

NINE

MILE NEWS

EARLY SPRING 2009

Photo courtesy of John Moyer



OUR MISSION IS TO ENSURE THE RESTORATION AND PROTECTION OF THE NINE MILE RUN WATERSHED THROUGH CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT, DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS, AND ADVOCACY.





May Apple photo courtesy of John Moyer



Snowdrop photo courtesy of John Moyer

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

IF WE HAD NO WINTER, THE SPRING WOULD NOT BE SO PLEASANT: IF WE DID NOT SOMETIMES TASTE OF ADVERSITY, PROSPERITY WOULD NOT BE SO WELCOME.

*Anne Bradstreet, American poet (1612 - 1672)
'Meditations Divine and Moral,' 165*

As I write this, we are back once again to sub-freezing temperatures, after a very brief, tantalizing taste of 50+ degrees last week. This winter has been long and relentless – much more like those I remember from my childhood than the wimpy affairs we’ve experienced so often during the last decade. And the steady stream of bad economic news has made the cold and gloom feel even more pervasive than usual.

But the snowdrops are emerging in my yard, and by the time you read this, I expect many of the signs of spring will be unmistakable. This time of regeneration passes quickly, so make plans now to experience as much of it as you can. Whether exploring on your own, or joining NMRWA for an invigorating run, an informative walk, or a stream sweep, the forests and wetlands of Frick Park provide an ideal opportunity to observe the unfolding miracles of the season.

Nonprofit organizations in Pittsburgh and across the country are being warned to brace themselves for dramatic reductions in funding over the coming year or two, as foundations try to rebuild their endowments, and local and state governments struggle to meet basic needs. If you have recently renewed your membership in the watershed association, please know that in this context your generosity is appreciated more than ever. If you have never been a member, please consider that for a basic membership of only \$20, you can make an impact on the future of your local environment by ensuring that we can continue our work in the watershed. If even a small monetary gift is out of the question at this time, remember that we offer many opportunities to volunteer and make a direct difference with your hard work. Just call 412-371-8779, ext. 15, and ask Lisa Brown how you can contribute. Our national period of adversity will eventually come to an end, and when it does, we, and our children, will be grateful for the investments that we continued to make in the restoration of our urban ecosystem, even when times were tough.

Thanks for participating – hope to see you in the park this spring!

WHO WE ARE

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Jeffrey Bergman, Program Director
Lisa Brown, Outreach Coordinator
Judith Jungling, Office Manager

Program Assistants:

Luke Stamper
Shaina Dulberg
Luke Kambic

Contact Us

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DR. MARY KOSTALOS ADVOCATING FOR NINE MILE RUN



Dr. Mary Kostalos –advocating for Nine Mile Run

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association wishes to express its gratitude to Dr. Mary Kostalos for her many years of service to the organization and for tirelessly advocating for Nine Mile Run. For almost forty years, Mary has studied, monitored, and worked to improve Nine Mile Run –her efforts directly influenced and contributed to the restoration of the stream. Most recently, Mary served as president of the Nine Mile Watershed Association while also chairing the Executive Committee and the NMRWA Monitoring Committee.

In addition to serving on the NMRWA board, Mary has also served on the boards of Environment Pittsburgh, GASP, and The Rachel Carson Homestead Association. As the founding director of The Rachel Carson Institute at Chatham, she planned and coordinated one of the largest environmental events in the history of Pittsburgh, Earth Day 1990. Mary’s commitment to local environmental issues has been instrumental in raising public awareness, increasing citizen engagement, and promoting sound ecological practices in the region.

In her academic and professional career Mary has successfully linked biology and Chatham University to the broader academic and scientific communities. As a Professor of Biology at Chatham, Mary has engaged hundreds of students in ecology and environmental biology. By incorporating opportunities that connected students to local issues, Mary created an active learning environment that cultivated a sense of commitment in her students. Her students have focused on a broad range of problems; from plant community assessment

to wetland restoration, from environmental toxins to habitat protection, and from invasive species to acid mine drainage. Dr. Kostalos also developed and directed the first environmental studies major at Chatham, expanding Rachel Carson’s legacy and inspiring future generations to pursue careers in the environmental sciences.

