



FALL 2016

THE STEWARD

Newsletter of the Lower Merion Conservancy

Monitoring the Health of Lower Merion and Narberth Waterways

For more than 30 years, the Conservancy has been in the streams of Lower Merion and Narberth, collecting data to assess water quality. Recently, the Conservancy's ability to monitor local waterways has been strengthened, thanks in large part to a grant from the William Penn Foundation. The Conservancy's local effort has expanded to a regional initiative that includes more than 50 conservation groups working together to improve water quality in the Delaware River Watershed.

Through a grant issued by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Conservancy has restored a section of streambank on the East Branch of Indian Creek in Narbrook Park and installed a rain garden along Windsor Avenue. These projects will help filter stormwater runoff before it enters the stream in Narberth.

One of the most recent and important improvements to our water quality monitoring efforts was made possible through a generous grant from the HDR Foundation. HDR's support has allowed the Conservancy to purchase equipment to collect comprehensive, highly accurate stream data that will be shared on the Conservancy's website.

Monitoring

The Conservancy continues to improve data collection efforts in Lower Merion and Narberth streams by monitoring six sites on the East Branch of Indian Creek and three sites on Mill Creek. Using a multiparameter device known as a YSI probe, we are able to measure a variety of combinations for dissolved oxygen, conductivity, pH, nitrate, and temperature, all of which impact stream health.

Additionally, the Conservancy has partnered with HDR and Dr. Steven Goldsmith of Villanova's Department of Geography and the Environment to place three YSI EXO2 sondes in three additional locations on Mill Creek for monitoring real-time water quality data.

In this edition of The Steward, the Conservancy will focus closely on explaining dissolved oxygen, one of the parameters for which we collect data in order to analyze stream health.

Continued on Page 4



Saint Joseph's University students monitor Mill Creek

A LOOK INSIDE

Special Report: Monitoring our Waterways	1,4
2016 Stormwater Runoff: 5K Trail Run	2
2016 Preservation WatchList Update	3
Easement Update: Toland Farm	5
Programs with a Purpose: Environmental Education	6
News and Notes	7

The Stormwater Runoff: 5K Trail Run



Stormwater runoff is the number one environmental issue in Lower Merion and Narberth. During a storm, runoff quickly travels underground. From there, it moves out of sight, and, unfortunately, out of mind.



In a township with more than 100 miles of stormwater pipes and more than 550 stormwater outlets, the Lower Merion Conservancy (LMC) created a unique event to build awareness about the damaging impact of stormwater runoff.

In 2012, the LMC collaborated with Lower Merion Township's Environmental Advisory Council to organize The Stormwater Runoff: 5K Trail Run. In its fourth year, the Runoff drew over 100 runners and spectators to take on one of the most challenging 5K courses in the region.



First Place Team from John Cipollone Inc.

The course starts and finishes at Flat Rock Park where Mill Creek enters the Schuylkill River. It enters Rolling Hill Park at the iconic Barker Mill, quickly climbing over 300 feet before traversing the hilly terrain of the 103-acre park.

2016 Results

Top Male
Matt Cohen 20:30

Top Female
Bryn Crawford 25:44

Top Team
John Cipollone Inc.

We congratulate the winners of the 2016 Stormwater Runoff and thank all who came out to support each other and this important environmental cause.

We are thankful for the support of our committed sponsors:

- West Laurel Hill Cemetery • AQUA • Shreiner Tree Care
- NovaCare Rehabilitation • Pennoni • Nolan Painting
- John Cipollone, Inc. • Waverly Heights • Navigation Benefits • Keystone Gardens • SavATree • TRA Insurance Solutions • Linwood Park • Delancey Street Bagels • Green Bean Coffee • MOMs Organic Market • Gladwyne Fire Company



Runner David Burnett from Keystone Gardens

Giving Through the United Way

Does your company offer ways to give to your favorite organizations? Designate the Conservancy as the recipient of your next workplace gift through the United Way!



Lower Merion Conservancy
Designation code number: 19559

Staff

Maurine McGeehan
Executive Director

Kathleen Abplanalp, Ph.D.
Director of Historic Preservation

Jessi Brown
Office and Communications Coordinator

Tom Clark
Conservation Coordinator

Chelsea Heck
Director of Education & Development Associate

Board of Directors

Todd Bressi
Chair

Karen DiNunzio, Ph.D.
Vice Chair

Michael McCann, Ph.D.
Secretary

David T. Hoog
Treasurer

Directors

Tania Alexander
Rita F. Auritt

Laurie M. Beach

Scott D. Cook-Sather, M.D.
Ellen B. Davis

George S. Day, Ph.D.

