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## Water Watch

### Should you have your water tested?

by Dr. Stephen Donovan

The only way to know if your water is safe to drink is to have it tested by a laboratory. Should you have your water tested? If you are near one of the gas drilling sites, a landfill, or the TCE plume in Harrow, you should—at a minimum—get a VOC (volatile organic compound) test. If you are concerned about arsenic, you can just get the arsenic assay alone.

The group of assays enumerated below is from the Nockamixon Well Protection Ordinance. These tests would need to be done for a new well or a property title change. This same group of assays would also be an excellent way to establish a baseline before any damage from gas drilling and hydro-fracturing (fracking) can occur.

You cannot see or taste many types of harmful contamination. The most common problem comes from bacterial contamination from a nearby septic system, or from surface water inadvertently entering a well.

Two tests needed to determine bacterial contamination are standard plate count

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# UPPER BUCKS FUTURES

Fall 2009

The Voice of the Gallows Run Watershed Association

Vol. 6, Issue 2

## Letter From the President

### Initiatives progress, infrastructure stands latest battering, open space issue heats up

by Todd Stone

The Gallows Run experienced another round of torture testing of its newly improved infrastructure this summer.

Heavy rains and a microburst of wind down the main valley of the stream uprooted sycamores and created torrential streams of stormwater runoff. Streamside erosion was exacerbated and some of the deeper holes on the stream are full of sediment, but rebuilt bridges and stream bank restoration at Kintner Hill Road stood the test.

The new bridge over the Run at Ferndale has been completed, the Delaware Canal path is almost finished, and the bridge over Gallows Run at routes 611 and 32 is scheduled for rebuilding in August, 2010. For more on the Rt. 611 bridge proposal, visit our website at [grwabucks.org](http://grwabucks.org).

Gratifying as it is to see progress being made in the watershed, this recent storm cycle again calls our attention to the need to be vigilant about stormwater management.

The GRWA Tree Squad continues to promote the planting of 1000 native trees at Community Day events in Nockamixon, Springfield and Durham and at Palisades schools. It is also starting work with local churches to support the effort.

There is nothing that will better preserve the water quality of the Gallows Run and other local streams than conservation of the forests and riparian buffers that filter and slow stormwater run-off. The GRWA continues to collaborate with our partners to support and promote Open Space preservation in the watershed, which includes these vital greenways.

*continued on page 3*



*This Kintnersville farm's field of ripening soybeans, is a fitting symbol for the rural way of life we're working to preserve in our watershed.*

*Photo by Linda Jenny*

# Palisades aquifer under stress; TCE contamination tests

by Todd Stone

This summer, the Bridgeton-Nockamixon-Tinicum Groundwater Management Committee, using historical hydrological data from the early 1990s, re-surveyed formerly measured wells to track changes in the water level in the townships' aquifers. The good news is that most wells experienced negligible change.

## Report indicates serious stress trend

However, the report's conclusion notes: "The more dramatic changes observed in the areas near Quarry Road, Palisades High School, and the Nockamixon-Bridgeton border near Marienstein and Lonely Cottage roads are important trends to be aware of... Imposing further stresses on the supply of groundwater in these areas may be a risky maneuver, and land-use decisions in these particular regions must be carefully considered."

The July 21 BNT GWMC Update on the Groundwater Level Monitoring of the aquifer in the Nockamixon neighborhood surrounding the Palisades schools states:

"The study of the Palisades High School well and a number of wells in the neighborhood strongly suggests that the aquifer supplying these wells is seriously stressed. The maximum depth to the static water level occurred in late September, 2008 at -202 feet. These water levels represent a drop of over 150 feet from when the High School well was first installed in

1950. The region had a normal rainfall season last year, suggesting that the content of the aquifer is a declining and unsustainable resource with a risk of running out at the current rate of withdrawal."

To see the reports in their entirety, visit [GRWAbucks.org](http://GRWAbucks.org).

