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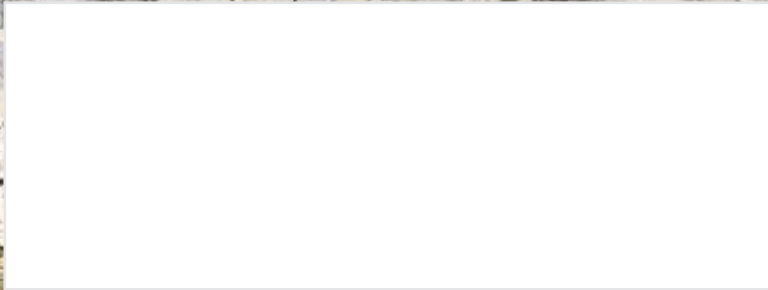
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SUMMER 2020

COMMON GROUND

"Protecting our rural character and natural resources through community-based land conservation."



Point Pleasant at the Tohickon Creek, a 29.5-mile-long tributary of the Delaware River dammed in 1958 to form Lake Nockamixon

You can make a difference!

Leave a Legacy, Plan a Gift.

When you include the Conservancy in your estate plans, you help secure the future of our region's natural resources and rural character for future generations. Planning today extends your impact beyond your lifetime.

Get Involved — Volunteer! Tinicum Conservancy would not exist without its volunteers. We need help with mailings, research, event planning, and more! If you prefer the outdoors, we need folks to take part in our River Road cleanups.

Please contact Tinicum Conservancy trustee Karen Budd at (610) 294-9069 or email kbudd3030@gmail.com for questions and more information.

Double Your Impact with an Employer Matching Gift.

Maximize your Conservancy support with an employer matching gift. Many companies make it easy to double or triple the amount you donate! Check with your human resources department.

Conserve Your Property. Preserving your land is a lasting way to contribute to our community.

Please contact our executive director, Jim Engel, at 610-294-1077 or email jengel@tinicumconservancy.org for questions and a confidential discussion about your options and opportunities.



JOIN TODAY

Become a new member today and instantly **double your impact!** See details inside (pg. 4) about a matching gift challenge from one of our generous donors that will make your gift double in size. Join today and help protect your community for your family and future generations.

Note from Jim Engel, Executive Director: As we all begin to make sense of how our lives have changed in the past four months, we also remember what we can count on to get us through. We love the sense of community and support we provide for each other, and we are continually refreshed by the natural world that surrounds us. The following personal essay by member and volunteer Terri Rogers reminds us what renews and inspires us, both before and after this crisis.

As the light barely comes over the horizon, a familiar sound fills the air. The shrill calls of the nesting pair of bald eagles awaken the woods from its dark sleep. They are preparing for a day of hunting, protecting their territory and raising their young.

They began this journey back in November when they started renovating the nest from last year, shoring it up with more huge sticks and lining the nest with dried grasses and moss. The aerie (or nest) sits high upon the treetop and is typically five to six feet wide and three feet deep. During this time, the sightings and vocalizations at the nest become more frequent as the pair strengthens their bond during their courtship.

Come February the pair, who mate for life, will have one to three eggs in the nest. Both birds will take turns incubating the eggs over the next 35 days. (Note: Bald eagles are federally protected while nesting and coming within 330 feet of their nesting site is strictly prohibited). The vocalizations so frequently heard are now lessened so as not to draw attention.

continued on pg. 3

Life on the Tohickon Creek



Photo by Rachel H. McKay



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The accreditation seal is awarded to land trusts meeting the highest national standards for excellence and conservation permanence.

The Tinicum Conservancy is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization established in 1992. Donations are tax deductible as allowed by law.

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NEAL'S NATURE NOTES

A letter from our President



"I am really glad we live here."

I am sure that most of you are hearing the same or something similar as you talk to friends and neighbors. What will the "new normal" look like for all of us, and how and what does this mean for the mission of the Tinicum Conservancy? These questions are on the minds of the Conservancy's staff and Board of Trustees as well. We all benefit from the Conservancy's work and the ongoing stewardship of conserved land by local landowners, and we know that the Conservancy will thrive in this new world because of strong community support in all its forms: committed landowners, generous donors, enthusiastic volunteers, partnering organizations, and community leaders. The work of protecting land, in perpetuity, means that there will always be more opportunities to fulfill our mission.

Ensuring fresh drinking water, abundant wildlife, places to walk and be inspired, and thriving farms will always be a priority. The Conservancy is closing in on its goal of 5,000 acres preserved, continuing to protect the farms, forests, and watersheds that make our area unique and make us glad we live here. We need your help and support to protect the next 5,000 acres. If you are already involved - thank you so much! If you have not gotten involved yet, then please consider donating your time, financial support or ideas to help us protect more land in the future. Be well, stay well, and make sure to get outside and enjoy our open space.

