

Nine Mile News

SPRING 2014

NINE MILE RUN
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

At long last, spring has arrived – the season of renewal! As 2014's schedule of outdoor activities gets underway, we invite you to join us in renewing our commitment to the restoration and protection of the Nine Mile Run stream and its watershed.

We are truly fortunate to have the opportunity to steward one of the most remarkable urban stream restorations in the United States, and there are many ways for you to be part of this effort.

Whether you join us for a stream sweep to rid the restoration area of trash, or install a rain barrel or rain garden on your property to lessen your contribution to stormwater runoff and sewer overflows, or just become a member of the Watershed Association and support us financially, you can be directly involved in environmental renewal in this community.

Those who live outside the watershed can take many of these same steps and benefit their own watershed and the Pittsburgh region as a whole – the damage caused by poorly managed stormwater is widespread. But there are other things we can all do this spring that will impact our region for years to come.

We have reached a critical decision point in the long-running struggle to move our sewer authority toward a more sustainable path for compliance with the Consent Decree to end sewer overflows.

On January 31st, 2014, the EPA told ALCOSAN that its \$2 billion dollar, all-grey infrastructure deep tunnel plan, submitted to them a year earlier, was “deficient”, and would not meet water quality requirements when completed.

They indicated that changes had to be made, and should include the use of green infrastructure. A week later the Department of Justice communicated that they would re-open the Consent Decree for renegotiation of the terms of the agreement.

This is our window of opportunity change direction, and insure that this region's largest-ever investment in infrastructure brings the greatest possible environmental and community benefits for the money we will have to spend to solve the problem. But there is still no guarantee that the renegotiated agreement will be a great improvement over what we currently have.

Those who care about this issue need to act now to insure that our opportunity is not lost. If you are comfortable with direct advocacy, I urge you to contact the County Executive and the Mayor's office, if you live in the City of Pittsburgh.

Tell them you want new leadership at ALCOSAN that will craft a green-first plan, followed by right-sized gray infrastructure that will maximize jobs, clean our air as well as our water, and revitalize our communities.

If you are more the quiet, financial-support-behind-the-scene type of person, you can make a major impact by helping the Clean Rivers Campaign to secure the funding needed to complete an objective study of the potential for green infrastructure throughout the ALCOSAN service area, as well as an analysis of the relative community benefits of green and right-sized gray vs. the deep tunnel approach. This data is needed to make a change in direction possible. Please go to www.cleanriverscampaign.org to learn how you can contribute.

The arrival of spring is always energizing for me – I hope it is for you as well, and will lead you to take action for a healthier future for our watershed and our region!



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Cover photo of a Crabapple blossom by John Moyer.

Upcoming Events

To register for an event, please visit our website, www.ninemilerun.org. Unless otherwise specified, all events are free and open to the public. Families are welcome!

SPRING & SUMMER STREAM SWEEPS

- ▶ Saturday, April 12, 2014
- ▶ Saturday, June 21, 2014
- ▶ 9:30 am-12:00 pm
- ▶ 9:30 am-12:00 pm

Meet in the Fern Hollow parking lot located at the bottom of Lancaster Avenue

Every time it rains, trash & debris from the upper watershed communities of Pittsburgh, Edgewood, Wilkinsburg, & Swissvale washes into Nine Mile Run. Come out and help us keep the stream clean & beautiful by helping pick up trash. We will provide gloves, safety vests, trash bags, & coffee! Please wear long pants & sturdy boots or closed-toe shoes. If you have tall rain boots, hip boots, or waders, please bring them.

For more information, contact Sara at 412-371-8779 ext. 123 or sarap@ninemilerun.org.

WATERSHED TREE CARE

- ▶ Saturday, April 5, 2014
- ▶ 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Join NMRWA as we remove stakes and remulch the trees from the Wilkinsburg TreeVitalize Project that were planted at Kelly Elementary School in Wilkinsburg. Meet at Kelly Elementary School, 400 Kelly Avenue, and come ready to prepare these trees for spring!

