

Nine Mile News

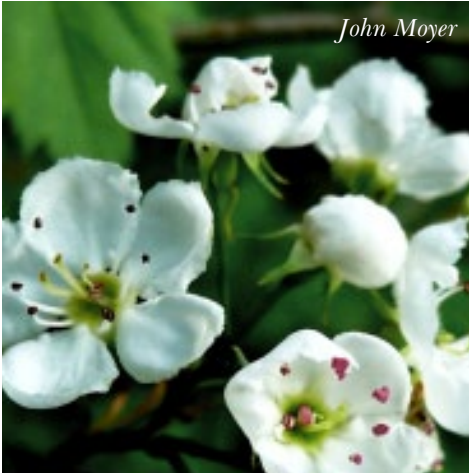
SPRING 2011

photo by John Mayer

NINE MILE RUN
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



A dozen years ago, some energetic and creative people were already busy laying the groundwork for what eventually became the most successful urban stream restoration in the United States to date – the Nine Mile Run restoration in Frick Park. The work of that same group of people also led to the creation, in 2001, of The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. They wisely understood that the physical restoration of the stream would not, by itself, achieve the improvement in water quality that the community desired, and set about creating an organization to advocate, educate, and demonstrate effective action.

Ten years later, we are proud of all that the Watershed Association has accomplished, but also very aware of how much remains to be done. We have helped many watershed residents think more holistically about their connection to the urban environment, and have helped hundreds to take concrete actions to improve conditions. Our Urban EcoStewards and other volunteer groups continue year after year to keep the restoration area free of trash and invasive species. With 1400 rain barrels installed, more than 300 trees planted, and a new rain garden program underway in the watershed, we have begun to make a measurable impact on the amount of stormwater runoff entering Nine Mile Run each time it rains. But perhaps more important than any one specific action, has been our work to educate citizens in this little corner of Allegheny County about water quality issues, and how what is happening in Nine Mile Run relates to the larger issue of combined sewer overflows in our region.

Over the next 20 years Greater Pittsburgh will make the largest investment in public infrastructure in its history, as ALCOSAN and the 83 municipalities in its service area work to comply with the court order we are under to stop sewer overflows. Right now as little as 1/10th of an inch of rain spews fecal bacteria and a host of other toxins directly into our rivers, which are also the main source of drinking water for 90% of county residents. To correct this problem, some amount of “grey” concrete infrastructure will have to be built. But if we can get enough stormwater out of the sewer system, through the use of “green” infrastructure, we can keep the costs down, and gain a host of other benefits for our communities as well, like cleaner air, cooler summer temperatures, and higher property values.

Over the last few years the NMRWA team has learned a lot about managing stormwater effectively on-site at homes and small businesses. We think it could be helpful to share that expertise with people outside the watershed as our region tackles this challenge. We are also looking for sustainable ways to generate income for our organization. StormWorks, the new social enterprise we are launching this spring, was born out of the intersection of these two ideas. Now even if you live outside the watershed, you can schedule a consultation to determine the best stormwater solution for your property. (see pg. 8 for more on StormWorks.)

Our 10th anniversary year holds one other major new venture for us as well – the Wilkinsburg TreeVitalize 500 Trees Initiative. We are thrilled to be part of this major effort to restore the urban tree canopy in Wilkinsburg, and look forward to sharing more with you about our progress in the next newsletter. Please consider coming out to volunteer with us to plant some trees this spring and fall. The work we do in this project will pay rich dividends for this community, and for Nine Mile Run, for many years to come.

Here’s to greening the ‘burg!

Brenda



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Our mission is to ensure the restoration and protection of the Nine Mile Run watershed through citizen engagement, demonstration projects, and advocacy.

Our Programs are made possible through the generous support of our funders.

The Heinz Endowments
 The Heinz Endowments Youth Philanthropy Project SWIM
 The Richard King Mellon Foundation
 The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Growing Greener II Fund
 The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Education Grant

The Sprout Fund

The Bessie F. Anathan Charitable Trust and the Norman W. May and Susan M. Zeff Fund of the Pittsburgh Foundation
 The Laurel Foundation
 The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy TreeVitalize Program
 PennVest
 Dominion Foundation

Thank you to

Betty Kindle and ALCOBAN
 Christina Kovitch and TestAmerica
 for their donation of professional services

In-Kind Donations

Home Town Tavern, Swissvale
 Brueggers Bagels, Squirrel Hill
 The Coffee Tree Roaster, Squirrel Hill

Special thanks to the Second United Presbyterian Church in Wilksburg and the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf for the use of their facilities for NMRWA meetings.

