

Friends of the Upper Delaware River

April 12, 2010
For Immediate Release

For more information:
Dan Plummer, FUDR chairman
catskilldan@mac.com
1-607-363-7848

Rowe Cites Creeks Restoration Progress; Funding at \$150K; 2 Sand Sites Selected

A coalition of government entities and advocacy groups is making significant progress with a plan to restore Sands and Cadosia creeks, ravaged by the devastating floods of June 2006.

At an update on the project April 5 at Emory United Methodist Church in Hancock, town Supervisor Sam Rowe said a “good team” has been working hard to raise money and identify crucial spots on the creeks.

Friends of the Upper Delaware River, a stream advocacy group, put up the initial \$50,000 to jumpstart the project. That allowed the hiring of LandStudies Inc., a Lititz, Penn., firm that specializes in flood plain restoration, to study the problem and suggest solutions.

At the meeting, LandStudies president Mark Gutshall explained that the typical short-term flood “solution” of digging streams deeper and straighter, then fixing damaged bridges, culverts and roads, makes no financial sense. The sensible long-term solution is “preventative work,” he said, including building overflows into the creek systems so floodwater isn’t simply running down a shoot toward bridges and personal property when the inevitable heavy rain or snowmelt happens.

Rowe and another meeting attendee, Wayne Reynolds, the Delaware County public works commissioner, said they agree that preventative stream restoration is the most cost-effective plan.

Since the April 5 meeting, FUDR board chairman Dan Plummer said he was informed that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation has approved a \$50,000 matching grant for the creeks project under the organization’s Delaware Basin Habitat Restoration Fund.

In addition, Delaware County has committed \$42,500 in 2010 to work on two specific sites on Sands Creek that were identified by LandStudies.

“They are the start of what is expected to be a number of cooperative projects aimed at stabilizing the two watersheds for the benefit of all involved,” Commissioner Reynolds wrote in a work plan made public last week. “We believe that these projects will reduce damage done to the county’s infrastructure during extreme weather events in the valley.”

The first site on Sands Creek is at its confluence with an unnamed tributary about 400 feet upstream from the intersection of Dry Brook Road and County Route 67. Rock “spoils” will be moved to allow high water to spread into a floodplain.

The second site is the former property of long-time Sands Creek resident Bernard Wormuth. Reynolds said work will begin there this spring to restore the parcel to its natural state as a flood plain. Wormuth was a participant in the federal buyout program after losing his home and property during the 2006 flood.

The NFWF grant and the county funding commitment bring the total earmarked for the project to nearly \$150,000.

“Needless to say, we are elated,” said FUDR’s Plummer. He added that additional funding partners are being sought. Over time, the work on the two creeks is expected to cost much, much more, “but we’re now off to a great start,” he said.

About 25 people attended the April 5 meeting, including State Assemblyman Clifford Crouch. The session included a viewing of a film, produced by FUDR member Dave Morris, about the creeks restoration project.

In the film, Commissioner Reynolds says, “We thought we could teach Mother Nature a thing or two. Well, guess who got taught?”

Also at the meeting, Supervisor Rowe said he has been in discussion with landscape architect Kelly Gutshall, a co-owner of LandStudies Inc., concerning what he called an “environmental overhaul” of the Town of Hancock.

Gutshall displayed drawings and maps that identified 40 local points of interest that are largely undiscovered by the public.

Rowe said the overhaul could include pocket parks, a river walk, river access points, hiking trails and bike paths that all connect, forming a loop that begins and ends in Hancock.

Rowe said development of the town’s untapped recreational and ecotourism potential could open up many funding opportunities and draw new economic interest to the area.