- ▶ Saturday, April 26, 2014
- ▶ 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Join NMRWA as we care for trees planted in 2010 at Dickson School in Swissvale. We will be weeding and mulching in a celebration of Arbor Day! Meet at Dickson School, 7301 Schoyer Avenue.

- ▶ Saturday, May 10, 2014
- ▶ 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

Join NMRWA for our final tree care of the spring season! We will be weeding and mulching trees planted in Wilkinsburg and Edgewood over the past few years. Meet at the intersection of Ramsey Street and Coal Street in Wilkinsburg.

For more information about any of the tree care events listed above, contact Alicia at 412-371-8779 ext. 116 or alicia@ninemilerun.org.

Do you live in Summerset? Are you interested in sponsoring a tree? Find out more at the Summerset Arbor Day Celebration on Saturday, April 26th.

For more information, please call the Summerset Neighborhood Association at 412-231-1000 ext. 217



PHOTOGRAPHY & iNATURALIST WALK

- ▶ Sunday, May 18, 2014
- ▶ 1:00 pm-3:00 pm
- ▶ Cost: \$10 for non-members, FREE for NMRWA Members!

Meet in the Fern Hollow parking lot located at the bottom of Lancaster Avenue

Join NMRWA Board member John Moyer and Monitoring Committee member Christopher Tracey for this brand new event, which infuses our popular Photography Walk with a new, citizen science twist! We will be covering some photography basics and taking photos in the restoration area, and will also learn how these photos can contribute to an ongoing ecological observation project in Frick Park. Please note that space is limited, so registration is required.

For more information, contact Sara at 412-371-8779 ext. 123 or sarap@ninemilerun.org.

BIRD & BREAKFAST WALK

- ▶ Sunday, June 1, 2014
- ▶ 7:30 am - 12:00 pm
- ▶ Cost: \$25 for non-members, FREE for NMRWA Members!

Meet in the Fern Hollow parking lot located at the bottom of Lancaster Avenue

Join us as we bird the Nine Mile Run Valley, led by Jack Solomon. In the past, we have been delighted to see winged visitors like Carolina Chickadees, Carolina Wrens, Baltimore Orioles, Yellow Warblers, Scarlet Tanagers, and Indigo Buntings... they're all possible to see in the restoration area on an early June morning! A late breakfast will be provided. This is one of our most popular events, so register soon!

For more information, contact Sara at 412-371-8779 ext. 123 or sarap@ninemilerun.org.

URBAN ECO STEWARD EVENTS

For more information and to register for an Urban EcoSteward event, visit www.pittsburghparks.org/uestrainings.

Spring Invasives Workshop

- ▶ Sunday, April 6, 2014
- ▶ 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

Wildflower Walk & Campfire

- ▶ Thursday, May 8, 2014
- ▶ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Summer Gathering

- ▶ Saturday, June 7, 2014
- ▶ 10:00 am - 12:00 pm



Our programs are made possible through the generous support of our funders... Thank you!

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GetGo, Wilkinsburg
PennDOT, *for gloves, safety vests, & trash bags*
Salvatore's Pizza, Wilkinsburg
Square Cafe, Regent Square

Special thanks to The Environmental Charter School at Frick Park, GAI Consultants, Second United Presbyterian Church of Wilkinsburg, South Avenue United Methodist Church, and UCP/CLASS for the use of their facilities for meetings.

Did you know?

Fewer than 10% of the people receiving this newsletter are current dues-paying members of the Watershed Association.

We can only achieve our mission with your active support.
Please renew your membership, or join for the first time, today!

For more information on membership benefits, please visit:
www.ninemilerun.org/get-involved/become-a-member/

Have you seen our new website yet?

The old NMRWA website is a thing of the past!

Thanks to many hours of work by NMRWA staff and some very talented designers we worked with last fall at Pittsburgh Give Camp, we have updated our website with a new, mobile and tablet-friendly design, better organization, and new features – like a blog and an easier and more efficient way to register for our events.