NINE MILE RUN RECOGNIZED FOR URBAN FORESTRY



The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association's Executive Director, Brenda L. Smith and Program Coordinator, Sara Madden received national recognition in November from the Washington, DC-based Alliance for Community Trees (ACT), a nonprofit urban forestry organization. Brenda and Sara received the organization's "NeighborWoods Scholarship," donated by The Home Depot Foundation, the leader in investing in nonprofit organizations that build better communities through urban forestry.

We wish to extend our sincerest gratitude to ACT and the Home Depot Foundation for recognizing the important work NMRWA has done to promote tree planting throughout the watershed, and for supporting Brenda and Sara's efforts to increase the urban tree canopy in the communities within Nine Mile Run.

RAIN BARREL OWNERS—YOU ROCK!

With the help of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Growing Greener II Fund, The Richard King Mellon Foundation, and the Roy A. Hunt Foundation, NMRWA launched The Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative Phase II in the spring of 2007. Over the last 4 years, this initiative has successfully increased citizen awareness in our watershed about the regional issues of stormwater runoff and sewage overflows, while giving residents a simple and cost effective way to help reduce their stormwater footprint. NMRWA has installed more than 1400 rain barrels within the watershed with over 3.8 million gallons of stormwater captured – that's a lot of water!

We would like to thank all the residents who took that leap of faith and became rain barrel owners. You are true pioneers. Your commitment helped make the Nine Mile Run Rain Barrel Initiative one of the most successful rain barrel programs in the United States!

Unfortunately, NMRWA cannot guarantee the current subsidized pricing for rain barrels within the watershed after June 30, 2011, the end of our grant period. This includes the free barrels for study area residences. If you or someone you know has been putting off getting a rain barrel, we urge you to call today and schedule an assessment. Please note – because each



