



Lehigh River Watch

Winter Update 2023

LRSA Co-Op: The Gyory LRSA Co-Op Nursery added approximately 1,500 trout to the Lehigh River between Glen Onoko and Northampton in 2022. Last summer, the LRSA Co-Op started raising another 2,000 trout for the 2023 stocking season; approximately 1,000 brown trout and 1,000 rainbow trout.

Stocking: In 2022, the LRSA paid Big Brown Trout Hatchery \$25,427 for fish that we stocked in the spring. We have already prepaid for \$10,000 worth of trout for 2023 to take advantage of our supplier's early purchase discount.

Memberships: Memberships and other funding for the 2022 stocking programs were less than the yearly amounts that the LRSA took in from dues and donations in both 2020 and 2021.

Admittedly, 2021 was a great year for the LRSA. (We had more than 536 members and took in nearly \$4,000 in donations, compared to 514 members and \$3,800 in donations in 2020.) In 2022, we had approximately 485 active members and received \$3,000 less in membership dues and \$300 less in donations compared to the previous year. Income received from raffle proceeds was approximately the same in 2022 as it was in the preceding year.

Bottom Line: The LRSA was able to put over 5,100 purchased trout in the Lehigh River in 2022 and the Gyory Co-Op Nursery provided an additional 1,500 trout for our stocking program, bringing the total number of fish we stocked last year to roughly 6,600. The LRSA also has a \$5,000 surplus from membership dues and donations that will be used to buy trout in 2023.

Historically, the LRSA ran a deficit each spring after stocking, until membership subscriptions from the spring and summer allowed us to pay off the annual fish loan. Taking out smaller yearly fish loans, taking advantage of early purchase discounts, and buying the remainder of our fish in the spring with cash on hand have eliminated our annual deficit challenges. Additionally, the LRSA stopped mailing membership cards and decals to new and renewing members. The resulting cost savings are used for fish purchases. Please note that the amount of money the LRSA has each spring determines the total number of fish that we stock. We encourage you to pay your dues early, so that we have money on hand before the April stockings. The amount of money we hold in the early spring also determines if we can afford a May stocking.

Water Quality Program: The LRSA received a \$1,500 grant from the Carbon County Community Foundation in June for the maintenance and repair expenses for two modems we use to support our water quality monitoring probes. This communications equipment allows LRSA's water monitoring probes to report water quality data in real-time to both the LRSA and Lehigh Gap Nature Center websites. Deer Park also generously donated \$2,000 for the LRSA Water Quality Monitoring Program in the spring.

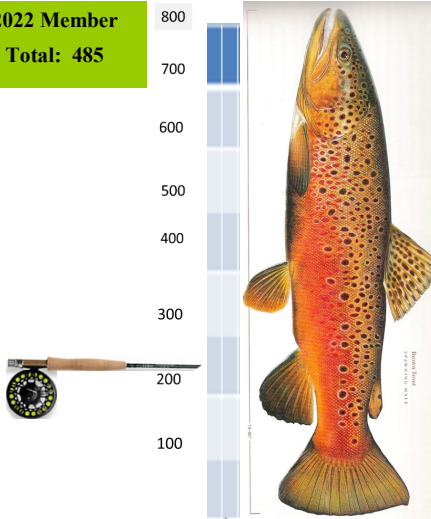
LRSA Stocking Total Since 1991: 394,100

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2023 Current Membership Total: 235

2022 Member
Total: 485



Environmental News

F.E.W. Re-evaluation Study Status: Steve Rochette, the public affairs officer for the Francis E. Walter Re-evaluation Study, told the LRSA in December, 2022 that the following information is still the most current status on the re-evaluation study: “We are analyzing the option to increase storage behind the dam (varying levels between elevation 1370 and 1392) but only during emergency drought situations. However, we have to conduct significant environmental and engineering analyses and modeling to determine if it’s possible. Because of that, we’ve requested additional funding and time to conduct those analyses. The study timeline and path forward depends on the result of the request (made to our headquarters.)”

