

Bucktail Watershed Association

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Bucktail Watershed Association

Contact information:

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Important Dates:

Monthly meeting
1st Tuesday of each month
Cameron County Courthouse
6:30 pm

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BWA Board of Directors

Steve VanEerden	Chairman
Kirk Baine	Vice Chair & Secretary
Mark McLean	Treasurer
Kyle Banks	
Kelley Flaherty	
Stan Hastings	
Denny Neal	

Tomlinson to speak at January Meeting

Jake Tomlinson, habitat coordinator for the Trout Unlimited's Eastern Abandoned Mine Program will speak at the BWA public meeting on January 7th 2014. Tomlinson is spearheading the group's PA Eastern Brook Trout Habitat Initiative that is focused on focused on improving and expanding brook trout habitat across

the state. Tomlinson will present at 6:30 in the county courthouse with a general BWA public meeting to follow. All members and prospective members are encouraged to attend and participate. For more information, visit www.tu.org.

Second Annual DriftwoodStock a success!

This summer, the Bucktail Watershed Association hosted the second annual Driftwoodstock picnic. We had the pleasure of hosting Van Wagner, a folk musician who celebrates the natural beauty of the Pennsylvania Wilds, and Cameron County's own Down County Country Boys Band. BWA members brought a variety of food to be shared and enjoyed music and camaraderie until late into the evening.

In addition to music, Members of the board set up an educational display describing our activities throughout the year and tee shirts commemorating the occasion were available. The BWA board is already working on plans for the third annual picnic for summer 2014. If you are interested in helping to plan the festivities, please



Musician Van Wagner performs at Driftwoodstock

contact a member of the board or email bucktailwatershed@yahoo.com to volunteer. We hope to see you there next year!

BWA Expresses Concern Over Endangered Species Coordination Act

During the latter part of this past summer, articles in various publications and e-mail alerts began to appear concerning proposed state legislation dubbed the Endangered Species Coordination Act. The biggest concerns were proper protection for threatened and endangered species and the possible loss of protection for Pennsylvania's most sensitive waterways.

Chatter about the controversy among some BWA members resulted in the matter being brought before the board of directors and members that were present at the September monthly meeting. The board unanimously agreed to send letters to Senator Scarnati and Chairman of the House Game and Fisheries Committee and Cameron County legislator, Representative Martin Causer indicating the BWA's opposition to the proposed bills. Here's a little background of the proposed legislation.

BWA concerned over the potential impact of proposed legislation on conservation efforts

This past June State House Bill 1576 was sponsored by Representative Jeffrey P. Pyle (R) of Armstrong and Indiana counties and brought before the House Game and Fisheries Committee. Its Senate companion, SB 1047, was simultaneously being sponsored by State Senator Joseph Scarnati. Rep. Pyle's stated goal is to streamline the permitting of land use thereby reducing costs to developers and expediting the process. He says this can be accomplished by "leveling the playing field" for affected state agencies.

Some of the features of the bill as it stands today (it has already been amended) include the requirement for the PA Game Commission (PGC) and the PA Fish and Boat Commission (PF&BC), when proposing any candidate species for Threatened or Endangered status, to undergo oversight by the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC).

The IRRC was established in 1982 to review Commonwealth regulations to insure that they are in the public interest and specifically excludes the PGC and PF&BC from their overview. Proponents of the bill claim that the IRCC would provide a "consistent, transparent, and accountable framework" for the designation process. It was noted that the Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Dept. of Environmental Protection (DEP) are already required to go through the IRRC process and all state agencies should shoulder the same requirement. By law, the PGC is responsible for protecting wildlife, the PF&BC for fish, reptiles, and amphibians, and DCNR for plants with additionally the PF&BC and DEP being responsible for stream designations such as those for wild trout (class A waters). Wild trout water designations would also undergo the IRRC review.

Opponents of the bill argue that the PGC and PF&BC, independent agencies each with a board of commissioners, are staffed with wildlife and fisheries specialists that are qualified to determine whether a species needs added protection and, in the case of the PF&BC, the wherewithal to designate waters appropriately. Conversely, the IRRC is staffed by political appointees with no backgrounds in wild resource management. Additionally, both commissions presently undergo oversight by their respective commissioners through a review process that also includes a public comment component. The IRRC requirement is being viewed by opponents as just another layer of government that will add cost to the taxpayers and time to the entire process. Proponents say the process of review could take as little as 60 days; opponents claim that the IRRC has taken upwards of two years in some past actions.

There are concerns that federal funding from the Pittman-Robertson Act for the PGC and Dingell-Johnson Act for the PF&BC, to the tune of

Endangered Species Coordination Act Cont'd

\$27 million, may be in jeopardy because of the nature of the proposed legislation. Drafters of the bill say that safeguards are in place to prevent those funds from being withheld from the commissions and wording in the bill does seem to support that claim.

Section 3 of the bill states: "No Commonwealth agency may take action to designate or consider fish, wildlife, or plants as threatened or endangered unless the fish, wildlife, or plants are designated under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (public law 93-205, 16 U.S.C., 1531 et seq.) or pursuant to this act." This section has raised concerns that too much federal power may be imposed and that species needing extra protection in PA may not get it because those same species may not qualify from a federal nationwide or regional viewpoint.

