



MTLC



MIDDLETOWN TOWNSHIP LAND CONSERVANCY

Save Open Space

Newsletter

Spring 2005

PO Box 4103, Elwyn, PA 19063

www.mtlc.org

The Fight to Safeguard our Drinking Water Continues

Last year at this time, MTLC was facing the greatest challenge of its 24 year existence. An experienced, determined, and well-financed developer, the Henderson Group, had in hand Middletown Township's approvals for building a sprawling office complex on Elwyn's Mineral Hill tract. The Henderson proposal is destructively intensive, requiring almost total clear cutting of the 79-acre site, extensive cut and fill grading, all to accommodate 375,000 square feet of office space in three buildings and 1600 parking spaces.

Why does MTLC oppose such intensive development of Mineral Hill? At first it was only our instinctive belief that the inevitable resulting degradation of the Ridley Creek watershed, once accomplished, could never be reversed. We didn't want our source of water, the Ridley Creek, to be despoiled, as the neighboring Crum Creek has been despoiled. We now know from the testimony of expert witnesses that that is exactly what would happen, and that Mineral Hill is the last and perhaps the best exceptional quality water to flow into the Ridley Creek, entering immediately upstream of the intakes of the Media waterworks.

Unfortunately, not a single elected official; township, county, or state has ever given us any hope that Henderson's development of Mineral Hill could or should be stopped. Initially it appeared that MTLC would be acting by itself in any further opposition to Henderson's project. Not quite! Over the years MTLC has worked with other local grass root organizations on projects of mutual interest and now they would be joining with us, along with statewide organizations, in continued opposition to Henderson's project.

Along with local approvals for projects, developers must have PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) permits when any waterways or wetlands, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant, are disturbed. The Mineral Hill tract is laced with literally thousands of feet of such waterways and numerous small wetlands, all of which would be obliterated by Henderson's project. Members of MTLC, The Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association, Upper Providence for Open Space, Delaware County Safe Drinking Water Coalition and many other concerned private citizens literally flooded PA DEP with letters objecting to the Henderson development (and two other developments) requesting a public hearing. We were successful! The PA DEP granted a very unusual first of its kind public hearing on three projects: Henderson in Middletown Township, the Lavin and Creighton tracts in Upper Providence Township, yielding to our contention that the combined effects of these three projects so close to the intake of the Media waterworks must be considered together and not separately. (See article on the PA DEP Public Hearing.)

Good news! Of the three projects being considered for PA DEP permits at the combined hearing, one, the Lavin tract (former Brookwood Nursing Home) will not be developed, but has been purchased as open space by Upper Providence Township, thanks primarily to the marvelous efforts of Upper Providence for Open Space (UPOS) and their dedicated and determined board of directors and members. Further, the PA DEP has not and will not issue permits to the Henderson Group or the Creighton tract developers as submitted, and has directed them to redesign them and resubmit. MTLC and others are closely following developments, probing, questioning, demanding updates and current status reports from the bureaucracies involved to prevent a "backdoor fait accompli" being presented to which we might not have time to respond.

Annual Members Meeting: Wednesday, May 18. See page 3 for details.

PA DEP Public Hearing

On April 15, 2004, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) held an unusual hearing at Penncrest High School. The hearing was unique in that it was perhaps the first time PA DEP collected simultaneous testimony on three related development projects: Mineral Hill, the Creighton Tract and the Lavin Tract. More than 100 people attended and twenty-two witnesses spoke against the developments; the only person who spoke in support was the attorney for the Creighton's.

There were many reasons people were motivated to speak at the hearing. Among them were the need to protect the water supply, the desire to preserve an historically significant and geologically unique site, concern about the potential destruction of one of the few remaining vernal pools in Delaware County and the desire to maintain our quality of life.

Members of MTLC, Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association (CRC), Upper Providence for Open Space (UPOS) and Delaware County Safe Drinking Water Coalition (DCSDWC) were not only among the speakers, but these organizations spent considerable sums obtaining expert testimony. Among the experts who made presentations were Stroud Water Research, macroinvertebrate population; Cahill Associates, stormwater management; Peter Talbot, Esq., steep slope ordinances; ecologist James Schmid, stream and wetland delineation and Matt Royer, attorney from Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture), who represented the Media Wetlands Coalition formed by MTLC, CRC and UPOS, regarding regulatory issues.

