



## MEETING MINUTES

June 8, 2021

### Attendees:

Shane Morgan	Doug Janiec	Ed O'Donnell	Don Peters
Jenny Egan	David Hawk	Laura Lee	Cori Trice
Sarah Bursky	Kelley Dinsmore	Kristen Travers	Rick Mickowski
Martha Narvaez	Andrea Withers	Aileen Parish	Moses Chun
Mallory Zink	Rachael Griffith		

Don Peters chaired the meeting.

Approval of March minutes.

Moses Chun provided an update on the Rails Trails and Conservation Assistance Program and the status of the White Clay Creek Preserve project. They are currently in the resource data collection phase with the goal of producing a Foundation Document to solidify the purpose and intent of the Preserve by the end of year one.

### New Business

The committee voted unanimously to appoint Laura Lee, White Clay Creek State Park Superintendent to the Wild and Scenic Steering Committee.

The committee discussed the potential of watershed wide botanical study pitched initially by John Goodall. She reviewed a list of what studies have already been done and the dates they were done. Laura Lee would support a botanical study of the DE side since this was last done in 2000 and should be updated. Aileen suggested we potentially assess areas that were left out during the first round of reports, but also asked about whether it made more sense to repeat the same areas to look for changes and generally inquired as to what the guidelines are on updating studies in regards to time. Doug suggested trying to coordinate with DNREC to learn what surveys they may have already done, but may not have communicated on. Laura agreed to reach out to DNREC to see what has been done and try to coordinate. Shane is going to connect with John again to try and get some of these questions answered. The committee will revisit this project idea again in September when we reconvene.

Shane reviewed part of the Saint Anthony in the Hills concept plan with the committee for feedback in particularly the water resources. She solicited feedback on two of the former

Kaolin Clay pits (now ponds) and whether it had any ecological benefit or detriment to connecting the two ponds. The first step would be to determine if the ponds are hydrologically connected. If so then there may not be a detriment to connecting them as part of the larger recreational plan for the ponds. If however they are part of two separate tributary systems (as it appears to be on one of the maps) connecting the ponds could be detrimental to the headwater streams feeding them, as one of them could be unintentionally dewatered (especially during low flows). It was agreed that daylighting the buried streams is a good idea, and removing any unnecessary stream crossings and unclogging existing culverts that are currently blocking flow. It was suggested that someone come out to assess the hydrologic connectivity if this hasn't been determined already. Any engineering firm could do this, but once a determination is made it would be good to have a company with both engineering and ecological restoration capacity to plan the work.

#### NPS River Manager Update

Sarah noted that a FY 2021 Challenge Cost Share Program application titled "Increasing Accessibility to Watershed-based Climate Change Education in Marginalized Communities within the White Clay Wild and Scenic Watershed" and submitted by NPS on behalf of Stroud was approved for \$22,600 funding. Shane updated the committee that Stroud had reached out to her about collaborating on this application after the last committee meeting. It involves providing educational programming to underserved communities in the White Clay Creek, educators, and local boy and girl scout troops. This involves hands on activities in the creek including kayaking, canoeing (if there is a suitable spot for this) and angling activities.

Sarah also noted that there is recent push by Delaware groups organized by the Delaware River Basin Coalition to investigate rivers currently listed as eligible for wild and scenic designation in the state of Delaware. Jerry Kauffman is leading this effort and has a few graduate students who will be conducting research on these rivers this summer (2021).

#### Wild and Scenic Updates

Shane followed up on proposals mentioned at the last meeting. The Dockstader Foundation award us \$7500 to work again with Rutgers and West Grove Borough on another municipal rain garden. Work is slated to begin in September 2021 with implementation completed by October.

The White Clay Knoll reforestation project was placed on hold due to complications with how the open space is managed. Due to this, the Keen reforestation project was investigated further. After reaching out to Drew Gilchrist at PADCNR, it was determined that Keen project would be a better candidate for the DCNR multifunctional buffer funding that was awarded to the Chester County Conservation District. Shane is working with Cori

Trice on submitting all the needed materials and met on site with Bill Teti to go over the scope of work and budget. This project should start in Fall 2021 with extensive invasive species management, followed by a spring 2022 planting on about 5.5 acres. Franklin Township has pledged \$20000 cash and \$10000 in-kind to buffer management.

An additional location for a 2 - 2.5 acre buffer along Egypt Run was located and the landowner is willing to discuss further. This would be on private land so it would take some work to determine funding for implementation and management. Shane will investigate further.

Shane reviewed the results to date of the bacteria monitoring and microbial source tracking research in White Clay Creek. Based on preliminary results, we see cow and human sources in the upper watershed, and geese appear to be widespread. Dr. Kan is finalizing analysis this summer and preparing a manuscript to be submitted to professional journals by the end of 2021 on the five-year study. It was noted that recreational season levels remain above EPA standards in both PA and DE and recreational sampling will continue this summer.