Karen Toole Ebbert

Gerry A. Fisher

John F. Gullace, Esq.

Brian K. Hoppy, CEP

Arthur M. Kaplan, Esq.

Jeffrey E. Mack

Melissa Morris, Ph.D.

Karen R. Nagel, Ph.D.

Heather Osborne

Diana Post

Shivane Raj

Bruce D. Reed, Esq.

Susan T. Stewart

Mark E. Taylor

Anthony Vale, Esq.

Jean K. Wolf

Joseph E. Lundy, Esq.

Pro-Bono Counsel

Honorary Directors

Sandra S. Drayer

Robert D. Fox, Esq.

Norah Goldfine

L. Fielding Howe, EASLA

Joseph M. Manko, Esq.

Margot McConnel

A. Gerald Renthall, M.D.

Jonathan H. Spergel, Esq.

Robert P. Van Brott

Charles F. Ward

Jonathan B. Weller

During the early summer, the Conservancy released its 2016 Annual WatchList of at-risk properties in Lower Merion Township and Narberth Borough. The list comprises nine historic properties (nominated by residents, members of the Conservancy, and the Conservancy's Board of Directors) threatened with demolition, suffering from deferred maintenance, or plagued by vacancy. The Conservancy is encouraged to learn that the long-term preservation of three of these properties looks promising.



Ardmore Freight shed, ca 1975. Photo Courtesy of Jeffrey W. Prichard.

Pennsylvania Railroad Freight Shed

Kimco Realty, the owner of the Pennsylvania Railroad freight shed on the Trader Joe's site, has indicated that it has no immediate or future plans to remove the historic building to accommodate additional parking. The railroad shed, which has long been a curiosity in the township, does not have demolition protection, but Kimco's reconsideration of its original plan offers hope that the 135-year-old building will remain to tell the story of Ardmore's early development.



306 Bala Avenue, Bala Cynwyd

306 Bala Avenue

At its recent meeting, the Building and Planning Committee of the Lower Merion Board of Commissioners recommended a preliminary development plan that encourages the preservation of 306 Bala Avenue, a house designed by the prominent Philadelphia architect, Horace Trumbauer. The plan proposes the retention of the historic 1896 house within a development of seven new residences. It also proposes a site design that retains and restores the property's historic ornamental fences, posts, and gates, and permits an unobstructed view of the impressive house from Bala Avenue.



Ardmore Theatre, undated.

Ardmore Theater Building

The Ardmore Theatre building may soon regain its place as the keystone of Ardmore's business district. At a recent Historical Commission meeting, the theatre's owners, who were accompanied by a preservation architect, informally discussed their interest in rehabilitating the façade as a means of attracting new tenants to the property. The applicant's ideas for the property include restoring the large arched window in the façade's central bay and replacing the incompatible half-round marquee with a sensitively designed canopy that reflects the building's original design.

The Lower Merion Conservancy supports all of these efforts to preserve the Township's heritage.



Narberth Historic Preservation Initiative

On October 17, 2016, Narberth Borough Council considered a proposal to partner with the Lower Merion Conservancy and Pennsylvania's State Historic Preservation Office to engage the public in a plan to advance historic preservation in the Borough.

The initiative will involve identifying the Borough's preservation goals and recommending an "action plan" to meet these goals. The Borough will use the next month to gauge public opinion about this potential partnership.

The Conservancy looks forward to this process.

Special Report: Monitoring our Waterways

Dissolved Oxygen

Dissolved oxygen (DO), or simply, the amount of oxygen held in water, is a major indicator of water quality. The survival of aquatic life depends on a sufficient level of oxygen dissolved in water. When DO drops below levels necessary for sustaining aquatic life, it becomes a significant impairment to water quality. DO and temperature are inversely proportional: cold water can hold more oxygen than warm water. DO and temperature levels fluctuate more in unhealthy streams than in healthy streams.

Unfortunately, the streams in Lower Merion and Narberth are impaired and DO levels decrease significantly during the summer months. This decrease in dissolved oxygen has less to do with the increase in ambient air temperature and more to do with environmental factors that play a significant role in impacting stream temperature.

The loss of trees and other riparian vegetation that shade and cool streams is a major contributor to low DO levels. The presence of fertilizer in streams also decreases DO. Fertilizer encourages plant growth, and when these plants decompose, bacteria levels rise. It is likely that decreased DO levels in Lower Merion and Narberth streams is indicative of fertilizer runoff from lawns and fields and from the loss of riparian plants that can filter fertilizer and other chemicals before entering streams.

