

2017 North Fork of Bens Creek

Cold Water Heritage Implementation Grant Final Report

December 2017

The Somerset Conservation District (SCD) held a public meeting to discuss the North Fork of Bens Creek Stream side buffer project on May 22, 2017 at the North Fork Golf and Tennis Club. Approximately twelve people were in attendance. Representatives from the golf course membership and staff, general public and Somerset Conservation District staff and board of directors were present. A discussion explaining the project need and scope of work was well received by all parties.

Project Summary

This project site was identified during the data gathering for the 2014 "North Fork of Bens Creek Cold Water Conservation Plan". The site was lacking quality stream side buffering and there was a need to re-establish riparian vegetation along the North Fork of Bens Creek and Heckman Hollow, throughout the corridor of North Fork Golf Course, Somerset County PA. Both streams hold populations of wild brook and brown trout and are important tributaries to Bens Creek. Two types of buffers were planted a native wild flower installation and a tree and shrub planting. The site selection for each of these buffers played into the needs of the golf course layout and membership requests. Sites for tree plantings were selected so they would not interfere with the game and benefit the stream with shade and buffering capacity at the same time.

Project Outcome

All of the District's goals for this project were met, although SCD would have liked to see the buffer extended wider in some areas with more trees planted. However given the situation the District considers this project a success and is grateful that the club members and management were willing to be a partner and assist with moving the project forward.

The trees and shrubs for this project were planted in the spring of 2017, however our project is not considered completed until the wildflower installation begins to germinate and becomes established in the spring of 2018.

Project Sustainability

The district and golf club membership will be committed to ongoing maintenance of the buffer to ensure the trees and wildflowers plantings are a success. Stressed plants and any potential bare spots within the wildflower buffers will be replaced or reseeded as necessary. Although the land is owned by the golf course the District and Mountain Laurel Trout Unlimited Chapter members have adopted this site as a "project worksite " that will be maintained in the future.

Future Projects

The District's buffer project has opened the doors to potentially complete future projects within the corridor of North Fork Golf Course. A few possibilities would be to assist with pond management to reduce the amount of water that would be needed to be drawn from the club's stream intake located on the North Fork of Bens Creek. Additionally there is a possibility to complete small scale fish habitat projects within this section of Heckman Hollow and the North Fork of Bens Creek that flow through the club's property.

Project Partners

This project was a success through the assistance of North Fork Golf Club members and management, volunteers from the Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited as well as the Somerset Conservation District staff, R.C. Newman LLC, Lichtenfels Nursury, INC. and Laurel Highlands Construction Supplies & Rentals.

The Mountain Laurel Chapter of Trout Unlimited donated \$500 cash towards the project and R.C. Newman LLC donated tree tubes and stakes, a value of \$180. Four MLTU chapter members assisted for 6 hours with tree planting. Five North Fork Golf Club members assisted with tree and shrub planting for 6 hours. Three Somerset Conservation District employees also assisted with tree and shrub plantings as well as the wildflower installation for a total of 20 hours. Total of 114 in-kind hours contributed to the installation of this buffer project, a value of \$2,280.00.

Accomplishments and Outcomes

The North Fork of Bens Creek Buffer Project consisted of planting trees, shrubs and wildflowers along 1440 linear feet of stream bank and total of .6 acres of streamside buffer was re-vegetated. The volunteer group planted 36 shrubs, 66 trees and installed .2 acres of a wildflower buffer. The total project cost for the planting installation, supplies and materials was \$5,886.97. Any remaining grant funds will be used to maintain the buffer by replacing dead, damaged trees, shrubs or wildflowers. With in-kind contributions the total value of the project was \$10,280.



**HECKMAN HOLLOW WITHIN THE CORRIDOR OF NORTH FORK COUNTY CLUB.
(PG. 43 NORTH FORK OF BENS CREEK COLD WATER PLAN)**



**THE NORTH FORK OF BENS CREEK WITH NORTH FORK GOLF COURSE CORRIDOR.
(PG. 53, NORTH FORK OF BENS CREEK COLD WATER PLAN)**