Some quotes from the hearing:

"... when you examine the site plan and the associated storm water management plan... you conclude that it's a disaster." Thomas Cahill, water resources consulting engineer, Cahill and Associates.

"...the current design cannot be approved without significant degradation of exceptional value wetlands because those site plans are grossly inadequate..." James Schmid, Consultant Ecologist, President of Schmid & Company.

"... I plan to retain my materials and plans for this site. I plan to show them to future generations of students at the University of Pennsylvania as a spectacular example of how NOT to develop a site plan." Robert Giegengack, professor of Earth and Environmental Science, University of Pennsylvania.

"... the DEP has in existing laws and regulations all it needs to make the decisions it must make to protect our water supply now and forever." Fred LeSturgeon, past president MTLC

MTLC views the outcome of the hearing a success, although our efforts must continue in order to protect the source of our drinking water - the Ridley Creek. After the hearing, The Lavin Tract was purchased by Upper Providence Township; the plans for Mineral Hill were withdrawn and revised; the Creighton plans were determined by the PADEP to be deficient and in need of revision.

Although Henderson's revised plans for Mineral Hill have once again been approved by Middletown Township Council, as of this writing, they have not yet been submitted to the PA DEP for approval.

This is where you come in! We believe that MTLC and our partners were successful at the PA DEP hearings because we were able to hire expert witnesses and legal counsel, a move which has given us a clout and presence before regulatory bodies that we wouldn't otherwise have. Because Henderson is now ready to resubmit a modified proposal, we need these expert witnesses again. We need your continued support as members of MTLC and, especially, for whatever contribution you can afford so that we can continue to effectively resist Henderson's development proposal. Please help us protect the Ridley Creek watershed, our source of drinking water!

Please use the enclosed form to renew your membership or to join MTLC and/or to make a

contribution.

MTLC TO HOLD 25th ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday, May 18, 2005

7:00 PM

Middletown Township Building

Guest Speaker: Dave Schnelle

Topic: What We Can Do about the Deer Tick Problem in Middletown Township

The guest speaker at this year's 25th annual MTLC meeting is Dave Schnelle, who is employed by the DuPont company in their consultant engineering group. Dave and his wife, Janie, a township supervisor in London Britain Township, Chester County have been working to find a solution to the deer tick problem in their area for the last 7 years. The entire Schnelle family – Dave, Janie and their three children had been diagnosed with Lyme disease. They did extensive research in an attempt to solve the problem. In May 2004, they initiated an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) control program targeted at the black-legged tick or deer tick (*Ixodes scapularis*) population. The program is designed specifically to reduce the tick population in order to protect the general public from Lyme and associated tick-borne diseases. It is carefully designed to minimize the impact on the deer and other small mammalian populations. Public safety is of paramount importance in the design of the program.

Lyme disease is the most prevalent vector-borne human disease in the United States. Since 1982, when Lyme disease first became a reportable disease, more than 17,730 cases have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC 2000). The actual number of cases is estimated to be at least three times that officially reported (Campbell et al. 1997). More than 90% of Lyme disease cases occur in the Northeastern states, between Massachusetts and Maryland.

The causative agent of Lyme disease, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, is transmitted by the black-legged tick. It is in the highly endemic areas in the Northeast and upper Midwest where a combination of factors including tick density, abundance of vertebrate host species (white-tailed deer), and local landscape features are related to a very high degree of risk of Lyme disease in humans (Barbour and Fish 1993). The recent emergence of Lyme disease as the major vector-borne human disease in the United States can be traced to ecological changes in the Northeastern and Midwestern states (Spielman et al. 1986) and a rebound of white-tailed deer populations from near extinction at the end of the nineteenth century to the high population densities of the species that occur throughout much of their range today. Because there is a positive correlation in space and time between the density of deer populations and the abundance of deer ticks (Spielman et al. 1985), the white-tailed deer has been described as a "keystone" host (Barbour and Fish 1993) of deer tick populations.

Although various mammals such as raccoons, opossums, cats, and dogs are parasitized by adult ticks, over 95% of female deer ticks are estimated to feed on deer (Wilson et al. 1990). Schmidtman and Carroll (1997) observed that 89% of the females and 88% of the male deer ticks feeding on deer were attached to the outside of the ears, head, neck and brisket. Effective exploitation of the dependent relationship of deer ticks upon white-tailed deer by preventing adult ticks from feeding on deer should result in a dramatic reduction in tick density for all stages and, consequently, a reduction in Lyme disease risk.

