



From the Branch President . . .

Having just come off of a successful Resource Operations Workshop this fall, I can say that it is a joy returning to the position of President of the Park Resource Branch.

I first served as President from 2007 to 2009; I now serve a second term, taking over the helm from Rob Lewis, who has done a great job with the Branch, and now moves on to a position on the Society's Executive Committee.

Our Branch Executive Committee often runs like clockwork, with many long-time members doing their job punctually and professionally. Judy Houck, our Recording Secretary, often has our Executive Committee meeting minutes to us the afternoon of the same day we met, or assembled via conference call.

We are planning to keep the fall, 2016 Resource Operations Work-

(Continued on page 2)

Resource Op Workshop '15 Continues to Impress

The annual Resource Operations Workshop, held at Cabela's in Hamburg on October 22, 2015 was well-attended by 66 park managers and maintenance staff. As has been the case with past workshops, The Branch hosted this with three educational tracks: Chainsaw Safety, led by George Gress of The Nature Conservancy/Acopian Preserve; Turf Maintenance Updates, by Tanner Delvalle, Horticulture Extension Educator for Schuylkill and Berks County; and Vehicle &



Corporal Richard Koontz, from the PA State Police's Commercial Vehicle Safety Division, does a demonstration field evaluation of a towed trailer during the Resource Operations Workshop sponsored by the PRPS Park Resource Branch on October 22.

(Continued on page 2)

CALENDAR

MARCH 13 - 16 Annual Conference, held at Seven Springs Mountain Resort, Champion, PA. The 2016 theme is "Survivor" with a tagline of "Outdoors, Outplay, Outstanding". Visit PRPS' website now to download a Registration Brochure.

APRIL 5, 19, 26 Playground Safety Workshops, held by PRPS Certified Playground Safety Inspectors. The locations and (instructors) are as follows: April 5: Plymouth Township Community Center (Rick Carbo); April 19: South Middleton Township (Kurt Uhler); April 26: Location to be determined (John Balicki). Contact the PRPS Office in March for a flyer.

APRIL 22 Spring Work Day, at the PRPS Office in State College. Help maintain the Society's grounds and advance objectives of the PRPS Landscape Plan. The typical work day is from 9 AM to 3 PM. Lunch and many specialized tools are provided. Come with clothing for outdoor work and some hand tools. Raindate of April 29.

From the Branch President

(continued from front page)

shop fresh, with new topics.

One of the topics that is surely on everyone's mind right now is winter storm response. If your agency is like mine at South Middleton Township, you are doing double-duty as an auxiliary service to the Public Works Department in snow removal. Or perhaps you have a primary role. It seems like there should be a roundtable on this topic (including deployment strategies, new chemicals, and high-tech tracking options), which would be very timely held in late October, before the storms are upon us.

In any event, give us your feedback on desired training and recommended speakers. Our Branch is here to help provide for your educational and recreation needs.



Kurt Uhler

Resource Op Workshop

(continued from front page)

Trailing Laws of PA, by State Police Corporal Richard Koontz.

All tracks featured morning classroom instruction, coupled with afternoon field demonstrations. For the Chainsaw Safety session, Gress demonstrated a tree-felling and clearing work at the PA Fish and Boat Commission's property at Kernsville Dam. For the turf track, Dellvalle took attendees on a 'pest walk', to identify turf threats on the grounds surrounding Cabela's.

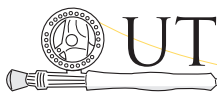


Koontz's field session included a mock inspection, as would be performed at a weigh station, of a South Middleton Township truck, trailer, and commercial mower. The inspection of chain securing details, and accessories lockdown, was revealing and informative.

Thanks to all of our speakers for contributing to the Workshop and furthering professional knowledge of PRPS members, and many members of the Keystone Athletic Field Managers Organization (KAFMO).

The Branch is looking to expand the 2016 Workshop into western PA. At minimum, a potential location should have:

(Continued on page 8)



OUTDOOR DREAM PACKAGE: 2015 WINNERS

First Place: \$300 Gift Certificate, Cabela's: Jim Bobeck, Muhlenberg Township

Second Place: \$150 Gift Certificate, Bass Pro Shops: Becky Richards, Berks County

Third Place: \$75 Gift Certificate, Gander Mountain: Dan Sharapan, Warwick Township

Apparently, Berks County park professionals have the luck of the draw, winning two of three of the raffle packages. Thanks to all who participated; the raffle netted \$820 for the PRPS Landscape Fund. Purchase your tickets now for the 2016 Raffle drawing to be held in mid-March, at the Annual Conference.

