



Newsletter, #76 Spring 2025

www.evergreenconservancy.org

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Annual Meeting of Members and Friends July 9TH at the Indiana County Conservation District

Plan to attend Evergreen Conservancy's annual meeting of members and friends on Wednesday July 9th at 5 pm at the Indiana County Conservation District. Not Tanoma????!! In recent years this event has been disrupted by two floods and extremely hot weather so the board has decided to schedule the meeting at the conservation district.

One thing we are keeping is the pot luck dinner. The conservancy will be providing hamburgers, hot dogs and non-meat products. Those attending should bring a side, salad or dessert and their own table service.

As always a main feature of this day is the presentation of the Evergreen Award. This year the recipient will be 4-H leader Deb Beisel. Unfortunately, Deb will not be able to attend. We plan to present her with the award at or August 13th finance and public relation committee meetings.

Since 2012 Evergreen Conservancy has honored local environmental leaders with its Evergreen Award. Our first Evergreen Award winner was Lee Roy Vatter. Since then we have honored John Novak, Karen Eller of Plant-It Earth, John

Somonick, Alex Lezark, Dr. Katie Farnsworth, Anne Daymut, Tammie Robinson, Friends of Whites Woods, John and JoAnne Ferraro, and Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited. Elizabeth Brunner was awarded the Evergreen Award in 2023 and Dr. Robert Eppley received a lifetime achievement award. Lisa Meadows received this award in 2024.

Have you wondered why you are not seeing as many butterflies? Our program for the annual meeting may answer that question. Rebecca Sterley will give a presentation on the Monarch Butterfly.

Members will be given the opportunity to elect board members.

There will be a report of 2024-2025 accomplishments.

Volunteers will be recognized.

Those attending will be given the opportunity to Join Evergreen Conservancy or renew their membership.

Election of Board Members at Annual Meeting

On the agenda of every annual meeting is the election of board members. Evergreen Conservancy members and friends will be electing new board members. So far Cindy Rogers, David Janetski, and Becky Snyder, current board members, have indicated they would be willing to serve another term. Monica Lee is also up for renewal election.

Board Members

Cindy Rogers - President • Shannon Kundla - Vice president • Becky Snyder - Treasurer
Tara Binion - Secretary • Dan Boone • Bob Lankard • John Dudash
David Janetski • Malcolm Hermann • Monica Lee • Emily Rahalla

OUR MISSION:

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

Enthusiastic Audience Learns About the American Chestnut

Evergreen Conservancy's largest presentation audience in years listened to Mike Tyree explain the blight that affected the American Chestnut and the challenges to restore it.

The American Chestnut was the dominant tree in eastern forests as we entered the 20th Century. But then a tree brought in for ornamental purposes contained something that our American

Chestnut could not withstand – blight. By midcentury the huge American Chestnut forests were wiped out. This had devastating effects to local economies and people, as well as the wild animals depending on the trees for food.

Dr. Tyree went on to detail the difficulties in bringing back the chestnut trees. The blight is still around. IUP is actively involved in American Chestnut planting at the Flight 93 complex. It's hard to weigh the success of the project because of how long it takes a tree to mature. Deer are the trees worst enemies.

His presentation was followed with a very active question and answer session. Our President, Cindy Rogers gave a rundown of Evergreen's recent activities.



New Storybook Walk

A new Storybook has been installed at Tanoma. Bring the kids to instill a love of books, the outdoors, and the environment.



Dates to Remember:

June 11th 5:30 & 6:30PM
 July 9th 5:00PM
 August 13th . . . 5:30 & 6:30PM

PR and Finance Committee Meetings
 Annual Meeting at the ICCD
 PR and Finance Committee Meetings

Plant Patrol

Plant patrol is seeking volunteers to help remove invasive species. Check the website for information. www.plantpatrol.org

Plant Patrol Events:

Sat, June 14, 2025 . . 9:00 am – 12:00 noon . . Thomas Covered Bridge
 Sat, June 28, 2025 . . 9:00 am – 12:00 noon . . Ghost Town Trail
 Sun, July 13, 2025 . . 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm . . . Buttermilk Falls Natural Area

Evergreen's Water Quality Monitoring

Evergreen Conservancy works to protect Indiana County's streams

Evergreen Conservancy has dataloggers in over 25 streams in Indiana County to check the quality of the water in our watersheds.

A watershed is an area of land that drains into a common body of water. The dataloggers are small devices that are cabled to the bank and are located in streams. The loggers continuously check water temperature, conductivity, and depth, each of which plays a major role in aquatic ecosystems.

Conductivity refers to the ability of water to pass an electrical current. If it is high, it may suggest the presence of harmful substances from industrial runoff, sewage discharge, or mining activities. It can also affect water's taste, appearance, and mineral balance, potentially leading to health risks and corrosion in plumbing. Mid-range conductivity (200 to 1000 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$) is the normal background for most major rivers. Conductivity outside this range could indicate that the water is not suitable for certain species of fish or aquatic insects.

