

NEWS RELEASE

From the Brodhead Watershed Association

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, September 08, 2021

Download photos: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tqH47zauKmeJessdWyxoYjJQRg9zb5L3/view?usp=sharing>

On August 11, 2021, a group of kayakers on the Delaware Sojourn put in at Minisink Park on the Brodhead Creek. (Photo courtesy Robert Lovenheim)

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pUE0CHGNFkRM1z7hyr5-u6W7TpQbjD7H/view?usp=sharing>

A view of the same stretch of the Brodhead, from a bit further upstream, on August 23, 2021. Minisink Park is to the right. (Photo courtesy Robert Lovenheim)

How our watershed handled stormy Henri

Editor's note: "Woods & Water" is an occasional feature focusing on the relation between land and water quality – and the conservation easements that help preserve our environment in the Brodhead watershed.

By Carol Hillestad

For Brodhead Watershed Association

The morning after Hurricane Henri blew into town, I watched an eagle glide on the crystal-clear air along the edge of the Pocono Plateau, as if surveying what had happened overnight in the Brodhead watershed.

What a view that is! The corrugated, eroded folds of the plateau stretch from Camelback to Mount Pocono Knob, northeast along Cresco Heights and Game Lands 221 to Chestnut Mountain, then Spruce Mountain and Mount Wismer, to West Mountain, Skytop, and beyond.

The previous night, for hours, while the eagle roosted in an old white pine, Henri had rained down billions of gallons of water on the Brodhead watershed.

In Game Lands 38 and Camelback, rain swelled Hypsy, Bowers, and Fall creeks as they raced into the McMichael, and Wolf Swamp and Dry Sawmill runs on their way to Pocono Creek.

Rain fell in sheets on Pocono Manor and the Knob, Cresco Heights and Game Lands 221, swamping Swiftwater Creek and Forest Hills Run, Tank Creek, Yankee Run and Devil's Hole, before they streamed into the Paradise.

Rain, rain, and more rain boomed down the rocky steeps of Buck Hill, Griscom and Mill creeks, Spruce Run, the Middle Branch, Leavitt Branch and Goose Pond Run — all of them pouring into the Brodhead.

Just think of all that water from all those creeks draining all that land — overtopping bridges, washing out roads then roaring through Stroudsburg and East Stroudsburg!

At Minisink Park, with the Delaware River in sight, Brodhead Creek spreads wide, unbound from its banks, filling the broad floodplain, flooding acres of soccer fields, trails, and woodlands several feet deep before finally releasing its burden of water to the Delaware River.

A catastrophe? No, not at all. This is a floodplain, and that's just what nature intended to happen.

Wedged between Route 80 and the Delaware, Minisink Park might seem a good spot for a park-and-ride, a strip mall, "riverview" condominiums, or an industrial site.

But floodplains are special. They're actually part of a river system, which includes the river channel itself and adjacent land that must be kept natural.

As the rain slackened, hours passed and a new day broke, the Brodhead and its sister Cherry Creek, which also enters the Delaware here, gradually returned to their banks. The standing creek water left behind will slowly infiltrate the soil of the soccer fields, and seep down into the woods, adding nourishing silt and sediment. Within a few days, the coffee-colored water will become clear and sparkling again, a source of drinking water for 13 million people.

The eagle swivels her head, blinks. Everything slips back to normal ... until next time.

Carol Hillestad is a hike leader and writer for Get Outdoors Poconos, a grant-funded series administered by Brodhead Watershed Association. Go to brodheadwatershed.org/gopoconos for information on this as well as other preserved lands and hiking areas in the Get Outdoors Poconos series. The series is administered by Brodhead Watershed Association and supported by a grant from the William Penn Foundation.

ABOUT THE MINISINK PARK FLOODPLAIN

Minisink Park is on River Road in Smithfield Township near Delaware Water Gap village. In creating the park, township leaders accepted that floodplain land adjacent to creeks floods naturally and often, and that allowing this to happen is essential to the diverse habitat there, and to mitigating flooding upstream.

The park is open to the public for hiking, and also has a children's playground.

GPS: 40.99176, -75.13968

For information: brodheadwatershed.org/minisink-park/

ABOUT STORMWATER

- According to the U.S. Geological Survey, "One inch of rain falling on 1 acre of ground is equal to about 27,154 gallons and weighs about 113 tons."
- The Brodhead watershed contains about 29,440 acres, and received between 3 and 6 inches of rain from Henri — meaning between 2.4 billion and 4.8 billion gallons of water fell across the watershed.
- Water flowing at just 4 miles an hour creates force comparable to the winds of an EF2 tornado – powerful enough to move boulders five feet in diameter.
- Never drive into water during or after a storm. Even 6 inches of flooding can make a vehicle buoyant and sweep you away.

Brodhead Watershed Association is a nonprofit environmental organization formed in 1989. BWA is dedicated to protecting and preserving water resources and the environment of the Brodhead watershed, and the water quality of the Brodhead, Cherry, Marshalls, McMichael, Paradise and Pocono creeks and their tributaries. BWA assists municipalities, residents, businesses and groups with protecting natural resources through education, workshops, seminars, public programs and stream monitoring. For information: info@brodheadwatershed.org or 570-839-1120.