2011 IS NO EXCEPTION – THIS WILL BE AN EXCITING YEAR FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND NMRWA!

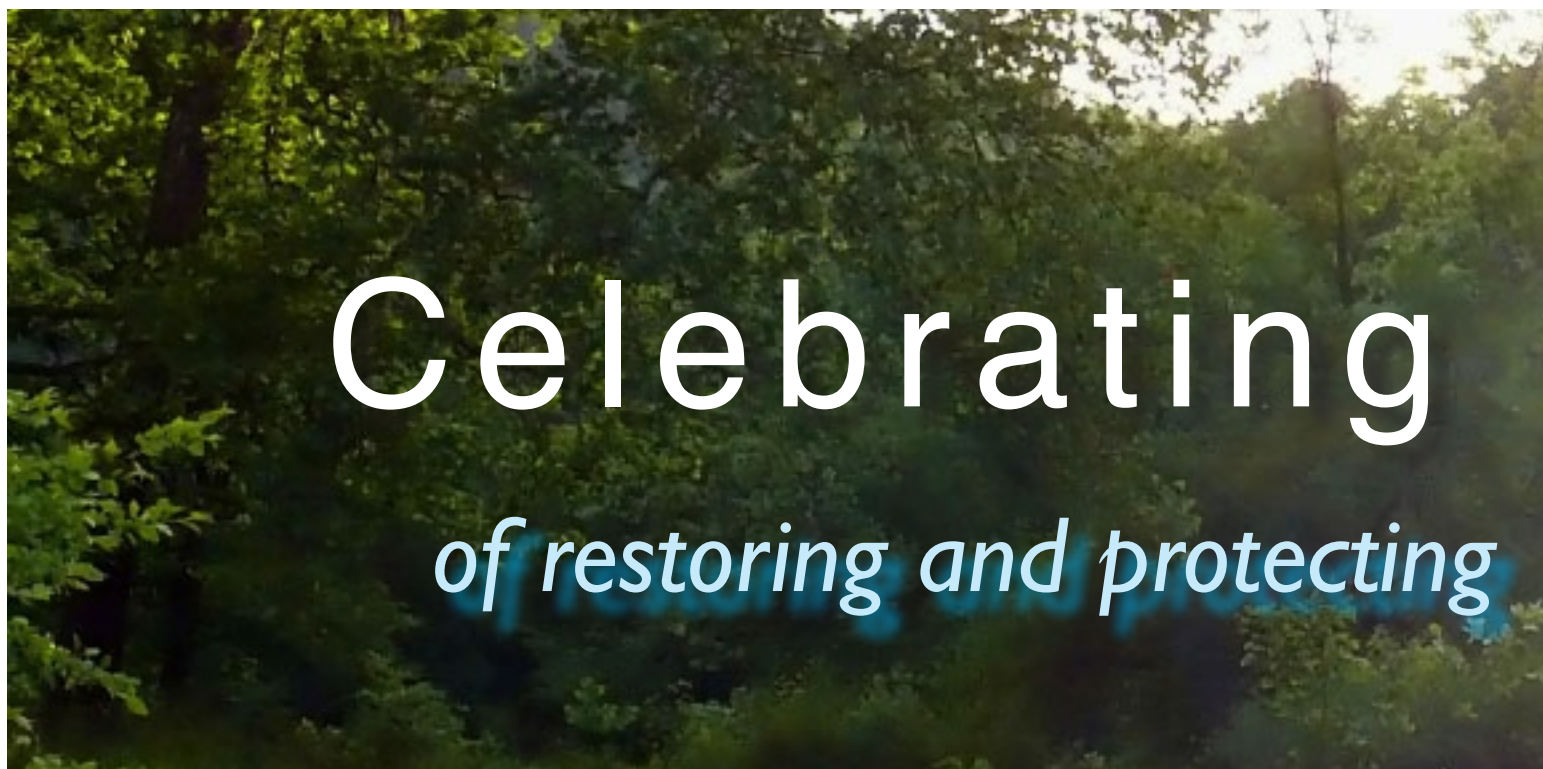
As early as 2001, NMRWA recognized that working with local schools was vital to our mission of raising awareness about the issues of stormwater runoff, non-point source pollution, and sewage overflows in Nine Mile Run. Most recently, we have worked to develop programs that inspire and motivate students and also nurture and create the next environmental leaders and stewards of the earth. Each year, the requests for service-learning projects from local schools have increased, making environmental education one of our fastest growing program areas.

NMRWA's Environmental Education Coordinator, Luke Stamper, is currently finishing an innovative native plant project with the Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf (WPSD). What makes this environmental education project unique is its focus on a traditionally underserved group - hard of hearing students. The students at WPSD have already had lessons on the history and issues of the Nine Mile Run Watershed, as well as lessons on native and invasive plant species. Each facet of this program was designed to

actively engage students, including field trips to the restoration area, a native seed collection workshop, planting and caring for native plants, and journaling and scrapbooking about their experiences. In addition, the WPSD students are creating a documentary about their recent work with NMRWA for a film competition. This project was made possible through funding

by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Environmental Education grant.

NMRWA also has funding from The Sprout Fund to implement a school-yard rain garden transformation project with the Word of God Catholic School in Swissvale. The garden will increase biodiversity by incorporating native



plant species that attract and provide habitat for wildlife while offering a unique outdoor learning environment. Sara Madden, NMRWA's Green Design Specialist, has already directed the students in a design charrette for their rain garden; construction will be completed this spring.

cont. from page 4

Another project we are exceptionally excited about is the transformation of the vacant lot next to Wilkinsburg High School. This project engages the students in Wilkinsburg High School's Key Club in creating a unique green space that includes a rain garden, tree plantings, outdoor classroom and seating area, and green infrastructure that addresses stormwater runoff from the adjacent parking lot. Lisa Brown and Sara Madden have directed the students throughout this project incorporating a series of design charrettes and presentations, and in planning for construction days. This project has been made possible through a grant from the Heinz Endowments Youth Philanthropy program.

No matter how busy we get, or how many rain barrels or rain gardens we

WHO KNOWS WHO TAGGED THE WHO POOL IN NINE MILE RUN? DO YOU?

NMRWA is conducting a nationwide search for the graffiti artist responsible for tagging the first drop pool along Nine Mile Run. If you know, contact Lisa at 412.371.8779, ext. 115 or by email at lisa@ninemilerun.org. We want to make them famous!

