



Conemaugh Valley Conservancy 2025 Annual Report

*Conserving and promoting the natural and recreational resources
of the Kiski-Conemaugh River Basin
to strengthen connections between people and the land.*

WORKING TOWARD OUR VISION

Clean and healthy rivers and streams, a robust economy, and generations inspired to enjoy and steward the watershed.

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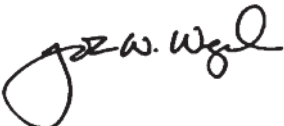
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The year 2025 was good for Conemaugh Valley Conservancy. CVC added new programs, offered more public outreach, and increased ties to organizations with similar missions.

Our dedicated volunteers continue to perform at the highest level in our three signature programs, Stream Team water sampling, the four day Stony-Kiski-Conemaugh River Sojourn, and the West Penn Trail and Triathlon. Without this small army, we could not host any of those events or execute those programs. In support of other CVC activities, I attended many meetings with our constituents in Armstrong, Indiana, Cambria, Somerset, and Westmoreland counties, as well as many meetings outside our service area. By meeting with various stakeholders in our footprint and beyond, CVC adds value to public activities and expands our name recognition. We also hosted a meeting of sportsmen, watershed groups, and state agencies to discuss the future of recreation on our beautiful rivers.

Increased donations through 2025 will allow CVC to increase capacity in small but important ways in 2026, such as that we now have a physical office in the Heritage Johnstown Discovery Center. We also are developing additional technical services, such as data analysis of lab reports from water sampling. Increased capacity will provide increased opportunity as CVC grows stronger.


John W. Wenzel

HEALTHY RIVERS AND STREAMS

STREAM TEAM



Stream Team volunteers continued to provide critical samples from abandoned mine discharges and treatment systems to the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation. We celebrated our volunteers on February 5 with a luncheon at Heritage Johnstown. Twenty-five people attended, including Board members Mike Burk, Brad Clemenson, Mike Cook, and Linda Gwinn, and special guests Jacob Biss of Spangler Subaru and Mike Timcik of Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation. Stream Team is funded in part by a Growing Greener grant from the PA Department of Environmental Protection.

The Stream Team has remained diligent and engaged through 2025. Water monitoring continues across four counties: Cambria, Indiana, Somerset, Armstrong and Westmoreland. Volunteers made visits to more than 300 individual sampling sites in 2025 -

passive treatment systems, boreholes and streams.

Stream team cooperation has been strong with core team members still actively sampling their assigned sites in a timely, efficient and accurate manner. In the second half of 2025 we inventoried our field sampling pH meters, and obsolete meters out of warranty were replaced with new meters. We continue to prioritize monitoring our passive treatment systems to provide valuable feedback to our watershed partners.

In 2025 we have further engaged our various partners in related water sampling activities aimed at improving existing AMD treatment systems. Blacklick Creek Water Association remains very vigilant in their stream monitoring activities and a complete rehab of the Laurel Run # 2 treatment system was realized in early 2025. On a smaller scale, a Trout Unlimited funded study of the Weaver system



in Somerset County via Biomost, an engineering consulting firm, completed an on-site visit and engineering assessment of Weaver which yielded a report and recommendations for improvement that will be the focus of future next steps between CVC and Somerset Conservation district.

Other notable stream team activities in 2025 have been:

- Stream flow monitoring training (flow volume in cubic feet per minute) was conducted via CVC's own Sontek brand water flow meter under the tutelage of Jim Eckenrode of Saint Francis University. Hopefully the meter can be used effectively in 2026.
- Data analysis and use of AI for graphing flow and water quality results of Hughes Bore Hole and Big Run Treatment systems. Data analysis was provided to volunteers and water association groups to support their understanding of their systems.



HEALTHY RIVERS AND STREAMS

We are grateful to all our Stream Team volunteers:

| | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Inga Armstrong | Mary Beth Gibbon | John Linkes | Jeff Reese |
| Patti Baldisare | Greg Gdula | Janis Long | Dennis Remy |
| Veronica Bortot | Brian Gunnligson | Kelli Majiros | Jackie Ritko |
| Mike Burk | Laura Hawkins | Vicki McGuire | Scott Rugh |
| Mike Cook | Jan Hill | Tom Mesoras | Diane Rugh |
| Malcolm Crittendon | Larry Hutchinson | John Noble | Jeff Sarver |
| Mark Domenick | Tim Kania | Dave O'leary | Diane Vento |
| Deb Donahue | Charlie Kulick | Steve Podratsky | Greg Walls |

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO WATERSHEDS

Through funding provided by the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds (C-SAW) CVC performed macroinvertebrate surveys in streams of interest in support of several local watershed groups. For the Aultman's Run Watershed Association, we surveyed Coal Run at several locations in Indiana County. In Westmoreland County, CVC surveyed Crabtree Creek in Crabtree and Camp Run in Jones Mill in support of Loyalhanna Watershed Association. For Kiski Watershed Association, we sampled a tributary of Beaver Run in Westmoreland County.

