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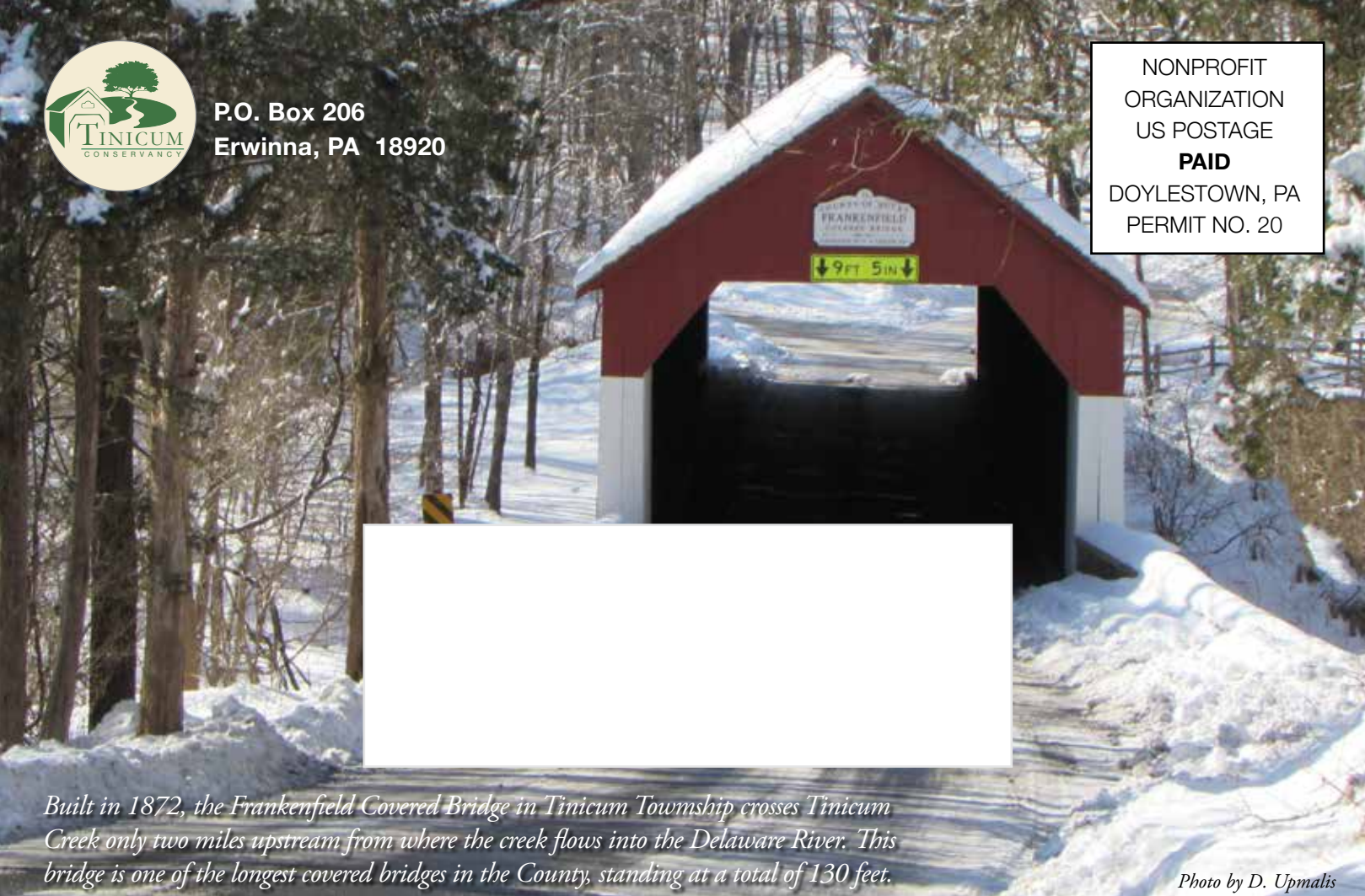
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COMMON GROUND

WINTER 2021

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



Built in 1872, the Frankenfield Covered Bridge in Tinicum Township crosses Tinicum Creek only two miles upstream from where the creek flows into the Delaware River. This bridge is one of the longest covered bridges in the County, standing at a total of 130 feet.