Stormwater runoff sends warm, polluted water into streams, increasing stream temperatures and nutrient levels.

While we cannot improve water quality overnight, we can do something to control stormwater runoff and its impact on the hydrologic system. One simple but important action you can take is to re-direct gutters toward vegetated areas and away from asphalt or concrete. Water should be encouraged to percolate into the ground during storms rather than rush onto streets and into streams. Wherever possible, lawn should be replaced with native perennials or shrubs to establish a deep root system. Plants with deep roots absorb more water than grass does. If your property is located along

a stream, make sure a riparian buffer exists or increase the size of the buffer that is present.

In early 2017, the Conservancy will be releasing a Stream Report with in-depth monitoring data from the past few years and more advice about improving stormwater management.

Graph and DO Levels at Three Sites

The stream running through Narbrook Park is close to the headwaters of the East Branch of Indian Creek. This helps to keep its temperature lower, and therefore, its dissolved oxygen levels consistent (Figure 1). Tree planting along the creek banks to shade the stream would help to maintain a healthy temperature, even in the hotter months.

The Shortridge monitoring site on the East Branch is shaded, but sections upstream of the monitoring site in Shortridge Park and along Wynnewood Road, are not. The temperature of the site, therefore, gets higher than that of the Narbrook Park site in the summer, and subsequently, dissolved oxygen levels decrease.

The temperatures at the Lankenau Hospital site are similar to the temperatures at Shortridge. However, their dissolved oxygen levels differ. As a result of continual buildup of decaying plants, Lankenau has a higher DO level than Shortridge.



Steve Goldsmith from Villanova University and the staff from HDR, before placing a probe in Mill Creek

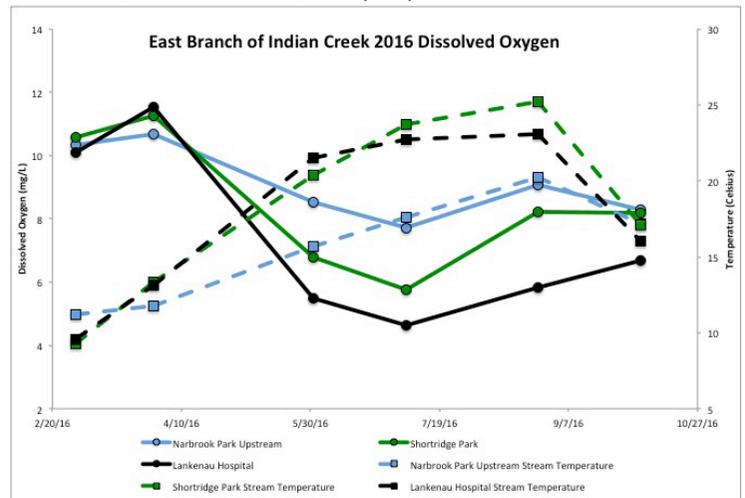


Figure 1: Data collected using a handheld YSI probe

Toland Farm to Welcome New Family

In 2011, the Conservancy worked with five families, known as the Pasture Partners, to help preserve a 4.4-acre parcel that was once part of Wynnewood's historic Toland Farm. Sheltered in a traditional neighborhood behind Lower Merion High School's athletic fields, the parcel was destined for development and approved for subdivision into eight buildable lots. If not for the forward-thinking families that pulled together to purchase undisturbed the property, the pasture may have had a very different future. Thanks to the resolve of the Pasture Partners, Toland Farm remains an oasis of open space and is preserved in perpetuity, a rarity in a township straining under the impact of residential growth.



To secure ownership of the parcel, each Pasture Partner family made a significant financial contribution toward the purchase of the 4.4-acre property. To safeguard the property's long-term preservation as open space, the Pasture Partners donated a conservation easement to the Lower Merion Conservancy. The easement, which permanently protects the land from future subdivision and development, permits the addition of one single-family home on a half-acre portion of protected property known as the "minimal protection area." With the addition of this house, a fifth Pasture Partner family will finally join the community it helped to preserve.

The new Pasture Partner family is sensitive to the historic and environmental value of the conserved property and aspires to build a house that is reminiscent of the buildings that once occupied the Toland Farm. It has chosen Moger Mehrhof Architects, of Wayne, to design a house that will have views toward the restored meadow. The placement of the house will preserve the street views of the meadow and a 200-year-old black walnut tree on the property.

