

RIVER RAPIDS

The newsletter of the Delaware RIVERKEEPER® Network, published three times yearly

Printed on 100% recycled paper



Technical assistance for PA groups for free!



Does your Pennsylvania watershed group need help answering questions about your watershed's health? Are you trying to decide how to best restore your local stream? Could your group benefit from a presentation about a specific technical watershed topic? If so, then the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds (C-SAW) can help.

C-SAW is a team of specialists that provides eligible watershed groups or local project sponsors with technical assistance, free of charge. The Delaware Riverkeeper Network is one of nine C-SAW service providers. The service is available at no cost to eligible groups. For more information about C-SAW, visit <http://pa.water.usgs.gov/csaw/>.

Finding Balance: Online, Offline, & Outside. *A letter from the Delaware Riverkeeper*

Electronic communications, online networking, and Internet socializing are all the rage. The Delaware Riverkeeper Network's new approach to our newsletter—a post card reminder of each issue's availability online—is just one demonstration of how widespread Internet access is changing the way we all communicate.

We are excited about the enhanced features we will be able to offer you in the digital version of *River Rapids*. And of course we value the ability to save money on paper and postage, and to reduce the water pollution and air emissions that are associated with print production and delivery.

But I do worry that as we all dive deeper into our computers for communication, learning, shopping and more, that we lose the time or inclination to go out and touch the water and take a break from our techno stressed world. It is so easy to be sucked into checking email one last time rather than getting outside to take that walk after dinner, take the kids fishing, or simply sit beside a local stream.

Experiencing the River and all of nature, research shows, is fundamentally important for children for both their physical and psychological development. Adults need the peace and beauty of rivers too. The Delaware River and its tributaries offer opportunities to sooth even the most wired mind after a hard day of electronic surfing and socializing. But in order to experience the River and its streams we need to first protect them.

Our River is unique and special and beautiful. There is always something new to learn about it. You may already know it is the only undammed river east of the Mississippi. Or that the Delaware Bay is home to the world's largest spawning population of horseshoe crabs, the eggs of which fuel some of the longest bird migrations worldwide. In this issue of *River Rapids*, you will learn that the Delaware is also home to a genetically distinct and unique species of Atlantic sturgeon.

In the end, all electronic communication—including the new format of River Rapids online—are simply tools, albeit increasingly powerful tools, for bringing about change. Their long-term benefit will be determined by how we use them.

So each day, use your computer time to write one letter, make one social comment, send one email to a decisionmaker or newspaper in defense of the River and its ecosystems (*River Rapids*' new format will help you with this). But don't forget to also create some time offline to take a walk, touch the water, and smell the native plants of the watershed.

Maya K. van Rossum
the Delaware Riverkeeper

The Voice of the Delaware River and its Tributary Streams

Explore the tidal waters of the Heinz Wildlife Refuge

Join us for a paddle on May 30th



Heinz Wildlife Refuge. Photo: D. Salas.

Come to the Heinz Refuge and go where the tide takes you for the two hours before and two hours after high tide. A paddle at the refuge can be a pleasant day trip for the entire family. You will be treated to wildlife diversity and scenic beauty you might expect to see only above the Delaware Water Gap, but here it is just a short drive from downtown Philadelphia.

On a fall trip, we saw double-crested cormorants and an assortment of turtles populating logs buried deep in the mudflats. DRN staff then observed a great blue heron spring from its nest squawking a protest at being disturbed. Then, as we paddled on, we observed a second, then a third, then a fourth. All told, we were privileged to see six herons take flight just a short distance away.

Your “explore” need not end when you strap the canoe to the roof of the car. The Heinz Refuge offers miles of nature trails, boardwalks, bird observation towers and the Cusano Environmental Education Center. Come solo or bring your entire family. Check out our calendar online for more information on this and other upcoming events.

Atlantic sturgeon: A rare fish story

The Delaware River once supported the largest population of Atlantic sturgeon in North America. Today, it is home to fewer than 100. Less than 100 Atlantic sturgeon, that is all we have.

And it is now known that the Delaware River’s population of Atlantic sturgeon is genetically unique. If lost to extinction, they can be found nowhere else on earth.

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) is considering listing the Atlantic sturgeon nationwide as endangered. The Delaware Riverkeeper Net-

work has submitted comments and sought your ac-

tion to support this listing.

Regardless of the NMFS’ ruling on the Atlantic sturgeon’s status nationwide, we are pushing for the agency to at least list the Delaware River’s unique population as endangered.

Pollution, dredging, and capture as



Atlantic sturgeon, *Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*.

bycatch during the harvest of other species, are just some of the harms that are preventing this long-lived species from being able to recover. It is critical that strong federal action be taken today before we lose the unique Delaware River population forever.

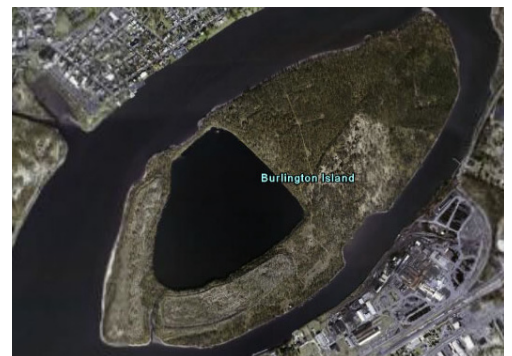
What’s “Petty” about Burlington Island?

The future of Burlington Island, the 400-acre, uninhabitable and undeveloped island between Bristol, Pennsylvania, and Burlington, New Jersey, is now being planned. And even though the Board of Island Managers, the quasi-governmental board responsible for the care of the island, say that they do not want “McMansions,” they are looking for economic development. Developers have responded with very different proposals: 1) Lenape and Settlers Replica Villages; 2) a bible-themed amusement park; and 3) a 315-room hotel and conference center.

