

Funding woes beset Centre County group that monitors stream quality



Centre Daily Times file

The Centre County Pennsylvania Senior Environmental Corps monitors more than 45 sites on county streams. Currently, they are in the running for up to \$5,000 in grant money to continue their work.

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A volunteer group of environmentalists who monitor stream quality in Centre County is in jeopardy of losing funding, but the community has an opportunity to help.

The Centre County Pennsylvania Senior Environmental Corps, an organization with 60 active members, has been monitoring the chemical, physical, biological quality of water in 19 streams at 46 different sites and reporting any significant changes in streams at risk of damage from Marcellus Shale gas drilling since

2002, said president Louis Mayer.

But last year, the group — which has been grant-funded from various public and private sources through nonprofit Nature Abounds — didn't receive a grant needed to purchase instruments and chemicals for monitoring the streams, said Mayer.

"Grant money for Growing Greener has just been really cut," he said.

In 2017, the state Department of Environmental Protection awarded \$25.1 million in Growing Greener grants, which aim to protect Pennsylvania's water sources using state and federal funding. Last year, DEP only issued \$20.7 million in

Growing Greener grants. Nature Abounds, said Mayer, doesn't have much money coming in to fund stream monitoring.

CCPaSEC provides a completely volunteer service that is beneficial to other organizations, he said, because they can track any changes in the watersheds and alert the county watershed specialist if they need to work with DEP on a corrective action plan.

"Without that (monitoring), as development occurs and other situations occur, there will be no way of telling or proving that there has been a change of water quality over a period of time," Mayer said.

CCPaSEC is divided into 13 different teams, which monitor

the watersheds of Spring Creek, Penns Creek and Beech Creek in Centre County. They also perform a macroinvertebrate study twice a year to track the population of different aquatic species, like dragonflies, crayfish and aquatic worms, he said.

Volunteers are interested in water quality and water supply, he said, because it affects everything from drinking water to trout fishing.

Because of the increased competition for federal and state funding, said Mayer, Nature Abounds encouraged local chapters of senior environmental corps to apply for grants on their

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own.

New Pig Corporation, based in Tipton, offers a grant program to support watershed restoration, conservation and protection. Along with four other grant applications, CCPa-SEC grant writer and mem-

ber Gary Moorman applied for a PIG Difference grant, which awards up to \$5,000 per project out of \$25,000 annually. Each project that makes it to the final round gets opened to public voting, where any project that gets at least 10% of the

vote receives a cut of the grant money.

CCPaSEC's project, called Baseline Data for Water Protection, is currently in second place with 682 votes. Voting is open until May 5. To vote for CCPaSEC, visit www.pigdifference.org/votenow.

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