We will be continuing to add content and information in the coming months, but please take a look around and let us know what you think – we hope you like it!

Also, make sure you've liked us on Facebook ([facebook.com/NineMileRun](https://www.facebook.com/NineMileRun)) and Twitter (@NineMileRunPGH), and consider subscribing to our blog – these are the best ways to stay up to date on what NMRWA is working on and has to offer.



We think the difference between our old (*top right*) and new website (*bottom left*) is striking—we hope you like it!

We're excited to announce... StormWorks has a new & improved rain container!

Many people are familiar with NMRWA because of our rain barrels. We've been working with rain barrels for a little over 8 years, field testing new designs and accessories, listening to client feedback, and conducting research, all the while trying to perfect how rain barrels are designed, perceived, sited, and installed.

With almost a decade of experience of designing and installing rain barrels beginning with Phase I and II of the Rain Barrel Initiative and including the first 3 years of StormWorks, we've decided to put together everything we learned to design what we think is the highest functioning, best looking rain container on the market.

It's time for an affordable rain collection system designed to fit with the edges, corners, and flat surfaces of a house; the new StormWorks rain container has a slim, modern design that can fit in narrow spaces between houses or shared walkways, behind shrubs, or neatly up against your house to blend in with your landscape.

Manufactured in Erie, PA of recycled UV-stabilized polyethylene, our new container has a capacity of 116 gallons so it can easily handle both large and small roofs. If you need extra capacity, you can quickly couple two containers together using one of our easy-to-install connector kits.

With two overflow outlets and three different placement options for the spigot, our new container offers hose flexibility without the worry of overflows. The removable filter basket allows for quick cleaning of leaves and debris and gives you easy access inside the container. Our new container will be available in multiple colors so you can find the best match for your home and landscape.



The new container is definitely different from the old NMRWA barrel! (Photo: A. Denmark)

As of mid-March, our new rain container does not have an official name yet, but that will be announced in early April and the container will be available for purchase in mid-May.

For more information or to schedule a stormwater property consultation to determine which of your downspouts to harvest rainwater from, visit www.stormworkspgh.com or contact Luke at 412-371-8779 x 120 or luke@swpgh.com.



It's time for an affordable rain collection system designed to fit with the edges, corners, and flat surfaces of a house; the StormWorks StormSaver has a slim, modern design that can fit in narrow spaces between houses or shared walkways, behind shrubs, or neatly up against or in a tight area of your house to blend in with your landscape.

Responsible

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with

Space-Saving Style

Manufactured in Erie, PA with 100% recycled UV-stabilized polyethylene, the StormWorks StormSaver has a capacity of 116 gallons so it can easily handle both small and large roofs! If you need extra capacity, you can easily couple two barrels together using one of our easy-to-install connector kits.

With two overflow outlets and three different placement options for the spigot, the StormWorks StormSaver offers hose flexibility without the worry of overflows. The removable filter basket allows for quick cleaning of leaves and debris and gives you easy access inside the barrel. The StormWorks StormSaver is available in multiple colors so you can find the best match for your home and landscape!




START SAVING RAIN, SPACE, AND MONEY TODAY!