Dr. Kostalos’ dedication to learning extends beyond the environs of Chatham to embrace and enrich the learning experiences of high school students. Since the 1970’s Mary has served as a judge for the Pennsylvania Junior Academy of Science (PJAS) Regional Competition. Seeing the need to engage younger students in environmental issues, she developed Rachel Carson Day, an annual day of environmental investigations for high school students held at Chatham. Working with ASSET (Achieving Student Success through Excellence in Teaching) and other local groups, Mary developed and presented programs for K-12 teachers and students designed to improve math and science education.

Although Mary has stepped down from the NMRWA board of directors, she remains an active member of the monitoring committee. For 8 years Mary has monitored the benthic invertebrate populations, so you just might find her in the stream collecting these small critters, but she is more often seen running the many trails through Frick Park.

Best wishes to Dr. Mary Kostalos!

ENERGY EFFICIENCY PAYS IN MORE WAYS THAN YOU THOUGHT.

Tired of outrageous utility bills? Interested in improving the energy efficiency of your home? Check out the Keystone HELP Energy Efficiency Loan and Rebate Program, at www.keystonehelp.com.

Pennsylvania homeowners who meet the program’s eligibility guidelines can get a low cost loan or a tax rebate for energy-saving improvements installed by an approved contractor.

Keystone HELP is principally supported by the PA Department of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Treasury Department and the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

WEEDING OUT DUMPING

Unfortunately, despite the amazing restoration of Nine Mile Run, many people still use the stream and stream banks as an illegal dump. If you see someone dumping in the watershed, get a description of the vehicle, including a license plate number, and call the police. If you see someone disposing unknown substances down a storm sewer or directly into the stream, or if you notice unusual colors or odors in the stream, contact the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection at the following:

PA Department of Environmental Protection
Southwest Regional Office
400 Waterfront Dr Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745
Contact: Complaint Service Representative,
(412) 442-4184.



Swissvale Tree Planting

GREENLINKS FALL PLANTINGS AND LOOKING AHEAD TO 2009

Did you know that trees are a vital component in improving Nine Mile Run? By intercepting and absorbing rainfall, trees reduce the volume of water that enters the storm sewers, reducing the damage caused by stormwater runoff. A fully mature oak tree can absorb and divert between 3000 and 4000 gallons of stormwater runoff per year—that's a lot of water! The advantages of street trees go beyond helping Nine Mile Run; increasing the number of trees in the urban forest provides many benefits to urban communities, including cleaning the air, raising property values, and creating more livable neighborhoods. NMRWA continues to expand and improve our GreenLinks Program and our commitment to increasing the number of street trees in the watershed.

In November, the NMRWA GreenLinks Program sponsored two community street tree plantings, one in Wilkinsburg and another in Swissvale. Partnering with the Wilkinsburg Shade Tree Commission and students from Wilkinsburg High School, NMRWA planted 9 trees along Wallace Avenue. NMRWA Program Director, Jeffrey Bergman, with a host of helpers including our Program Assistants, Shaina Dulberg, Tim Converse, Luke Stamper, and Luke Kambic, experts from TreeVitalize, and Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest, demonstrated the proper techniques for planting street trees. Although everyone involved felt a deep sense of satisfaction as they viewed the newly planted trees, the students from Wilkinsburg High School found the experience particularly fulfilling and engaging, saying:

"Tree planting was a great experience. I am glad I was able to do something positive for my community. Even though it was freezing cold, I still had fun and learned a lot."

~Tasia

"I like the trees, I really liked planting them. I am worried that they are not going to grow leaves. I am glad that you all choose our school and the Hosanna House, we look more like a community now."

~Lakia

HELP US MAINTAIN OUR STREET TREE PLANTINGS BY BECOMING A TREE TENDER!

Tree Tenders are trained volunteers who are authorized to care for small city-owned trees during Tree Care Days. This special group of volunteers participates in a three-session course that equips them with the skills necessary to care for trees. Local tree experts provide instruction, and the course covers everything from tree biology to planting and pruning.

These courses are offered through the Friends of the Pittsburgh Urban Forest (FPUF) Go to www.pittsburghforest.org/TreeTenderCourse to register.

