

CONEWAGO STREAM TEAMS – INCLUDING YOUTH IN WATERSHED RESTORATION CREATES LOCAL WATERSHED CONNECTIONS, PROMPTS COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND INCREASES WATER LITERACY IN YOUTH

Jennifer Fetter, Sanford Smith, Matt Royer¹

Youth in Pennsylvania's Dauphin, Lebanon, and Lancaster Counties were invited to be part of a unique opportunity: a chance to learn, hands-on, about the water in their own community and how their daily lives impact that water. This is the mission of the 4-H Stream Teams program, which was piloted within the Conewago Creek Watershed and surrounding communities in 2010-2013. This small, 53 square mile watershed is the focus of much attention, as partners from a wide-variety of government agencies, universities, and non-government organizations come together to see what a fully collaborative effort (in this case the Conewago Creek Collaborative Conservation Initiative) can do to restore a small watershed and ultimately improve the quality of water entering the Chesapeake Bay. Thanks to the efforts of Penn State Extension Educators and to funding from a USDA-NIFA Integrated Water Quality Program Grant, youth had the opportunity to be included in this collaborative effort. The three major components of the 4-H Stream Team concept are 1) provide a hands-on water-education curriculum that teaches youth about water conservation, water science, and water quality issues 2) focus youth learning experiences on small watersheds where their daily lives have the greatest impact and 3) promote community service and outreach projects that youth take ownership of in their own small watersheds. With the help of 159 dedicated volunteers, over 3,340 youth have been reached through 4-H Stream Team activities. For those youth who completed 4-H Stream Teams activities and participated in evaluations, there has been demonstrated knowledge gained in water topics, increased knowledge of youth's own local watershed boundaries, and participation in community service and outreach projects that directly benefited the local watersheds in and around the Conewago Creek pilot program.

¹Jennifer Fetter, Watershed Educator, Penn State Extension, Dauphin, PA 17018
Sanford Smith, Extension Specialist, Penn State Extension, University Park, PA 16802
Matt Royer, Director, Penn State Agriculture and Environment Center, University Park, PA 16802

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