An important component of the conservation easement is the plan for the pasture's restoration. When the Pasture Partners purchased the property, it was overgrown with vines and invasive species. Working with Natural Lands Trust, Cox & Company Tree and Landscape Services, and currently with Land Stewards LLC, the partners removed the overgrown vegetation and restored much of the pasture to a lush meadow of native plant species, trees, and grasses. This restoration has encouraged the return of wildlife, including hawks, rabbits, foxes, and a wide variety of pollinators.

West Laurel Hill Cemetery Celebrates Exciting Rebrand

In the areas of historic preservation and environmental sustainability, the work of West Laurel Hill Cemetery has long been consistent with the Conservancy's broader mission of protecting the built environment and the natural landscape. The Conservancy is grateful for the Cemetery's decade-long support of work that advances this mission.

In recent years, West Laurel Hill Cemetery has passionately embraced a program to promote historic and environmental sustainability on its property. Through guided walks, lectures, events, and the introduction of the region's only truly sustainable cemetery, West Laurel Hill has encouraged visitors of all ages to look at this pastoral cemetery as much more than a place of peaceful rest. The cemetery has given the public a unique opportunity to simultaneously engage with nature and marvel at the art and architecture of a resplendent historic site.



On October 4, 2016, West Laurel Hill Cemetery celebrated its renewal with a rebranding celebration. The cemetery and its associated funeral home, Bringhurst and Turner, now operate under a family banner: West Laurel Hill Cemetery Funeral Home.

The Lower Merion Conservancy encourages the public to enjoy the Cemetery's one-of-a-kind programs and events and welcomes the next chapter of its renaissance: the addition of a special pet cemetery.

Partnerships with a Purpose

Environmental Education Update

By kindergarten, most children have experienced some level of exposure to technology. For many, technology became a major tool in early education. Luckily, creative hubs such as Pixar and PBS produce innovative and thoughtful programming that presents complicated social and environmental information on a manageable level. Interactive games and videos also play their part in a child's introduction to environmental education. However, despite advances, technology will always fall short in comparison to the awe that comes from experiencing nature firsthand.

At the Conservancy, we work to make direct connections to nature and the environment through our school programming. By combining structured lessons with free time, children learn to self-direct and come to understand the great outdoors as their classroom. At the Conservancy, feeling leaves crunch underfoot, eating lunch in a rain garden, and whispering to classmates while hiking past 150-year-old mill ruins is a part of the education experience. No media platform or device can substitute the valuable experience of stepping into the creek for the first time, or seeing under a microscope what you have plucked out the water with your own two hands.



Green Woods Charter School, May 2016



Shipleigh Students at Ashbridge Park, March 2016

From philosophy to practice...

Those roots of exploration were planted into the mission and vision of Overbrook's Pre-School and Kindergarten when the school partnered with the Conservancy more than 12 years ago. Today, parents volunteer their time to bring three pre-school classes and one kindergarten class to Rolling Hill Park every month to sew the seeds of appreciation and respect for our natural world.

More recently, in 2013, Green Woods Charter School fourth grade teacher, Dan Sylvan, came to the Conservancy to realize his desire of creating an enriching, hands-on environmental education program using limited resources. Soon after, the Conservancy and Mr. Sylvan tested this new style of programming by introducing Green Woods students to a year-long immersive program that illustrates the relationship between our watershed and the built environment.

After just two full-day programs, both the Conservancy and Green Woods teachers saw the limitless benefits of the new partnership. Today, fourth grade at Green Woods is nicknamed "Watershed Year," and here at Rolling Hill Park, the home of the Conservancy, science is integrated into the entire Green Woods curriculum.

The program created for Green Woods has been adapted for the Shipleigh School's fifth grade students. Shipleigh students use their backyard, Ashbridge Park, to study the impact of stormwater runoff on Mill Creek. Students monitor the stream monthly and participate in stream ecology lessons led by the Conservancy. The work of the students and the results of their studies have been integrated into the Conservancy's StreamWatch program.

The Conservancy is proud to partner with schools to make interactive, scientific education more accessible. After all, environmentally responsible adults begin as environmentally enlightened students.

**Interested in helping the
Conservancy buy education supplies?**
Give to Education at www.lmconservancy.org/Education



Green Woods Charter School at the Schuylkill, May 2015

Board of Directors

The Conservancy welcomes five new members to its Board of Directors, elected at our annual meeting and members' picnic in June.

