They have 14 grandchildren. Art proudly claims he has gotten his whole family involved in his environmental projects.

In 1984 Mr. Grguric and several fellow coal miners raised money to stock trout in Blackleggs Creek. This led to the establishment of the Blackleggs Creek Trout Cooperative and Nursery on Marshall Run. Under Grguric's leadership the Blackleggs Creek Watershed Association was formed in 1986.

Art helped secure \$1.5 million funding for six abandoned mine treatment systems. He also established the Trout in the Classroom Program in the Saltsburg School district. In 2014 Art was selected as man of the year by Pennsylvania Outdoor News.

He is best known for his Outdoor Wild Game Breakfast at Blackleggs Creek Memorial Park.

## Evergreen Conservancy Recognized Indiana County Parks And Trails 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Indiana County Parks and Trails has existed as an organization for 50 years. Evergreen Conservancy and the parks organization have enjoyed a close relationship ever since Evergreen was established. Ed Patterson, long-time director, was invited to the annual meeting to receive recognition for the parks and trails contribution to Indiana County.

In 1983 Ed Patterson was hired as the third director. Indiana County Parks transformed into a facility more than just a place for Indiana residents to go for a family picnic:

- The Laurel Highlands Kennel Club shows brought recognition of Blue Spruce Park from outside the area.
- Blue Spruce Lodge and Lakeside Center made Blue Spruce a location for wedding receptions and other events.
- The Festival of Lights brought in 25,000 visitors by 2014.
- Friends of the Parks provided entertainment and education to those who may not otherwise go to a park.
- The Ghost Town and Hoodlebug Trails provided biking and hiking opportunities for residents.
- The park system expanded by adding covered bridges, the Waterworks Conservation Area, Old Smicksburg Park, Tunnelview Historic site, Eliza Furnace, and Buttermilk Falls (made famous by Fred Rogers of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood), and the Blairsville Riverfront Trail.
- Mr. Patterson enhanced the image of Indiana County Parks and Trails by writing and publishing guidebooks to the Ghost Town and Hoodlebug Trails. He also published material about the little known creature – Wehrle's Salamander. His most recent publication was the 50 year history of Indiana County Parks and Trails.

## Tanoma Updates

- The Trompe is up and running and seems to be helping the system increase the dissolved oxygen in the ponds. We will be adding several new water towers to increase the dissolved oxygen and two new weirs to help measure flow. We have been waiting for the water to go down but the weather has not been cooperating. Hopefully we can get these installed by the end of the year.
- Art Grguric and his crew came out to Tanoma and poured a new cement floor under our pavilion. We had gotten washed out twice in the past two months and decided we needed a more permanent solution. Art did a great job and we appreciate all his work. We still have to put in stone for the one side of the pavilion and move the battery shed but that will be completed soon.



## Grants in Progress

### Dominion Mini Grant

We will be doing a stream restoration project on Laurel Run in Yellow Creek State Park in the late summer, early fall with support from our Dominion Mini Grant. If you have an interest in helping with this project, let us know! Financial support for this project is provided by the Dominion Energy Charitable Foundation which is dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities served by Dominion Energy companies.

### 2017 DEP Environmental Education Grant

We are well on our way in creating our new ECO tour in Indiana County with support from this grant.

## New Board Member

**Nicole Kelley** is a geoscience student at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, focusing on near surface hydrogeophysics and water conservation. Before attending IUP, Nicole taught in the New York City and Pittsburgh public schools, specializing in elementary math and science curriculum. She currently lives in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.



## Hidden In Plain Sight

I have taught tree identification courses for more than ten years. One of the trees that consistently give people difficulties is blackgum or black tupelo (*Nyssa sylvatica* Marsh). Not because it is rare; blackgum is found commonly throughout the eastern United States from Maine to Florida and west to Texas. Not because it is difficult to identify; it certainly has plenty of identifiable characteristics. From its simple, alternate, pinnately-veined, obovate leaves to its diaphragmed pith. The only reason I have come up with, is that it is just unremarkable... "a forest filler". People simply never consider it when trying to identify a tree. That is until early fall. Blackgum is one of the earliest plants to start changing colors in the fall. It is common to see just a cluster of leaves turn a bright "fire truck" red color that is in deep contrast to the rest of the forest. Eventually the whole tree will turn a beautiful red color, which is why it is sometimes planted as an ornamental. This tree is so common, and so typical that it is simply just ignored most of the time, but keep an eye out this time of year and you should see them peeking through.



*By Mike Tyree*

## Trail Clean Up Scheduled Saturday, October 14

Evergreen Conservancy does a clean-up of the Hoodlebug Trail and adjoining Highway 119 areas twice a year. Our fall clean-up will be Saturday, October 14 at 9 am.

To get to the meeting place (the Homer City Ball Field) take old Route 119 South through Homer City (Main Street) and go past the high school. Take first right and follow about ¼ mile to a stop sign. Turn right and cross the Hoodlebug Trail and follow the trail to the parking lot.

Those wishing to help should go to the parking lot with gloves. Garbage bags will be supplied. In past years we have been able to finish in two hours or less.