There are hundreds of different streams in our county that make up the 11 Indiana County watersheds. Our county, like our state, has an abundance of flowing freshwater. In fact, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has 86,000 miles of streams — more streams than any other U.S. state, apart from Alaska.

Water is one of Pennsylvania's most important natural resources.

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, 33% of Pennsylvania's streams are polluted. One-third of our state's streams do not meet water quality standards for drinking water, aquatic life, recreation, or fish consumption.

Over the last century and a half, Indiana County streams were put at risk by extensive logging, deep coal mines, and strip mines. Heavy logging, which took place in our area from 1880 to 1930, increases the speed of rainwater runoff, causing increased streambank erosion and sedimentation. It can also raise water temperature, change acidity, and cause nutrient losses.

Mining also takes a toll on water quality, primarily due to abandoned mine drainage (AMD), which is water that has become contaminated by passing through a physical environment affected by past coal mining. After coal is removed from underground, water seeps into the newly emptied areas and eventually makes its way back to the

surface, now polluted. Water that runs through slag piles left from strip mines also becomes polluted.

AMD lowers water quality by increasing acidity and introducing high concentrations of metals, elevated sulfates, and suspended solids.

Contaminated water seeping from coal mine areas is the most severe water pollution problem in the eastern United States, including the coalfields of Pennsylvania. Indiana, Cambria, and Clearfield counties are the top three counties in our state with abandoned mine water discharges.

Though there is still much work to be done, thanks to the ongoing efforts of many people in both the public and nonprofit sectors, Indiana County water quality is improving. However, there are many sources of water pollution, both old and new, that we need to monitor.

There is occasional water pollution from road and farm runoff. Recently, our county has seen the introduction of Marcellus shale projects, which could introduce new water quality problems if we don't stay alert and head off pollution problems that, in the past, seemed to catch us off guard.

All of our drinking water is processed through a water treatment system, of course, but if there is pollution, it is more costly for the water to be treated — and water users ultimately pay the cost.

The Conservancy is very fortunate to have a group of volunteers who download the dataloggers about every two weeks and email the data to our staff. All of the data is entered into a database that covers western Pennsylvania. If there is a pollution event, we send that information to the appropriate person or agency, who will go out to check the stream. We have been fortunate in the county that there have been very few incidents over the many years that we have been monitoring our streams.

Evergreen Conservancy's water monitoring project depends on volunteers — and we need more people who are interested in learning about our streams to help out!

Anyone who would like to volunteer to go to a local stream and download data may contact evergreenconservancy@gmail.com. It is easy to do. Our volunteers enjoy being outside and like knowing that they are helping to monitor water quality in the county's streams. The volunteer takes a laptop to the stream, plugs the logger into the laptop, downloads the data, and then emails the data to the Evergreen Conservancy.

Indiana County Senior Envirothon 2025



On a beautiful and unusually perfect spring day, 125 students gathered at Blue Spruce Park to test their knowledge of natural resources and environmental science during the 39th annual Indiana County Senior Envirothon competition. Typically known for rainy and chilly conditions, this year's event welcomed participants with sunshine and mild temperatures, creating the perfect setting for students to compete for scholarships and recognition.

The competition brought together 25 teams of five students each from Homer Center, Indiana, Marion Center, Penns Manor, Purchase Line, River Valley, and United High Schools, and the Homeschoolers for Christ Co-op. Teams prepared for months leading up to the event and tackled field-oriented tests in five key areas: aquatic ecology, forestry, soils and land use, wildlife, and this year's current issue, "Roots and Resiliency: Forest Stewardship of a Canopy of Change." Students identified wildlife by skulls, tracks, and calls; examined macroinvertebrates, trees, and invasive species; analyzed soil characteristics; and explored sustainable forestry and conservation practices.

The event was made possible through the support of agency partners and community volunteers. Testing stations were facilitated by agency partners and community volunteers, including PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, PA Game Commission, PA Fish and Boat Commission, Evergreen Conservancy, Blacklick Creek Watershed Association, Indiana Garden Club, Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and PA Senior Environmental Corp., Turner Dairy and ARIN IU28 for sponsoring lunch, and Indiana County Parks and Trails hosted the event at scenic Blue Spruce Park.

At the close of the event, students gathered at the lakeside for the awards ceremony.

This year's results were as follows:

1st Place — Homeschoolers for Christ Co-op., 2nd Place — Marion Center's Bee Hive Five, and 3rd Place — Penns Manor's The Wild Ones. In addition to the top three placements, special awards were also presented to River Valley Team A — top score in Soils and Land Use, and United Team 1 — top score in Forestry.

The winning team, Homeschoolers for Christ Co-op, is now preparing to represent Indiana County at the upcoming Pennsylvania State Envirothon, where they will compete against county champions from across the Commonwealth.