Due to all the recent rain, we returned to the static water levels (SWL) in the area around PHS that was recorded last year at this time. We got a reprieve this year. The Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection (PADEP) does not regulate groundwater withdrawal. It is unclear who, if anyone, does.

Nockamixon needs to start thinking about contingency planning for a potential water shortage around the high school.

## DEP tests for TCE near Harrow

Another concern that should be monitored is that PADEP is currently testing for elevated levels of trichloroethylene (TCE). The chemical compound is a chlorinated hydrocarbon commonly used as an industrial solvent. It's a clear, non-flammable liquid with a sweet smell, and has been detected in a plume in the Nockamixon aquifer, near routes 611 and 412.

Due to concerns about its toxicity, the use of TCE in the food and pharmaceutical industries has been banned in much of the world since the 1970s. Legislation has forced the substitution of TCE in many processes in Europe, as the chemical was classified as a carcinogen carrying an R45 risk phrase.

Not only is TCE a problem in groundwater contamination, its vapors can also rise through the ground into homes and other buildings sitting above such deposits if the compound is present in high enough concentrations. This is happening right now in Pompton Lakes, N.J. Numerous TCE contaminations around the country, including the one in Pompton Lakes, are being investigated by environmental activist Erin Brockovich, made famous by the movie of the same name, which starred Julia Roberts as the title character. 

## Did you know?

by Kevin Kline

It's been more than 250 years since the last village of Lenni Lenape Indians in eastern Pennsylvania moved west to "forever live in peace." They occupied several large villages on or close to the Delaware River in Williams, Durham, Nockamixon, Bridgeton and Holland Townships. One of these villages was located where the Gallows Run meets the Delaware River.

These indigenous people worked, traded and made their home right in the middle of where the white man was settling. They made charcoal that powered the furnace at the Durham Iron Works, several miles north at the mouth of Cooks Creek.

But the most important thing they left behind was a love for the land, something all of us in the Delaware Valley should hope to pass on to future generations.

We advocate on behalf of sound environmental stewardship, sustainable land management, and the preservation of the rural character of our communities here in Bucks County Pennsylvania. Our tools include educational outreach, active participation in the legal processes that affect local land use, and a strategic partnership with other organizations that share our objective.

**UPPER BUCKS FUTURES** is a semi-annual newsletter published by the Gallows Run Watershed Association (GRWA). The publishers make every effort to confirm facts, dates, etc. We apologize for any typographical errors that may inadvertently slip by our proofreaders, but we cannot be responsible for any inconvenience that results from such errors.

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# Artists of the Gallows Run: Art for Conservation

by Mary Shafer and Todd Stone

Sunday, November 22 is a special date for GRWA and its supporters. Aside from being our annual Members' Meeting, it's also a day that will help us get in the mood for Thanksgiving.

Following the meeting, we will—in partnership with the Heritage Conservancy—sponsor a wine and *hors d'oeuvres* reception for the opening of our first-ever Art for Conservation benefit exhibit, "Artists of the Gallows Run."

The GRWA members' meeting will be held at 4:30 p.m., followed by the reception from 5:00-8:00. The show will showcase works by local artists, featuring vistas of preserved properties in our watershed. These works will be offered for sale, with 50% of the sale prices donated to fund further land conservation efforts in Nockamixon Township.

How appropriate that such a feast for the eyes will be hosted by Karen Baron's inimitable Ferndale Inn, at the corner of Route 611 and Church Hill Road in Ferndale, where the bridge over the Gallows Run has just been reopened following complete recon-

struction. This event is made possible by a grant from the Erwin J. and Gertrude K. Neusch Fund.

The work will then be exhibited Dec. 15-Jan. 22 at Palisades H.S. Community Gallery, with an opening reception Dec. 16 at 5 p.m. Please reserve the date and tell your friends about this exciting development in GRWA's progress toward its mission to use every possible mode of outreach in promoting awareness of our watershed's beauty and lasting value.

### Preparing to Paint

On Wed., Sept. 30 Gallows Run artists Todd Stone, Ron Brown, Paul McGinn, Linda

Jenny, Karl Schwartz, Pat McCutcheon, Reinhold Schwenk, Bob Noonan and Joe Danciger took an initial walk-around on four properties that have invited artists to work there.