## Just FYI... An Important Anniversary For Those Who Do AMD Work...

On August 3, 1977, the Surface Mining and Reclamation Act was signed into law by President Jimmy Carter. The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 (SMCRA) is the primary federal law that regulates the environmental effects of coal mining in the United States.

SMCRA created two programs: one for regulating active coal mines, and a second for reclaiming abandoned mine lands. SMCRA also created the Office of Surface Mining (OSM), an agency within the Department of the Interior, to promulgate regulations, fund state regulatory and reclamation efforts, and ensure consistency among state regulatory programs.

SMCRA created an Abandoned Mine Land (AML) fund to pay for the cleanup of mine lands abandoned before the passage of the statute in 1977. The law was amended in 1990 to allow funds to be spent on the reclamation of mines abandoned after 1977. The fund is financed by a tax of 31.5 cents per ton for surface mined coal, 15 cents per ton for coal mined underground, and 10 cents per ton for lignite. 80% of AML fees are distributed to states with an approved reclamation program (see below) to fund reclamation activities. The remaining 20% is used by OSM to respond to emergencies such as landslides, land subsidence, and fires, and to carry out high priority cleanups in states without approved programs. States with approved programs can also use AML funds to set up programs to insure homeowners against land subsidence caused by underground mining.

## Plants to be on the Lookout for Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*)

When people hear the name "sumac" many think it is a poisonous plant. In fact, there is a poison sumac that is also a member of the *Rhus* family. However, poison sumac, with its white or gray berries, looks very different from staghorn sumac. If you drive along the road this time of the year you have probably seen staghorn sumac. It's a small tree or shrub with many branches that are covered with velvety hairs. Its name, staghorn, comes from its resemblance to a stag's antlers when they are in velvet. It has numerous toothed leaflets with a cluster of round, hairy, red, berry-like fruit at the tip of the branch. These fruits are edible and if you have attended one of my Mother's Day walks you have probably sampled some staghorn sumac Lemon-aide.



*Staghorn Sumac*

Smooth sumac (*Rhus glabra*) and dwarf or winged sumac (*R. copallina*) can also be used the same way. One of my reference books cautions that if you are allergic to other members of this family such as poison ivy, poison sumac, cashews, mangos, etc. you should avoid staghorn sumac. But I am very allergic to poison ivy and have never had a reaction to staghorn sumac. You can find staghorn sumac in all our parks, but remember not to harvest the fruits along roadsides because of pollution.

Staghorn sumac has many uses. Shoemakers once used staghorn sumac to make a dye for leather. Trappers used it to mask their traps of human scent. In the 1700's the berries were exported to Europe to be used in a tobacco mixture. The milky sap was used in natural glues. Native Americans used the staghorn sumac to make a tasty drink. It can also be used to make delicious jelly. Medicinal uses, depending on the variety, include using the berries to treat bed wetting, as an ingredient in cough syrup, as a tea for female disorders and to treat lung problems and sore throats. Leaf tea was used as an astringent and to treat asthma and diarrhea. Root tea was used as a diuretic. Bark tea was used to treat fevers, to treat dysentery and as an astringent. The inner bark and root decoctions are the most powerful while the berry tea is the mildest. This plant certainly has a distinguished history of use!

*By Cindy Rogers*

## Dates To Remember: Mark Your Calendars!

September 7th	10:00 am	Stormwater Education Partnership Meeting at White Township building.
September 7th	11-3	IUP Community Involvement Fair.
September 9th-10th:	All Day	Northern Appalachian Folk Festival (NAFF) – Evergreen will have a booth at the festival.
September 9th	1:00 pm	Geocache Workshop at NAFF 1 pm. Want to learn how to do geocaching? We will talk about geocaching and use GPS units and phones to locate an actual geocache.
September 12th:	7:00 pm	EC Board Meeting – Rescheduled from the usual first Thursday – 1005 Oak Street.
September 29th	7:00 pm	EC Fall Program on trees by board member Mike Tyree, "What is Bugging our Trees?"
October 5th:	6:30 pm	PR Committee (6:30 pm) and Finance Committee (7:30 pm). Meetings at 1005 Oak Street.
November 2nd	7:00 pm	Evergreen Conservancy Board Meeting - all welcome at 1005 Oak Street.

## Join Evergreen Conservancy Today!

Support the all-volunteer Evergreen Conservancy and its mission through your membership.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Levels:

\_\_\_\_\_ \$15: Student \_\_\_\_\_ \$25 \_\_\_\_\_ \$45 \_\_\_\_\_ \$70 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100

\_\_\_\_\_ \$1 Youth (17 and under) \_\_\_\_\_ \$ Other \_\_\_\_\_ \$75: Business/Org

Additional Donation: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Complete this form and send check to:  
Evergreen Conservancy, PO Box 0783, Indiana, PA 15701



I am interested in volunteering:

\_\_\_\_ as a board member \_\_\_\_ on a committee (finance, PR fundraising) \_\_\_\_ with water monitoring field work  
 \_\_\_\_ on Legal issues \_\_\_\_ with grant writing \_\_\_\_ environmental education \_\_\_\_ social media \_\_\_\_ Homer City gardens plots  
 \_\_\_\_ with fundraising activities (making crafts or manning a table at sales) \_\_\_\_ other \_\_\_\_\_