Each member of the winning team was awarded a \$500 David S. Frick Envirothon Education Grant. Since the scholarship program began in 2007, more than \$32,250 in Envirothon education grants have been awarded to Indiana County students. This year's grants

were made possible by donations from local businesses, conservation organizations, and private citizens. Contributors included Herbert, Rowland & Grubic (HRG) Inc., Edward Kuckuck, J.H. Hickman Surveying/MECALL Services LLC, Thepeacefarm.net, Gibson-Thomas Engineering, Blacklick Creek Watershed Association, Keller Engineers, Inc., Joe and Arlene Yackuboskey, Bankson Engineers, Inc., Crooked Creek Watershed Association, Duncan Financial Group, Bonni Dunlap, InFirst Bank, Ken Sink Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Vince and Toni Receski, S&S Screen Printing, Stiffler McGraw, Susan Bowers, Dilltown Sportsman's Club, Indiana Garden Club, Lias Tire, Inc., and Cindy Rogers. The Indiana County Conservation District extends sincere thanks to all of the sponsors, volunteers, and educators who make this event possible each year, inspiring local students and fostering the next generation of conservation leaders.

Tammie Robinson



The team with their advisors left to right: Connie Bruner, James Pumford, Austin Collins, Jonathan Brown, Nathan Kennedy, John Bruner, Debbie Beisel.

Evergreen Receives WPC Mini Grant

Evergreen Conservancy received a BHE GT&S Watershed Mini Grant in the amount of \$1600 to advance our water quality protection efforts and environmental outreach. We plan to use this grant money for the maintenance and repair of our data logger equipment. Our data loggers are located across Indiana County and they record stream parameters such as temperature, conductivity, and depth to help us detect pollution events in our local streams. In addition, this grant money will allow us to continue our outreach efforts through the production and distribution of our quarterly newsletters.

Evergreen's President, Cindy Rogers, and 24-25 AmeriCorps member, Rebecca Caldwell, attended the award ceremony at



Chestnut Ridge Resort in Blairsville, PA as representatives to receive the grant award and to connect with other award recipients from Western Pennsylvania.

Financial support for this grant is provided by BHE GT&S which is dedicated to the economic, physical, and social health of the communities served by the BHE GT&S companies. This grant program was administered by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in commitment to its core mission of conserving Pennsylvania's diverse ecosystems through science-based strategy, leadership, and collaboration.

We're very appreciative of BHE GT&S for this grant program and WPC for administering this grant.

AmeriCorps Program Update

For the past 30 years the PMSC AmeriCorps program has served directly with non-profits, schools and government agencies to be leaders in environmental stewardship, health & wellness, and K-12 education. For over 10 years, many AmeriCorps Members have served alongside Evergreen Conservancy, assisting with water quality events, education programs, and community outreach opportunities. AmeriCorps members have been an integral part to Evergreen's daily operations and have formed strong connections with its members and other volunteers.

As of this past month, the AmeriCorps program is coming

to a halt for the 2024-2025 year, pending Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) budget cuts. At this time, it remains unknown whether AmeriCorps will return for the 2025-2026 year or for any future service. If so inclined, please utilize the resource below to receive more information:

https://www.statecommissions.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=342:asc-statement-on-the-termination-of-ameri-corps-grants&catid=23:news&Itemid=191

Thank you to all our AmeriCorps Members for working hard to get things done for our local communities.

Blue Spruce Trash Pick Up, March 29th

Evergreen Conservancy conducted its spring litter clean up on Blue Spruce Road and Park on Saturday March 29th. It turned out to be a nice day with 9 volunteers picking up 8 bags of trash. The volunteers included a number of people from Walmart. Thanks for your help!!!



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	spaghettibenders.com
Michael B's Shoe Store	\$10 off any purchase	www.michaelbshoes.com
Plant-it Earth	15% discount	on FaceBook The-Plant-It-Earth-Greenhouse-And-Gardens
Little Mahoning Creek Pottery	10% discount	www.nancysmeltzer.etsy.com
		littlemahoningcreekpottery.blogspot.com
Artist Hand Gallery	12 oz. drip coffee \$1	theartistshandgallery.com



JOIN OR RENEW your membership TODAY if you have not already done so for 2024.

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Mon- Tue: 9:00am - 6:00pm Wed: 9:00am - 7:00 pm Thu - Fri: 9:00am - 6:00pm Sat: 9:00am - 5:00pm

Please support Nature's Way market in Greensburg. They support us with a generous donation!



Thanks again for the generous donation from Nature's Way of Greensburg who belongs to 1% of the Planet. Next time you are in Greensburg stop by and say thanks to them!

1% of the Planet is a global network of businesses, nonprofits and individuals working together for a healthy planet. Businesses that join 1% for the Planet commit to giving 1% of total sales each year to your choice of our approved nonprofit partners. You can get involved! Joining is easy – go to www.onepercentfortheplanet.org/tell-us-about-your-organization. 1% of the Planet brings dollars and doers together to accelerate smart environmental giving. The Planet needs you NOW.

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 _____

