

## Shamokin Creek restoration awarded 3 grants, seeking federal infrastructure money

By JOE SYLVESTER THE NEWS-ITEM  
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SHAMOKIN — Three new grants awarded the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA) will help it continue its watershed assessment to qualify for federal money and clean acid mine drainage from the creek for good.

SCRA Vice President Steve Motyka said on Thursday the organization was awarded a \$45,000 grant from the Degenstein Foundation about a month or so ago for the watershed assessment and restoration plan. Williams Gas more recently approved a \$5,000 grant for SCRA to use for day-to-day operations and administrative costs. On Wednesday night, the organization learned that the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds (FPW) awarded SCRA a \$20,000 grant to hire a part-time watershed manager.

Those grants follow a \$200,000 grant late last year from the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED) to assess the upper Shamokin Creek watershed and produce a restoration plan.

SCRA President James Koharski wrote to the Degenstein grant selection committee in December, stating, “The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has allocated \$1.5 billion to Pennsylvania to restore Abandoned Mine Lands and remediate Acid Mine Drainage. A watershed assessment and restoration plan are needed to acquire this funding.”

He said the creek restoration group has had many successes over the past 27 years.

“Students and citizens of our valley have been educated as to why Shamokin Creek’s aquatic life is depleted and how it can be restored,” Koharski wrote. “Treatment sites have been built, thousands of trees have been planted and tons of trash has been collected. Fish now live in some tributaries where fish haven’t lived for 100 years. Our goal of a cleaner Shamokin Creek has been achieved but not completed.

“With your help we can restore Shamokin Creek from its headwaters in Centralia, Columbia County to its confluence with the Susquehanna River in Sunbury.”

Motyka said the yearlong watershed assessment and sampling started about two months ago. The assessment will cost about \$250,000. Motyka said SCRA also is having assessments done of other creeks, such as Carbon Run, which flows through part of the Anthracite Outdoor Adv Area (AOAA) land in Coal Township.

“We need yearlong sampling to apply for bigger money,” he said.

He said the federal money could go toward construction of a treatment plant to treat the acid mine drainage, in which iron oxidizes, smothering aquatic life on the creek bottom.

“From Shamokin east to Centralia, there are 63 springs (discharging acid mine drainage),” Motyka said. “If we focused on the top five, it would take out 95 percent of the pollution.”

The plant would pump the water to the surface and treat it with hydrogen peroxide or limestone, he said.

He was hopeful the project to clean the entire 35-mile-long creek from Centralia to Sunbury would qualify for the funding.

“We’ve been very successful with a lot of educational grants and academic research in the past,” Motyka said.

He said he was amazed by what a small group of people has accomplished so far, but there is more work to be done, and SCRA could use more volunteers.

Anyone interested in volunteering with SCRA can reach [the group at ShamokinCreek@gmail.com](mailto:ShamokinCreek@gmail.com) or by calling 570-590-4167.

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