We are still collecting cool stream sweep finds! Join the next stream sweep on April 30th - see what interesting stuff makes its way into the stream.



Photo by John Moyer

10 Years
our urban watershed

GET OUTSIDE!

Please check our website www.ninemilerun.org under *Get Involved* for a complete list of upcoming events, cancellations and last minute changes. We will post cancellations the night before an event. Unless otherwise specified, all events are free and open to the public. Families are welcome!

Rooted in Wilkinsburg The Wilkinsburg TreeVitalize Project- 500 Tree Initiative

► Saturday, May 7 | 9:30am – 12:30pm
Dumplin Hall, 502 Hay St.

► Wednesday, May 11 | 2 – 5pm
Meet at the Wimco parking lot, 401 Penn Ave.

► Saturday, May 14 | 9:30am – 2:30pm
Meet at Herrmann's Printing on Douglass Drive
off Robinson Blvd.

Help NMRWA plant the first 100 trees in the Wilkinsburg TreeVitalize Project- 500 Trees Initiative! This project will ensure tree-lined streets for Wilkinsburg's future while also providing many economic and social benefits. In addition, these trees will help reduce stormwater runoff and non-point source pollution entering Nine Mile Run. Join NMRWA, TreeVitalize, the Borough of Wilkinsburg, the Wilkinsburg CDC and the Wilkinsburg Shade Tree Committee, as we continue to add to and improve green spaces in Wilkinsburg. We provide all tools and supplies. Breakfast and lunch will also be provided. Register by writing justin@ninemilerun.org or by calling 412.371.8779 ext. 116.

Funding for this project was received through the Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority (PennVest).

Nine Mile Run Stream Sweep

► Saturday, April 30 | 9am – noon
Meet in the Lower Frick Park soccer field, use the Lancaster Ave. entrance.

Every time it rains or snows, litter from the streets in the upper watershed communities of Pittsburgh, Edgewood, Wilkinsburg and Swissvale washes into the stream. Help us keep the Nine Mile Run Stream Restoration beautiful. We provide gloves, safety vests, and trash bags. Please wear long pants and sturdy boots or shoes. Register by contacting Lisa at 412.371.8779 ext. 115 or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

Photography Walk with John Moyer

► Saturday May 14 | 2pm
Lower Frick Park parking lot, off Lancaster Ave.
Non-members: \$10 / Members: Free!
Not sure if your membership is current?
Email judi@ninemilerun.org

You've seen his work, now grab your camera and join John Moyer in this child and dog friendly event! John will take us on a tour of his favorite spots along Nine Mile Run and offer helpful hints and tips for improving your nature shots. John's photography not only graces the Nine Mile Run newsletters, email blasts and calendars, but his photographic documentation of the Nine Mile Run Restoration Project has been published in Civil Engineering Magazine, Western Pennsylvania History Magazine, and Landscape Architecture, and has also appeared in the PBS documentary Liquid Assets. You must preregister for this event! Please register by calling 412.371.8779 ext. 115, or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

Breakfast and Bird Walk

► Sunday, June 5 | 7:30am
Lower Frick Park parking lot,
off Lancaster Ave.
Non-members: \$20 / Members: Free!
Not sure if your membership is current? Email
judi@ninemilerun.org

Join us as we bird the Nine Mile Run Valley, and witness the seasonal changes in the restoration area. In the past, we have been delighted to see some unusual winged visitors - come see if we get any pleasant surprises this year. Chuck Tague and Jack Solomon lead this outing. Breeding birds should be active. An Orchard Oriole nested in the valley last June, so we may see either it, or its more common cousin, the Baltimore Oriole. Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, Yellow Warbler, Scarlet Tanager, and Indigo Bunting - they're all possible in the watershed on an early June morning. A late breakfast will be provided. This is one of our most popular events - you must preregister! Please do so by calling 412.371.8779 ext. 115, or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

NMRWA and PPC Frick Park Work Day

► Saturday, June 11 | 9am – 1pm

Join the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association and the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy for this day of collaborative fieldwork in lower Frick Park and the Restoration Area. We will be tackling a range of tasks, including planting and seeding, rogue trail closures and, of course, the always exciting invasive species removal! Please dress for the weather, and be sure to wear long pants and sturdy boots or shoes. Register by contacting Lisa at 412.371.8779 ext. 115 or email lisa@ninemilerun.org

URBAN ECOSTEWARD EVENTS

To register, visit <http://www.pittsburghparks.org/crewleader> or call 412-682-7275

Woodland Wildflowers Walk & Campfire

► Thursday, April 28 | 5:30pm – 7:30pm
Frick Environmental Center

Learn to identify our region's spring wildflowers. A campfire and marshmallow roast will follow the walk.