We completed the research funded by the Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation on the abandoned mine discharge on Kimberly Run, Somerset County, which flows into the Kimberly Run Natural Area, owned by our partner organization Somerset County Conservancy.

We were awarded a \$30,000 grant from Wild Resource Conservation Program for a treatment of fireflies of Pennsylvania, to be completed jointly with collaborators from Penn State University and University of Florida. We will study the holdings of several major museums and use those locality records to for an ecological model predicting possible ranges of our PA species. We will also generate educational pamphlets and web material for public outreach.

UPPER BASIN

Inclined Plane Hillside Reclamation and Recreation

CVC furthered restoration and recreation efforts along the Inclined Plane hillside in Johnstown, through a grant from the Department of Environmental Protection's Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation. Atlas Engineering completed engineering and design to address potential hazards from prior mining on the hillside. The project will ultimately improve the trail and develop parking. The engineering and design plan will provide the basis for an October 2026 Abandoned Mine Lands for Economic Revitalization (AMLER) application for development and construction.

Atlas also completed a wetlands enhancement plan that will include interpretation of wetlands issues at the site. A report was also secured indicating that no further issues with endangered bats were found at the site, so there should be no problems with future permitting issues.

During the course of the year, CVC also worked with Cambria County Transit Authority to address a slide and runoff area which could have potentially impacted the base of the Plane. A drainage pipe for stormwater runoff from the Westmont neighborhood had become clogged due to collapsed shale cliff. CVC collaborated with the City of Johnstown to provide a temporary solution to the problem.

The upper basin team also hosted two volunteer work days. Volunteers helped clear knotweed at the base of the Inclined Plane to prepare the site for spraying. CVC also planted trees at the Conemaugh Gap Gateway Park as part of a US Forest Service grant being administered by the Community Foundation and Johnstown Vision Together.

INSPIRED TO ENJOY

URBAN NATURALIST

Our nature walks with urban youth were a big success. Sixteen walks over a six week period hosted 228 students and 42 adults. Partner institutions are Citikidz camp in Rector and Flood City Youth Fitness Academy in Johnstown. Walks included birding lessons, a stream study exercise, and a lesson on mammal skulls. We thank the guest naturalists who leant their expertise: Luke DeGroot, Ben Kehoe, Dr. James Kellam, Nick Liadis, Dr. Jeff Payne, and David Poder. Also, from July 14 to July 18 the Flood City Youth Fitness Academy sent 30 students to the Citykidz campus each day for the Citikidz programs, with fees paid by the Urban Naturalist grant.

You can find a video created by LassoTheMoon Marketing about the program at



STONY-KISKI-CONEMAUGH RIVERS SOJOURN

Presented by AmeriServ Financial and Technimark

A total of 67 paddlers participated in the 2025 river sojourn from June 5-8. Sixteen people paddled all four days and 44 river miles from Johnstown to Apollo. Registrants came from around the Commonwealth as well as neighboring states - Ohio, Indiana, Virginia, North Carolina.

The sojourn planning team was delighted to welcome 3 new guide boaters. We also thank the Blairsville River Rescue Team for their support.

Sojourners enjoyed overnight stays in Blairsville, Saltsburg, and Avonmore, paddles through Conemaugh and Packsaddle Gaps, and a stop at Saltsburg's Historic Canal



Days Festival. We're grateful to our presenters who emphasized our theme of Be Different, Do Different: Denise Jennings, Blairsville's Underground Rail Road history; Dr. John Wenzel, Urban Naturalist program; Saturday evening – First Waves 10 anniversary video.

Thank you to our volunteer committee: Mike Burk, Chair; Brenda Mahoney, Coordinator; Laura Hawkins; Bryan Mahoney; Clark Fisher; Emily Fisher; Susan Flicker; Rick Bloom; Michael Mance; Mark Shank; Margaret Golik; Mike Hog.



SPONSORS MAKE IT HAPPEN! PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers - AmeriServ - Technimark - Community Foundation for the Alleghenies, Indiana County Conservation District – Indiana County Tourist Bureau, Spangler Subaru - Gibson-Thomas Engineering - Mr. Muffler – Stone Bridge Brewing Co.