Water Quality, Working Farms, and Wildlife Protection: On November 8th, most Carbon County residents voted yes on a nonpartisan referendum on their election ballots. The referendum is designed to help protect drinking water, lakes, streams, the Lehigh River, working farms, and wildlife habitat from excessive development. This referendum will raise up to \$10 million over a 20-year period. Those funds will be available to farmers and conservation interests to purchase land for public use and conservation purposes on a matching funds basis. The intent is to preserve and protect land and water resources that are critical to the environmental and economic health of Carbon County.

The Carbon County Water Quality, Working Farms, and Wildlife Habitat Protection Referendum passed due to the non-partisan efforts of Save Carbon County. To learn more about this nonpartisan group and their organization, please visit www.savecarboncounty.com.

My wife Carol and I are Mahoning Valley residents. Before settling here; I spent 28 years living all over the U.S., I noticed the negative impact that excessive development had on “all” the areas I called home. Development is inevitable and necessary, however it is important to plan thoughtfully, so that places that are dear to us and critical to the health of our environment and economy are conserved for our well-being and future generations. It is important to remember that nature-related tourism brings over \$35 million in economic benefits to our area each year. That’s according to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Water Management Plan for the Lehigh River. Even though the economic analysis portion of the water management plan is out of date and understates the economic value of nature-related tourism along the Lehigh River watershed; it provides a useful starting point for recognizing the need to preserve natural resources that are critical to Carbon County’s economic well-being and make it a special place to live.

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Soft Hackle Wet Flies

by George Maciag

Soft hackle wet flies have been around for a long time. Some publications in northern England have mentioned them in the 1800's. There are even some references going back as far as the Middle Ages. These flies are wingless and sparsely-tied. Some patterns are tied using only thread and a hackle feather. In Great Britain they are often called spiders. One reason that these flies work so well is that soft hackle fibers undulate in the water giving a life-like action. The feathers used in making these flies are obtained mostly from upland game birds like partridge, grouse, pheasant, etc.



Fishing these flies is very relaxing. I like to light up a cigar and then cast them slightly upstream and then let them drift. Be sure to mend the line during the drift. This keeps the flies from speeding up too much. As the flies approach the end of the drift they will swing across the current. When they reach a position below me I let them dangle for a few seconds before recasting. The trout will often hook themselves! Although I will use soft hackles in slow moving water, they work best in a nice medium speed run. Many wet fly fishermen like to use multiple fly presentations. Two or three flies spaced a few feet apart is a method worth trying. Remember that you must have confidence in whatever flies you fish. A lot of people give up if they don't catch anything after a few casts. Always give a new fly pattern or technique a fair trial!

Some of my favorite patterns are: partridge and orange, partridge and green, starling and purple, partridge and pheasant tail, and the march brown spider. A few of these are pictured in the photo that accompanies this article.

If you would like to explore this method of fly fishing, I recommend books and You Tube videos by the late Sylvester Nemes. Another good resource is Davy Wotton. He has many good DVDs and You Tube videos concentrating on wet fly tying and fishing.

Fishing is relaxing and wet flies will convince you of this. Remember this famous quote: **“Many men go fishing all of their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after.”** Henry David Thoreau

Drifting by Peggy Hale Bilbro

The best sleep is those thirty minutes after I should have gotten up, when I roll over and tell myself to take just one more minute before I face the chaos of the day. I'm not completely asleep, but I'm not awake either. Every muscle, every tendon, every vein and nerve melts into the bed. My mind slows. My heart opens and my breath gentles into a slow rhythm. I just lie there, being.

*above the rapids
pooled stillness
and shadows
under a river rock
rainbow trout*



Peggy Bilbro's roots are Western, but she has lived in the South for more than fifty years, which helps shape her writing. Her poetry reflects her lifelong interest in the large and small miracles of the world, from dust bunnies to stardust, from mouse holes to black holes. She finds pleasure in the creative challenge of translating those miracles into poetry. This tanka prose poem first appeared in *Ribbons*, Fall 2021. She admits that what fishing experience she has "was as a child, where my real goal was to sit on a rock in the middle of the river, watch the water go by" and see "the trout hanging deep in the shadows of my rock."