Branches is published by the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society, Inc. (PRPS). It is part of the membership benefits provided to members of the Park Resource and State Park Branches.

Society membership entitles persons to discounts on educational workshops and the Society's annual conference, timely notification of pending legislation and information affecting the field of parks and recreation, the Membership Directory, and the semi-annual, *Pennsylvania Recreation and Parks* magazine, among other benefits.

For membership information about PRPS, contact: Tim Herd, Executive Director, PRPS, 2131 Sandy Drive, State College PA 16803; Telephone: (814) 234-4272; Email: herd@prps.org; Website: www.prps.org.

Newsletter articles should be submitted to John P. Mikowychok at jpmik@comcast.net. Line art and color, high-resolution digital photographs or scanned illustrations are welcome. We reserve the right to edit any articles sent for publication.

Branch Work Days in 2015 Included Hardscaping

The Branch Executive Committee, with help from PRPS staff and members of the Therapeutic Recreation Branch, accomplished much in 2015, including three hardscaping projects.

The Work Days – full-day volunteer efforts to continue improving PRPS’ landscape at its office grounds on 2131 Sandy Drive – occurred on April 17 and September 29.

1. Embankment Solutions

One of the challenges of the PRPS property is its outdoor infrastructure, which the Society inherited from the former owner, who operated a private school. The northeast corner of the property once included a small basketball court, faced on the south with a steep turf embankment. Since 2007, Work Days have included converting portions of that embankment into a mulched bed with massing of English Ivy (*Hedera helix*, variety ‘Baltica’). This ivy was chosen because of

its tolerance for north exposures with less-than-optimum sunlight.

Furthermore, the heavy, wax-like coating on English Ivy can tolerate a standard, 1.5% solution of Glyphosate herbicide, eliminating the tedious process of hand weeding.

In recent years, local youth have used the steep embankment and basketball court for skateboarding. Scrap lumber was placed over the ivy, leading from the parking lot’s north end,

Branch President Kurt Uhler (foreground) and Jim Bobeck put finishing touches on a new, 40’ fence, installed on the embankment overlooking the former basketball court. The rails were screwed in place to prevent removal.

providing a challenging skate ramp to the macadam court. This activity was severely damaging the ivy, and leaving bare earth subject to erosion.

The solution to this problem was implemented in the April Work Day, with installation of post-and-rail fencing



SPIRITS UNDAMPENED: Despite near-continuous rain during the Fall Work Day, PRPS Treasurer Rob Lewis (at left) and TR Branch Member and Society President-Elect Kirk Rakos create a new bed around the Society’s main sign, to prevent further damage from line trimming.

at the top of the embankment. Hopefully, with this 40’ fence in place, damage to the embankment will cease — or, at least, it will present new obstacles for skateboarders to overcome!

Branch President Uhler also removed and dismantled the basketball court’s two goal posts, which were becoming unstable. The future of this asphalt court remains unknown; PRPS members are encourage to make suggestions for it, if it is not to be removed.

2. A Fishing Expedition

The second hardscaping effort included replacement of the bronze fish in the Robert Griffith Memorial Garden. Vandals removed the original, ‘Boy Fishing’ sculpture’s suspended fish in April of 2011. A permanent solution, with theft-resistance, was discussed by the branch. In the end, the branch had a Berks County metalsmith fabricate a stainless steel rod, inserted through a replacement bronze fish, with an upside-down, ‘shepherd’s crook’ configuration for placement in a footer. That concrete footer was installed at April’s Work Day. A piece of fly fishing line (rather than bronze tubing) was installed between the sculpture’s fishing rod and loop in the fish’s mouth.

(Continued, ‘Work Days 2015’ on page 4)



Newly-appointed Executive Director Tim Herd and Kurt Uhler operate the installed enclosure gate. The finished enclosure is shown in the inset.

3. Storage Maintenance

The third hardscaping effort involved replacing the wood enclosure panels on the south side of the office building, installed by former Executive Director Kim Woodward's husband in the early 2000's. At the fall Work Day, volunteers removed and installed several new panels and a new gate with hardware. A future Work

Day will include cleaning and staining the panels for improved resistance to weather and south exposure. At the Spring Work Day, PRPS staff also cleaned and stained the pressboard siding of the maintenance shed by the southwest building corner.

