

QUITTAPAHILLA WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
Meeting Minutes
Virtually via Zoom
September 20, 2022

Present: Michael Schroeder, Bob Connell, Joseph Connor, Kent Crawford, Karen Feather, Katie Hollen, Jo Ellen Litz, Kara Lubold, Courtney Reimann

The meeting opened at 7:02 p.m.

1. Project Updates.

A. Snitz Creek Project 18-19. Before the meeting, Mike provided links to two recent articles in the *Lebanon Daily News* on this project; JPEG images of these published items are also included as addenda to these minutes

- Mon Sept 12: this piece by reporter Dan Larlham on events at the Sept. 6 North Cornwall Twp Supervisors meeting:
<https://www.ldnews.com/story/news/local/2022/09/12/northern-cornwall-township-chair-unhappy-with-watershed-group-tactics-snitz-creek/68080299007>
- Wed Sept 14: Mike's op-ed response:
<https://www.ldnews.com/story/opinion/2022/09/14/on-proposed-snitz-creek-restoration-project/69493765007/>

Mike reported that he also discussed this issue on Laura LeBeau's morning news program on WLBR Radio yesterday, Mon. Sept. 19. After lively discussion, general agreement was reached that in the coming months the QWA should pursue a softer, behind-the-scenes approach in an effort to persuade the property management company, Lowe's, and the property owners to sign onto the project, in anticipation of the next round of Growing Greener funding.

- B. Quittapahilla Mainstem at Spruce St. Bridge in Annville.** Mike reported on a possible project around the Spruce St bridge on the Quittie mainstem through this Fish & Boat Commission grant program targeting the Quittapahilla and Tulpehocken watersheds: <https://www.fishandboat.com/Transact/Grants/Pages/TulpehockenQuittapahillaWatershedGrantProgram.aspx> Russ Collins of DFTU is facilitating the development of a proposal for this project, the deadline for which is Oct. 21.
- C. Other Projects.** No significant updates on Snitz 2, Snitz 4, Beck 6, Bachman Run, or Killinger Creek projects.

2. Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Updates. Mike reported on some staff turnover at the Lebanon County Conservation District, with new CAP Coordinator Johanna Willieme <johanna.willieme@lccd.org> taking over from Mary Kate Gallagher, and new Watershed Specialist Katie Hollen <Katie.Hollen@lccd.org> taking Steph Harmon's former position.

3. Monitoring Program Updates. Kent Crawford reported that the QWA's Monitoring Program is now going at full speed, with biological sampling of macroinvertebrates having taken place or

planned at all six monitoring stations. In the coming weeks, Kent expects to issue calls for volunteers for biological sampling on specific dates, so keep your eyes peeled for emails from Kent. Samples are being delivered to LVC Professor of Biology Becky Urban, whose students will analyze the macroinvertebrates collected by our volunteers, by quantity and type (down to the family level). Kent also reported that two LVC students have embarked on a special project to undertake longitudinal temperature surveys in the watershed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Schroeder, Secretary Pro Tem

Addendum No. 1. Daniel Larlham, "I find this morally reprehensible," front page, Lebanon Daily News, Sept. 12, 2022.

Lebanon Daily News

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 12, 2022 | LDNEWS.COM



PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

‘I find this morally reprehensible’



Without authorization from all five landowners, restoration on sections 18 and 19 of Snitz Creek are at a halt.
PROVIDED PHOTOS

Creek

Continued from Page 1A

if you're Jane's Revenge, or BLM or all those kinds of radical antifa groups, but I find this morally reprehensible," Abram said, "I find these threats, unprofessional."

An information packet sent by the watershed association to the township included email exchanges between parties representing the Snitz Creek project and the property manager.

Copies of those email exchanges were provided to the Lebanon Daily News by Schroeder and acquired from the township through a Right to Know request.

"We will be launching a social media campaign directed specifically at Lowe's Home Improvement in North Cornwall Township," Schroeder wrote in an email to Noel T. Mammion of National Realty & Development Corp., who manages the property, "framing the company as standing in lone opposition to a project that will benefit local property owners, the health of our local waterways, and the Chesapeake Bay – in essence, portraying Lowes Companies and its agents – including the NRDC – as selfish, out-of-touch, and enemies of the environment."

"We also intend to engage in direct action protests in public spaces adjacent to Lowe's, with protest signs and press releases to the media spotlighting Lowe's refusal to support this much-needed project."

Abram said that he, and the rest of the board, could not work with an organization that would threaten others in order to get what they desired.

"For North Cornwall Township to be associated with these kinds of tactics is something that I'm certain that more than one of our residents would find completely objectional," Abram said. "So, I think you burned a bridge here that you're not even aware that you've burned."

