



BIG SPRING WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

2023 Year in Review

Notes from the President by Mark Spicka

The Big Spring Watershed Association kept busy in 2023 in our efforts to restore, protect, and enhance the Big Spring. In April we conducted our stream cleanup 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 Twp. provided the truck to haul away the trash. Unfortunately, our cleanup in October was rained out, but we plan to continue cleanups in 2024. 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. Gardeners worked hard to maintain and expand the pollinator habitat at 380 Big Spring Road and we completed the educational signage at the site. Several BSWA members also repaired and installed several wood duck boxes along the Big Spring. In 2024 we look forward to continuing our activities and look to partner with the County Conservation District and the Master Watershed Steward Program to address invasive plants along the Big Spring.

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 join 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.

Warehouse Development Proposed Near Big Spring Headwaters

The proposed development of three warehouses on Route 11 could negatively impact the Big Spring and surrounding residential wells. In December 2023 developers submitted plans to the West Pennsboro Twp. Planning Commission for the warehouses on about 110 acres of land at 3485 Ritner Highway. This site is within the Big Spring surface watershed. It is about 4000 feet from the headwaters of the Big Spring and less than 3500 feet from lower sections of the Big Spring. The development plans propose a total size of about 1.3 million square feet of warehousing space plus impervious surfaces such as parking lots for trucks. Runoff carrying contaminants from such impervious surfaces could drain into the Big Spring, adversely affecting its water quality.

Furthermore, an inspection of the preliminary plans for the warehouse development reveal some serious concerns over the site's stormwater management plans. The plan proposes both surface and subsurface water retention basins intended to filtrate runoff water back into the aquifer. (Continued on the next page.)

Upcoming Activities: Fly Tying Classes

Starting on Thursday, January 25 at 6:30pm we will be holding fly tying classes at the First United Presbyterian Church in Newville. The classes will be held on Jan 25, Feb 1, 22, 29, and March 7. 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 in April

BSWA will hold its spring cleanup on a Saturday in April with the exact date to be determined. 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 wlfranz1@yahoo.com to find out more about the bird walks.

BSWA Website

For more information about the ecology, geology, and history of the Big Spring along with information on how to get involved in BSWA's activities, follow this link to our website.

<https://bigspringwatershedassociation.org/>

BSWA on Facebook

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



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(Continued from the previous page.) Of particular concern is the proposed construction of seven subsurface infiltration basins. Some of these subsurface infiltration basins would be up to 35 feet under the current surface grade. The entire property is situated on limestone and it would be necessary to blast deep into the rock to construct such subsurface infiltration basins. According to the proposed plans, the water from the roofs of the warehouses would go untreated into the subsurface basins. With the basins sitting directly upon the porous limestone rock, the fear is that the stormwater would not be adequately filtrated before entering into the ground water. With its proximity to the Big Spring, contaminated water could quickly find its way into the Big Spring, which also serves as Newville's secondary water source. Furthermore, the wells of surrounding residents could be negatively impacted by runoff from the development getting into the aquifer.

As of January 2024, the proposal has not been approved by the West Pennsboro Twp. Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. In addition, the stormwater management plan must be approved by the County Conservation District. Throughout the permitting process, BSWA will work with partners and allies to voice concerns about the proposal and ensure that any development is not detrimental to the Big Spring and the area's aquifer. It is imperative that members of community let their concerns be known to the permitting authorities.



Volunteers for the Spring Cleanup held in April

Educational Signage Completed at Pollinator Habitat

This past fall volunteers completed the installation of educational signage at the pollinator habitat at 380 Big Spring Rd. The signage explains the Big Spring's unique karst geology and the changing land use in the area. Its intent is to demonstrate the characteristics of a limestone spring creek and show how Big Spring's water originates up the Cumberland Valley and travels underground through limestone rock before emerging at its headwaters. We hope to educate the public on the potential threats to the water quality of the watershed and show how the the aquifer that creates the Big Spring also provides water for fish, birds, and other wildlife, in addition to the drinking water for much of the local community.



Mary Blakeslee and Laszlo Bockh in front of the educational signage.

Mary Blakeslee and Laszlo Bockh spearheaded the project and organized numerous volunteers in BSWA and the community to complete the project over the last seven years. All told, over 2400 volunteer hours have been contributed to the educational signage and pollinator habitat! The site will serve as part of BSWA's educational outreach as local middle school students will visit the site in April to learn about the importance of native plants and clean water as part of a healthy ecosystem.

A recent article appearing in the Valley Times Star and the Shippensburg News Chronicle talks about the signage and pollinator habitat. Click [here](#) for a link to the article. If you would like to see the signage in detail, click [here](#) and [here](#). Both the educational signage and pollinator garden have been funded by a series of Cumberland County Land Partnership Grants. We thank Cumberland County, particularly the Planning Office, for its support throughout this project.

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!