The following week the NMRWA team moved to Swissvale and planted an additional 8 trees on McCague Street. Darrell Rapp, a long time friend of NMRWA, helped to coordinate the planting, and along with Tim Ward and his students from Word of God School, worked in a light rain to plant all the trees in one day. Thank you and congratulations to the many community volunteers from Wilkinsburg and Swissvale who turned out for these two events! Not only have you improved your community, but your efforts have helped ensure the preservation of Nine Mile Run.

Since its inception, the NMRWA GreenLinks program has planted 172 trees in the watershed. This year we will be planting an additional 50 trees in Wilkinsburg and Swissvale. Our first planting this spring will take place on April 11th when we will plant 20 trees in Wilkinsburg. Once mature, these trees will divert thousands of gallons of stormwater runoff annually, helping to preserve the health of Nine Mile Run. To volunteer for this event call Jeffrey at **412.371.8779 ext 14**.



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GROW A WATERSHED FRIENDLY LAWN

The lure of a lush green lawn often tempts us to use products that offer quick results but are damaging to soils and grasses, and contribute to nonpoint source pollution in our streams. Did you know that organic lawn care is much simpler than it seems? A healthy organic lawn will naturally withstand weed and insect invasions—a thick, strong, deep-rooted lawn can defend itself against all but the toughest weeds. A green and attractive lawn is possible without the use of synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides. Follow these easy steps and free your lawn of chemical dependency!

TEST YOUR SOIL

- Amending your soil before having it tested is a waste of money and may ultimately damage your lawn.
- Grasses thrive in soil with a pH between 6 and 7.
- Adjust the pH by adding lime or sulfur to your soil.

TOP DRESS WITH COMPOST IN SPRING AND FALL

- Compost adds trace minerals, nutrients and beneficial microbes to the soil.
- Add 1/4 inch of compost for every 100 square feet of lawn.
- Rake evenly over the lawn.

MOW HIGH

- Mow to a minimum height of 2.5 to 3 inches.

- Taller grass shades the soil preventing weeds from germinating.
- Taller grass requires less water and prevents early dormancy.
- Longer blades of grass have a greater surface area available to absorb more sunlight and convert it to energy.
- Leave the grass clippings on the lawn to replenish nitrogen in the soil.

WATER DEEPLY AND INFREQUENTLY

- Most lawns need approximately 1 inch of water per week.
- Water in the early morning to allow the lawn to dry out before sunset.
- To encourage deep roots systems and to crowd out shallow rooted weeds, lawns should be allowed to dry out between watering.

BE SMART ABOUT WEEDS

- Weeds are not the end of the world!
That said, here are some easy organic methods to discourage weeds:
- Simply pull or dig out weeds on a regular basis.
- Apply corn gluten meal, an organic pre-emergent herbicide to control dandelions, crabgrass and other weeds.
- Leave autumn leaves on the lawn- run over them a few times with the lawn mower. Chopped leaves (especially maple leaves) left on the lawn and allowed to break down can inhibit germination of some weed species.

For more information about organic lawn care visit the following website organicgardening.about.com/od/lawns/a/OrganicLawn.htm



photo courtesy of John Moyer



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EVENTS

RESTORATION RUN

Saturday • March 28 • 11AM
Meet in the soccer field in Lower Frick Park, use the Lancaster Avenue entrance.

See the amazing transformation of Nine Mile Run, learn about the future of this unique project, and then join other watershed runners on a leisurely jog through parts of the restoration and Frick Park. Choose between a 3 mile or 5 mile route (all paces and abilities are welcome). Please register for this event by calling Lisa at **412.371.8779 ext 15** or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

GREEN LINKS TREE PLANTING

Saturday • April 11 • 9AM-1PM
Meet at the Intersection of Center Street & Franklin Avenue

Trees increase property values, clean our air and water, and beautify our neighborhood. Join Nine Mile Run and the Wilkesburg Shade Tree Committee as we plant 20 new trees in Wilkesburg. Breakfast and all supplies and tools provided. Please register for this event by calling **412.371.8779 ext 14** or email info@ninemilerun.org. Be prepared to work hard, get dirty, and have fun! We will proceed rain or shine.