Other artists who have expressed interest in participating in the GRWA Art for Conservation show include Robert Ranieri, Carolyn Mercatante, Curt Herr, and Sharon Mendelson. 



*Conserved property owner Marek Plater hosts Gallows Run artists Todd Stone, Pat McCutcheon, Ron Brown, Karl Schwartz, Reinhold Schwenk, Joe Danciger, and Paul McGinn for a tour of potential painting spots to depict in their pictures for the upcoming exhibition.*

— Photo by Linda Jenny

## Letter From the President

River conditions permitting, the GRWA is hosting a stream clean-up of the Gallows Run and Lynn Island on Oct. 24, to pick up debris left by recent high water events. Dr. Anne Rhodes of the Morris Arboretum will be on hand to educate us about those things other than trash we may find on our walk.

Springfield Township is working towards adoption of a new, state-of-the-science stormwater ordinance referencing the latest guidelines from Harrisburg. This ordinance could serve as a model for all our Upper Bucks communities' use. It will be the topic for the upcoming winter meeting of the Upper Bucks Regional EAC, co-sponsored by Cooks Creek and Gallows Run watershed associations.

This issue of *Upper Bucks Futures* features the four candidates for two

Nockamixon supervisors' posts, who are up for election on Tuesday, Nov. 3. We hope their responses to our questions help voters make an informed choice.

The GRWA is delighted to be sponsoring a unique addition to this year's seventh annual members' meeting. Please be sure to mark your calendars, to attend our meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Nov. 24, at the Ferndale Inn.

It will be followed at 5:00 by the opening of our "Artists of Gallows Run: Art for Conservation" exhibit and sale. Details are in this issue. Come out and support the GRWA and land conservation, while enjoying how the artists in our watershed interpret the natural beauty of our neck of the woods in Upper Bucks.

Don't forget to renew your GRWA membership for 2009. If you can manage

it, we would welcome your additional support in the form of a gift membership for a friend, colleague or family member. They needn't live here, but we're sure you have folks who come to visit and express their enjoyment of our beautiful area. Giving a gift membership to GRWA will allow them to receive our newsletter and feel a part of that beauty.

It's through such funding from you, our members, along with grants from our partners and affiliates that we're able to fulfill our mission to protect and preserve the natural resources of the Gallows Run for the future. This issue of UBF should provide ample evidence that we have considerable work cut out for us in the coming year, and we need resources to make that happen. Thanks for your continued support. 

*continued from page 1*

# Do you need to have your water tested?

(total Coliform) and fecal Coliform or *e. Coli*. Bacterial contamination tests for drinking water are not expensive (about \$30), and can be performed by several Bucks County labs.

The best way to avoid contamination is to have a properly functioning septic system. It is recommended that all septic tanks be pumped every two to three years. This will prevent the leaching pipes from getting plugged, then failing. When the tank is pumped, the baffle inside the tank can also be inspected. Regular, periodic pumping is the best insurance for prolonging the life of your septic system.

Other sources of harmful compounds:

- improper disposal of toxic compounds (TCE, waste oil, etc)
- Superfund sites, dumps & landfills
- naturally occurring compounds (arsenic, lead, etc.)
- potential contamination from gas drilling and fracking.

If you are located near any gas-drilling site(s) and are concerned about your water being adversely impacted, you will

need to have the quality of your water assayed (tested) by a Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection (PADEP) certified laboratory before the drilling starts. This will establish baseline values to help prove adverse impact, should it occur.

In the list below are some of the more important assays to consider. Chemical tests are specific to a particular type of contamination. A different test must be performed to detect each type; otherwise, it will not show up in the results.