SPECS	INCLUDES	THE 3 MOST POPULAR REASONS TO CAPTURE RAINWATER:
<p>CONTAINER Capacity: 116 gallons Dimensions: 54" tall x 47.81" wide 18.30" depth at bottom 15.42" depth at top Weight (when empty): 58 lbs Material: 100% recycled UV-stabilized Polyethylene Color: Multiple colors and textures available.</p> <p>OVERFLOW FITTINGS Material: Noncorrosive nylon 90° elbow Diameter: 1.5" threaded spigot</p> <p>SPIGOT FITTINGS Diameter: 1.5" (standard hose size) threaded spigot Front spigot height: 1.5" Side spigot height: 1"</p> <p>TOP (FILTER DECK) Gently sloped towards filter basket</p> <p>EASY CLEAN REMOVABLE FILTER BASKET Material: UV-stabilized polypropylene Color: black Dimension: 8" x 2.2" Mesh: Mosquito proof 316 stainless steel mesh with 0.955 aperture</p>	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;">        </div>	<div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #0070C0;">1</p> <p>Rainwater is better for your plants and soil. It is highly oxygenated, free of the salts, inorganic ions, and fluoride compounds contained in tap water that accumulate in the soil over time and potentially harm plant roots.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #0070C0;">2</p> <p>You'll help control moisture levels around the foundation of your home. Collecting rainwater and directing it away from your house and foundation before it hits ground levels will help to prevent flooding, dampness, and mold.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid #ccc; padding: 5px;"> <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; color: #0070C0;">3</p> <p>You can reduce your water bill. With a 116-gallon capacity (installed on a roof area that will fill the container during the average sized rain event in Pittsburgh, you can collect over 2,000-gallons of water during the growing season.</p> </div>

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For more information, please visit our website at www.stormworkspgh.com or contact Luke at luke@swpgh.com or 412-371-8779 x 120.

StormWorks is a project of the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association.



Winter is the perfect time to prune trees throughout the watershed

Like many of you, NMRWA has eagerly been awaiting the end of this long and cold winter. However, we haven't been hibernating inside much - rather the opposite! Paul Yanulavich, StormWorks Horticulturist and ISA Certified Arborist, and Nathan Resnick-Day, GreenLinks Program Assistant, have been hard at work this winter pruning trees in the watershed.

Paul and Nathan's pruning efforts have been focused on all the trees planted during the Wilkinsburg TreeVitalize Project that have been in the ground at least a year, as well as other trees planted by NMRWA prior to that project. To reduce the incidence of transplant shock, we don't prune trees that have been in the ground for less than a year. Allowing them time to establish in their new environments before removing any growth allows for a better reaction to the pruning.

Performing maintenance pruning on young, newly established trees is very important, as it helps trees grow into healthy forms and can reduce the need for major pruning later in life. Winter, when trees are dormant, is the ideal time to prune, as this encourages new growth when their sap starts running again in the spring, and also limits the spread of diseases like oak wilt between trees.

Without leaves obscuring their view, Paul and Nathan have been pruning with both structure and safety in mind to help ensure our watershed trees are healthier and happier come springtime. They have been removing dead, damaged, and diseased branches, removing suckers and water sprouts, thinning to promote light and air circulation, eliminating crossing branches to prevent future damage, and removing co-dominant leaders.

Co-dominant leaders are two branches growing straight up near the top of a tree - cutting off one of them allows the other branch to grow and become the main, dominant branch, which prevents them from splitting and tearing later in life.

Assessing trees for these types of issues and more is especially important to do when trees are young. Pruning a problem branch when it is only one inch in diameter is much easier than when it has grown to 5 inches in diameter!



Paul & Nathan prune two cherry trees on Mifflin Avenue in February. (S. Powell)

Paul and Nathan will have pruned **nearly 600 trees** before winter is over! Thank you to them and be sure to check out their hard work the next time you're in the watershed.

Are you interested in helping us prune in the future? In collaboration with Tree Pittsburgh, NMRWA held its first pruning workshop in Wilkinsburg on March 22. We are hoping to make this an annual event, and would love to have you join us!

Please note that NMRWA and Tree Pittsburgh ask that all volunteers who participate in pruning workshops be Tree Tenders, so please visit Tree Pittsburgh's website (treepittsburgh.org) to learn more about becoming one.

If you plan to become a Tree Tender, or you already are, and you live in the watershed, consider joining our Watershed Tree Tenders group! Contact Alicia at 412-371-8779 ext. 116 or alicia@ninemilerun.org for more details.

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Last November, NMRWA Monitoring Committee members and student volunteers from Duquesne & Pitt sampled fish in a portion of lower Nine Mile Run. They collected more than 660 fish comprising 13 different species, including the rainbow darter seen in the picture above! (S. Powell)

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