

# Rock 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!

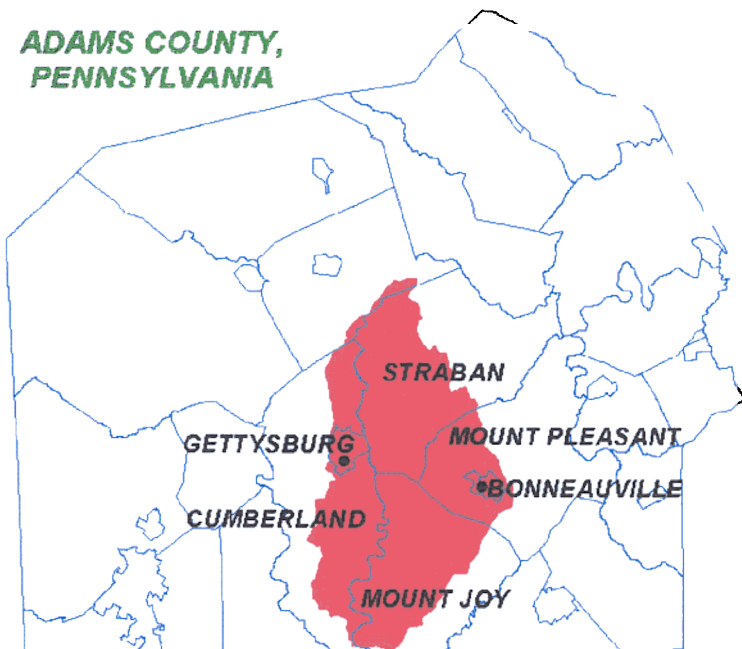
## THE WATERSHED

Rock Creek is a 63 square mile watershed. **Tributaries**, or streams that flow into Rock Creek, include White Run, Littles Run, Stevens Run, Chicken Run, Plum Run, and Lousy Run. Rock Creek serves as the eastern boundary of Cumberland Township and separates it from Straban and Mt. Joy



Plum Run at Devil's Den featuring the diabase boulders for which Rock Creek was named.

## ADAMS COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA



Townships. The watershed includes all of Bonneauville, a portion of Gettysburg, and parts of Straban, Mt. Joy, Cumberland and Mt. Pleasant Townships. The watershed also includes the planned community of Lake Heritage.

## HISTORY

Rock Creek joins the Marsh Creek near the Maryland border to form the Monocacy

River. The Monocacy River eventually enters the Potomac River which then flows into the Chesapeake Bay.

The first known reference to the creek by its current name is shown on a survey draft of the Manor of Maske for the William Penn family in 1766. It was then referred to as Rock Run. It was named for the large boulders that are still commonly found in the watershed. The diabase boulders, known locally as "Gettysburg granite" or trap rock, were formed 180 million years ago during the Triassic Period when the continents were pulling apart and the Atlantic Ocean was forming. Molten rock was forced into the cracks of the existing shale, siltstone and sandstone. The molten rock cooled to form the existing boulders we see today in areas like Devil's Den, Culp's Hill, and Big and Little Round Tops.

Although there are no known early Native American settlements, Rock Creek was used by several tribes as fishing and hunting ground. Spear and arrowheads can still be found on the banks of the creek.

One of the first mills serving the area was built along the Rock Creek. It later became known as McAllister Mill. McAllister Mill was one of the first stops on the Underground Railroad for slaves escaping northward. Ironically, during the Civil War, the mill served as a Confederate Hospital. The largest Civil War field hospital for the Battle of Gettysburg was located between White Run and Rock Creek. Wounded soldiers who were laid along the banks were swept to their deaths from high waters when a severe storm struck the area on July 5, 1863.

## **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 Rock Creek Watershed.

As the population grows, the human impact upon Rock Creek intensifies. Effects on a watershed include **point source pollution** and **non-point source pollution**. Point source pollution is pollution that results from an identifiable discharge such as industrial or municipal sewage wastes. Non-point source pollution is not as easy to identify, measure and control, but it 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 Rock Creek have been already identified by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection as impaired by excess nutrients, siltation, changes in stream flow and changes in the temperature of the stream.

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

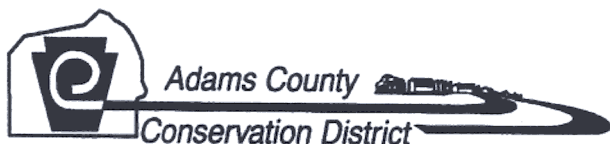
The Watershed Alliance of Adams County is a member based non-profit organization whose mission is to improve and protect water resources in Adams County. This is accomplished through:

- 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 for Aging, participants of all ages are welcome.



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