

Consider the Future—Help Save Pine Creek

The Pine Creek

Observer

Summer 2017

(Newsletter of the Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group)



President's Column Ron Comstock

CALL TO ACTION:

A SQUEAKY WHEEL

An environmental nightmare is developing in PA and especially for Pine Creek and the PA Wilds: new U.S. environmental policy is slashing environmental regulations and programs, PA budget cuts to DEP and DCNR, and rising natural gas prices will insure a new wave of natural gas drilling, pipelines, frack-water waste disposal concerns, and other threats to our fragile watershed.

In times of limited budgets and shrinking personnel, state agencies have to make tough choices as to industry oversight, inspections, and enforcement actions. It will be the SQUEAKY WHEEL that gets attention to issues and concerns. It is very important that DEP, DCNR and your political representatives (Governor, State Senators/Representatives, County Commissioners, and Township Supervisors)

all know that you value our drinkable water, fishable streams, state forest, quality of life, etc.

Local organizations such as The Pine Creek Watershed Council, Tiadaghton Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Tiadaghton Audubon Society, Tioga County Concerned Citizens, and The Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group are all environmental protection-based organizations that represent YOU. Please give them your support. Attend a meeting, express your concerns, and help prevent further damage to our area.



Volunteers Clean Up Pine Creek Watershed



The Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group and dedicated volunteers met on May 21 to clean up the north end of the PA Grand Canyon. The group pulled out several tires and filled up bags full of trash. Many thanks to our awesome volunteers and Pine Creek Outfitters for the boating gear and shuttle.

We announce these events on our website, group e-mail, and on the "Pine Creek, PA" Facebook page. If you want to join us, please make sure you're on the our group's e-list or check Facebook for details!

Our mission:

Keeping Pine Creek Clean

Our vision:

Pine Creek will be a peaceful watershed with clean, cold water that is a sanctuary for both wildlife and humans.

Contact us!

Website: <http://pinecreekheadwaters.weebly.com/>

Email: pinecreekheadwaters@gmail.com

Phone: 570-724-5097

Please join us at our monthly meetings: Jan.—Oct. every fourth Thursday at 7 p.m. in the room next to the cafeteria at Soldiers & Sailors Memorial Hospital in Wellsboro, PA.

Monitoring Residual Waste Use in the Northern Tier Bryn Hammarstrom

Article originally run as an op-ed in the Wellsboro Gazette on May 4, 2017

On April 18 I had a conversation with Ali T. Morris, director of DEP's Municipal and Residual Waste division, who gave me an update on the General Permit application submitted by Clean Earth, Inc. (CE) back in mid-2016 to spread Marcellus and Utica Shale drilling returns across Pennsylvania.

For three years, Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group has actively opposed the application of horizontal and vertical drilling returns as "fill", "base", "cover" or any other use which would allow its heavy metal and other components easy access to contaminate Pennsylvania's **constitutionally-guaranteed** clean air and clean water. One company (CE) seeks DEP permits to mix drilling returns with cement, re-label it

"engineered fill", and use it across our Commonwealth. To clarify, "engineered fill" is a meaningless industry term; it has no standing scientifically or bureaucratically. DEP regards drilling returns as Residual Waste, and much of it should be labeled Hazardous Waste if it were not for federal (political) mandates exempting oil/gas exploitation by-products from the Hazardous label. (See footnotes below.)

CE's last use of this waste product under their 5-year Research and Development permit (expired March 17, 2017) was their first allowed application on a "virgin" site (their term), improving a road at Lycoming County's Bobst Mountain Hunting Club. CE's original application for this project was for 10 miles of roadway, using about 50,000 tons of Residual Waste; however, DEP only approved eight-tenths of a mile, using some 4,000 tons. Yet even with a half-year of time extensions, on a project less than one-tenth of their original proposal, CE did not finish the project. Tioga Countians may remember that CE's proposed Wellsboro Airport project called for 500,000 tons!

