PMC strikes a blow against polluted stormwater runoff

There are countless threats to the water we need to survive. Some of them are obvious, others harder to see. We have tried to control these self-induced threats by designating them as either Point Source Pollution (PSP) or Non-Point Source Pollution (NPS).

One of the first tasks undertaken by the Environmental Protection Agency was development of regulatory guidelines to limit the amount of pollutants that could be discharged from pipes. These regulations are enforced through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. The program also included erosion control measures of sites under construction.

NPS regulations have evolved to include trying to control runoff from fields, roof tops, roadways and parking lots, which have contributed greatly to the pollution we find in our streams. But how can you put a permit limit on what comes off a parking lot?

The NPDES Phase II program requires that projects that create impervious surfaces, like parking lots, must now use alternatives to catch and release direct discharges of storm water. These types of development are now being designed with innovative ways of capturing runoff before it can get into our streams.

The BWA recommends the Pocono Medical Center for using such enlightened alternatives to traditional storm water management now that we know it will help protect our streams. We hope that all developers in the watershed follow their lead in adhering to the intent, and spirit of the NPDES program as we all look to find the proper balance between water resource protection and economic development we all desire.

May 9 & 10: Time to go native again

The Brodhead Watershed Association hosts its annual Native Plant Sale on Saturday, May 9, at Northampton Community College in the Poconos from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. There will also be a sale on Sunday, May 10, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Both sales will be held on the campus of Northampton Community College. The sale will feature a wide variety of native plants suitable for home gardens and landscapes. There is no need to be a member of the BWA to attend the sale. The sale is open to the public. For more information, please visit the BWA website at brodheadwatershed.org.

Two special programs will precede the plant sale event. On May 9, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., the BWA will host a workshop focused on the benefits of native plants in the environment. The workshop will be led by local experts and will cover topics such as identification, propagation, and care. The workshop is free and open to the public. For more information, please visit the BWA website at brodheadwatershed.org.

Extension will present “What’s Invading Our Watershed?” a workshop on identifying and controlling such invasives as Japanese knotweed, Tore of Heaven and Mile-a-minute Vine. The workshop is at Northampton Community College on Mill Road in the Poconos from 7 – 8:30 p.m. The charge is $5 for members, $10 for non-members.

Interested in seeing invasive plants and their native alternatives up close and personal? Then join naturalists Don Miller, Robin Vann, and Linda Ross Brecker on a walk in the Paradise Creek Watershed on Saturday, April 26, from 1-4 p.m. Participants will discover the “good, the bad and the ugly” among native, invasive and ornamental plants on the grounds of Ross and Ross Nursery on Route 191 in Paradise Valley. To register for the walk, please call the BWA office at 570-839-1120. The charge is $3 for members, $5 for non-members.

More information on all this is available at brodheadwatershed.org/nativeplantsale.html. Come join us and go native with native plants.

Thank you to our Plant Sale sponsors:

Colonial Auto Sales
Cool’s Corner Restaurant
Desal Restaurant

There is still time to become a sponsor. Contact info@brodheadwatershed.org or call 570-839-1120.

33 trained for ‘Streamwatch’ program

Ellen Davis, BWA Streamwatch Coordinator, shows new volunteers the tricks of the trade. Thirty-three new and present volunteers attended training sessions in March.
2014 Spring-Summer Events

Saturday, April 26, 1 - 4 pm: “Plant That! Not That!”
Hike - Ross and Ross Nursery, Paradise Valley. This Prelude hike to BWA's May Native Plant Sale will explore “the good, the bad and the ugly” of a changing plant landscape and provide plant identification information for invasive plants and landscape tips for “growing native.” Please pre-register at info@brookheadwatershed.org.

Thursday, May 1st, 7 - 9 pm: “Plant This! Not That!”
workshop, Northampton Community College, Tannersville. Vince Connore, Penn State Cooperative Extension, explains how to identify and control exotic plants and suggest native plants to use as replacements. Please pre-register at info@brookheadwatershed.org.

May 9th, 6:30 - 8:30 pm: Native Plant Sale - BWA members only preview night. Northampton Community College, Tannersville. Members get 10 percent discount and choose from the best selection of plants. Visit www.brookheadwatershed.org for more info.

Saturday, May 10th, 8 am - 3 pm Native Plant Sale - Public Day 100% of plants to choose from Northampton Community College, Tannersville. Visit www.brookheadwatershed.org for more info.

