

BIG SPRING WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

2022 Year in Review

Notes from the President by Mark Spicka

The Big Spring Watershed Association has kept busy in 2022 in our efforts to restore, protect, and enhance the Big Spring. We had tremendous participation by community partners and BSWA members in our activities. In April and October we conducted our stream cleanups and collected trash along the spring from the headwaters down into Newville. Members of the Newville Cub Scouts participated in the event and West Pennsboro provided the truck to haul away the trash. In September BSWA again hosted Project Healing Waters in which wounded veterans enjoyed a day of fly fishing. The Big Spring Fish and Game Association generously made available their pond for fishing and provided food for the event. Our birders continued to hold bird watching walks along the spring on the first Saturday morning of each month and the gardeners worked hard to maintain and expand the pollinator habitat at Nealy Rd. Thank you to all of the volunteers! Your tireless efforts have made all of BSWA's accomplishments possible. We encourage all members of the community to take part in BSWA's activities. Membership dues also support our activities. If you have not already, please consider renewing your membership or making a donation to BSWA. Click [here](#) for the membership form.

Educational Signage Near Completion at Pollinator Habitat

Mary Blakeslee, BSWA volunteers, and members of the community are developing educational signage to be placed at the bird and pollinator habitat at the corner of Big Spring and Nealy Rds. This signage is intended to educate the public not only about how the Big Spring is a unique resource, but also how it faces specific threats. One placard will provide an overview of the Big Spring's watershed. It will particularly focus on the karst geology of the region and show how the Big Spring's water originates upgradient in the Cumberland Valley. The other placard will document the human impact on Big Spring and how changing land use, such as the construction of mills and intensive agriculture, have impacted Big Spring over time. In June 2022 volunteers erected the sign at the site and we hope to complete the layout of the placard in early 2023. The project is being funded by a Land Partnership Grant from Cumberland County.



Upcoming Activities: Fly Tying Classes

Starting on Tuesday, January 31st at 6:30pm and running through February 28th we will be holding fly tying classes at the First United Presbyterian Church. BSWA will provide materials for the fly patterns and no experience is needed. Contact Linda Watson at fishmorekane@gmail.com for more information.

Spring Cleanup on April 15

BSWA will be holding its spring cleanup on April 15. It will run from 9-11 am and we will meet at the headwaters parking lot. Contact Linda Watson at fishmorekane@gmail.com for more information as we determine the exact date for the cleanup.

Monthly Bird Walks

Bill Franz leads bird walks along Big Spring on the first Saturday morning of every month at 7:00. Click [here](#) for a list of the birds that have been found along the Big Spring. Contact Bill Franz at wfranzl@yahoo.com to find out more about the bird walks.

BSWA Website

In early 2022, BSWA rolled out a new website. The new site features information about the ecology, geology, and history of the Big Spring along with information on how to get involved in BSWA's activities. Here is a link to the page:
<https://bigspringwatershedassociation.org/>

BSWA on Facebook

BSWA now has a Facebook page. Click on the Facebook logo below and like our page to get updates on our activities and projects.





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Photo shows an area of a major sink along Cramer Road in Shippensburg.

Potential Warehouse Development Threatens Valley Aquifer

The potential development of three warehouses at exit 29 along I-81 near Shippensburg could negatively impact the aquifer of western Cumberland County and the Big Spring. About 100 acres of land could be developed near Cramer Road. On the property there are a number of major sinkholes with documented and direct connection to Big Spring. Contamination from runoff from warehouses, trucks, and parking lots could drain into the sinkholes, adversely affecting the water quality of Big Spring. Dr. Todd Hurd, Professor of Biology at Shippensburg University and BSWA member, has conducted dye tracing that showed water entering a major sinkhole on the property travelled the approximate 9 kilometers to the Big Spring in about 3 1/2 days. Such a quick movement of water underground through the karst geology of the Cumberland Valley indicates that the water does not have the opportunity to be filtered before emerging at the Big Spring headwaters. Click [here](#) and [here](#) to see Dr. Hurd's published articles documenting his work.

In August 2022 former BSWA presidents, Bill Ferris and Tom Smithwick, spoke at a Southampton Township (Cumberland) Board of Supervisors meeting in opposition to the rezoning of an adjacent property of approximately 45 acres from agriculture to commercial/manufacturing. This property was to be part of the potential warehouse development. The township supervisors denied the rezoning. In October 2022 Dr. Hurd presented his research to the Board of Supervisors, indicating the potential dangers of development on the property. At this point in early January 2023, the property owners and their developers have not yet submitted a formal development proposal to the Southampton Township Board of Supervisors and the Planning Board. BSWA is working with local community members who share our concerns about potential development at the site and will continue to monitor the situation.

Water Monitoring of Big Spring

For the last 2 years BSWA Board Member Don Horn and Paul Christman have been conducting monthly water testing of Big Spring. They test the water for factors such as temperature, pH, clarity, conductivity (measure of salts and inorganic chemicals in the water), and nitrogen levels. Once a year they also sample for macroinvertebrates such as mayfly nymphs, caddis larvae, scuds, cress bugs, midges, crane flies, and crayfish. Overall, their monitoring gives an important snapshot of the health of the Big Spring and can be used to trace pollution sources and the impact of invasive species. The monitoring is a partnership between ALLARM (Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring) at Dickinson College, the PSU Extension Master Watershed Steward Program, and the Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay. The work on Big Spring is part of a larger effort to monitor the watersheds flowing into the Chesapeake Bay. The data collected is shared through the Chesapeake Bay Monitoring Collective and used by various local, state, and regional partners. Their results will be summarized and interpreted later in 2023. Don and Paul have gone through extensive training in the Master Watershed Stewards Program. Don is also involved in a wide variety of conservation groups and sees the work on the Big Spring as critical for protecting healthy water sources for current and future generations. Thank you for your important work, Don and Paul!



Don getting ready to check for water clarity and and depth.

Membership Drive: Please support BSWA's efforts to restore, protect and enhance the Big Spring. Your membership dues go to support all of our activities. Click [here](#) to download the BSWA membership form. Thank you for your support!