Photo by D. Upmalis



The Lower Tohickon Creek & Water Sharing: A Complicated Balance

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 and as volunteer property monitors.

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

Your gift can make a positive impact to help protect your community for your family and future generations.

The Tinicum Conservancy is a private non-profit organization that depends on charitable contributions to steward over 5,000 acres conserved, to protect the environment, and to educate the community about our mission. Your support is essential to realizing our shared purpose.

Every gift makes a difference. Use the envelope inside or visit tinicumconservancy.org to donate today. *Thank you.*

Members of a newly formed work group representing DCNR, PADEP, National Park Service, MBI (a research/study group), Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Tinicum Conservancy met in October after a year hiatus (thank you Covid-19) to discuss the health and protection status of the Lower Tohickon Creek. Since

the majority of the water in the Lower Tohickon Creek comes directly from the Nockamixon Reservoir, the group's focus is now on the carefully regulated releases of water from the reservoir to the creek. The dam at the south end of the reservoir was built in the late 1960's. It is designed to allow water to flow through an overflow notch

only during high-water events, such as large storms. Otherwise, the dam has two valves that precisely regulate the passage of water to the creek below. Under strict control by Nockamixon Park managers, the amount of water allowed to pass through the valves has been the same, unchanging since the dam was built. Climate factors, ecological needs,

continued on pg. 3



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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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SMALL EFFORT CAN LEAD TO BIG IMPACT

A letter from our President



Hello everyone,

Hurricane Ida had a devastating impact on our region a few short months ago. Some of our neighbors will be recovering for years, while some of us were lucky and only had a minimal cleanup to contend with. But I think it's safe to say that every one of us was affected in some way.

My letter today is about how good stewardship of your land—whether it's conserved or not, whether it's a half acre or a hundred acres—can significantly impact what happens downstream from your property, or just as importantly, what happens to your own property when there's a flood event.

In the aftermath of Ida, I took a tour along the Tinicum and Tohickon Creek watersheds and saw firsthand how responsible land management made a huge difference.

I walked through meadows of native grasses and sedges that had effectively reduced runoff to almost nothing, completely absorbing the more than seven inches of rain that had fallen—even on sloping ground!

I also visited meadows in the flood plain, areas that were slammed with six to eight feet of water and then flooded for days.

But once the water had drained away, there was no erosion or disturbance of the ground at all. Yes, the goldenrod was covered in a film of dirt and leaning downstream, but the birds, bees and butterflies returned immediately, and all the dusty foliage was good as new with the next rain. In these areas, all that's left of Ida's wrath are piles of branches that collected in the receding water or tangles of twigs and vines that caught in the lower branches. The landscape itself is perfectly intact, ready to absorb the energy and flood waters of the next storm.

Now more than ever, it's clear to me that these naturally-occurring meadows are the best proof that even the simplest of choices can have a profound impact. No matter the size of your property, a meadow can go a long way to protect your land from the damage that a major storm event can bring. So we can all do our part to protect our land in the future, upcoming issues of this newsletter will include articles written by local experts in the fields of landscape regeneration, native plants and local ecology. If you're interested in learning more about what you can do now, please reach out to the Conservancy.

Our best to all of you,

—Neal Feigles

Check our NEW website!

Our new website is live and better than ever — THANKS to our super talented volunteer, John Clement for his hard work and tireless dedication. Thank you John!

tinicumconservancy.org



Tohickon Creek (cont. from pg. 1)

community infrastructure, commercial, industrial and recreational demands on the Lower Tohickon have changed significantly since the 1960's, but the amount of water the creek receives has not. Thus, the creek ecosystem has been struggling to survive for decades. The work group has agreed to study models for new water release regimes to give the creek the additional volume it needs to meet the demands of its many users, maintain cooler temperatures and

prevent drought conditions all the way south to its confluence with the Delaware River. Should greater releases to the creek cause lower water levels or significant long-term drawdown within the reservoir, these studies must include the potential effects to the reservoir's existing infrastructure, ecology and recreational needs. The goal is to agree on a more balanced, sustainable approach to sharing the volume of water both systems need to stay healthy and functional. It's complicated! The work

group hopes to have model studies begin this winter and to implement increased release tests in 2022.

