

Reader's Corner

Chiques Creek Project Explained

Contributions to Lancaster Farming's "Reader's Corner" are welcome. The article that follows was written by Wendi List, a senior environmental studies student at Manheim Central.

Many years ago there was a wind that swept across the state of Pennsylvania and deposited a seed deep in the earth of Lancaster County. As the seed matured, its roots permeated the soil and made it fertile and fruitful. A man and his family then settled on this land and farmed it, he called himself a farmer. This fertile soil, the seed of agriculture, became a vital resource to the farmer and the nearby community that had since settled there, for through its fertility it provided the countrymen with food, clothing, shelter and security. Historically, the community depended on the farmer, and the farmer was dependent on the community.

Manheim developed as such a community. It was a small town surrounded by abundant farm land and protected by the people who depended on it. This interaction between the farmers and the community is a stable relationship even today. It is largely responsible for the organization of the Chiques Creek Watershed Project, for damages to both farm land and borough properties led to the initial movement of this existing environment project.

What is a watershed association such as the one beginning in Manheim? The

definition of such an organization is very simple, however, the implications of such an association are rather complex. First of all, a watershed comprises all the land that is drained into a specific stream or river. In Manheim, we are speaking of the Chiques Creek and the Rife Run tributary. The watershed association is entirely a local project, not a government project, with as little political procedure as possible. It is an active organization made up of the people who live where the problems exist. They are concerned individuals who realize we must not exploit our environment, but protect it from the deterioration that has existed for over two hundred years. We can no longer do what our ancestors have done when faced with the depletion of their resources: abandon our farms and homes and pioneer new lands. Too many people are gambling with the environment we presently occupy, and not enough people are striving to preserve it. An environment is a vulnerable process, if it is healthy and pleasant, just introduce a corrupting species and its natural balance will easily be destroyed by the human, animal and industrial wastes that contaminate its waters and soil, by the erosion and run-off when it blocks streams with the deposition of sediment, and by the indiscriminate commercial and residential development that defaces all aesthetic values. There will also exist the inability for the environment to support

wildlife and to store adequate water supply. The association functions to overcome the deterioration and protect our own interests and those of our descendants.

The watershed project is working to conserve our natural resources, to practice good environmental stewardship. It functions throughout the natural boundaries of the watershed, which could drain only a few hundred acres or many square miles. The area involved in our study is Manheim and northern Lancaster-Lebanon County. This is approximately 250,000 acres located above the present White Oak Dam, north of Manheim.

When the project was first undertaken, our basic challenge was erosion, flooding, and the protection of the flood plain, on which Manheim directly lies. The Manheim Borough Council first submitted an application appealing for assistance under the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to Pennsylvania's State Soil and Water Conservation Commission. The program's objectives were to prevent flood damage and to improve economic lease. The type of watershed treatment would be dam sites, and technical assistance was believed to be needed. There are many agencies and available help which can deal with the complex organization of a watershed association.

However, today the protection of our vital resources is so urgent, for every day the increasing population makes more demands on our environment, that the problems often exceed the scope of the agencies. The agency's power is often hindered by political restrictions and the

problems do not stop, for they have no political boundaries. Neither does an association to any great extent and it is for this reason that a citizens' action is more effective, and the agencies are only used for technological knowledge and for counseling.

Manheim Borough first held a public meeting before the submission of the application. This is a most important step in any organization, for its success is in direct proportion to the amount and degree of public involvement. At present the project is co-ordinating a conservation education program, involving environmental students. Students write news articles, some are constructing models of the watershed, others are collecting data such as water quality analysis, flow measurements, water table records, etc. A lot of this work is done by chemistry students. Students in the environmental class of Mr. Flick and Mr. Wenger at Manheim Central High School, were involved in a field trip to collect data for a county-wide survey on the Chiques Creek, material that will certainly be used for the association's educational goals.

The approach of the educational program is completely constructive, it is for improvement, a broad educational crusade. Hurricane Agnes was the decision-making event for this project. It clearly demonstrated the flood situation during the summer of 1972. The total damage cost was approximately 1.5 million dollars. These damaging floods must not continue. We must place proper checks on our environment or suffer the consequences.

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Youth Calendar

- Saturday, March 8**
York County 4-H Fun Night at the 4-H center in Bair - 7:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, March 12**
12-15th 4-H Expo at the Park City Shopping Mall.
- Friday, March 14**
Manheim FFA Banquet at the Manheim High School cafeteria beginning at 6:45 p.m.
- Upcoming Events**
- Tuesday, March 25**
Thomasville 4-H meeting at the 4-H Center in Bair.
- Wednesday, March 26**
Lampeter-Strasburg Future Homemaker's Easter Egg Hunt for the faculty's children at 4:00 p.m.

AT HOME

If you're an average homemaker your feet carry you about 10 miles a day and take 1500 tons of jolts. An active child takes 30,000 steps a day a distance equal to twelve miles. Most healthy people are comfortable in a house when the temperature is 68 degrees. About seventy percent of all homemakers suffer eye defects.

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