There are three PADEP-certified laboratories in Bucks County that can carry out these assays (QC Labs, \$350; Analytical Laboratories, Inc., \$460; Hydrodyne Analyses \$439). For a complete list of PADEP-certified laboratories, please check the Excel file at the PADEP website: [http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/labs/lib/labs/2009-0911\\_accruited\\_laboratories\\_excel.xls](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us/labs/lib/labs/2009-0911_accruited_laboratories_excel.xls)

It is crucial that the tests be carried out by a DEP-certified (accredited) laboratory, AND that documentation of an unbroken chain of sample custody be established.

- Fecal Coliform
- Standard Plate Count (total Coliform)
- Color
- Total Dissolved Solids
- Turbidity (clarity)
- pH (acidity or alkalinity)
- Odor
- Hardness
- Detergents
- VOC (volatile organic compounds)
- Nitrate
- Nitrite
- Sodium
- Total Chlorine
- Arsenic
- Copper
- Iron
- Lead
- Manganese

Note: Request the VOC in drinking water assay by EPA method 524.2, it can detect TCE, MTBE, benzene, toluene, tetrahydrofuran, 2-butoxyethanol, etc.

In order to establish a baseline quantity of water produced from your well, contact a certified well driller for testing. 

Testing Laboratory Location			Southampton	Chalfont	Silverdale
Contact Person (prices as of Oct 2, 2009)			Greg Hawk	Geoffrey Kinka	Jade Snyder
Phone Number			(215) 355-3900	(215) 723-6466	(215) 257-7542
PA DEP Certified (Accredited) Laboratory Number			9-00131	9-00332	09-00274
Maximum Contamination Level (MCL) as per the Nockamixon Well Protection Ordinance			QC Labs	Analytical Laboratories Inc.	Hydrodyne Analyses Inc.
Fecal Coliform	<1	count / 100 mL	\$20.00	\$20.00	49.00
Standard plate count (total Coliform)	500	count / 100 mL	\$12.00	\$20.00	
Color	15	Color Units	\$7.50	\$15.00	12.00
Total dissolved solids	500	ppm	\$6.00	\$15.00	15.00
Turbidity	5	NTU	\$10.00	\$15.00	15.00
pH	6.5 - 8.5		\$5.00	\$15.00	8.00
Odor	3	Threshold odor number	\$20.00	\$15.00	12.00
Arsenic	10	ppb (As+3 plus As+5)	\$10.00	\$20.00	28.00
Total Chlorine	270	ppm Cl	\$5.00	\$10.00	FREE
Copper	1	ppm Cu	\$10.00	\$20.00	20.00
Detergents	0.50	ppm MBAS	\$20.00	\$15.00	30.00
Hardness	270	ppm ( as CaCO3)	\$15.00	\$10.00	15.00
Iron	0.3	ppm Fe	\$10.00	\$20.00	15.00
Lead	15	ppb Pb	\$10.00	\$20.00	20.00
Manganese	50	ppb Mn	\$10.00	\$20.00	15.00
Nitrate	10	ppm NO3 -	\$16.00	\$25.00	18.00
Nitrite	1	ppm NO2-	\$16.00	\$25.00	12.00
Sodium	22	ppm Na	\$10.00	\$20.00	15.00
EPA method 524.2, VOCs in drinking water *	4.5	ppb (any chloroalkane plus any chloroalkene)	\$135.00	\$140.00	140.00
<b>Total **</b>			<b>\$347.50</b>	<b>\$460.00</b>	<b>\$439.00</b>

\* Total chlorinated alkanes and chlorinated alkenes, this method also can detect trichloroethane (TCE), methyl tert-butyl ether (MTBE), benzene, toluene, tetrahydrofuran (THF), 2-butoxyethanol (2-BE), etc.

\*\* Prices current as of 10/2/09. QC Labs (<http://www.qclaboratories.com/index.htm>) offer the possibility of a discount for multiple samples. Analytical Laboratories Inc. (<http://www.analab.com/priceList.php>) also offer other packages of analyses. Before you make a final decision, you should call to see if there are any additional charges, such as a pick-up fee.

# Bridge replacement project comes together at intersection of routes 611 & 32 in Kintnersville

By Mary Shafer

According to PennDOT’s design criteria report, the bridge replacement project for the two spans over the Gallows Run at the intersection of routes 611 and 32 will not only replace structurally deficient bridges, but also create a safer traffic flow pattern.