Early Season Invasive Plants

► Thursday, May 12 | 5:30pm – 7:30pm
Frick Park, lower parking lot off of Lancaster Ave.

Learn how to identify and remove invasive plants early in the season, focusing on limiting seed distribution.

Shrub and Tree Identification

► Thursday, June 9 | 5:30 – 7:30pm
Frick Park, lower parking lot off of Lancaster Ave

Learn some useful tools for field identification of native and non-native trees and shrubs.

Late Season Invasive Plants

► Thursday, August 25 | 6:00 – 8:00pm
Emerald View Park (Greenleaf Parking Lot),
1885 Greenleaf St. 15211

Find out how to identify and remove invasive plants later in the season, focusing on limiting seed dispersal.

MAKE A GREENER CHOICE ABOUT YOUR ENERGY SUPPLIER AND SUPPORT NMRWA TOO!

Did you know the electricity production is responsible for more pollution than all the cars and trucks on the road?

Deregulation of the electricity market in Pennsylvania means you can now choose your energy supplier. At NMRWA we chose Viridian Energy! Viridian Energy is a socially responsible energy company providing greener electricity at an affordable price. Viridian was founded with the vision to empower customers to make a difference in the environment simply by switching energy providers. You can make a difference by choosing Viridian, a renewable supplier.

It's easy! If you sign up through the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association's group you not only help the environment but NMRWA also receives funding for our programming – we receive \$2 a month for each customer who joins our group, for as long as the customer remains with Viridian.

Sign up today at www.viridian.com/ninemilerun and click on "become a customer!"



SAVE THE DATE!

THE SUMMER STORM

July 23rd, 7pm

SAVE THE DATE!

State of the

September 24th

PLEASE JOIN US!

Your membership contributions are a vital source of support for our programs. And our members' voices lend strength to ours as we advocate for green approaches to our urban challenges. Please choose a level of support that works for you:

- \$20 **BASIC MEMBERSHIP**
- \$50 **SUPPORTER LEVEL:**
 AND RECEIVE: *NMRWA logo Hat*
- \$100 **STEWARD LEVEL:**
 AND RECEIVE: *NMRWA logo T-Shirt*
- \$250 **RESTORER LEVEL:**
 AND RECEIVE: *An autographed Poster-sized photo of Nine Mile Run by John Moyer*
- \$500 **PROTECTOR LEVEL:**
 AND RECEIVE: *NMRWA Rain Barrel, with delivery and installation included*
- \$1,000 **VISIONARY LEVEL:**
 AND RECEIVE: *All of the above, or NMRWA logo jacket.*

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association is a legally incorporated 501 (c)3 charitable organization. Official registration and financial information may be obtained by calling 1.800.732.0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

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STORMWORKS, A NEW VENTURE FOR NMRWA

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association has launched a new initiative to expand our stormwater management services - StormWorks. StormWorks is a social enterprise, and will help us to achieve our mission, both through the actual products and services it offers and by generating income to support our other programs.

StormWorks will provide people outside the Nine Mile Run watershed with NMRWA's expertise in residential and small-scale commercial stormwater management. Rain Gardens, Rain Barrels, and Tree Plantings comprise

the initial product line.

We recommend having a StormWorks representative come to your home or business for a consultation, to determine the best solution for your individual situation. Some people may make use of all three approaches, while others will find that only one suits their particular needs. There is a \$75 charge for the consultation, but the fee will be waived if the visit leads to the purchase of a StormWorks service.

To schedule a consultation, please contact StormWorks Director of Business

Development Somer Obernauer, Jr., at 412-371-8779 ext. 114, or somer@ninemilerun.org. Evening and weekend hours are available.

Financial support for this project was provided by the Richard King Mellon Foundation, serving Southwestern Pennsylvania with a program focus on Regional Economic Development and Conservation, along with Education and Human Services and Nonprofit Capacity Building

STORMWORKS

innovative rainwater management

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