

BIG SPRING WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

2025 Year in Review

Notes from the President

by Mark Spicka

The Big Spring Watershed Association volunteers worked hard in 2025 in our efforts to restore, protect, and enhance the Big Spring Watershed. Here is a summary of our volunteer-driven activities for the year.

- Trash Cleanups: We continued to conduct our biannual creek cleanups in April and October. Volunteers picked up the accumulated trash from the headwaters down through Newville. We were joined by members of the Newville Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts. West Pennsboro Twp. provided the truck to haul away the trash. All told for 2025 we had 31 participants and collected at least 17 bags of trash in addition to larger pieces of trash such as a life vest, a discarded boom box, and a tire.
- Stream Monitoring: Don Horn and Paul Christman continued to conduct monthly monitoring of water quality, testing for pH, temperature, nitrogen, and conductivity. They are working in conjunction with ALLARM from Dickinson College and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. The latest complete analysis of the monitoring showed stable water levels and pH (7.5), as might be expected. Nitrogen levels showed a median of 4 ppm and a high of 7 ppm, which is a relatively elevated level and typical in spring creeks in the Cumberland Valley due to agricultural run off.
- Maintaining and expanding the pollinator habitat: Paul Christman led volunteers in maintaining the pollinator habitat at Nealy Road. Paul is also evaluating the garden as it matures to determine what new plants may be installed in the coming year. (Continued on next page.)



Citizens call on the DEP to protect the Big Spring in August 2025.

Upcoming Activities:

Fly Tying Classes

Starting on Tuesday, January 27 at 6:30 pm, BSWA will be holding fly tying classes at the First United Presbyterian Church in Newville. The classes will be held on January 27, Feb 3, 10, 17, and March 3. 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 25

BSWA will hold its spring cleanup on Saturday, April 25. 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 about 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.



BIG SPRING WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 52
NEWVILLE, PA 17241

Website: <https://bigspringwatershedassociation.org/>

Monthly Meetings: 2nd Thursday of every month at 7pm via Zoom and in person.

Contact Mark Spicka at mespic@ship.edu for more information.

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(Continued from the previous page.)

- Fly tying classes: From late January to early March 2025 BSWA held fly tying classes at the First Presbyterian Church in Newville. The event is organized by Linda Watson and includes tyers of all experience levels. Different BSWA members led a session on a given night and walked participants through the completion of several flies. Emphasis is on learning basic techniques that can be applied to a wide variety of flies. We will be continuing the classes in 2026.
- Participation in the Earth Day fair at Big Spring Middle School: BSWA members Linda Watson, Bob Robinson, Don Horn, and Paul Christman participated in the event in April. They explained to students the unique limestone geology that creates the Big Spring watershed and the variety of insect, animal, and bird life that depends on the clean, cold waters of the Big Spring.
- Advocacy regarding proposed warehouse complex: BSWA has been highly engaged in the evaluation of the proposed warehouse complex near the headwaters of the Big Spring. See the article to the right for more details.

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.



Cleanup Volunteers in October 2025

Proposed Warehouse Plans Under Review by the DEP

BSWA continues to monitor and comment on the approval process of the proposed development of three warehouses on Route 11 that could negatively impact the Big Spring and surrounding residential wells. As of early January 2026 the DEP had not rendered a final decision on the permit. The proposed warehouses sit on about 110 acres at 3485 Ritner Highway. The site is within the Big Spring surface watershed and is less than 3400 feet from the Big Spring. The development plans would include 1.3 million square feet of warehousing space and additional impervious surfaces such as parking lots.

Stormwater carrying contaminants from roofs and parking lots could easily enter into the ground water. Once in the ground water those contaminants can quickly find their way into the Big Spring, which acts as Newville's secondary water supply, and into residential wells in the area. The BSWA maintains that the proposed plans represent an unacceptably high level of risk to the area's groundwater and do not adequately align with best management practices set out in the DEP's Stormwater Management Manual.

Since summer 2024 BSWA has worked with local partners and citizens to submit comments to the DEP expressing concerns about the plans. The Borough of Newville hired Dr. Bill Seaton, a professional hydrogeologist, who has recommended further analysis of the site and has identified the potential danger of contamination of the ground water.



Local residents attend the DEP public hearing in August 2025

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!

