

FRIENDS OF THE NESCOPECK  
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## FRIENDS OF THE NESCOPECK

### 2023 NEWSLETTER



The Friends of the Nescopeck have been posting photos, updates, and new information on Facebook. Check us out and like us! To receive notifications of our postings, follow our page. Visit our website at <https://friendsofthenescopeck.org/>

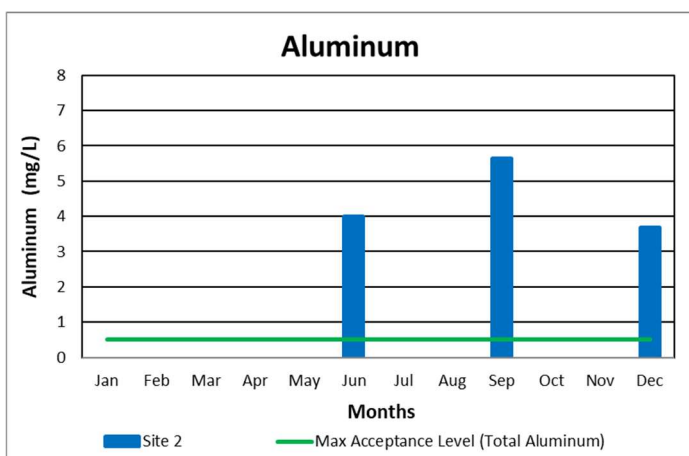
### Mission

Friends of the Nescopeck has a mission to educate the public about the importance of conservation, maintenance of quality fish and wildlife habitat, and natural diversity. The Friends want to develop and assist in programs that identify, assess, and monitor areas of impact within the watershed and to develop and assist in programs to maintain and improve the watershed.

### Water Quality

The Friends of the Nescopeck continued to test water samples monthly throughout the Nescopeck Creek watershed. This year marks our 7<sup>th</sup> continuous year of testing. We test five sites including our two largest tributaries – Little Nescopeck Creek and Black Creek, both of which are affected by AMD (acid mine drainage).

The Friends coordinate quarterly testing with PA DEP as our quality check and we share DEP results on parameters we are no longer able to test, such as aluminum, manganese and sulfate. High levels of aluminum, manganese and iron coupled with low pH flowing from the Jeddo Tunnel continues to pollute the Little Nescopeck Creek and the main Nescopeck Creek from Route 93 all the way to the Susquehanna River. DEP has listed this entire stretch as impaired as well as most of the length of Black Creek.



This past year we have been forced to selectively cut back on some of our testing due to the high cost of our reagent chemicals. Some of our equipment also requires replacement. If anyone wishes to help subsidize our testing program we would greatly appreciate any help – financial or if you would like to participate in the testing program.

Test results are available upon request.

## Friends Helping Friends

Friends of the Nescopeck participated in Boscov's Friends Helping Friends Event again this fall. Proceeds from this fundraiser will go towards replenishing testing supplies and equipment maintenance.



## Jeddo Tunnel Tour

On May 5, Tim and Gary led a tour of the Jeddo Tunnel for state and local officials and conservation partners. The tour was arranged by Mike Korb of Tetra Tech at the request of State Senator Argall's staff and included state senators and representatives and officials from Luzerne County and Butler Township as well as representatives from Trout Unlimited, DEP BAMR and EMARR. Participants were given an information packet containing tunnel description, maps and possible treatment strategies. An extended conversation was held at the tunnel mouth with a high level of interest on the part of the participants.



## Black Creek Township Road Clean-up

Earth Day in 2023 was April 22, but the Friends got together a week earlier – April 15 – for our annual



Earth Day/Beautify Pennsylvania Road Clean-up. We went back to Tomhicken Road, where two of us had picked up trash in 2022. This year, we had a bigger crew and were joined by a Boy Scout and his dad, so we covered a much longer stretch of road and collected a lot more trash than the year before – about 42 bags.

No one was surprised to find that large amounts of trash had accumulated in the year between clean-ups, and we recognized the same brands of iced tea containers and beer cans.

While

muttering dark wishes for those who like throwing trash out of their vehicles, we were heartened by many motorists who honked, gave us thumbs—up, or said “thanks!”



## Macroinvertebrate Sampling in Nescopeck Creek

One of the Friends' most consistent activities in our efforts to improve and promote the Nescopeck Creek watershed is to regularly measure water quality in the Creek and its tributaries. Chemical testing is done monthly, but we also periodically do a biology-based test called macroinvertebrate sampling. "Macro testing" consists of scientifically collecting water samples from the creek bottom, then counting all the insect larvae, worms, and all small invertebrates in the samples. Since the different



species have highly different tolerances for water pollutants, the numbers and types of invertebrates found, applied to a mathematical formula, provide an accurate measure of the pollution level, or water quality.



