

THE CONEWAGO CREEK INITIATIVE: A MODEL FOR COMMUNITY WATERSHED ENGAGEMENT AND RESTORATION

Matt Royer, Kristen Kyler, Jennifer Fetter¹

Over the last several years, a partnership of over thirty organizations called the Conewago Creek Initiative has been working cooperatively in a small watershed to increase community engagement and work with farmers and landowners to adopt land management practices to improve water quality. The partnership is facilitated by the Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center, a research, extension and engagement center of the College of Agricultural Sciences. The concept of the Initiative is to establish a “shared discovery” watershed where the value of community based private/public partnerships to address nonpoint source pollution challenges can be demonstrated. The Initiative was supported by a grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. Further support was provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s designation of the Conewago as a Chesapeake Bay “Showcase Watershed” and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection through the Section 319 nonpoint source pollution control program. The Initiative’s work has resulted in increased citizen engagement and outreach, an increase in adoption of best management practices, and positive water quality improvement trends in the watershed. The Initiative provides a model for local watershed community based engagement. It demonstrates a preferred approach to address local, upstream water quality problems in order to meet priority restoration goals for larger estuarine water bodies, (i.e., the Chesapeake Bay).

¹Matt Royer, Director, Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center, University Park, PA 16802
 Kristen Kyler, Project Coordinator, Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center, University Park, PA 16802
 Jennifer Fetter, Watershed Educator, Penn State Extension, Dauphin, PA 17018

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