The project will involve removal of the existing Old Easton Road bridge, built in 1921. It will also entail replacement of the existing Easton Road bridge. Built just after the Second World War in 1949, this existing structure is now 60 years old. Its official “sufficiency rating” is 38.1%, meaning actual functionality now fulfills less than half of its original design. In plain English, this renders the bridge structurally deficient and in poor condition. Its concrete parapet has been temporarily repaired with w-beam railing and the approach guide rail is functionally inadequate.

The replacement bridge will incorporate a decorative form-liner façade and the use of weathered steel guide rail to contribute to a scenic setting. This aesthetic consideration was made as a concession to significant public outcry several years ago when replacement of the bridge was first being discussed.

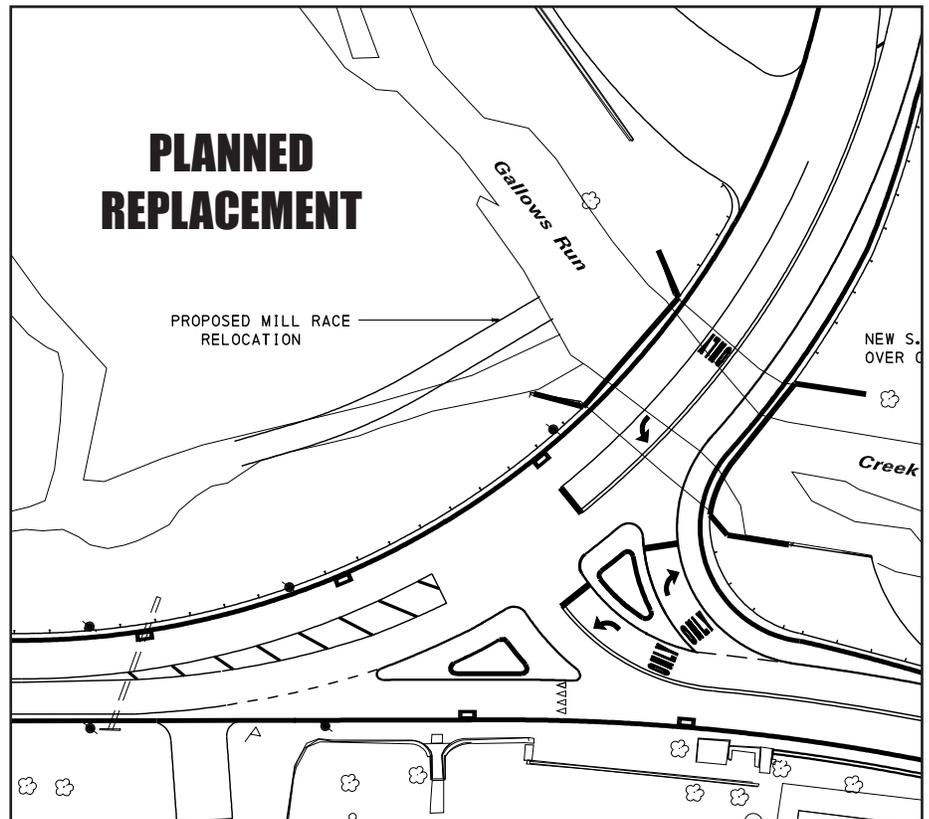
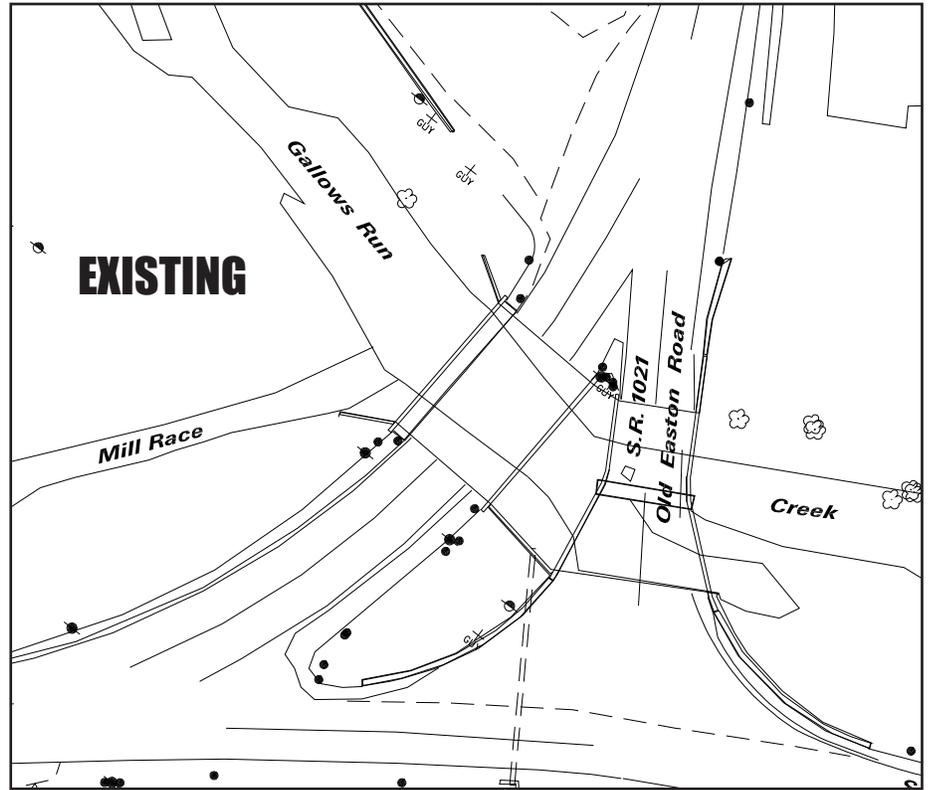
Residents expressed serious concern that any new structure would contribute