This year, on May 17, we tested an area of the Creek above the confluence with the mine-poisoned Little Nescopeck. We expected the water quality to be very good, and, sure enough, there were large numbers of macros. It was a bit surprising that the formula

produced a number indicating only fair-to-good quality. Participants thought that this might be because many of the insect larvae were very young and small, and thus difficult to identify. Some species' eggs may not even have hatched. We determined to re-test the same area in the future, but later in the season.

The Friends are available to area individuals and groups who might like to learn this technique. It's good science and always an enjoyable experience.



## AMD Plant Tour

Back in April, the Friends of the Nescopeck visited the Oneida #3 passive treatment plant to learn more about cleaning up AMD (acid mine drainage) from a mine drainage tunnel and improving the downstream water quality. The tour was led by Wayne Lehman from the Schuylkill County Conservation District. The treatment consists of a large up-flow style limestone tank followed by a series of settling ponds before returning the water to Tomhicken Creek.



## Vernal Pool Hike

In mid April of 2023 the Friends conducted a vernal pool study in Nescopeck State Park. The site was chosen for its relatively easy access while still providing a pristine pool and surrounding forested area. These pools are found throughout the Northeast and Mid Atlantic regions. They are small seasonal freshwater pools that provide breeding areas for various amphibians and invertebrates and habitat for other animals and plants.



About eight members participated, with Diane Madl, Environmental Education Specialist Supervisor from Nescopeck State Park, leading the program. The group met at the park office, and the park supplied the various equipment such as hip boots, nets, and specimen containers. The group carpoled to the study site. The collection of sample creatures was done with as little disturbance as possible, and all creatures were returned to the pool afterwards. Among the life forms found were mayfly and caddis fly larvae, small leeches, freshwater isopods, white clusters of amphibian eggs, and two Red Spotted Newts in the small stream of water exiting the pool.

Nescopeck State Park is home to approximately 200 acres of forested wetlands. Among these are vernal pools, seasonal depressional pools that provide critical breeding habitat for amphibians like wood frogs and several mole salamander species. Filled by rain and snowmelt, these pools hold water for several months while these species complete their life cycles hopefully before they dry up. Luckily these pools are protected within the state park, but these sensitive wetland habitats can easily be disturbed or destroyed by human activities. Habitat fragmentation, suburban and urban runoff carrying contaminants, and building and road construction, among other factors, may have resulted in the loss of over 50% of wetlands in the US since European settlement. Environmental factors include seasonal temperatures, rainfall timing and amount, and ground water levels can also affect the health of vernal pools. We hope that through our educational programming efforts, we can make people more aware of these unique habitats and their importance.

We especially enjoy partnering with the Friends of the Nescopeck who advocate for protecting and enhancing our local watershed.

## Kayaking with the Friends

This past summer, the Friends kayaked the north branch of the Susquehanna River, picking up where we left off last summer. Endless Mountain Outfitters shuttled us north of their location and we paddled approximately 8 miles south to the Sugar Run area. The water level was higher than normal in late July and made for easy paddling. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful scenery and wildlife we encountered on this trip. Our goal is to continue paddling sections of the Susquehanna River north branch until we reach our watershed.



## Outreach



The Friends set up our display at two area activities: Winterfest in February and Valley Day in August. Winterfest was conducted at Nesciock State Park in the Environmental Education Building. We were assigned a larger exhibit space than in previous years and this enabled us to interact more efficiently with participants. Valley Day was conducted outdoors at the Conyngham Borough Municipal Complex and members encountered a high level of interest throughout the day. At both outreach activities, take-away information materials were made available to the public.

## Municipal Report

For the sixth full year, the Friends provided a report to watershed municipalities and partners detailing the results of our water quality testing. This year, results were individualized for host municipalities, other watershed municipalities, and partners. As in our first report, information was included on methodology, quality control, test parameters, site selection and characteristics, test results and test result comments. A combination of line graphs and bar graphs was developed by Gary Leander, Director of Testing, to provide more user-friendly data. Friends also offered to present the results at municipal meetings or activities.

PA/BAMR arranged with USGS to re-establish a stream gauging station at the mouth of the Jeddo Tunnel with live data available to the public beginning November 2022. PA/BAMR beginning in February 2023 is sampling water monthly at this same location with the PA/DEP lab analyzing the water quality. The Friends will download and organize this data to highlight in our annual report.