—Neal Feigles

Neal Feigles is the new president of the Tinicum Conservancy's Board of Trustees

We're Growing! Tinicum Conservancy Welcomes Scott Berman

Last autumn we shared the exciting news that in 2020, Tinicum Conservancy anticipated expanding our resource protection program by embracing new technologies and adding new staff to our humble office. Today we're happy to announce that those plans are underway — please join us in welcoming our new Resource Protection Assistant, Scott Berman!

As a member of the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission's Participation Task Force, and having worked with Friends of Worcester and the

Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association (aka Wissahickon Trails), Scott brings a wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm to the Conservancy. His experience includes work in open space and trail planning, land protection strategies, communications, social media and fundraising. Scott will be primarily responsible for managing the annual conservation easement monitoring program, teaming-up with our dedicated group of volunteer monitors, and integrating new technologies into both field and office work. Plus, he'll be assisting

Maria Fell with membership services. Scott's work will help us meet the increasing professional requirements of our accreditation. He'll also be instrumental in improving the efficiency and safety of our monitoring program as we move from outdated and wasteful methods to a new technological world.

Scott is a proud Montgomery County native. In his free time he enjoys cooking, visiting local farmers' markets, exploring the Schuylkill River Trail, and summering at the Jersey shore. Scott says he's thrilled to join our team. "I'm looking forward to getting to know the Tinicum community, working with the volunteers, and getting involved with the important work of conservation stewardship in Upper Bucks County."

We look confidently toward a future that promises ever more growth and land protection in our region, and we're excited to welcome Scott to our team. We hope you'll stop by to say hello!



Tinicum Conservancy's Resource Protection Assistant, Scott Berman



Photo by Rachel H. McKay

Life on the Tohickon Creek (cont. from pg. 1)

It is now that the real work begins. The female sits ever so diligently on the eggs (although the male will take over that duty to give her a well-deserved break), well camouflaged by the nest and the branches of the tree high above. The male starts his day fishing the Tohickon Creek, giving passersby a truly magnificent view to behold.

Suddenly, out of the clear blue winter sky appears a large dark shadow, whose wingspan can be six to eight feet (females being larger). It flies effortlessly through the woods, going unnoticed by most until it reaches the nest and then announces its presence to its mate.

Upon returning to the nest site, the male will perch high upon the treetop, ever vigilant of the possible dangers around so that he can protect the nest. The eagles' territory can cover a full square mile, which they defend from interlopers and predators alike.

Once the chicks hatch, they will require constant food during the day as they mature. The once quiet tree in the woods suddenly erupts as the chicks boisterously respond to their parents when they return with a meal.

The joyful shrills continue to amplify as the young mature. The chicks will fledge from the nest at about 12 weeks old. They usually stay for one to two months more to learn from their parents and hone their skills. It will be four to five years more before the juvenile birds get the signature look of the adult. Until then they will remain brown and go almost unnoticed, soaring the skies above the Tohickon Creek, like their parents did, in search of a meal.

The once lively nest is now still, and the woods are becoming quiet with only an occasional call heard. The sun begins to set, and as the last of the orange glow starts to fade into the horizon, one last view of a winged shadow is seen. And the silence of the woods reigns again. Until next year my friends...

—Terri Rogers



**Honoring 5,000 acres
protected with a
\$5,000
new-member
matching gift challenge**

Photo by Cindi Sathra

JOIN TODAY and DOUBLE YOUR IMPACT

Become a new supporter of the Tincum Conservancy and your gift will be matched dollar for dollar up to \$5,000 by a generous donor. Help keep our community healthy and beautiful. Your generous commitment to the Conservancy will help us protect the next 5,000 acres. Use the envelope provided or give safely and conveniently online at tincumconservancy.org. *Thank you.*



Rapp Creek Development Update

The owner of a new housing development in Nockamixon Township has requested permission to cut an additional 2.17 acres of trees above steep slopes along a tributary stream to Rapp Creek, which is a Pennsylvania-designated Exceptional Value stream. Almost nine acres of trees have already been removed from the site. The developer previously ignored required safeguards that were included in their permit, namely the installation of stormwater management structures. As a result, mud flowed into Rapp Creek and caused serious impairment to the stream's water quality, with direct impact on two adjacent conservation easements held by the Tincum Conservancy.

Local residents and a Conservancy representative testified at the Zoning Hearing Board earlier this year. They asked Nockamixon Township to deny the developer's request for additional tree cutting, which could further degrade the stream, but COVID-19 restrictions have put the hearings on hold. Former Board President Boyce Budd and Executive Director Jim Engel plan to attend and support local landowners when the hearings resume.

Kelly's CORNER:

Annual Easement Monitoring - Adjusting for COVID-19



The Conservancy takes very seriously its responsibility to monitor every conservation easement property annually. Our monitoring program helps us stay connected to our landowners and is a large part of maintaining our national accreditation status. However, thanks to COVID-19, our office has been closed since mid-March. We are nearing summer and not one landowner or property has been visited.

With respect to the safety of your families, our volunteers and Governor Wolf's continuing stay-at-home quarantine, all property visits for 2020 are temporarily on hold until at least early June.

