



BIG SPRING WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

2021 Year in Review

Notes from the President by Mark Spicka

The Big Spring Watershed Association has kept busy this year in our efforts to restore, protect, and enhance the Big Spring. We had tremendous participation by members of the community and BSWA in our activities—from helping maintain the bird and pollinator garden, to participating in trash cleanup, and guiding wounded veterans as part of Project Healing Waters. Thank you to all of the volunteers! Your tireless work has 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 to the address listed below.

Bird and Pollinator Garden

Mary Blakeslee and the BSWA gardeners were busy this summer expanding and maintaining the bird and pollinator garden at the corner of Big Spring and Nealy Rds. The garden is a wonderful mixture of native plants that provide habitat and food for birds, butterflies, and bees. In November Mary and Laszlo Bockh installed rocks around the garden to protect it from vehicles and also had holes drilled for the footers of educational signage that we will be developing and installing in 2022. The project is being funded by a Land Partnership Grant from Cumberland County.



Upcoming Activities: Board Meetings Going Back in Person and on Zoom

We will be holding hybrid meetings in 2022. We will continue to hold meetings on Zoom for those who wish to stay remote and begin to meet in person at the First United Presbyterian Church in Newville. See details below for information about our monthly meetings or contact Mark Spicka at mespic@ship.edu.

Fly Tying Classes

Starting in mid-February on Tuesdays at 6:30pm 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 in April

BSWA will be holding its spring cleanup in April. Contact Linda Watson at fishmorekane@gmail.com for more information as we determine the exact date for the cleanup.

New Website for BSWA

In early 2022, BSWA will roll out a new website. The new site will feature information about the ecology, geology, and history of the Big Spring along with information on how to get involved in BSWA's activities. We will link the new website to BSWA's existing site.

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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Spring and Fall Cleanups

BSWA held cleanups along the spring in April and October with great community participation. In the fall members of the Newville den of Cub Scouts and their parents participated in the cleanup. Linda Watson has been leading the cleanups for over 15 years in conjunction with PA's Adopt a Highway Program. Thank you to West Pennsboro Twp for providing the truck to collect the trash.



Hosting Project Healing Waters

In September BSWA hosted Project Healing Waters. This program teaches wounded veterans the basics of fly fishing and gets them out on the water with local fishing and conservation groups. This fall BSWA hosted 8 veterans for a day of fishing on the Big Spring with members serving as guides. Plenty of fish were caught and a great time was had by all under sunny skies. BSWA recently received a generous donation from the Shippensburg Rod and Gun Club to support our future hosting of the event.



Birding Along Big Spring

Bill Franz and Vern Gauthier lead bird walks along Big Spring on the first Saturday morning of every month at 7:00. The bird walks are a great way to learn more about the birds that live along the spring from two local experts. This past summer a pair of Roseate Spoonbills, native typically to Florida, spent time along the spring. Click [here](#) for a list of the birds that have been found along the Big Spring. Contact Bill Franz at wlfraenz1@yahoo.com to find out more about the bird walks. Thanks to Paul Dyarman for the photos above.



The PA Fish and Boat Commission conducted an electroshocking of the upper reaches of the spring in August 2020. The results indicate that brook trout outnumber rainbow trout in this section of the spring, showing that restoration work done in 2010 and 2013 has had its intended impact. Trout populations have risen since 2018. Overall, rainbows boast a greater biomass than brookies with a total biomass of trout of over 90kg/ha, which designates Big Spring as a class A wild trout fishery and among the very best in Pennsylvania. The PAFBC will conduct another survey in August 2022.



Fish Population Remains Strong

This past summer volunteers identified and mapped various invasive plants along Big Spring with the intention of removing them in the future. Invasive plants often crowd out native plants that provide habitat and food for birds, pollinators, and animals. Of particular interest was poison hemlock, Japanese knotweed, and purple loosestrife. BSWA is partnering with the Cumberland County Master Watershed Steward Program in this project.

Identifying and Mapping Invasive Plants

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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!