Plantings and Pruning

The Work Days were not exclusively about hardscaping, but also maintenance of recent plantings, particularly on the foundation shrubs on the west side of the building and selected plants in the ornamental, triangular bed by the main entrance walkway. The office building's design, with large overhanging roof, creates an environment where foundation shrubs tend to lean outward towards sunlight. Correcting that crooked (and sometimes unbalanced) posture was a goal for the Fall Work Day [see photo series below for an example].

Perennials were installed in the Griffith Memorial Garden. 'Elijah Blue' Fescue (compact, ornamental grass) plants

(Continued, 'Work Days 2015' on page 5)

YOUR MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD YOU: "STAND UP STRAIGHT!"

Good posture isn't just beneficial for people; it's also good for plants. And, it is not just an aesthetic issue; unless they are trained for trellis/espalier purposes, trees and shrubs which are plumb are less likely to have structural problems in the future, like cracks and splits from being out of balance or weighed down by ice. In this series of photos, I demonstrate a properly-pruned and straightened Winterberry (a deciduous holly, *Ilex verticillata*), framing one of the windows of PRPS' Fred Coombs Library. Here's how it's done:



An evaluation of this shrub shows heavy branching leaning away from the building, and to the South (A). I picked the two co-dominant leaders which were generally parallel to the building wall, and pruned away other tall, leaning leaders, creating a vertical oval. Study the

species' normal framework and branching style by observing plants in an open, sunny or natural-woodland environment, unaffected by light inequities of a wall. In a woodland environment, Winterberries are graceful and open, with ascending and gently-arching branches. Photo B shows the plant with unbalanced branching and winter dieback pruned away. It is now open and airy, with branches rubbing the wall or extending too far outward into the lawn removed. To get it plumb, I staked and guyed the right-most of the two dominant leaders with a 24" wood stake with reveal (notch) cut on the opposing side; heavy, steel wire; and a length of scrap hose (C). By choosing the far, right-most leader to guy from the left, I was able to pull the entire plant to plumb. Due to pressure from laterals and the stems' positions in the soil ball, the rest of a young plant often 'goes along for the ride' when you do this, and a second guy was unnecessary. This plant is now poised to grow upright, and frames the window as intended for attractive winter viewing of the fruit-set from inside. Remove the guying after two growing seasons; 'about 18 - 24 months. — J. P. M.

were installed in the vicinity of the fish mounting, mimicking flowing water. In the future, White Astilbe will be installed immediately around the fish; when in flower, they will suggest the splash of the fish jumping.

Fifty English Ivy plants were installed on the embankment, replenishing part of the areas damaged from skateboarders.

The massing of three Northern Bayberry shrubs (*Myrica pensylvanica*) on the north side of the Memorial Garden is doing very well; regular pruning of this massing was done to preserve sight lines and a clear stairway railing.

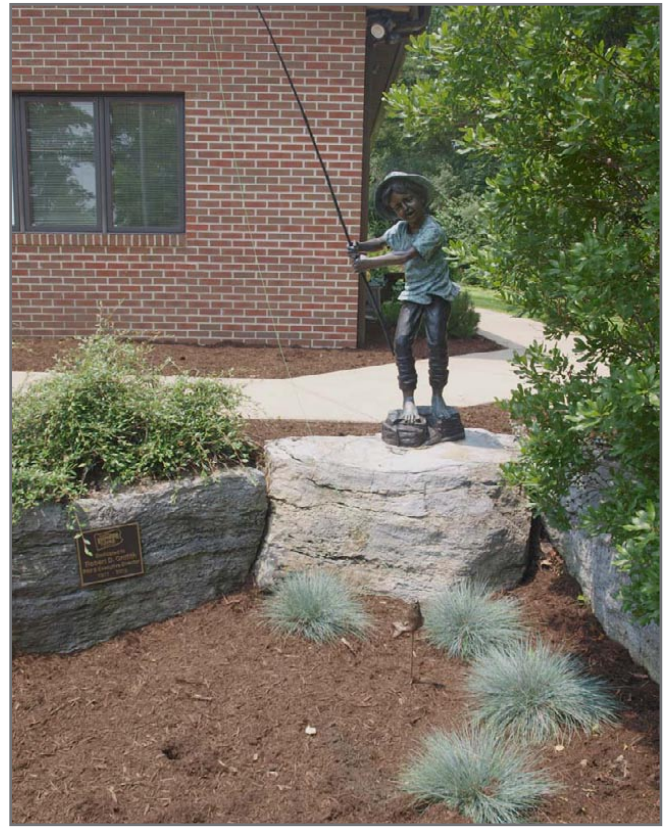
One of the stand-out plants in the Landscape Plan has been a ground cover, above the rock outcrop in the Memorial Garden. A single Willowleaf Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster solicifolius*, *sal Repens*, 'Scarlet Leader') has completely covered the areas above the limestone rock outcrop, spreading a remarkable 9' from center. This plant also covers much of the horizontal rock, perhaps due to a warm, macro climate here in winter. Regular pruning of these branches manages a weeping, or waterfall effect over the rock, and clears the bronze plaque installed in Bob Griffith's honor. Interestingly, this plant was suggested and purchased by Griffith several years before the Memorial Garden to him was planned.

