



Shenango River Watchers, Inc.

FALL 2007 NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 20

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A Course of Action

By Becki Clemetson

To read many of the articles about the current practices of golf courses, you begin to get the feeling

you can't consider yourself a golfer AND an environmentally concerned citizen without also inviting the label of hypocrite. Well, no need to go list that precious set of golf clubs on ebay. Right in our backyard is one of the most environmentally friendly AND award winning golf courses in the country. Where is this wonder of wonders, you ask? At Tam O'Shanter, of course!

The breathtaking golf course has a long history in the Shenango Valley. T. Wade Walker opened Tam O'Shanter in 1929. The Kerins family purchased it in 1948. It remains in the Kerins family and is owned and operated by Richard and Paula Kerins who hope to someday pass it onto their children – Colleen, Christen, and Joseph. The environmentally friendly practices used at the golf course stem from Richard's deep sense of responsibility to the community that surrounds Tam O'Shanter. He doesn't just own the course, he has spent his life learning the best way to take care of the course so that not only will the golf course look beautiful but the wildlife around it will too. There are approximately 20,000 golf course superintendents nationwide, only about 10% are certified, meaning they have received advanced training in the best and safest methods of golf course management. Count Richard Kerins among the elite group of certified golf course

superintendents. (To get a better understanding of what it means to be a certified superintendent, please check out the web site for Golf Course Superintendents Association of America at www.gcsaa.org.)

Anyone who has driven along Route 18 near the Hermitage-West Middlesex border can't help but notice the beautiful rolling acres that make up Tam O'Shanter. Many golf courses look just as lush and green, but how that is accomplished is what sets this golf course apart from the others. Mr. Kerins uses his vast knowledge of the environment and the animals that call it home to make the most responsible decisions possible. For example, the grasses that are planted at Tam O'Shanter are hardier varieties that require less water and are more resistant to pest damage. In the rare cases that fungicides and herbicides are used, newer varieties that breakdown more quickly are used and in the smallest amount possible. The last time insecticides were used at

the golf course was in 2002! Just by knowing the life cycle of some of the pests that can pose a problem, Mr. Kerins has opted not to use any intervention at all. He told me of one case where a couple of brown patches showed up on the course. Upon inspecting the cause of the brown patches, he realized grubs were the culprits. He also knew that in just a couple of weeks, the

grubs would mature and move on, allowing the grass to return to its healthy looking state without the use of one drop of pesticides. Even the irrigation system that is used by Tam O'Shanter was selected for its efficiency of water use.



AUDUBON
COOPERATIVE
SANCTUARY
SYSTEM

While all of this is great for the community, a nationally recognized program has also taken notice. In 1996, Tam O'Shanter was recognized as a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary. That sounds like a very impressive achievement but what does it really mean? The whole program had a very simple and practical beginning. In the early 1990s, a golf course superintendent in upstate New York who wanted an environmentally friendly way to rid his course of skunks contacted Rod Dodson, President of Audubon International. After touring the site and others in the area, Mr. Dodson realized that the golf community at large really just needed some education in order to care for golf courses in a much more environmentally friendly way. After contacting the United States Golf Association (USGA), Mr. Dodson spent much of 1991 learning everything he could about the golf industry. He devised the Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program and USGA became the sponsor of the program.

There are six areas that golf courses can apply for certification: Environmental Planning, Wildlife & Habitat Management, Integrated Pest Management, Water Conservation, Water Quality Management, and Outreach & Education. In order for a golf course to be a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, certification must be achieved in all six areas. When Richard Kerins started the process of having Tam O'Shanter become a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, he was pleased to see that Tam O'Shanter already met much of the criteria. The most challenging part of the process of getting certified was documenting all that they did. Mr. Kerins showed me the very large binder that contained all the documentation that was required to apply for certification. I could easily see why it took him three years to complete all the paperwork. Just five years after Ron Dodson and the USGA started the Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary program, Tam O'Shanter was among the very first golf courses to achieve certification.