*continued on page 11*

*PennDOT schematic drawings show the differences between the existing stream crossings (TOP) and the planned, single-span replacement bridge (BOTTOM) across the Gallows Run where it empties into the Delaware River near Johnny Mac’s American Grill.*

*The new span will be wider to accommodate a dedicated left turn lane from southbound Rt. 611 onto southbound Rt. 32. This, along with median strips, will foster a less confusing and less dangerous traffic flow at this critical intersection.*

*According to PennDOT’s latest project report, this span will also incorporate better drainage management features. The replacement is not expected to cause a great deal of inconvenience for drivers or nearby residents and businesses.*



## Nockamixon Supervisor Race: A Candidate Overview

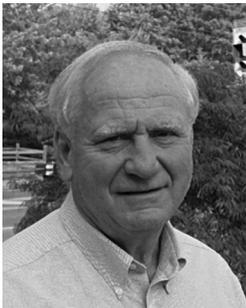
Since its inception, GRWA has played a key role in monitoring local governments and their responses to the issues we're concerned about: water quality and quantity conservation; responsible stewardship of all our natural resources; and preservation of the rural character of our watershed. In that function, we contacted the four candidates running for two open seats on the Nockamixon Board of Supervisors in November. We put five questions to each concerning topics that will certainly come up during their tenure, should they win. Here we share with you their responses, in hopes of letting you hear, in their own words, how these candidates might govern on the issues that concern us all.

### Nancy Alessi – Democrat

Nancy has been a member of the Nockamixon Township Open Space Committee since 2004, serving as co-chair since 2007. Before buying an old farm in Nockamixon in 2001, Nancy lived in Illinois. There, she was an elected municipal board member of a suburban community where she gained eight years of experience in budgeting, frugality, consensus building, volunteer coordination, zoning, planning, administration, finance and management.

Now retired, Nancy earned a master's degree in Education at Chicago's Roosevelt University and has taught in graduate, college, and elementary schools. She has also been the executive director of a United Way affiliate, a board member of several non-profit agencies, and a fundraiser for non-profit organizations.