Pruning also includes the job of invasive removal. Tallhedge Buckthorn appears to be the newest culprit to enter the scene. Quantities of the bush were removed and stump-treated in the south edge of the rear yard.



PRPS staffers (left to right) Emily Schnellbaugh, Tracy Robert, and Susie Schnellbaugh stain the exterior of the maintenance shed at the Spring Work Day.

The Branch will continue to add plants to the landscape. A current priority is replacement of the Cherry Laurel shrubs in the front foundation planting, which succumbed to State College's brutal winter of 2013-14. Overall, new plantings are being reduced; it is estimated that 90% of the Landscape



MEMORIAL GARDEN: At the Spring Work Day, volunteers installed a new bronze fish and four 'Elijah Blue' Fescue grasses. The 'Boy Fishing' Sculpture and rock outcropping are accented with a Willowleaf Cotoneaster groundcover (left, center) and large massing of Bayberry shrubs (right). [Photo taken in July, 2015]

Plan has been implemented in terms of woody tree and shrub planting. Focus in the future will consist more of maintenance and invasive removal, which — as park managers know — is a never-ending responsibility.

The one thing that Work Days do not want for is a lack of enthusiasm. The Fall Work Day was a success, despite hours of steady rain. And, PRPS staff are always ready and eager to help with many tasks, providing lunch and refreshments for volunteers. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team!

If you have not yet contributed to the Society's capital fund, a donation of your time is always an option. Please consider coming out to a future Work Day. The Spring Work Day for 2016 is set for Friday, April 22. Contact Kurt Uhler or the author for details of tasks to be accomplished, and tools needed.

— John P. Mikowychok, CPRP

Trail Bridge Opens in Manayunk Section of Philadelphia

Since the early 1900s, the skyline of the Manayunk neighborhood of Philadelphia along the east side of the Schuylkill River between Roxborough and East Falls had a distinguishing landmark: The arched, concrete railroad bridge which crossed the River. Eventually, that same bridge would also cross the Schuylkill Expressway, or PA-Interstate 76, which was built under the bridge's west side in the 1950s.

Now, that same bridge, closed for decades to rail traffic, has been rehabilitated and given new life to provide a connecting link to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

On October 30, 2015, officials from the City of Philadelphia, Montgomery County, Lower Merion Township, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA), and the Commonwealth formally dedicated and opened the one-third-mile bridge to trail users.

History

Originally part of the Pennsylvania Railroad's 'Schuylkill Valley Division', this rail line was constructed in the late 1800's to connect the coal mines of Scranton and the northeast areas of PA to 30th Street Station in Philadelphia, with many spurs in between. Two lines actually ran the connection; the other one is now the Schuylkill River Trail.

The concrete bridge at Manayunk was completed in 1918, with SEPTA acquiring it in 1983. Rail service stopped in 1986, when SEPTA's 'Ivy Ridge' line segment ceased due to



A prominent landmark in Manayunk, the former railroad bridge now owned by SEPTA has now become part of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail.

[Present-day photos by John P. Mikowychok]

inadequate ridership and concerns about the condition of the bridge.

Chris Leswing, Assistant Director of Lower Merion Township's Planning Department, noted that for a brief period in the early Twentieth Century, limited passenger service was added to the predominantly-freight line. "George Brooke Roberts (1833 - 1897), President of the the Pennsylvania Railroad from 1880 to 1890 lived in the area near City Line Avenue, so he established and named the passenger stations at Bala and Cynwyd, in part, to commute to work," he noted.