A substantial body of literature reports research on tests of a variety of methods used to control deer ticks and reduce the risk of tick-borne disease in the Northeast. However, various problems such as adverse environmental impacts, risks of insecticide exposure to humans and pets, high cost, and inconsistent efficacy, have limited their impact upon the incidence of Lyme disease. Management technologies that have been explored to control deer ticks include habitat modification, area-wide acaricide applications, acaricide self-treatment of the rodent reservoir of Lyme (*B. burgdorferi*), white-tailed deer density reduction, and deer exclusion by fencing. These techniques have met with limited success. However, large-scale changes, such as tree thinning, vegetation removal and burning are incompatible with the privately owned and managed residential properties characteristic of many hyperendemic communities.

An acaricide treatment directly delivered to deer which will prevent feeding of adult stage ticks (Pound et al. 1994, 1996; Sonenshine et al. 1996) appears to be a strategy with great potential for having wide-scale impact upon Lyme disease risk. Effective treatment would result in the equivalent of eliminating deer as hosts for adult deer ticks, resulting in the loss of reproductive ability for the population and elimination of all stages within the two to three years encompassing the natural life span of one generation.

Mount et al. (1997) developed a computer model, which simulates deer tick populations and Lyme disease risk. This model has been used to simulate the effects of all tick control technologies available for deer ticks, employed individually or in combination. Of all the control technologies simulated, acaricide self-treatment of deer was the most efficacious technology for reducing the abundance of deer ticks in long-term management programs over large areas. Simulations revealed that this approach would be more effective than deer removal alone.

Agricultural Research Service entomologists at the Knippling-Bushland U.S. Livestock Insects Research Laboratory in Kerrville, TX have developed a passive topical treatment system called the "4-poster" (Pound et al. 1994). The device is designed to selectively apply an acaricide, such as amitraz or perithium, directly to the heads, ears, and necks of deer through contact with vertical applicator rollers while they feed on corn dispensed from a central storage bin. Through grooming, acaricide is transferred to other body areas such as the brisket, axillae, groin, and vent. Amitraz is highly toxic to ticks, but it has low mammalian toxicity, consequently, there are no restrictions associated with residue in treated animals. Deer may be consumed the day of treatment.

By Steve Wood (This article was adapted from materials available at <http://tickkiller.com>)

To learn more about what YOU can do to reduce the risk of Lyme disease in our community come to the MTLC Annual meeting on Wednesday, May 18, 7:00 PM at the Middletown Township Building.

Refreshments will be served following the presentation. The meeting is open to the public.

R-3 to West Chester: A Good Idea Whose Time Has Come – Again!

The financial problems of SEPTA are well known to all of us and, at this time, no long-term solution has been proposed by Pennsylvania's legislators to provide a permanent funding source. So it remains "business as usual" with stopgap funding to continue existing services and delay rate increases.

The current state of financial affairs at SEPTA does not mean that we should give up our effort to promote the resumption of passenger service to West Chester on the R-3 line. Indeed, the more publicity we can generate through newspaper interviews, the petition drive and by publicly voicing support for restoring the R-3 line to its original terminus, the greater the likelihood that our state Senators and Representatives will take notice and help to make it happen.

Several thousand signatures were obtained last year on petitions that urge restoration of R-3 train service and MTLC members and supporters continue to collect signatures. With warmer weather and outdoor community events on the near horizon, we urge others to take advantage of the many opportunities to collect signatures and spread the word.

For more information or to obtain petitions and posters, contact Susan at (610) 565-4903 or tgsg@erols.com

Gardening in Middletown *by Jacqueline DeJesse*

Middletown Township is a great place to garden. With so many mature trees it is easy to improve the soil to grow just about anything. Our tree leaves are the treasure.

Any garden begins with the soil. In this area there is clay mixed with organic matter. Mix in those composted and shredded leaves before you plant. This enriches the soil, loosens the compacted clay and allows the plant to breathe. Mulch your plants to conserve water and keep down the weed population.

