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TOP STORY

By MACKENZIE WITT THE NEWS-ITEM

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## **SCRA veep: Shamokin Creek restoration plan should be ready by summer**



Kulpmont Borough Councilman and Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance Vice President Steve Motyka speaks to fellow council members and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection personnel during a meeting on Thursday. The group walked to Veterans Memorial Park to observe the rain garden on Fir Street.

MACKENZIE WITT/STAFF PHOTOS

KULPMONT — An assessment of the Shamokin Creek and a conceptual restoration plan should be completed by the summer, Steve Motyka said during a meeting held Thursday with members of the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA), Kulpmont Borough Council and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The restoration plan will focus on treating some of the most pertinent locations with acid mine drainage throughout the length of the creek. Once those tasks are complete, Motyka said, SCRA can start applying for bigger projects, such as the installation of water treatment facilities.

“We owe a lot to the DEP,” he said, “and there’s more to come. ... The power of persistence has a lot to do with it as well.”

Motyka, who currently serves as the vice president of SCRA and a councilman for the Borough of Kulpmont, highlighted some of the progress the SCRA has made in some of its projects and the monetary support that’s come with it.

In recent years, the SCRA has been awarded approximately \$1.4 million dollars in grant money from various entities and agencies, including the American Rescue Plan Act, the Allegheny Group of the Sierra Club and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

The SCRA also received compensatory funds from Transcontinental Gas Pipeline Company LLC through the DEP for failing to properly maintain erosion and sedimentation and for the discharge of sediment into commonwealth waterways, according to the DEP.

Most recently, the SCRA and Kulpmont Borough invested \$112,000 into designing and acquiring permits to alleviate rainwater impacts in the watershed near Veterans Memorial Park.

The goal of the project is to keep excess rainwater out of the mines, decrease the volume of acid mine drainage and retain the water on the surface of the ground so there’s less polluted water that has to be treated further downstream.

The Shamokin Creek starts in Mount Carmel and runs directly through Coal Township, Shamokin, Snyderstown and ends in Sunbury, where it meets the Susquehanna River. The overarching goal is, as Motyka realized during the meeting, to have clean water from here to Sunbury.

Cleaning the Shamokin Creek will promote the presence of wildlife such as tadpoles or fish, increase the property value of homes near the creek and encourage the presence of recreational activities in the creek.

Motyka said the use of environmental education grants from the DEP has given the SCRA more visibility among hundreds of students and teachers from local school districts.

“You need to have the right people, the right groups to take it through the process,” said DEP Regional Director Jared Dressler. “You have to have the right project, the right site, the right timing. ... If you don’t have the right people, those projects tend not to succeed. This is a good example of (having) that.”

Near the end of the meeting, the group walked down to Veteran’s Memorial Park near Fir Street and observed the rain garden and educational signs posted nearby.

Motyka said recent developments in restoring the Shamokin Creek is all thanks to the SCRA’s partnership with Kulpmont.

Borough Councilman Bob Chesney commended Motyka’s work in restoring the creek.

“(Steve) has proven over the years that he’s taken a sick puppy and it’s not ready to run free yet, but it’s getting better and maybe one paw is fixed and a couple more paws to go. I know that he’ll stay on it and get it going,” Chesney said.

He added that the recognition and vocal and monetary support from the DEP was “a great thing.”

Chesney said, “You gotta start somewhere.”

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