

# Conewago Creek Watershed

## WHAT IS A WATERSHED?

A watershed is the area over which all rain and snowmelt drains before it enters a water body such as a stream, river, pond, lake, wetland or ocean. No matter where you are, you are in a watershed!

## HISTORY

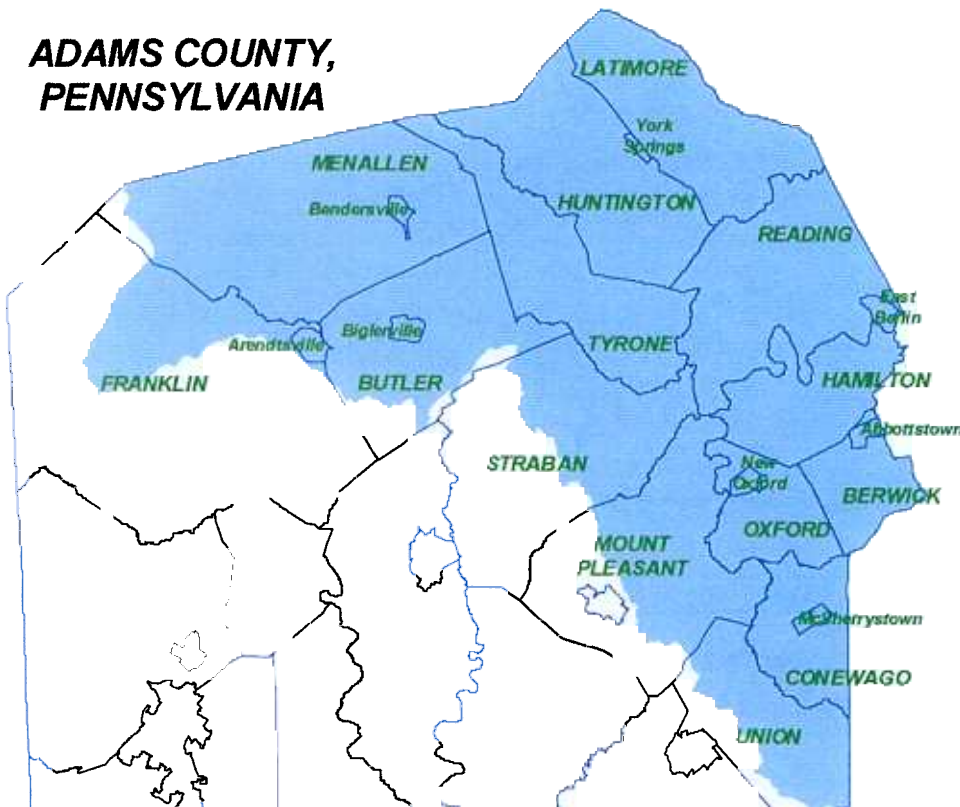
Conewago is an Indian word (either Lenape or Iroquois) meaning "at the place of rapids". In 1734, William Penn authorized licenses to people wishing to take up land west of the Susquehanna River. About 20 licenses were issued for about 8,000 acres of land along the upper reaches of the Conewago Creek and its tributaries in the northern part of what is now Adams County. Many of these licenses were granted to Scotch-Irish immigrants. The first settlers moved into this area because it was at the intersection of two important trails; one



The Conewago Creek as it passes through the scenic Narrows northwest of Arendtsville.

originating in Baltimore and leading to Carlisle and the north; the other starting in Philadelphia and leading westward and southward to and beyond the Potomac river. In 1737 was the first survey of the disputed land between Lord Baltimore and William Penn. The strip of disputed land was called "Little Conewago". The disputed territory afforded a natural sanctuary for Catholics who were being persecuted for their religious beliefs in Maryland. The border between MD and PA was in dispute for many years before the survey by Mason and Dixon.

## ADAMS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



The Conewago Creek's headwaters flow from South Mountain, a narrow tongue of the Blue Ridge Mountains that extends into Pennsylvania. The Conewago Creek then travel east through York County where it then joins the Susquehanna River which eventually flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

## **THE WATERSHED**

The Conewago Creek is a 510 square mile watershed with the majority of it located in Adams and York counties. **Tributaries**, or streams that flow into the Conewago Creek include the South Branch Conewago, Bermudian Creek, Latimore Creek, Opossum Creek, Quaker Run, and Beaver Creek, Beaverdam Creek, Brush Run, Swift Run, and Markle Run. Tyrone, Huntington, Latimore, Reading, Hamilton, Oxford, Conewago, Berwick, Menallen, Butler, Starban, Mt. Pleasant, and Union townships are located within the watershed. The watershed also includes the boroughs of Arendtsville, Bendersville, Biglerville, York Springs, East Berlin, New Oxford, Abbottstown and McSherrystown. The Conewago Creek and its tributaries serve as the boundary for many of these townships and boroughs.

## **PROBLEMS**

According to the 2000 census, Adams County's population increased 16.6% from 1990 to 2000, making it the fourth fastest growing county in Pennsylvania. Part of this rapid growth is occurring in the Conewago Creek Watershed.

As the population grows, the human impacts upon Rock Creek intensify. Impacts on a watershed include **point source pollution** and **non-point source pollution**. Point source pollution or pollution that results from an identifiable end-of-pipe discharge such as industrial or municipal sewage wastes. Non-point source pollution which is not as easy to identify, measure and control, but is currently the leading cause of degradation within the Chesapeake Bay. Non-point sources of pollution include residential and agricultural runoff, urban **stormwater runoff** (water that drains from constructed surfaces such as parking lots, roads, roofs, driveways, sidewalks and heavily compacted soils) and increased erosion and subsequent sedimentation from poor management of construction sites.

Segments of Conewago Creek have already been identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as impaired by nutrients, siltation, changes in stream flow, changes in the water temperature, changes in stream habitat, stormwater runoff, and surface mining.

## **THE WATERSHED ALLIANCE of ADAMS COUNTY**

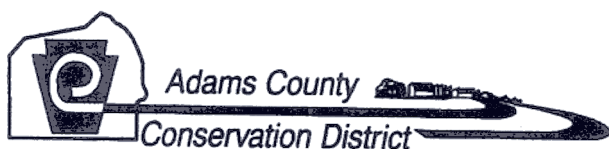
The Watershed Alliance of Adams County is a member based non-profit organization whose mission is to improve and protect water resources in Adams County. This is accomplished through:

- Conducting educational and informational programs.
- Promoting a sustainable watershed resource for the future through encouraging sound water management and land-use practices.
- Establishing a county-wide volunteer water quality monitoring program and database .
- Identifying and sponsoring sound watershed improvement projects.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ALLIANCE for SENIOR INVOLVEMENT**

The Environmental Alliance for Senior Involvement or EASI has been collecting water quality information since the Summer 2000 to establish baseline data, or information on the current or existing conditions of our streams in Adams County. EASI uses a standardized protocol with the testing of seven physical and chemical indicators of water quality including; pH, conductivity of water, temperature, alkalinity, dissolved oxygen, nitrates, phosphates, and sulfates. A habitat assessment and water quality rating based on **benthic macroinvertebrates** (aquatic insects) is also part of the protocol.

Although the Adams County Chapter of EASI is sponsored by the Adams County Office, participants of all ages are welcome.



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