Obviously, Tam O'Shanter was doing a lot right just to become a part of such an elite group of golf courses, but since the golf course achieved certification, Mr. Kerins has welcomed individuals from two other groups who share his view of environmental responsibility to improve the natural habitat that is part of Tam O'Shanter. Jason Giddings conducted his Eagle Scout project at the golf course by improving the bird boxes, improving natural areas, and increasing public awareness mostly by updating and adding more information to the tee signs that point out the unique natural surroundings of the golf course. Also, a butterfly garden was added under the expertise of Master Gardner, Mary Legett. Mr. Kerins expressed his gratitude to these individuals that took the time to improve upon Tam O'Shanter's commitment to the environment. He said there are so many things he'd like to do, but just doesn't have time to tend to. So if you know of someone looking for a nature or community service project, please contact Mr. Kerins and see if the project could come to fruition on the grounds of Tam O'Shanter.

So as I said earlier, no need to give up the game of golf because the Shenango Valley is fortunate enough to have a golf course run by a superintendent that seems to embrace the philosophy so eloquently stated by Ron Dodson, "A golf course never stands alone – it is always part of a larger context. It is part of a community made up of humans, wildlife, plants, watersheds, and natural resources, and to survive, it must ensure that all of those parts are healthy."

My many thanks to Mr. Richard Kerins for taking time out of his very busy schedule to meet with me and provide me a greater understanding and appreciation for all that he does as Superintendent of Tam O'Shanter Golf Course.

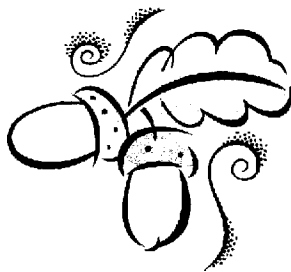
Remaining 2007 Events

September 15th -16th Water
Fowl Expo in Linesville, PA

September 16th – Munnell Run
Farm Day

(We have a food booth there
and need help with this also.)

October 3rd - Public Meeting of the SRW Board to be
held at the Hermitage VFD, Station 3 on Maple Drive
beginning at 7:00 p.m.



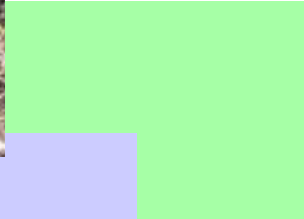
Water Analysis Project

Dr. Shane V. Smith (Vice-president Shenango River Watchers), Dr. Felicia P. Armstrong, and Dr. Thomas Diggins of Youngstown State University have begun working in cooperation with Shenango River Watchers to conduct water and sediment quality analyses in the Shenango River. The first project will be an initial survey of macroinvertebrate populations in the remediated (cleaned up) area of the former Westinghouse Electric Corporation Superfund site in the Shenango River to be conducted by Paul Robinette, under the supervision of Drs. Armstrong, Smith, and Diggins. This initial survey will be used as a baseline to monitor the future health and quality of the river in this area. Paul's research is being conducted as part of a Master of Science degree in Environmental Studies for the Department of Geological and Environmental Sciences at Youngstown State University. Paul's research is partially funded through an internship with Shenango River Watchers.

Clean Up April 14 & 21, 2007 Greenville Dump Site Along the Shenango



**PRE-
CLEANUP**



CLEANUP





**OVER 230
VOLUNTEERS**



**OVER
226,000 LBS.
OF TRASH
REMOVED**



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POST CLEANUP



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New Business Member

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 Slovak Home

Membership Renewals

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 Ken Ammann
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 Lyle Bieber
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 FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!!!!**

Membership Form

Yes, I would like to support Shenango River Watchers!

I have enclosed my donation of:

- _____ \$10 Individual Membership
- _____ \$20 Individual Membership + T-shirt
 (Please choose size)
- _____ \$25.00 Business Membership
- _____ \$35.00 Business Membership + T-shirt
 (Please choose size)
- _____ Other

 Name

 Address

 Phone

I want to help with:

- Clean Up Days
- Watershed Research Committee
- Financial Planning
- Fundraising
- Newsletter
- Water Testing
- Food Preparation for Clean Up Days

_____ Yes, send me a t-shirt. I've enclosed a donation (\$20 Individual; \$35 Business) and have picked my size below!

Size selection:

- Small Medium Large Extra Large



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SRW Sixth Annual Banquet

The first meeting of the Banquet Committee will be held on October 25, 2007 at Jalisco Restaurant, 7 pm, Hermitage. Contact the SRW office at 724-342-5453 for further information. All are welcome in the planning of the Sixth Snnual SRW Banquet.

MARK MARCH 29, 2008 ON YOUR CALENDARS FOR THE 6TH ANNUAL BANQUET