NINE MILE RUN STREAM SWEEP

Saturday • April 18 • 9:30AM-Noon
and Sunday • June 21 • 9:30AM-Noon
Meet in the Lower Frick Park soccer field, use the Lancaster Avenue entrance.

Join NMRWA as we sweep Nine Mile Run of litter. Every time it rains or snows, litter from the streets in the upper watershed communities of Pittsburgh, Edgewood, Wilkesburg and Swissvale washes into the stream. The Nine Mile Run Stream restoration project is one of this region's unique environmental successes. Help us keep this amazing transformation 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 15** or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

UES WETLAND WALK

Saturday • May 9 • 10AM-Noon
Meet in the lower Frick Park parking lot, use the Lancaster Avenue entrance.

The restored Nine Mile Run stream area has been planted with thousands of native woody and herbaceous species. This year marks the fourth growing season since the completion of the restoration, and should provide a

wonderful opportunity for learning to identify some of these beautiful natives as we explore the wetlands.

Please RSVP by April 29 for this event by calling Jeffrey at **412.371.8779 ext 14** or email jeff@ninemilerun.org

RAIN BARREL OPEN HOUSE

Thursday • May 14 • 5:30PM-8PM
NMRWA offices
702 South Trenton Avenue

Join the staff at NMRWA for a fun evening of savory food and drink, and explore innovative options for residential stormwater management. See our rain barrel workshop; learn how to install and maintain your barrel for optimum performance. Learn techniques for incorporating rain barrels in your landscape and learn about the best products and methods for painting a rain barrel. See the NMRWA rain garden and talk with Sylvania Natives owner, Kathy McGregor about the optimum plant choices for a rain garden on your property. Please RSVP by calling **412.371.8779 ext 15** or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

UES EARLY SEASON INVASIVE PLANT WORKSHOP

Saturday • May 30 • 9PM-Noon
Highland Park, Bigelow Shelter

Do you know what garlic mustard looks like? How about Japanese knotweed and mugwort? These and other invasive species threaten native plant populations by out competing them for light, space, and nutrients. Find out how to identify and remove invasive plants early in the season. Register by calling Jeffrey at **412.371.8779 ext 14** or email jeff@ninemilerun.org.

UES BIRD WALK

Sunday • June 7 • 7:30AM
Lower Frick Park parking lot,
off of Lancaster Avenue

Join us as we bird the Nine Mile Run Valley, and learn about the ecological restoration efforts in the southern end of the park. 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 joint outing with the Wissahickon Nature Club and the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. 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. We'll keep an eye out for butterflies and dragonflies, too, as well as late spring and early summer wildflowers. Then, join us for brunch at Kazanky's whenever we tire or the birding slows. A children's activity, led by the Frick Environmental Center and suitable for ages 5-9, will be part of this event. Please RSVP. Register by calling **412.371.8779 ext 15**, or email lisa@ninemilerun.org.

TREE CARE WORKSHOP

Wednesday • June 17 • 5:30PM-7:30PM
Meet at the corner of Wallace Avenue & Mill Street in Wilkesburg

Young trees need a lot of extra care to survive. NMRWA has planted 172 trees throughout the watershed over the last 5 years to help improve the watershed and its neighborhoods. Help us ensure the long term health of the newest trees in the borough by joining us to water, weed, and prune. This summer evening event is open to all. We will be providing supplies, but please feel free to bring your own tools and gloves if you have them. Please register by contacting Jeffrey Bergman at jeff@ninemilerun.org or **412-371-8779 ext. 14**.

UES TREE AND SHRUB ID

Wednesday • June 24 • 6PM-8PM
Riverview Park, Chapel Shelter

Join experts from the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to learn some useful tools for identifying native and non-native trees and shrubs. We will learn to recognize branching patterns, as well as distinguish differences in leaves and bark and fruits and seeds. Register by calling **412.371.8779 ext 14** or email jeff@ninemilerun.org.

OTHER COMMUNITY EVENTS

THE 3RD ANNUAL EARTH DAY FESTIVAL AT THE FRICK ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER

Saturday, April 18th
2005 Beechwood Blvd. Squirrel Hill

Come celebrate Earth Day at Frick Environmental Center! This free and exciting family festival runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday, April 18, 2009. Explore nature, enjoy local entertainment, learn ways to practice sustainable living, and much more. For more information or to volunteer call Patty Himes at 412-422-6538.