The tried and true method of putting shrubs or small trees as background, some perennials in front for splashes of color and edging in the front with annuals keeps color going throughout the season. Some tips I have learned over the years about gardening include:

When planting perennials, leave a little space for them to expand. After 2 to 5 years, dig and divide, so the clump doesn't die out in the middle.

Since perennials bloom only once during the season, cut them back after blooming so they don't look so leggy. My favorite perennials are daylilies because they really require little care. Plant them in at least half day sun, water, and you will be rewarded with beautiful blooms in July when little else is blooming. There are literally thousands of varieties to choose from in form and color. Remove spent blooms to keep the bed tidy.

Annuals are fun flowers. Mix and match colors and varieties to create your own vision. I like to edge my beds with dwarf ornamental pepper plants. The purple flowers and peppers last a long time and then the peppers turn red changing the look at the end of the season. You can also toss other vegetable plants in with your flowers creating an interesting look that you can eat!

Prune your trees and shrubs but be careful to prune when recommended. The safest time to prune a shrub is right after it blooms. That way, you are not taking off next year's flowers by mistake. Forsythias respond well to hard pruning but azaleas do not. Consult a reference if you are not sure.

You can move plants quite easily, even big ones. For example, azaleas are shallow rooted so don't be afraid to move them if they are not in the right spot or they have overgrown their spot. Change your beds, and have fun with it.

Plant spring flowering bulbs behind perennial clumps. The bulbs will flower first and then the new perennial foliage and flowers will hide the bulb foliage.

I also like to dig some of my tropical houseplants into my beds. Pull them out of their pot in mid May, spread out the roots a little, and drop them in a hole amended with shredded leaves and watch them flourish. Don't forget to retrieve them in the fall! Summer tropicals that can be saved include banana trees, lantana, hibiscus, plumeria, passionflower, and mandevilla.

I feed with milorganite and/or osmocote once or twice a season. I don't use pesticides because there are many organic alternatives available.

You get a new slate every year. Create your vision, water, and enjoy the beauty you have created in your own space in beautiful Middletown.

Chester-Ridley-Crum Watersheds Association Upcoming Events

8th Annual Streams Cleanup will be held on Saturday, May 7th, from 9 AM to 11:45 AM. Free T shirts and a picnic for volunteers will follow at Rose Tree Park at 12 Noon.

Last year, volunteers cleaned up 30 sites along all three creeks, which included two sites in Middletown, for a total weight of over 12 Tons. One group of volunteers, headed by MTLC Board President Steve Wood, cleaned up a section of Chester Creek along Mt. Alverno Road. Steve has volunteered again to head a group this year. To work with Steve at this site, contact him at 610 566-4284 or thewoods@aol.com

For a list of cleanup sites, or for a site assignment, contact Rich Erickson at erickson3@comast.net or 610 565-6691, or the CRC office 610 892-8731, crc@nni.com

Homeowners Workshop: Alternative Creek Friendly Ways to Care for Your Lawn and Property

Tuesday, May 17, 7:00 PM at the Middletown Township Building. Lecture Topics include: lawn care, plant care and plant selection. For more information, contact Anne Murphy at CRC 610 892-8731 or crc@nni.com

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******* URGENT NEWS UPDATE *******

On Monday, March 14, Middletown Township Council approved revised plans submitted by the Henderson Group for the development of the Elwyn property known as Mineral Hill. The location of this project is directly upstream of the water intake at the Aqua PA waterworks, formerly Media waterworks.

As of this writing, the plans have not been submitted to the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).

To be certain that our water supply will remain pure, we will again need to hire experts to examine the new plans, perform field studies and advise us on a course of action. The experts we hire must be paid. We are grateful for the generous contributions we received in 2004 and look forward to your continued support. Your dues and contributions will help us protect our drinking water supply.

******* PLEASE JOIN AND CONTRIBUTE TO MTLC *******

**Make checks payable to MTLC
Mail to: P.O. Box 4103
Elwyn, PA 19063**

I would like to join/rejoin MTLC and have enclosed: \$_____

____ Individual \$15 ____ Family \$25 ____ Supporter \$50 ____ Benefactor \$100 and up

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ email: _____

I would like to become more involved with the projects of MTLC. Please have someone contact me.

Middletown Township Land Conservancy is a non-profit 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.
All donations are tax deductible.