Every gift makes a difference. Use the envelope provided or visit tinicumconservancy.org to donate today. *Thank you.*



Dear River Road Cleanup Volunteers,

Many thanks to the hardy group that showed up on a dreary morning despite the threat of rain. It stayed pretty dry and we picked up 14 full bags of trash, 2 doors, a truck tire and miscellaneous car parts. Have a lovely winter and we'll see you next year.

—Graham, Beverly and Phil



“Live Stakes” and Volunteers Contribute to a Herculean Forest Restoration Project

Philanthropic leaders and Tincum residents Chellie Berrong and David Bader decided in 2006 to permanently protect their 76 acres of forests, steep hills and deep stream corridors with a conservation easement. But 76 acres is a lot to care for, and over the next decade invasive plants, especially barberry and Japanese stiltgrass, spread out of control. These aggressive plants made walking paths impassable, creek banks unstable and severely degraded habitat and the overall diversity of flora and fauna that would otherwise naturally thrive on this beautiful Tincum property. In 2019, Chellie and David hired ArcheWild, Inc, an ecological restoration firm from Quakertown, to envision and implement an aggressive strategy to remove invasive plants, reestablish trails, protect and restore native species diversity and implement a long-term management plan. Between 2019 and 2021, the ArcheWild team used integrated pest management to remove almost 60 acres of barberry and

other invasive plants, using a combination of hand tools, a massive brush hog and herbicides. In May 2021, ArcheWild partnered with the Berrong-Bader family and Tincum Conservancy to offer a public educational tour demonstrating the techniques and progress of this amazing project. Attendees on the walks learned about invasive plants and management methods that all landowners can employ themselves.

This past October, Tincum Conservancy and several community volunteers worked closely with ArcheWild, Inc. to help stabilize the streambanks of a creek using “live stakes.” Over decades, invasive plants had made their home along the streambanks and shaded out any other natives that would help to stabilize the soils. The ArcheWild team had cleared and treated 15 ft on either side of the stream, and erosion control was the next priority. First, a layer of coir mat was tacked into

place. Coir mat is made of coconut fiber and will naturally break down into the soil over a few years, while the new “live stakes” root and take hold: the perfect hand-off!

What are “live stakes”? These are cuttings from certain species of hardy, hormone-rich, wet-loving woody plants such as grey



and silky dogwoods, arrowwood viburnum, black willow and buttonbush. Cuttings 2-3 feet long are harvested from healthy, well-established plant species while they are dormant, then pushed deeply into the wet soil of their new home along a needy streambank. When these dormant stakes wake up in Spring, they’ll take root and begin to leaf out. Over the next few years, the rooted plants will create a new native colony and stabilize the streambanks, preventing erosion, improving water quality, and providing a permanent habitat for wildlife.

Tincum Conservancy and ArcheWild, Inc. wish to thank the intrepid volunteers who joined us to collect and install live stakes during tumultuous weather conditions! Also, a grand THANK YOU to Diane Allison, Jeff Keller, Sally Mirick, and Natural Lands’ Paunacussing Preserve in Holicong for graciously allowing our team to harvest 600+ live stakes.

—Kelly Germann



For more in-depth information about ArcheWild, Inc. and this project, please visit our website at tincumconservancy.org

Every gift makes a difference. Use the envelope provided or visit tincumconservancy.org to donate today. *Thank you.*



An evening under the stars and in the great outdoors

People just want to get out and have fun as the pandemic recedes, so the Conservancy provided that opportunity in September: friends and neighbors gathered for an evening under the stars to watch *The Biggest Little Farm*, a documentary about a couple who transform an environmentally damaged property into a renewed and productive farm. The Conservancy also provided good old-fashioned fun with free popcorn and drinks. Close to 100 people attended the outdoor affair, hosted by Bill Tomai and John Sebesta at their 41-acre conserved property.

“The movie’s theme of locally grown, fresh produce that is cultivated by good land-stewards really speaks to local residents,” explained Jim Engel, Conservancy Executive Director. “We live and work in a region that is highly supportive of CSA’s and a farming tradition that stretches back more than 300 years.”

