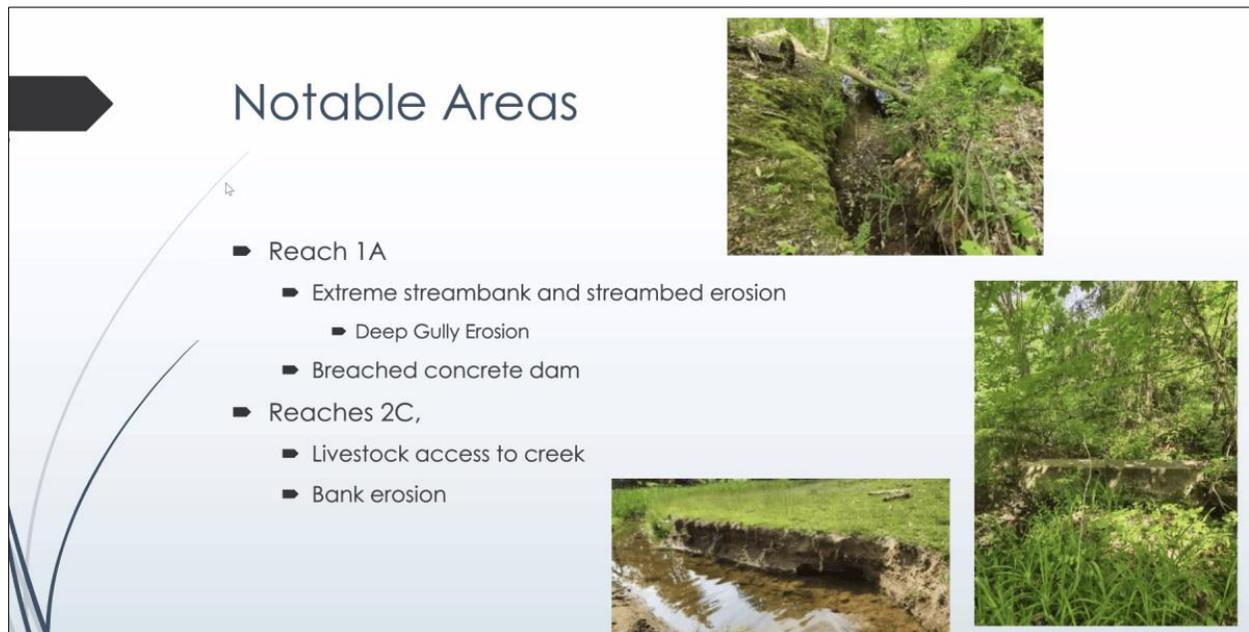


Quittapahilla Watershed interns present findings on health of local waterways

by LebTown Staff November 2, 2023

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Two interns for the Quittapahilla Watershed Association took center stage recently to present their findings after a study of some of the main tributaries of the Quittapahilla watershed in Lebanon County.

The interns, Hannah Horengic and Ilyssa McLaughlin, are both students at Lebanon Valley College. They conducted stream morphology surveys and examined on-the-ground agricultural Best Management Practices on three connected waterways: Gingrich Run, Killinger Creek, and Snitz Creek.

According to a release from association spokeswoman Cheryl Hemperly, the students' stream assessments included livestock access to a creek, severe bank erosion, water-treatment discharge, as well as several sizable sinkholes.

“Two out of the three creeks ended in a sinkhole ... Gingrich Run and Killinger Creek,” Horengic said in their presentation.

They also discovered fallen trees causing creek diversion and a bridge collapsing into one of the streams.

“An abandoned bridge ... made of brick and stone is currently collapsing into the stream,” McLaughlin said in the report. “If that continues, it’s going to create a pretty significant blockage.”

The students presented a brief overview of their research during an association meeting in October. They will provide the association with a complete report of their findings, including close to 3,000 pictures from their survey of the streams.

The summer internships were administered by the Lebanon Valley Conservancy, which is a partner and sponsor of the watershed association. The conservancy was created in 2000 to promote the conservation of cultural, historical and natural resources through public awareness, education and land preservation.

The internships were paid through a grant provided to the Lebanon County Conservation District’s Lebanon County Clean Water Team by the state Department of Environmental Protection. Rocky Powell, president of Clear Creeks Consulting, provided training to the interns for their work over the summer.



Hannah Horengic and Ilyssa McLaughlin

The study, according to Courtney Reimann, land protection director for the conservancy, “brought funding into Lebanon County to support our stream health and also provided local students with hands-on monitoring experiences with our waterways.”

According to the release, the data gathered by the interns will help determine the next steps to improve local stream health.

“Local monitoring efforts are important,” said association president Michael Schroeder.

Schroeder noted that, some 25 years ago, the DEP “determined that 98% of the Quittapahilla watershed’s 89 miles of waterways are impaired.” Updated data from the study will help the organization prioritize future projects impacting the overall health of the watershed.

The Quittapahilla Watershed Association — a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 to improve the water quality of the Quittapahilla Creek and its tributaries, and to raise public

awareness about the watershed's importance to the local quality of life and to the Chesapeake watershed — is seeking volunteers to help monitor streams in Lebanon County throughout the year. Anyone interested in getting involved can contact Schroeder at mjsch313@yahoo.com or Reimann at director@tlvc.org.