DEP made an on-site inspection March 2, confirming the work had not been completed, and ordered a halt to CE's activity. A second DEP inspection was done at Bobst Mtn. in May, and a conference held between DEP and CE leadership to discuss CE's failure to complete its project. Possible outcomes include civil and financial penalties.

CE's original General Permit application was deemed "administratively incomplete" in DEP's 'deficiency notice'

send to CE on Oct. 21, 2016. On April 18, Ms. Morris informed me that CE's re-submission is again "administratively incomplete", and the current talks between CE and DEP would address the revised/ incomplete 'GP' application, and the failure to complete the Bobst Mtn project.

I hope Northern Tier residents will continue to support PCHPG's monitoring of EACH and EVERY attempt to spread Residual Waste across our fertile lands and clean waterways.

[1] An undated EPA document titled "Exemption of Oil and Gas Exploration and Production Wastes from Federal Hazardous Waste Regulations" had the following quote referring to Solid Waste produced during Oil and Gas Exploration and Production: "In addition, although they are relieved from regulation as hazardous wastes, the exemption does not mean these wastes could not present a hazard to human health and the environment if improperly managed."

[2] Quote from Jan. 2014 Region 3 EPA (Philadelphia HQ) on the permit for Elk County's Deep Well injection of "produced water" and other liquid wastes from Marcellus Shale exploitation: "Individual constituents within the brine produced during an oil or gas production can be toxic, hazardous, or radioactive. However, these fluids, when produced in association with oil and gas production, are exempt from hazardous waste regulation and are not classified as hazardous under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, 42 U.S.C. Section 6901 et seq."

A-LIST Cottage Rentals



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Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area Buffers Mark Simonis

Some of us from PCHPG recently met with the PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry staff to discuss concerns about the near clear-cutting practices conducted within the Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area buffers. Those folks did a great job of explaining how their State Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP) addresses what can and cannot be done within those areas. We appreciate their patience with us non-forester types!

The SFRMP includes a section on "Wild and Natural Area Definitions and Guidelines," which states that within Natural and Wild Areas, "Timber harvesting is not permitted except as may be required for

maintenance of the public safety." It also states, "Natural areas will be left undisturbed with natural succession allowed to occur. Intervention will only be permitted when man-caused activities or events threaten its natural value. ...A 600-foot wide management buffer will be maintained around Natural Areas except when a road, pipeline or power line serves as a boundary in which case a 300 foot wide buffer will apply." As is the case with the Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area, many natural area boundaries are the surrounding roads including Colton Road, Painter Leetonia Road, West Rim Road, and Clay Mine Road. Along these roads the buffer is 300-foot.

Another section of the SFRMP entitled Sivilculture, however, goes on to define "Aesthetic/Buffer Management Zones". This section makes allowances for timber harvesting within the natural area buffers and describes the types of treatments that can be done. In this section, whose aesthetic is being utilized? The treatments we are seeing in the Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area buffers do not appear to be aesthetic buffers. Although a forester may be able to see the difference, to the untrained eye these look very much like near clear cuts. Who are these buffers for? Are they for trained foresters or are they for the general public who drive, bike, or hike along the Pine Creek Gorge Natural Area?



Hometown Science Festival

Liz Costanzo Kreger

Mark your calendars for the first annual Hometown Science Festival. Join local researchers, natural resource managers, health care professionals, teachers, students and citizens from our region and community to celebrate "Hometown Science" with hands-on science activities and demonstrations for children and families! This event will be held on the Green in Wellsboro, Saturday August 12th from 10am to 4pm. For more information about the Hometown Science Series & Festival, please contact hometownscience@gmail.com or visit us on Facebook @HometownScience.

PCHPG Thanks These Local Businesses for their Generous Support

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**PINE CREEK HEADWATERS
PROTECTION GROUP**

PO Box 445
Wellsboro, Pa 16901

I Want to Help Pine Creek

Name: _____

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I want to join or renew my membership with PCHPG:

_____ Individual \$10.00

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Mail To:

Pine Creek Headwaters Protection Group

P.O. Box 445

Wellsboro, Pa 16901

We need your financial support to continue our important work!

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Please provide an email address, if available, to help us save on mailing expenses.