Fast-forward to 2005: Municipal entities decided that a rehabilitated rail-trail bridge would provide connections from Manayunk to the 2-mile Cynwyd Heritage Trail project, which runs westward to Route 23 and to 600 new apartments along the Schuylkill River, at the

Constructing the Manayunk Bridge

This remarkable panorama was taken in April, 1917 as the bridge was nearing completion. Due to the increasingly-heavy loads being transported by freight trains, by 1917, the "S" Bridge (shown at left) was dismantled and replaced by the Manayunk Bridge, a Spanish-arch concrete bridge. It is fondly regarded by generations of Philadelphians as the definitive icon of Manayunk. *[Photo courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society]*



former Connelly Container site, being built by Developer Brian O'Neill. Regulatory obstacles were formidable, with crossing of the River and a state highway, I-76. Total cost



Now-former Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter (center) along with City and SEPTA officials, Montgomery County Commissioners, Lower Merion Township and state officials officially opened the renovated rail bridge for public use on October 30.

for the project, according to Leswing, was some \$6 million, with engineering. Sources of funding included a \$1.3-million grant from PennDOT's Community Transportation Program, \$250,000 from Lower Merion Township, \$125,000 from Montgomery County, and the balance from the

William Penn Foundation and other contributors.

Acquisition costs were unnecessary; SEPTA worked with the City and Lower Merion Township to develop a 60-year lease, for \$1.00.

The role this new trail connection plays in southeastern PA's 'Circuit', or planned network of 750 miles of pedestrian and bicycle trails in the Greater Philadelphia Area was noted by now former-Mayor Michael Nutter, who presided over the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"The Manayunk Bridge creates an important connection in the Circuit Trails establishing key links between the city and the suburbs, Lower Merion and Main Street Manayunk, and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail and the Schuylkill River Trail," said the Mayor. "This bridge required great collaboration and serves as a prime example of how together we can drive this to be a first-class region with transportation and recreational amenities that draw people here, connect communities, and encourage exploration of the region's natural resources."



The trail bridge has several stellar amenities, including bike and pedestrian-marked lanes, elaborate railing system, and the stormwater trench drains and bike racks, above.

(Continued on page 8)



Though designed for pedestrian and bicycle use, municipalities envision programming possibilities for the 30'-wide, concrete-decked bridge, with spectacular views of the river and the Manayunk community. Elizabeth Rogan, President of the Board of Commissioners of Lower Merion Township, dubbed the bridge "the High Line of the Main Line", likening this project to the elevated train bridge conversion to a linear park in Manhattan. A music festival is being considered on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail bridge next summer, according to Leswing.

And, the Trail is well-supported from the Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail (FOCHT), a group which formed in 2008 to further advance and maintain the trail. FOCHT holds Township-sponsored work days the third Saturday of every month. Projects have included numerous plantings, including restoration of a wetland basin. The group also sponsors programs, including group bike rides, walks, and a 5K Trail Trot. It has received a 'Green Machine' Award from the PA Horticultural Society, and a Merit Award from the Penn-Del Chapter of ASLA. They recently received a grant from West Laurel Hill Cemetery to install mile markers every half mile.



The emphasis on multi-municipal cooperation for the completion of the bridge is nowhere more-evident than in the municipal boundary markers present on the bridge decking's stamped concrete, over the Schuylkill River.

To be sure, having a trail making connections to communities as Mayor Nutter stated, as well as a nearby commuter rail line creates, as Leswing coined it, "...a best example of 21st Century transportation." The 250 or so attendees to



The Cynwyd Heritage Trail runs two miles from the bridge at Manayunk southward, to Cynwyd Station in Lower Merion Township. Both maps were made in advance of the Manayunk Bridge construction. [Maps courtesy of the Friends of Cynwyd Heritage Trail]

the dedication ceremony and the members of FOCHT, I am sure, would echo that sentiment.

For more information, visit the Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail's website, at <www.cynwydtrail.org/>.

— J. P. Mikowychok

Resource Op Workshop

(continued from page 2)

- multiple classroom environments, with AV projection and public address capabilities;
- opportunities for field demonstrations, including turf areas, woodlands, playgrounds, and/or parking lots, or areas within a short drive;
- common areas for registration and lunch; restroom facilities.

Please contact Past Branch President Rob Lewis at (610) 383-3812 to discuss potential sites.