Shane also reviewed the status of the sensor stations. The station at West Grove has been removed due to continual burying by sediment. This is a shallow stream making it difficult to find an ideal spot for relocation. The station however, was in good shape and can be reused elsewhere or used for part as other stations deteriorate. The Egypt Run station was also removed due to the upcoming bridge replacement. This station was determined to be in a failing state and will not be redeployed (note this station was our first installed in 2017, the general lifespan of the sensors according to Stroud is about three years. The interns will continue to take monthly grab samples from both locations. Shane also noted that troubleshooting work is being done on the remote sediment sampler built by volunteers.

Finally, Shane noted that USGS is doing an intensive subbasin study of White Clay Watershed with the goal of using it as a means to develop models for the piedmont region of the Delaware Watershed. They have installed 5 new Next-Gen water observation stations (all observable on line), they are conducting a paired temperature study to determine the contribution of groundwater to white clay creek temperatures, a sediment fingerprinting study to look at sources of sediment, chloride studies, and they are taking a closer look at TSS at Strickersville by employing different tools to measure sediment loads. Shane will invite USGS to present at a future meeting once they have collected and analyzed the data.

The Catch the Rain program has been very active the first half of the year, with 15 site visits and reports produced, 13 rain barrels sold, 2 live stakings, and one invasive removal and

restoration planting claimed. Shane noted that she had several site visits in the borough of West Grove and suggested that at some point it may be worth submitting a larger project proposal to DEP for multiple GSI projects aggregated throughout the borough.

Shane noted that Ellen Kohler and her have concluded their outreach to PA municipalities. They are trying to build better relations/communication with new castle county and the Delaware conservation groups, both in terms of project identification and project support. We have been meeting bimonthly with Mike Harris and Tracey Surles. The Christina Watersheds Municipal Partnership hosted an HOA workshop on May 21 with 20 live attendees and 40 virtual attendees. The workshop was based on HOA Stormwater Basin Retrofits and Management. We will be presenting another workshop in October on Road BMPs.

Shane noted that she has been working with volunteers to complete the Visual Resource Inventory of the watershed which will be used in the upcoming State of the Watershed Report. She is meeting with volunteers on Wednesdays throughout the summer with the goal of completing 10 sites. The importance ratings for all of the sites will be done in the fall/winter.

This year's virtual creek fest was somewhat successful. We had a total of 1300 online visitors, but only 4 people filled out the activities form for a free water bottle. Furthermore, the story map which contains a timeline of the watershed's history, will live on the whiteclay.org site permanently.

Shane noted the 108 acre Smedley property (Loch Nairn golf course) appears to be moving forward as well as the 7.8 acre Penn Green/Hiles acquisition both in New Garden Township. Shane and Dave updated the committee on the terms of the Hiles DCNR grant. It was originally thought that a condition of the grant was that all buildings, historic or not, had to be demolished. DCNR has clarified that this is not correct. The township will just need to deduct the land that the buildings are on from the application with lead to a very minor deduction in the grant award. Dave Hawk noted that the township supervisors are discussing whether to keep all buildings, including the fishing shack, and determining how each of the buildings could be repurposed for township use.

Dave Hawk also noted that PHMC (the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission) has determined that the proposed "Welsh Baptist Historic District" (including the John Evans House, the Meeting House, the Sexton's House, and the remnants of the mill infrastructure) is "eligible" to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This will be helpful in terms of applying and qualifying for grants to stabilize the John Evans house.

## Financials

Shane reviewed the current budget status and the status of the White Clay Restoration Funds. She noted that COVID did not impact the amount of restoration funding we received last year or this year and that we are possibly on track to earn more. She also reviewed sources of nonNPS funding.

## Remaining 2021 Meeting Dates:

September 14, 10am

December 14, 10am

## Other White Clay Announcements:

Ed and Laura mentioned the tent events the state park is hosting throughout the season to educate visitors on trail etiquette and multi-use trails. The state park has seen a 189% in trail use since Covid and they are trying to be proactive about education users on spots to visit as well as how to be a good patron.

Aileen noted that there would be an event hosted by the London Britain Historic Commission and the Chester County Historic Commission in late August at the White Clay Creek Preserve Historic area (Welsh Baptist House area). Rachael shared the link to the event: <https://www.chescoplanning.org/HisResources/TownTours.cfm>

Rick Mickowski inquired about the status of the dam removals. Shane indicated that Dam 2 is currently on hold as more investigation is being done. NPS shared the design with NOAA and they had some questions about whether this was a dam removal for fish passage or for full river restoration as they are two different types of projects. The next steps are to learn from the state historic preservation office if the mill race above the dam needs to be watered or not. If not, there may be further investigation into whether a full dam removal would create unfavorable conditions to the downstream infrastructure. Sarah suggested that at some point the committee determine if there is a need to form a separate stakeholder group to ensure the removal of the remaining dams once Jason and Matthew Fischel have moved on.

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 pm.