Jeffrey E. Mack, executive managing director of Newmark Grubb Knight Frank's Philadelphia region, has been a significant member of the Philadelphia commercial real estate brokerage community since 1979. He co-founded the commercial real estate firm Smith Mack & Co. in 1984. Newmark Grubb Knight Frank - BGC Partners, Inc. acquired Smith Mack & Co. in 2012. Mr. Mack is involved in the community also as a Board member of the French International School of Philadelphia, the Bryn Mawr Hospital Foundation, and the Committee of Seventy. He is a past board member of the Natural Lands Trust and The Baldwin School.

Heather Osborne, founder and president of Osborne Consulting, holds a Juris Doctorate from the University of Maryland and served as Assistant Public Defender for the State of Maryland. She is a former board member of Calcutta House in Philadelphia.

Shivane Raj, a former administrator at the Phebe Anna Thorne School in Bryn Mawr, graduated with a B.A. in Physiological Sciences from Oxford University before completing her clinical training at University College London to obtain her medical degree.

Bruce D. Reed, general counsel of Colorcon, Inc. (Berwind Corp. subsidiary) since 1995, serves on the Board of the Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail and the Montgomery County Open Space Board. He is a former president of the Board of Commissioners of Lower Merion Township and also a former co-chair of Lower Merion Township Planning Commission.

Anthony Vale, a partner in the Litigation Department of Pepper Hamilton LLP since 1986, has many years of experience in complex litigation involving pharmaceuticals and medical devices. He has served on the Planning Commission of Lower Merion Township since 2007 and resides in Haverford.

Consider joining the Mill Creek Society

*Our past is our passion,
our future is our responsibility*

Each year, some of our past disappears, as character-defining buildings are lost and open space is consumed by new development.

**There are many ways to contribute to preservation and open space initiatives.
One way is through a planned gift to the Conservancy.**

Special legacy gifts from members have helped to ensure the future of our preservation work. Since 1995 we have protected more than 130 acres of open space and ensured the long term preservation of many historic buildings.

When you name the Conservancy in your will, add us to your retirement plan, or name us as a beneficiary of your life insurance policy, you help to ensure the Conservancy's work and you contribute to the legacy of the community you call home.

Please talk to your financial planner about receiving significant charitable income tax or estate tax deductions and contact the Conservancy for more information about becoming an honored member of the Mill Creek Society.

Please contact Maurine McGeehan, maurine@lmconservancy.org or 610.645.9030



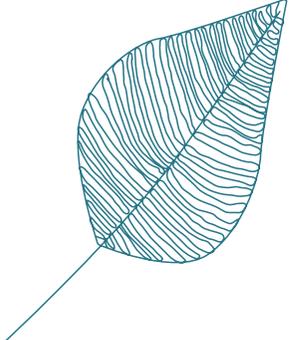
1301 Rose Glen Road
Gladwyne, PA 19035

Non-Profit
US Postage
PAID
Conshohocken, PA
Permit No. 6155

Inside: the latest news from the Lower Merion Conservancy



Annual Winter Treks



The winter tradition continues as the Lower Merion Conservancy partners with Bridlewild Trails Association, the Henry Foundation for Botanical Research, Peace Palace Mission, and Riverbend Environmental Education Center to present a series of free hikes for adults and children ages 8 & up. Enjoy the company of friends during a brisk walk through the treasured fields and forests of Lower Merion!

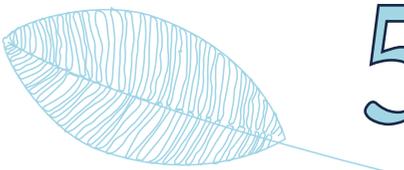
Please check Imconservancy.org for trek descriptions and more details.

1 Over the River and Through the Woods
From Turtle Hollow to Waverly Woods
Saturday, January 21, 10:00 a.m.
Richie Ashburn Field, Youngsford Rd, Gladwyne

2 Riverbend Ramble
Saturday, February 4, 10:00 a.m.
Riverbend Environmental Education Center
1950 Spring Mill Road, Gladwyne

3 Henry Gardens and Wilderness
Saturday, January 28, 10:00 a.m.
Henry Foundation, 801 Stony Lane, Gladwyne

4 A Divine Saunter
Saturday, February 11, 10:00 a.m.
Palace Mission, 1622 Spring Mill Rd, Gladwyne



5 Hike the Rolling Hills
Saturday, February 18, 10:00 a.m.
Rolling Hill Park, 1301 Rose Glen Rd., Gladwyne