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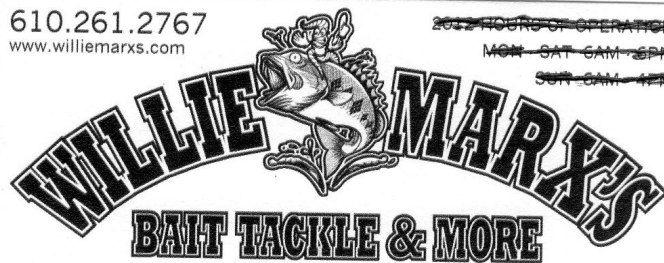
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Camp Fires

Steve Chuckra

Happy 2023! Wow, that number seems awfully high to someone who was born in 1967. That someone being yours truly. I find that I'm confronted with the task of writing an article for this edition of the LRSA newsletter, and I am contemplating the effects that passing time has on my selection of topics and writing style. It's normal for me to find ideas for articles I write during the drafting of these introductions. However, nothing is coming to mind but Christmas thoughts. Today is December 24th and it's 3 degrees outside. The only thing I'm currently thinking about is the outside temperature, our chickens, and the woodstove in our living room. Looking down at my hands, I'm also remembering the many camp fires and cold streams that contributed to all the wrinkles I see. I think a good topic for this newsletter might be campfires and fishing.

I've frequently celebrated the end to many well-spent hours of fishing by reliving the events of the day in front of a campfire. Regardless of the time of year, I've always found that ritual to be as rewarding as it is warming. Building a fire relaxes me and fills me with a sense of well-being, especially if I plan to cook on it or drink something nice in front of it. It's a delight of warmth, smell, and sound. Even campfire smoke elicits a whole palette of emotions and memories from past trips. A smoky campfire on a damp, drizzly day along a wilderness stream has often been my idea of heaven.

When I was four or five years old, my parents took me camping on the Lehigh River near Maple Island below the White Haven Tannery. That outing, I'm sure, included my first campfire. That's also the first time I can remember seeing the Lehigh. It seemed really big, crystal clear, and ominous to a five-year-old. I also thought it was very shiny and beautiful. I felt that I may never see another place quite as beautiful. During the decades that followed, I've had the good fortune to fish and build campfires all over the country. Many of those fires were as unique and memorable as the places I fished. The main differences, aside from the geographical settings, are the smells of indigenous wood. Hard woods in the East, ponderosa pine out West, and poplar or lodge pole pine in Alaska. Oh, and I need to specifically mention Pacific Northwest cedar, as it stands out as a favorite, and the smell of it burning makes me remember both camping and fishing adventures in the dark cedar forests around the Upper Skagit River in British Columbia.

I didn't camp on fishing streams very much until my military career took me to Alaska when I was 20 years old. I really enjoyed fishing for king salmon, rainbow trout, and grayling during the time I lived there. There was nothing quite as exciting as camping in the Alaskan wilderness, catching big wild kings, and drinking Moosehead Lager by the fire in mosquito and bear infested woods. I liked doing that so much I made it a point to return there every year during the July salmon runs whenever possible. My career provided me with opportunities to fish magical places in the Sierras, Rocky Mountains, high deserts, and even the Belgian Ardennes. I never built campfires in Europe, but I enjoyed many fires in our woodstove after returning home from fishing the Belgian streams. I suppose, that's how I satisfied my ritualistic fire building urges. I hadn't realized that until this very moment.

It's not really the passing of time that influences how we write or feel about things, it's the accumulation of experiences and memories during that time. Realizing that is a good way to bring a story about the outdoors back to Christmas. At a time when we contemplate and celebrate all that is good in our lives and those around us, it's very comforting to have a life-time's worth of exciting and warm memories. I hope the fires in your houses and hearts burn bright this year and we look forward to seeing you on the Lehigh in 2023.