INSPIRED TO ENJOY

WEST PENN TRAIL

CVC's 15-mile West Penn Trail traverses old railroad grades and hilly slopes between Blairsville and Saltsburg. The trail is maintained by a dedicated crew of volunteers – they logged 445 hours in 2024 performing routine maintenance as well as major repairs and resurfacing.

The West Penn Trail Council particularly thanks Dan DeForno for his outstanding performance mowing and trimming the trail from Saltsburg to the Conemaugh Dam and back – not an easy job! Dan put in more than 50 hours in 2024. Thank you for your dedication, Dan!



Barry Ambrose was another outstanding volunteer for the trail. Barry maintained the Kiski section of trail, plus cleared debris and assisted with surface repairs throughout the entire trail. Thank you for nearly 100 hours of service!



West Penn Trail Council

Jerry Seitz, President
Cliff Wissinger, Vice-President
Jack Maher, Secretary/Treasurer
Damien Boudreaux
Mike Keltz

Jack Maguire, Trail Manager
Bill Rodgers
Jack Ruebel
Barry Tuscano
Kitty Tuscano

INSPIRED TO ENJOY

Pollinator Paradise

Pollinator Paradise is an ongoing Pennsylvania Master Naturalist project, located near the eastern end of West Penn Trail near Blairsville. The garden includes an incredible variety of native plants, attracting equally variable pollinating insects.

Site visionary and team leader Dorothy Pierini-Rodgers welcomed more volunteer assistance in 2025. Many thanks to Louise and Dave Madden, Ann Marie Nagy, Carol Byers, Rachel Deavers, Keith Terney, and Bill Rodgers.

The team is always looking for new volunteers who enjoy playing in the dirt! Help is needed with planting, weeding and watering. Drop us a line at cvconserv@gmail.com to volunteer.



photo: Dorothy Pierini-Rodgers

West Penn Trail Triathlon



The 2025 West Penn Trail Triathlon overcame a significant low-water challenge to host another fun and exciting event. The Conemaugh was too low for the usual kayak route from the Conemaugh Dam to Saltsburg, so just 2 days before the event coordinators mapped out an alternative loop route around the deeper pools near town. The new course contributed to the always energetic vibe in Saltsburg on Triathlon day.

There were 123 participants this year representing 8 states, PA, VA, MD, NC, MA, SC, DE, and OH.

There's no way to say enough good things about Triathlon coordinator Mike Keltz and his family. As one participant put it: "The town is great with the trails and river. It was a well-run event. Appreciate the efficiency of timing the competitors and the quickness of handing out awards."

Enjoy LassotheMoon Marketing's video about the event at



THANK YOU: Sponsors, Partners, and Friends!

Many thanks to our partners and sponsors: Wagner Trucking, Tres Rios Sports, TMR Roofing, Nature's Way Market, Shelly Foundations, Kiski Flats Keep, Dr. John Tollari, Avonmore Italian Club, Saltsburg Volunteer Fire Department, Saltsburg Sunoco, Butt Wrestling BBQ, Saltsburg Shop n Save, US Army Corps of Engineers, Two Dam Kayak Rentals, Saltsburg Kayak and Canoe Outfitters, Medic One Ambulance Service, Saltsburg Borough, Tunnelton Volunteer Fire Department, Four Seasons Brewing, Culligan Water, Flat Tire Bike Shop, Judy Altman, Tricia and Charlie McFeaters, Kitty and Barry Tuscano.



After a long wait, contractors broke ground on the pedestrian bridge over Rt 22 at Blairsville. CVC held \$364,252.47 private monies dedicated to matching construction grants managed by Indiana County. This bridge is part of a proposed connection between the West Penn Trail and the Hoodlebug Trail which in turn connects to the Ghost Town Trail.

INSPIRED TO STEWARD

Dr. Wenzel provided content for two Earth Day recognitions. One was a lesson on stream insects for the Saltsburg Evergreen after school program (April 24). On April 26 at the Earth Day celebration at the International Conservation Center (Fairhope, PA), a branch of the Pittsburgh Zoo, CVC provided a lesson on the evolution of mammals as illustrated by dentition and tooth formula using about 20 skulls and fossils. The same display of skulls was provided in support of Nature Works in Johnstown (March 15).



In support of Kiskiminetas Watershed Association, CVC provided a table display on stream macroinvertebrates that indicate water quality, with specimens for examination. The event was September 20 at the Leechburg annual "Pink Day," and 165 people stopped to view the insects and learn about our rehabilitated rivers. The same table display was offered at the Headwaters To The Ohio Water Network's 2026 fall "Confluence" on

September 27 in Mount Pleasant. At that event, 45 people visited the table. This same lesson was repeated at the Indiana Apple Festival in Indiana on October 4. Ninety-nine people stopped to view the booth and talk about insects.