Proponents point out that under the bill, sensitive data about T & E species would be combined from all agencies concerned to create one main database that would be used only by those cleared to view that information and would expedite the review process with all the information being in one place. However, the PA Natural Diversity Index (PNDI) already exists, and has for some years now, and already does what the bill intends and jealously guards the information to prevent misuse by unscrupulous individuals or groups.

To date, there have been hearings with testimony from many organizations and agencies on both

sides of the issue with many other groups formed up to support the cause as they see it. In no particular order, here is just a partial listing of some of the interested parties. Supporting the legislation: The PA Builders' Assn., the PA Chamber of Business and Industry, Unified Sportsmen of PA, Allegheny Mineral Corp., the PA Aggregate and Concrete Assn., the PA Anthracite Council, the PA Coal Alliance, and various construction and resource extraction concerns. Opposed to the bill: the PGC, the PF&BC, the PA Chapter of the Sierra Club, Penn Future, PA Federation of Sportsman's Clubs, the Keystone Trails Assn., PA Audubon, American Birding Assn., the Delaware Riverkeepers Network, the PA Council of Churches, and the Bucktail Watershed Assn.

A letter dated Oct. 18th was received by the BWA from Rep. Causer noting our concerns while expressing his and assuring us that he will consider our viewpoint as the legislation process unfolds. To date, no correspondence has yet been received from Sen. Scarnati. On Nov. 13th, the amended bill moved out of committee with a 16 – 8 vote in favor. Should it pass both houses, the governor is expected to sign it into law.

The amended version of the bill can be viewed at: www.legiscan.com/PA/text/HB1576/2013. For even more information just enter pa state house bill 1576 into your favorite search engine.

Japanese Stilt Grass Is On The Move

Japanese stilt grass is an annual grass that is quickly invading Northern Central PA. This plant, like the other invasive plants that we are working on, changes our native plant communities because it grows so fast and displaces native plants, including tree seedlings. Stiltgrass grows well in many habitats, from wetlands to early successional fields and forested upland, though it prefers floodplain forests and moist soils. Although it is a shade adapted species, it also grows in full sunlight, especially in disturbed habitats such as roadsides, powerline right-of-ways, ditches, agricultural lands, lawns and gardens. We observed a lot of stiltgrass along the creek banks. The BWA has not yet done any control of this plant, but we suggest that BWA members work to control this plant, which can be hand-pulled or mowed before it sets seeds in early August.

Invasive Species in the Sinnemahoning Watershed

The spring and summer of 2013 were busy for the BWA volunteers and contractors, who continued to improve the health of the watershed by controlling invasive plants. As many BWA members know, invasive plants push out the native plants, which lowers the habitat value for most of our wildlife, including fish. So we continue our work. The Bucktail Watershed Association would like to thank our funders for providing the resources to keep our watershed healthy: the Sinnemahoning Stakeholders Committee, PA Department of Environmental Protection, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and the US Forest Service.

Mile-a-Minute: In late July, while scouting the Driftwood Branch for Japanese knotweed, we got a nasty surprise: we found a very large patch of mile-a-minute vine right above the village of Sterling Run. And, like all mile-a-minute patches, the more we looked the more we found. Fortunately, the landowner and neighbors are cooperative and enthusiastic, and we were able to treat the large patch, and the smaller ones around it before the plants went to seed. Also, the mile-a-minute population west of Emporium is larger than we originally thought. We are planning to go after all these sites in early spring with a pre-emergent herbicide.

Japanese knotweed: While the fight against mile-a-minute is discouraging, our knotweed work is making good progress. In the summer and fall of 2013, we treated or visited about 41 miles of stream banks in the Sinnemahoning Creek Watershed. Starting at the top of the watershed, we have treated the Driftwood, First Fork and Portage Branches and eight tributaries. This year, we worked down the Driftwood Branch to Stillhouse Run, across from the Emporium Country

Club. Many stream banks that were once solid patches of Japanese knotweed now host many types of perennial and annual native plants. We still check on these sites, and usually find a few little knotweed plants, which we spray, but the sites are looking a lot better.



Vegetation Managers Inc. staff sprays knotweed along the Driftwood Branch

Buckthorn: Our landowner partners on the Cameron-Elk County line continue to work on their buckthorn population, and the BWA was able to do a small pilot project on a very infested State Game Lands site.

Asiatic bittersweet: This woody vine is a problem plant in the First Fork valley. BWA did some work to control it in 2012, but we are planning a different strategy for 2014. Vines are very challenging to control, since they climb all over their host tree and are hard to cut and/or spray. We are planning an experimental project next spring.

BWA Members: Why is your membership important?

Please make sure that your membership is current. Why? Our numbers help to keep us strong. When the BWA applies for funding grants for work within the watershed, our membership base shows our strong commitment to the work we do. Our organization is managed by volunteers, so we have no overhead, so every dollar goes directly to watershed work. You can get more involved in any of our activities by emailing: bucktailwatershed@yahoo.com

**BUCKTAIL WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 123
EMPORIUM, PA 15834**

BUCKTAIL WATERSHED ASSOCIATION SUMMER NEWSLETTER ENCLOSED

**BUCKTAIL WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

If you are interested in becoming a member or renewing your membership, please send this form along with cash or a check for the annual dues to:

Bucktail Watershed Association
P.O. Box 123
Emporium, PA 15834



Annual Dues

Sign up for:

- Individual Membership
- Family Membership
- Donation

\$5.00

\$7.00

Amount Enclosed _____

Name

Address

Phone

Email Address

Signature

Date