

*Water at Risk Series: Name Calling*  
*Written by: Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association*



*CAPTION: Creeks and streams throughout the Brodhead watershed have signs like this one proclaiming their names. Knowing your place among the creeks and where they flow connects you to nature in your daily life. Go to [brodheadwatershed.org](http://brodheadwatershed.org), click on “Programs” then “Explore Your Watershed” to learn about creeks near you.*

We humans are naming animals.

Our first gift to a newborn, often before mother’s milk, is a name. A new puppy gets a name. Old friends have nicknames. We name cars, trucks, and towns. Fly rods and guitars. Names, names, names.

Names can express affection, control, and connection. And along with all their emotional weight, names are also useful, describing where we are, where we come from, and how to get to someplace else. As you travel from home to school, shopping, work — any time you are out and about in the Brodhead Watershed —

you will pass signs telling you the names of the creeks and streams along your way.

The signs are a project of the Brodhead Watershed Association, working with townships and boroughs throughout the drainage area of Brodhead Creek. Starting back in the 1980s, the founders of BWA realized that many residents — newcomers and old-timers alike — didn't know the names of the creeks they lived on, marveled at, and passed every day.

Believing that people love what they know, BWA has been working with municipalities ever since to get signs posted and maintained along creeks large and small, throughout the watershed.

Just like people, creek names and personalities can change. This spring, for instance, with all the rain we've had, you may have noticed that some of our creeks have been making a spectacle of themselves, roaring under the road, and sometimes over it. Other times of the year, some are hardly a trickle. Over the decades, or millennia, some of their names have changed, too. The river we call the "Delaware" was named for British baron De la Warr, but called "Lenapewihittuk" by the Lenape who fished it and lived along it for thousands of years.

You can find out about the creeks in your life and learn where they rise, flow, and end. It's easy. At [www.brodheadwatershed.org](http://www.brodheadwatershed.org), click on "Programs" then "Explore Your Watershed." You'll find maps naming creeks, ponds, lakes, and dammed water bodies.

Get to know your creeks! Sometimes, name calling is a good thing.

*An archive of "Water at Risk" articles is on BWA's homepage at [www.brodheadwatershed.org](http://www.brodheadwatershed.org). Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member!*