Next year, the Conservancy hopes to return to the Community Celebration event just in time to celebrate the Conservancy’s more than 30 years of protecting local communities.





Photo by C. Satbra

Kelly's CORNER: Get Lazy, Be Messy & Leave the Leaves

Ahh, autumn! Crisp, cool days, bright blue skies, and crunchy leaves on the ground. It all triggers me into fall clean-up mode. If you're like me, you're probably thinking it's time to cut down all the dead brown plants, rake up all the fallen leaves and tidy up all the flower beds for winter, right? SO WRONG. Let me tell you why.

Maybe you've heard about declines in native bees and monarch butterfly populations. In fact, ALL of our native insects have decreased almost 45% overall

since the 1970's, mostly because of habitat loss and pesticide use. You can play a significant role in reversing that decline, by "leaving the leaves."

Many of us garden to attract and feed butterflies, bees and birds. Some of us avoid using pesticides and herbicides to protect the creatures that visit our land. Some of us care for woodlands because we love the wildlife our forests support. In the fall, all those organisms we've invited and provided for all spring and summer

depend mightily on all the fallen detritus, decaying matter and leaf litter (i.e. the dead stuff) to survive the winter and safely make it to spring. Loads of insects, their eggs, pupae, chrysalises and larvae overwinter in all that matter we see as just a mess. These are our pollinators, pest-controllers, soil aerators, and the foundation of the food chain for everything else. If we cut it down, clean it up, bag it or otherwise remove and discard it, we disturb crucial habitat and toss away the very basis of a healthy backyard ecology. Further, getting



rid of all that organic matter removes critical nutrients our soil and sleeping plants need next year. What to do? Get lazy. Be messy. Leave the leaves.

A few of our native moths are the first to emerge in spring, and, along with ladybugs, are the first line of protection against aphids later on. Many insect predators, including wasps, flies, praying mantids, ground beetles, assassin bugs and lacewings overwinter in decaying leaf and bark debris. Once Spring arrives, they make quick work of some of our most persistent garden pests: slugs, stink bugs, Japanese beetles, mites, thrips, whiteflies and scale.



Once Spring arrives, Lacewings make quick work of some of our most persistent garden pests.

In the fall and winter, gold finches, blue jays, cardinals, woodpeckers and chickadees pick through dead matter for nutritious food sources and depend on the seed heads left atop mature flowers and native weeds like common mullein, clearweed and sumac. In springtime, adult birds feed their young on worms, insects and seeds that have survived the



winter (and clean-up crazy humans). The biggest threats to baby birds' survival are predators and starvation. Being too tidy can deprive baby birds of valuable food sources.

So, what's someone like me, a tidy person with an itchy pruning finger and bad rake habit to do? Say it with me now: Leave the leaves! Armed with that mantra, I clear away only the dead plant matter that impedes my walkways and driveway. I may cut down tall spent flowers, bundle them with twine and stand them up (instead of corn stalks) or lay them in the garden. This feeds my neatnik impulse while still feeding the little beasties. I allow leaves that land in my garden beds to stay there, whole. By the time they fall, they may already have caterpillar eggs attached (particularly if they're from an oak tree: leaf-littered ground beneath oaks is prime real estate for overwintering bugs in the Northeast).

Running my lawnmower over the leaves that fall on my lawn mulches them into the grass to feed the soil. In one particularly visible area of my lawn, I pick up the chopped-up leaves and spread them in my

garden beds as mulch. That's a little less mulch to buy in the spring, and a lot of habitat protected right on my property. Come mid-May, clearing away the spent plants and any leaves that haven't decayed satisfies my tidy-gene, and adding it all to my compost pile is a valuable investment for later.

So, here's my challenge to all you fellow gardeners: Try a new life-saving practice of intentional untidiness. Put down your rake, pruners and leaf bags. Instead, watch the parade of birds visiting the bonanza you've left for them, especially after the first snowfall. If the idea of a scruffy winter garden gives you the jitters, maybe choose just one garden bed this year to leave unkempt and dedicate it to mother nature's purposeful messiness. The bounty of winter guests, spring pollinators, insect predators and enriched soil that will grace your gardens next spring may just convince you to get lazy, be messy and "leave the leaves" every autumn from now on.