Saturday, May 17th, 10 am - 5 pm: Spring Festival at Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge at Morton Farm

President’s Corner

Spring is here. Floods can happen. Streamwatchers be careful. Maybe that should be the end message, but it begs the question, “how much water has fallen in the Brokhead Watershed?” Some quick (admittedly flawed) estimates: Watershed near 312 square miles; Rainfall year to date 5-10 inches (NWS); Area of East Stroudsburg + Stroudsburg = 2.5 ± 0.8 = 4.3 square miles. If 5% of a rainstorm suddenly rushed into the Bugle, they would be 30 feet underwater! Amazing that much water as possible should go into the re-charging zones to maintain our water supply. Preventing erosion, limiting paramecia, maintaining riparian buffer all help the process of recharge and help maintain the high water quality in the streams that we have come to expect in this watershed.

BWA members should all be proud of the job that BWA’s Streamwatch program has done through the years. This spring they will be out there again, sounding the alarm at the first sign of lowered water quality. Join in on celebrating their passion for the watershed. Thank you Streamwatchers...and be careful out there.

John Smith

New members

The BWA happily welcomes our newest members!

Ann Berumen, Gary & Sue Obre, Rose Ann Whitehill, John & Suzi Fetterman, Kris & George Ledenski, Gordon Dunn, Nancy Hilliard, Bill & Diane Lessard, Kelly Lewis, Sean Aulan, Catherine Feola, Diane Champ. Pat and Jean Conaway, Matt Mills, Mary Sayer

Not a member yet? Join Here: http://www.brookheadwatershed.org/form_member.html
(You can even pay online!)

Better water quality likely for ‘The Gorge’ on Brokhead Creek

By Don Baylor

Long-time local anglers refer to it as “The Gorge.” It is a spectacular wild section of the Brokhead Creek between the Stroudsburg-East Stroudsburg interchange bridge and the Rock Tegan Paper Mill near Delaware Water Gap. Very little of this wild stream segment is visible traveling on foot from top, bottom, or down a steep decline from one of the bordering ridges. Looking downstream as you cross the Interstate 80 bridge just east of Stroudsburg, you might not see the Brokhead make a sharp bend to the east at the beginning of the gorge. A few miles further east, at the next bridge crossing, you can see a portion of the lower end of the gorge upstream and the Rock Tegan Paper Mill below.

Through the gorge, having gathered the combined rows of Peccono Creek and McMichael Creek in Stroudsburg, the Brokhead flows large through deep green pools and bold, well-stocked riffles. The joining of Brokhead and McMichael waters can be seen looking upstream from the Route 80 crossing next to Stroudsburg. Though much of the Brokhead escapes its bed, forming totally new configurations in recent floods, it has remained little changed through the confined ledge and boulder structure in the gorge.

The east side of the gorge is traversed by an active rail line. On the west side, from Gros Park, one can easily take or bike the remains of an old railroad-trimmed rail bed halfway down the gorge to a point where the rail bed disappears in an old wash-out. At the lower extremity of this rail bed, the Brokhead contains the remains of a one-time power generation dam. This dam and one that confined the Brokhead above the paper mill are long gone, but the apopon and weirs of the dams remain. My friend Bob Learman, a native of Delaware Water Gap, had a grandfather who, years ago, manned the power dam daily by falling over the ridge from that town. The height and length of the power dam impoundment was made clear to me when Bob related his grandfather’s story of a winter’s ice skating flay all the way from the dam to the interchange bridge. Years ago, I recall returning home with a few grindings and a few brown trout after visiting an old quasi quarry in the gorge near today’s Interstate 80 Marshall’s exit.

My neighbor often came home with stories of large specimens he saw caught near the mill. Years later, I frequently haunted the gorge with fly rod, often remaining well after dark to stalk some of those large brown trout. In recent years, I often fly-fishing the gorge because the once abundant mayflies and caddisflies that brought the fish to the surface had largely disappeared as water quality declined. During late summer, lower Brokhead, below Rock Tegan to the Delaware was coated with severe sargassum, looking like bank-to-bank trash carpet.

With Brokhead Creek Regional Authority’s new state-of-the-art wastewater treatment plant on line and significant improvement in Brokhead water quality below Rock Tegan, the fly-fish in the gorge may be on the mend. The current Brokhead through Stroudsburg and into the gorge still needs care and remediation from upstream point source discharges. The Brokhead Watershed Association has high hopes for a remnant for the lower Brokhead.

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