Best Regards, Steve C.

Environmental News

Continued from page 2.

The Jim Thorpe Borough Counsel is currently considering a variation to environmentally protected zoning in order to permit housing development on land within 1,000 feet of Mauch Chunk Lake. The amendment would allow a nine home development in an area that has been protected as special use since plans for the lake were designed in 1972. This is a significant event in that the homes themselves would be built near the source of one of the Lehigh River's cleanest tributaries. Mauch Chunk Creek was recently designated an exceptionally high value stream by the PA Fish and Boat Commission and it is one of the coldest and cleanest tributaries in the Lehigh Watershed.

Unintentional wastewater discharges from the homes' septic systems could present significant threats to the lake and watershed. Additionally, the precedent set by the zoning variation would have lasting and damaging ramifications in allowing additional variations to protected zoning along the lake and elsewhere in Carbon County. Despite recommendations to adhere to the protective zoning designations by both the Carbon County and Jim Thorpe Planning Committees, the Borough Counsel is seriously considering the Mauch Chunk Lake zoning variation. The Jim Thorpe Borough Counsel plans to vote on this measure at its regularly scheduled meeting on January 12th.



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LRSA Overview: Steve Chuckra

Memberships: The LRSA had 485 members for the 2022 trout season. That is 51 fewer memberships than in we had in 2021.

Membership Processing: The LRSA recently updated the wording on the membership expiration reminders that our website automatically sends out each fall. The new reminders tell members to disregard the message if they have already paid dues for the upcoming year. The old reminders were confusing because they were not linked to our payment records and people who renew in the summer and fall receive them regardless of their payment status.

Additionally, some people become very concerned when their membership checks are not immediately cashed. LRSA membership processing is a volunteer position. Our volunteer processor works full-time and has many other important commitments. Please do not become overly concerned if your check is not cashed for a few weeks.

Grant Funding: This year the LRSA received grant funding for our Water Quality Monitoring Program from the Carbon County Community Foundation and Deer Park. We would like to express our sincere thanks to both organizations for their generous support of our water quality and environmental initiatives during 2022.

Thanks: Your involvement continues to makes a meaningful difference for those who respect and appreciate the Lehigh River. On behalf of the LRSA, thank you for your support.

We sincerely hope that all of you have a very good new year!

Steve

Best Regards,
Steve Chuckra



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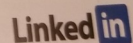
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LRSA

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The LRSA is a Non-Profit Organization Dedicated to the Restoration and Stocking of the Lehigh River.

Members and the public are welcome to join us at our meetings: 7pm on the last Tuesday of each month (except December) at Wegman's Café, 3900 W Tilghman St, Allentown. Due to Covid-19, please check our website for meeting updates and cancellations.

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LRSA MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

I want to support the Lehigh River Stocking Association and their efforts to restore and stock the Lehigh River.

Is this a renewal membership?

Name Address

City State Zip Phone

Email Age Email my newsletters Yes No

Basic Membership — \$30 All memberships include an annual newsletter subscription.

Silver Membership — \$60 You will receive an LRSA T-Shirt. Size: Sm Med Lrg XL XXL Don't send

Gold Membership — \$75 You will receive an LRSA Hat Don't send

Husband and Wife Membership — \$55 or **Family Membership** — \$65: Includes Husband, Wife, and Children < 16.

Platinum Membership — \$100 You will receive an LRSA Hat and T-Shirt or you will receive an LRSA Sweatshirt.

Circle your preference above and mark your size Sm Med Lrg XL XXL Don't send

Life Membership — \$300 You will not need to ever renew your LRSA Membership and you will receive a Life- Member Pin.

Conservation Membership \$75 You will receive an LRSA Hat and \$20 will go to the LRSA Conservation Program Don't send

Diamond Membership — \$500 Amount of membership you would like to direct towards LRSA Conservation Program

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