REGENT SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD YARD SALE

May 16th

Ten years ago Regent Square started hosting a community yard sale that has grown into a well-known and much-anticipated event throughout the Pittsburgh area. The Regent Square yard sale showcases the beauty and charm of this wonderful neighborhood. Come for the bargains! Streets and locations are marked with balloons. For more information check out the RSCA website at www.regentsquare-rsca.org

SIERRA CLUB ENVIRONMENTAL FILM FESTIVAL

Wednesday, April 8, 2009, 6–10pm

Films: *Dinner for Two*, *Build Green*, *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*, *Coming Home*, *The Sacred Balance*, *Powers of Ten*

Saturday, April 18, 2009, 6–10pm

Films: *Garden Song*, *Eden's Lost and Found: Philadelphia*, *YERT (Your Environmental Road Trip)*, *Cheat Neutral*, *Black Diamonds*

The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park
829 Milton Ave., off S. Braddock Ave. near the Frick Park tennis courts in Regent Square

Donations accepted to offset cost of films. Refreshments available.



IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

NINE MILE RUN WATERSHED ASSOCIATION BOARD PRESIDENT, MARTHA RIECKS

-By Shaina Dulberg

A West Virginia native, Martha came to Pittsburgh as a student at the University of Pittsburgh majoring in environmental sciences and creative non-fiction. After receiving her undergraduate degree she entered the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs, earning a master's in public administration and nonprofit management.

While in graduate school, Martha dedicated her time to the Girl Scouts' PROGRESS Program, a partnership with Carnegie Mellon University designed to increase research and outreach in gender equity issues. PROGRESS takes a fresh approach to gender equity issues by teaching middle school aged girls lifelong problem solving and negotiation skills. Martha has maintained her connection to the Girl Scouts and is currently the Director of Alumnae Relations for the Girl Scouts of Western Pennsylvania.

Martha became interested in local watershed issues while an intern with the Allegheny Watershed Network. In 2005, following her internship, and hoping to continue working at the grass roots level, she joined the Board of Nine Mile Run Watershed Association. Martha has served on both the Board and the Development Committee where her knowledge and expertise have greatly

contributed to the growth and development of the organization. Passionate about the work that is being done at NMRWA, Martha believes we are truly setting an example—becoming a model for watershed programs throughout the United States. Her vision as the new president is to “ensure that we continue to be a trend setting watershed organization” and hopes to see the organization continue to grow and thrive.

Martha is passionate about the local Pittsburgh environment as well, and spoke warmly about our city's gorgeous parks, diverse wildlife and progressive people. When speaking about this subject, she noted, “We are truly privileged to live in an urban environment that is so connected to the natural world. Where else can you live in a city and see wild turkey, deer, hawks, foxes and great blue herons?”

Martha, her husband Chris Tracey, a NMRWA Monitoring Committee member, and their dog Sydney, live in Highland Park and try to take advantage of their proximity to the park as much as they can. If you don't find this couple strolling in Highland Park, most likely you will find them riding their bikes or involving themselves in community issues. Soon there will be an addition to their family—Martha and Chris are expecting their first child this July!



photo courtesy of John Moyer

PLEASE JOIN US!

YOUR SUPPORT IS A VITAL SOURCE OF OPERATING FUNDS FOR OUR PROGRAMS. DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- \$20** covers an hour of in-the-field training for Urban EcoStewards
- \$50** helps purchase five native plants for a neighborhood park
- \$100** buys a native tree to be planted as a shade tree
- \$250** helps fund the purchase and installation of a rain barrel
- \$500** pays for our newsletter to be printed
- \$1000** helps support a summer intern

Go to www.ninemilerun.org to join today, or use the enclosed envelope.

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.

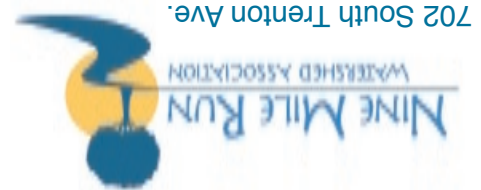


photo courtesy of John Moyer



Blue Heron in Nine Mile Run—photo courtesy of Matt Kambic

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