Abram thanked the group for their time and moved on from the topic.

In an interview following the township meeting, Abram said that he supports the work being done on Snitz Creek, and that continued work on the watershed is important. The township was initially onboard with helping until they read through the correspondence.

"As long as I'm chair and I hold that gavel at North Cornwall Township we will not be partnering or dealing with Quittapahilla Watershed at all until these tactics have been atoned for, or Michael is removed, or there is some

Snitz Creek restoration at a standstill

Daniel Larlham Jr.
Lebanon Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – PENNSYLVANIA

Members of the Quittapahilla Watershed Association and other parties involved in the Snitz Creek restoration project attended the Sept. 6 North Cornwall Township meeting to request support for the restoration of the creek behind Quentin Road.

The group has received approval from four out of five property owners for restoration of the sections designated by the association as 18 and 19.

The fifth property owner, who owns the land currently leased by the Lowe's at 1755 Quentin Road, has refused to allow for the group to make changes on their property over concerns about maintenance, according to Michael Schroeder, president of the Quittapahilla Watershed Association.

However, Trout Unlimited, a group working alongside the watershed society, said that they would be taking care



The president of the Quittapahilla Watershed Association said that the most important is the work that needs to be done on Snitz Creek.

of the maintenance once restoration was complete.

The restoration would cost no money to the business as it is funded through grants.

The groups involved in the restoration project attended the meeting to ask that the township help convince the property owner to allow them to repair their section of the creek.

During remarks made regarding the project itself, township Chair Samuel Abram cut off Rocky Powell, president of Clear Creeks Consulting, to address Schroeder.

"These tactics should be applauded

See CREEK, Page 2A

Addendum No. 2. Michael Schroeder, "Viewpoints: Saving the Chesapeake one waterway at a time," *Lebanon Daily News*, Sunday, Sept. 14, 2022 (full text on following pages).

Lebanon Daily News, Sunday, September 18, 2022, page 3

VIEWPOINTS

Saving the Chesapeake one waterway at a time

Your Turn
Michael Schroeder
quawb@lebanonpa.com

We begin this story where it ought to begin along the severely eroding banks of Snitz Creek behind Lowe's on Quentin Road in North Cornwall Township. Hoop it across the field behind Lowe's down to Snitz Creek and you'll find a waterway choked with fallen trees, debris, and sediment, flowing in a channel much too wide for the volume of water that usually flows. Its banks are muddy and exposed, its streambed thick with silt and muck. With every rainstorm a pulse of sediment and agricultural pollutants flows from the banks of Snitz Creek down stream into Quittapahilla Creek, Swatara Creek, the Susquehanna River, and the Chesapeake Bay.

It is sections of waterways like this that cumulatively are "killing the Chesapeake Bay" – the title of a hard-hitting series of investigative articles by a team of reporters led by Mike Argento published in February 2021 in the York Daily Record. More than 40 recent photographs documenting the conditions along this section of Snitz Creek can be viewed via this link: <https://tinyurl.com/y364ew3m>.

Keep those photos in your mind's eye, because that's where this story begins and ends with the section of Snitz Creek behind Lowe's in need of major restoration work. Go see for yourself.

Now we turn to the Quittapahilla Watershed Association (QWA), an all-volunteer, non-profit, grassroots citizens organization founded a quarter-century ago. The QWA's mission is "to improve the water quality of Quittapahilla Creek & its tributaries; to raise public awareness about the watershed's importance to the local quality of life and to the Chesapeake Bay watershed; and to encourage citizens, organizations & businesses in Lebanon County to help maintain the health & viability of the watershed's streams & ecosystem."

I've had the privilege of serving as QWA President for the past eight years. Our work is focused mainly on facilitating grant-funded projects to improve the water quality in the watershed – most grants coming from PA Department of Environmental Protection's (PA DEP's) Growing Greener program and the federal Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Clean Water Act Section 319 funding.

To do this stream restoration work, we need the permission of property owners along sections targeted for restoration. That's one of our main jobs – contacting property owners, explaining the work we're proposing, and asking permission to access their property and do the work. It doesn't cost them anything and once the work is completed, they don't need to do anything except not disturb or destroy the "best management practices" (BMPs) that have been installed – like stabilized banks and a narrowed streambed, for instance.

Most property owners are glad to see the work done because they see the need for it. Who wants a severely eroding waterway choked with muck and debris in their backyard?

Sometimes, property owners reach out to us to ask about fixing problems on the waterway next to their property. That happened in 2017, when a number of property owners along Snitz Creek near Lowe's got in touch to ask about restoring that section.