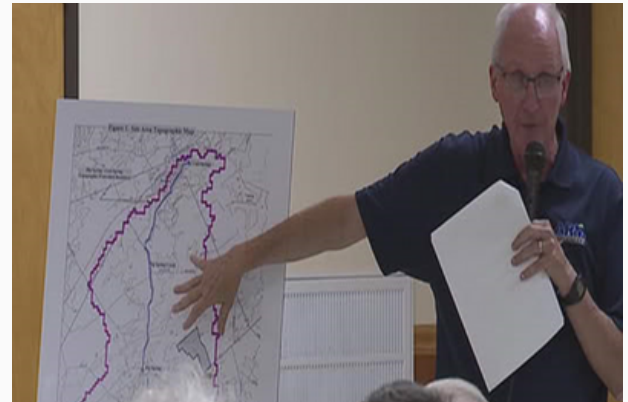
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Looking Forward to 2026

Looking forward to 2026, BSWA anticipates several projects to continue our efforts to protect and enhance the Big Spring.

- **Instream Habitat Restoration and Management of Invasives**
Looking forward to 2026, we are partnering with the Cumberland County Conservation District and the PA Fish and Boat Commission to do in-stream habitat restoration from the “willow tree pool” parking lot downstream 1200 feet to Nealy Road. This stretch of the creek is silted in and holds little productive holding water for trout. The County Conservation District has applied for a Growing Greener Grant from the DEP to support the work. BSWA is working with the Conservation District to eradicate invasives such as purple loosestrife, poison hemlock, and Japanese knotweed along the spring. Results for the grant application should be received in early 2026 and we hope the work to start in summer 2026.
- **Hosting Project Healing Waters:** After taking a year off due to scheduling conflicts, BSWA looks forward to again holding Project Healing Waters in which we host wounded veterans for a day of fly fishing. BSWA will continue to partner with Big Spring Fish and Game Association that has generously made available their pond for fishing and provided food for the event.
- **BSWA’s 25 year anniversary of its founding:** BSWA is celebrating the 25 year anniversary of its founding. Look out for information on events to celebrate our efforts to restore, protect, and enhance the Big Spring.



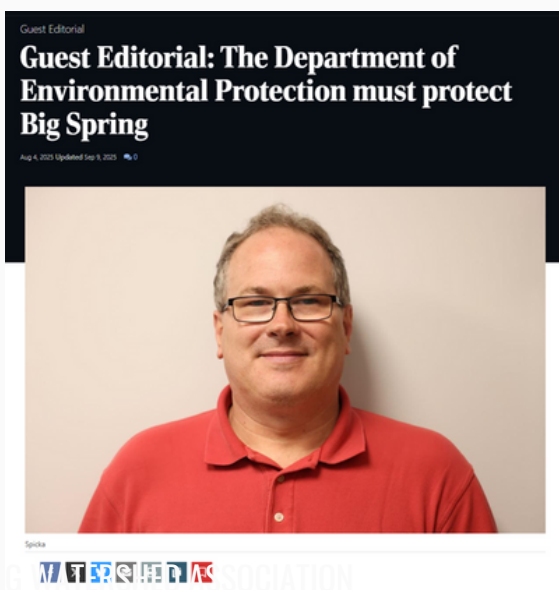
Dr. Bill Seaton speaks at the DEP public hearing.

(Continued from previous page.) In May 2025 the DEP issued a draft permit for the project. BSWA, the Borough of Newville, and local citizens asked the DEP for a public hearing

Over 100 local residents attended the public meeting in August. Officials from the Borough of Newville and local residents spoke on the catastrophic impact this flawed development could have on local water supplies and the community as a whole. BSWA spoke on the failure of the plans to adhere to the DEP’s best management practices and the inadequate geotechnical investigation of the site. Dr. Seaton stressed the high risk nature of the site with probable underground hydrologic links to the Big Spring. Click [here](#) for Dr. Seaton’s comments at the public hearing.

Following the hearing local citizens held a well-attended rally to demand the protection of the Big Spring. BSWA, the Borough of Newville, and other civic organizations published an open letter in local newspapers calling on Gov. Shapiro that he compel the DEP to protect the Big Spring. It can be found [here](#). We encourage citizens to submit comments to Gov. Shapiro demanding that he protect the Big Spring that can be submitted [here](#).

Several local citizens have retained legal counsel to challenge the pending DEP decision on the permit. They have hired David Raphael of K & L Gates in Harrisburg. Raphael is the former Chief Counsel of the DEP and an expert in environmental law. The residents have formed the Big Spring Preservation Association in order to establish a legal defense fund. Their website can be found [here](#). BSWA is in support of the efforts for this legal defense fund to protect the Big Spring and its watershed.



Click [here](#) to read BSWA’s editorial appearing in the Carlisle Sentinel.