DRN has reached out to many of the same environmental organizations that teamed-up to preserve nearby Petty’s Island in order to get their help in this

effort. And we have been joined by residents from Bristol, demonstrating regional interest in protecting the Delaware River’s islands. Our coalition has met with the Island Managers and the developers and provided testimony on the direct economic benefits that Burlington City, County and the region realize from maintaining the island as a natural resource refuge and park. Especially with current land use conditions along Burlington City’s waterfront presenting an opportunity for re-development.

Directly across from the island are an aging pipe distribution company and a historic stone mansion, both in decline. If the City, County and State of New Jersey could find a new,



Aerial view of Burlington Island, NJ

Image: www.state.nj.us

railroad-accessible site for the pipe company, that 35-acres could host the proposed hotel. The mansion, still structurally sound, could serve handsomely as retail and office space. All anchored by a permanently preserved, 400-acre Burlington Island that could host habitat, passive recreation and beauty for all.

Letters to NY Governor, EPA needed now!

About 10,000 people let the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NY DEC) know how they feel about the Draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement on shale gas during the recent comment period which closed December 31, 2009. Many told the DEC to withdraw the Draft and start over with a comprehensive analysis that will protect New York and the Delaware River Watershed.

DRN thanks all who responded to our call for letters. Momentum has built against allowing the polluting practices of shale gas extraction and development, but we need to hammer home the message to policy and decision makers at the state and regional level to prevent gas drilling from polluting our water and harming our communities.

Please take a moment to send a message to Governor Paterson and the Environmental Protection Agency to let them know your concerns about shale gas extraction. You can also send a letter using the sample shown on the “*Urgent Help Needed*” page of our website or write your own. And, as always, do copy DRN so we know you have commented.

Preparing to monitor natural gas industry

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network, coordinating with ALLARM, the U.S. Geological Survey and other local partners, has begun a pilot monitoring project in the Upper West Branch Lackawaxen and its special-protection tributary streams. Together, we are seeking to collect important baseline stream data before the natural gas industry sets foot in this region (which could come as soon as May of this year).

The first training, which included over twenty concerned citizens from the local chapter of Trout Unlimited and The Lackawaxen River Conservancy along with county conservation district watershed specialists, was held on January 30th in Hawley, PA. The workshop (sponsored in part by the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds or C-SAW) covered quality assurance/quality control measures, site selection criteria and assignments, and hands-on equipment training and protocol review using blind samples.

Beginning in February, monitors will measure TDS, conductivity, salinity, flow and chloride for at least 15 stations in the region. DRN is working with USGS and local partners to supplement this dataset with automatic data loggers, routine lab analysis, and macroinvertebrate sampling this spring where gaps exist.

If you are interested in learning more about this opportunity or sponsoring a monitoring site and the equipment needed to expand our watch-dogging efforts in the Upper Delaware, contact Faith at 215-369-1188, ext. 110, or at faith@delawareriverkeeper.org.

BREAKING NEWS:

Our efforts to prevent the Delaware Deepening are continuing. For the latest news about this rapidly developing issue, go to our website, www.delawareriverkeeper.org.



LaMotte Chloride Test. Photo: F. Zerbe.

DRN's River Shop

Did you know that plastic bags are made from natural gas or petroleum by products? Our organic cotton canvas tote bags are made in the U.S. from 10-ounce organic cotton canvas. They are easy to clean, made to last, and they feature the beautiful Delaware Riverkeeper Network logo screen printed in teal. They are perfect for carrying around groceries, books, gardening gear or beach stuff.

Three sizes available. \$10.00 each.

Visit DRN's River Shop online for more information.

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Delaware RIVERKEEPER® Network

The Voice of the River and its Tributary Streams

300 Pond Street, 2nd Floor

Bristol, PA 19007

Schuylkill Watershed Congress

When: Saturday, March 13th, 2010

Where: Montgomery College Community College-West Campus
South Hall, 101 College Drive
Pottstown, Pennsylvania

What are people saying about the Schuylkill Watershed Congress?

“Great program . . . All the speakers were knowledgeable and informative . . . Introduced me to some interesting new people . . . Our group had a pretty lively discussion, which is always the best gauge of success . . . Smoothly run . . . One of the best workshops each year!”

Registration Fee: \$40 (Early Registration rate). Register by Friday, February 26th, 2010, to qualify for the \$40 Early Registration fee. **After February 26th, the Registration fee increases to \$50 per person.** Registration fees cover participation in Saturday’s program, Saturday morning’s hospitality and lunch.

Cancellation Policy: Cancellations received by March 5th, 2010, may be subject to a \$25 service charge. Registration fees are not refundable for cancellations received after March 5th.

If you are interested in learning more about the Schuylkill Watershed Congress, want to register, or become a sponsor, contact Chari at 215-369-1188, ext. 109 or email chari@delawareriverkeeper.org.

Upcoming Events

Looking for a reason to get outside? A place to paddle, take a walk, go fishing? Or a way to help protect and restore streams? The Delaware Riverkeeper Network can help you connect with your local streams. Check out our calendar online for more information on these and other upcoming events.

April 24th & 25th
Burlington Island Clean-up
Burlington, NJ

May 14th
Horseshoe Crab Census
New Jersey Beach TBD

May 15th
Cooper River Canoe Trip
Camden, NJ

May 30th
Heinz Wildlife Refuge Canoe Trip
Philadelphia, PA

June 12th
Horseshoe Crab Census
Delaware Beach TBD