At the request of the Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, CVC hosted a meeting of stakeholders to discuss the future of public access to the Kiski-Conemaugh river. POWR and PEC are eager to ensure that restoration projects also present opportunity for recreational developments in the basin. We hosted 42 people from 29 organizations to study maps and suggest sites of particular interest. Participants included canoe clubs, fishing clubs, watershed groups, commercial outfitters, Fish and Boat Commission, Game Commission, Bureau of Abandoned Mines, charitable foundations, and more.

ANNUAL MEETING

Our annual members' meeting was the evening of Wednesday, May 14, on the campus of University of Pittsburgh Johnstown. Approximately 70 people attended where they enjoyed an Italian buffet dinner. Special recognition was paid to donors Nature's Way Market, Spangler Subaru, and James McKay Armstrong. Following the business meeting, Dr. Wenzel provided a lecture on photic communication in fireflies.



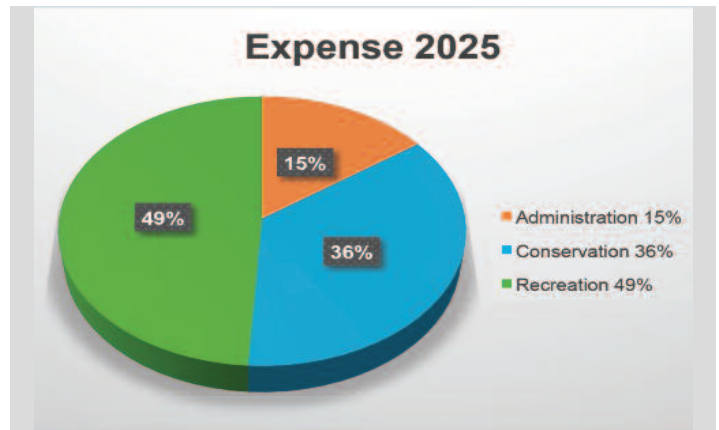
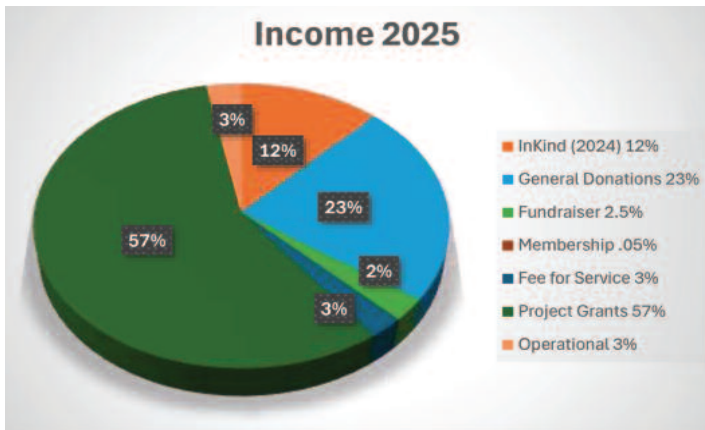
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Judith Johns & Edward Hunter
David Hurst
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Indiana County Tourist Bureau
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Italian Club
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Jenner Township
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FINANCIALS



WAYS TO GIVE

Like what you've read here? Join us! There are many ways to support our conservation and recreation work – membership, donations, event sponsorship, contribution toward the endowment, and more. For more information on any of the support options or to donate on-line, visit www.conemaughvalleyconservancy.com

The official registration and financial information of the Conemaugh Valley Conservancy may be obtained from the Pennsylvania Department of State by calling toll-free within Pennsylvania 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Endowment

The Community Foundation for the Alleghenies houses an endowment for longer-term financial security for Conemaugh Valley Conservancy initiatives. The endowment has primarily been built through Nature's Way Market's participation in the 1% for the Planet program. The CVC endowment currently exceeds \$521,000, and the sustaining fund is growing at \$136,000. The Board of Directors welcomes your participation.

CVC encourages planned or major gifts including bequests, gifts of retirement funds, charitable gift annuities, and gifts of life insurance policies. Any planned gift should start with a discussion with your financial advisor, who can assist you in finding the best tool to meet your charitable goals. For more information, or to contribute to the endowment, contact the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies at (814) 536-7741 or info@cfalleghenies.org.

Become a member!

You can become a member on line, or select your membership level below and return this form to CVC/P.O. Box 218/Johnstown PA/15907-0218.

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Address _____

\$500 Champion \$250 Patron \$100 Sponsor \$50 Supporter \$25 Individual
 Other _____

Please direct my gift to _____ (CVC program or project)