Before we resume property visits, we will evaluate and consider the possible risks, as well as our landowners' concerns. We will take all appropriate precautions and protective measures for the health and safety of our landowners, volunteers and staff. We have begun to research alternative methods to physically visiting properties if that becomes necessary, and we'll reach out to all easement landowners when our new monitoring protocols are in place.



A volunteer monitoring a conserved property from years prior.

However, conservancy staff are still available by phone and email, and we encourage landowners to contact us with questions, share future plans or just to say hello.

Our hearts go out to everyone whose job security has been put at risk during all this uncertainty and confusion, as well as all the essential workers who are putting their own health at risk on a daily basis. Just because we're all keeping physical distance doesn't mean we can't stay connected — in times like these, community matters most.

*A Very Special
Thank You!*

Volunteer Highlights:

Claire Billingham, Sue Bunkin, Barbara Brookman, Kathy Greany, Linda Kling and June Rothkopf for assisting with mailings, scanning, and filing.

Bill Cahill for all those trips to Doylestown to "drop" off our bulk mail and to pick up printing & supplies.

Carol Cassel, Karen Budd, Boyce Budd, Claire Billingham and Corrine Blaydon for keeping our gardens at the Conservancy looking beautiful all season.



The dam at Lake Nockamixon reservoir

Photo by David Upmalis

Lower Tohickon Creek's Future Depends on the Nockamixon Reservoir

Last summer we and over 900 community members, legislators, non-profit groups and partners rallied to urge the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) not to downgrade the legal protection status of the Lower Tohickon Creek. We convinced the PADEP to suspend their downgrade recommendation while they and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) conduct a study of the Nockamixon reservoir's "water budget" and the volume of water being released from the Nockamixon Dam, where the Lower Tohickon Creek begins.

Why did they listen? Amazingly, one of our partners at Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Erik Sildorff, while sifting through some very old historical documents, found the 1967 building plans for the Nockamixon Dam and reservoir. Before the Nockamixon Dam was built, the Tohickon Creek was free-flowing for over 29 miles, from Springfield Township all the way to the Delaware River in Point Pleasant. The building of the Reservoir in the late 60's divided the Tohickon into the Upper and Lower Tohickon Creeks. Recognizing that a huge dam could have major negative

impacts on the downstream quality and quantity of water, those historic documents contained a mandate that a certain amount of cold water from the bottom of the reservoir must be sustainably released to the Lower Tohickon Creek to provide for and maintain certain ecological standards. We believed it was possible that, for the past five decades, the amount of water being released from the dam was not sufficient to maintain those ecological standards. The PADEP and DCNR coordinated to conduct a "water budget study" over the past 6 months. In the simplest terms, a



"water budget" defines several things: the amount of water the reservoir normally receives from the surrounding watershed, how much water the reservoir can hold, how much water is needed to support the recreational uses and ecological needs of the reservoir, and finally, how much water typically spills over the top of the dam, or gets manually discharged by way of release valves. Manual releases can happen on a seasonal basis, during high-water storm events or for recreational uses, such as the biannual whitewater boating events. This study also included a history of the past and present water volume released from the bottom of Nockamixon Dam specifically for maintaining the Lower Tohickon creek. Through this study (and likely several more) we hope to ultimately determine and adjust for an appropriate and sustainable volume of cold water released to the creek to support the chemistry and biology it should have. We also hope to convince officials that the recreational and ecological resources of the Lower Tohickon Creek are just as valuable to our community as those of the Nockamixon reservoir, and that the water resources must be shared equitably.

Kelly and Maria each celebrate 10-year milestones with the Conservancy!

A special thanks to Maria Fell and Kelly Germann for their decade-long commitment to protecting our community, serving our members, and safeguarding the farms and natural lands that we all love. "I have worked with natural resource organizations for my entire professional career," says Jim Engel, Executive Director, "and I've never met two people who dedicate themselves to their work the way Kelly and Maria do."

Maria serves as the Conservancy's Office Manager, and it's her voice you'll most likely hear if you call the office. Always upbeat and congenial, Maria provides professional support for our members, keeps track of member gifts, and assists with financial matters. In general, she helps keep the office humming!

Kelly is the guardian of our monitoring and stewardship program, which protects

almost 5,000 acres (and counting). She makes sure our conservation easements remain strong and assists landowners with questions about their easements and how to best manage their natural resources. Kelly also works with our volunteer monitors and Stewardship Committee members to ensure they have all the information and training needed to thoroughly monitor our protected properties. Her latest focus is on training our newest staff member, Scott Berman, who as Resource Protection Assistant will help advance and update our easement monitoring program.

To Kelly and Maria, on behalf of the entire Tincum Conservancy community, we want to thank you both for your hard work, your long-standing commitment, and your unparalleled dedication to our mission.



Tincum Conservancy's Office Manager Maria Fell



Tincum Conservancy's Resource Protection Manager Kelly Germann