In response, the QWA, our partner, Doc Fritchey Trout Unlimited and the company we work with that does the design and permitting work and manages the project's, Clear Creek Consulting, LLC, developed a grant proposal to address the severe erosion along this section of Snitz Creek. We call it "Snitz Creek 18 and Upper 19 Stream and Floodplain Restoration Project," or "Snitz 18-19" for short.

The project's proposed BMPs included, among other things, removal of multiple fallen trees and debris jams, streambank stabilization, repair of a failing dam, and repair of eroding gullies that are endangering an extensive wetland system and riparian buffer along the floodplain at the rear of Lowe's and on the property immediately upstream. This area can never be developed because it is a FEMA-designated floodplain. This is but one of several projects we are working on to address problems along Snitz Creek.

The deadline for the 2022 round of PA-DEP Growing Greener grants was June 24. By mid-June, we had secured the permission (oral or written) of four of the five property owners for our Snitz 18-19 proposal. We tried hard to get the permission of the company that manages the property where Lowe's sits – the Manhattan-based National Realty & Development Corporation (NRDC).

After a long series of emails and phone calls, on the afternoon of June 21 – three days before the deadline – NRDC abruptly announced the property owners' "final decision" not to sign onto the project. They offered no good reason for their refusal and indicated they wanted no further contact. This abrupt end to our cordial and seemingly productive discussions was unfortunate and frustrating.

The QWA's regular monthly meeting was at 7 p.m. that same day, June 21, only a few hours after the NRDC announced the property owners' "final decision" not to sign on. At that meeting, we reached consensus that we would try to get the project unstuck by contacting Lowe's directly to let them know about the lack of cooperation we had received from the property owners and their manager. We hoped that Lowe's would step up as a responsible member of the community and convince NRDC and the property owners to agree to the project. However, we also gave both companies a courtesy heads-up that if the property owners continued to refuse to discuss the project, or until they offered a reasonable explanation for their refusal, we would let Lowe's customers know about it using social media, press releases, and peaceful demonstrations in public spaces near the store.

We made very clear that we hoped to avoid such an outcome. "We are reluctant to undertake these steps," we wrote to the NRDC, "but we feel that your corporation's refusal to agree to this project leaves us no choice. Our goal here is not to get in a fight with you, or with your clients, or with Lowe's. Our only goal is to restore the section of Snitz Creek behind Lowe's. I am confident we can do that and protect the legitimate property interests of you and your clients and Lowe's. But we can only do so if we re-engage in conversation and negotiation."

And that's where things stood before the Sept. 14 public meeting in North Cornwall Township, when Supervisor Sam Abram angrily denounced me and the QWA's "threat" of speaking out against the landowner and Lowe's as "morally reprehensible."

To repeat: our goal is not to get in a fight with the landowner, Lowe's, or anyone else. Our goal is to work collaboratively with all the landowners whose properties are being impacted by the currently degraded conditions, to restore and protect the water quality and aquatic resources along this section of Snitz Creek, and to contribute to the broader effort to reduce the flow of sediment and other pollutants to the Chesapeake Bay.

To the property owners, the NRDC, and Lowe's: Please do not let this unfortunate incident prevent us from working with you and your neighbors in resolving the problems affecting your property and theirs. We implore you to reconsider your participation in this much-needed project. Look again at the photos of the creek's exposed, eroding banks and its too-wide, debris-laden, sediment-choked channel. Take a little. It won't cost you a nickel, and your property and interests will not be negatively impacted in any way.

Please.
Michael Schroeder is president of the Quittapahilla Watershed Association.




SITE MAP	SNITZ CREEK 18 AND UPPER 19	JUNE 2022
	NORTH CORNWALL TOWNSHIP LEBANON COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA	PREPARED BY: 

Viewpoint: Saving the Chesapeake One Waterway at a Time

By Michael Schroeder

President, Quittapahilla Watershed Association

Lebanon Daily News, Sunday, September 14, 2022

We begin this story where it ought to begin: along the severely eroding banks of Snitz Creek behind Lowe's on Quentin Road in North Cornwall Township. Hoop it across the field behind Lowe's down to Snitz Creek and you'll find a waterway choked with fallen trees, debris, and sediment, flowing in a channel much too wide for the volume of water that usually flows. Its banks are muddy and exposed, its streambed thick with silt and muck. With every rainstorm a pulse of sediment and agricultural pollutants flows from the banks of Snitz Creek downstream into Quittapahilla Creek, Swatara Creek, the Susquehanna River, and the Chesapeake Bay.

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<http://www.quittiecreek.org/documents/2022/Snitz18-19/Snitz%20Creek%2018%20and%20Upper%2019%20Existing%20Conditions%20Photographs.pdf>).

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Please.

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