

November 19, 2019

Hammer Creek...A watershed worth improving.

As a landowner in the Hammer Creek Watershed, you may be aware that the Doc Fritchey and Donegal chapters of Trout Unlimited joined together about a year ago to assess the condition of the watershed in an effort to address flooding, land loss from bank erosion, and water quality. Trout Unlimited restores cold water ecosystems, such as Hammer Creek, to make them work better for landowners and wild trout. Over the past year I have spoken with many of you and heard your stories of property damage and frustration with the creek's inability to properly handle storm water. Our goal is to address these issues by surveying (with your permission) the conditions in the watershed, developing a cold-water conservation plan, creating a prioritized list of "hot spots", followed by designs to mitigate the issues. Once we have the list put together, we begin the process of looking for grants to pay for the work to be done. All this at no cost to the property owner.

Currently we are conducting surveys and the common problems we are finding is lack of stream bank stability and riparian buffer (a corridor of trees and shrubs to hold the soil in place). As stormwater enters the creek, stream banks erode, sending silt downstream ultimately ending up in the Chesapeake Bay. This causes land loss from erosion, makes floods worse on landowners, warms a cold-water ecosystem and prevents wild trout the ability to spawn. By utilizing proven design techniques, we can change how the stream handles storm water and greatly improve all the above issues.

Donegal Trout Unlimited has perfected these techniques and used them on Lititz Run, winning national awards. Doc Fritchey has brought life back to Stony Creek in Dauphin and Lebanon Counties using a limestone diversion well to counter acid mine runoff.

We hope to have the coldwater conservation plan completed in the next year to then move on to the implementation phase. As we have updates, we will inform landowners periodically with newsletters such as this. Progress thus far includes an electro-fishing survey on parts of the creek to develop a baseline of trout life supported. A water quality monitoring capsule was installed to measure the impact of improvement projects on the creek. As you can see, we are a dedicated bunch of volunteers. If you have questions or have not yet indicated whether we may survey the stream on your property, please contact me at 609 405 1415. We would welcome you as a partner in improving the quality of the water on your property.

Best Regards, Jim Suleski

Doc Fritchey Trout Unlimited Conservation Co-Chair/ Hammer Creek Landowner Liaison