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### Carl Bahnck – Republican

Carl Bahnck is a lifelong resident of Nockamixon. He and his wife, Kathleen, have two daughters who graduated from Palisades High School, and now their grandchildren attend the Palisades school district.

Carl, now retired, was a Quality Control Chemist and Laboratory Manager for 34 years at Merck & Co. He is also the owner of his own home improvement business.

Carl has been a member of the Ottsville Volunteer Fire Co. for 45 years. He was a member of the Planning Commission for four years, during which he helped develop the Nockamixon Township Comprehensive Plan. He believes in maintaining the rural character of the township through responsible and sustainable development, and in holding the line on taxes.

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### Terry Fritz – Democrat

For the past eight years, Terry has been a member of the Nockamixon Environmental Advisory Council. He helped develop the current system of review of development plans, site visits and recommendations to the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors. He is currently Vice Chairman of the Nockamixon Historic Commission, and has been a resident of Nockamixon since 1994.

During his working career, Terry was in banking for 18 years, culminating in a position as Vice President in charge of Charitable Foundation Management with CoreStates Bank. After that, he owned and managed a small flower bulb import business, the Charles H. Mueller Co., until 2006. Although partially retired, he continues to manage their real estate investments.

Terry has a master's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and a B.A. degree from Princeton University. He also has a degree as a Certified Financial Services Counselor from the National Graduate Trust School at Northwestern University. He currently serves as one of the Democratic Committee representatives for Nockamixon.

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### Bill Sadow - Republican

A lifelong resident of Bucks County, Bill and his wife, Kathleen, are 25-year residents of Nockamixon Township. Their children attend the Palisades School District.

Bill is a graduate of Palisades High School and is a local small business owner. He readily donates his services and equipment to the community.

Bill has been a member of the Nockamixon Planning Commission for 8 years and held the office of Chair for 4 years. He was a member of the drafting committee for the new Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance (SALDO) and the Nockamixon Township Comprehensive Plan, which was adopted December 20, 2005.

*Editor's Note: These responses were edited for grammar, spelling and punctuation only. Candidates were not given a specific word length for any answer. We have published the candidates' responses as they were given to us, in alphabetical order.*

*continued on next page*

## 1. What is the biggest challenge facing the Nockamixon Board of Supervisors?

**ALESSI** – The biggest challenge supervisors face is to protect Nockamixon’s well water and aquifers from current and future threats. These include, but are not limited to: excessive withdrawals by commercial users; chemical infiltration from currently unknown causes; possible chemical and methane gas infiltration coincident with gas drilling using hydro-fracturing (fracking) technology; and naturally varying rainfall and recharge levels. Supervisors also need to continue to work with the school district to help with well level monitoring and with encouraging responsible water usage. Residents living near the schools are lucky that we had unusually high rainfall this year, and that water levels in the area rose back to levels set prior to last year’s 25-foot drop in our aquifer. Unfortunately, we can’t depend on luck forever.

**BAHNCK** – The Township budget. In these economic times, revenues from EIT, real estate transfers and building fees are all down. The township is now faced with a budget deficit of \$300,000. We need to tighten up on spending and make cuts where needed to get back to a balanced budget. The question is, can we eliminate the deficit and still hold the line on taxes? Securing a line of credit with EIT funds or a bond issue without seeing the specific costs involved would be an irresponsible call on my part. You need the facts and figures in front of you to make such a decision, and that decision needs to come from the constituents. This issue would need to be thoroughly evaluated, and met with no new or any increase in taxes to township residents.

**FRITZ** – The largest short-range challenge is getting the township government working in a professional manner within the confines of a budget and providing good information and services to its residents in a fair and timely manner. The greatest long-range challenge is keeping residential and business development within the existing water and space resources in a fair manner, while allowing for the growth of services and improvement of existing properties.

**SADOW** – Presently, it is the budget. We have approximately a \$300,000 shortfall. What does this mean for the 2010 budget? What cuts need to be made to balance the budget? How do we alleviate future shortfalls and make up the deficit?

## 2. It has been observed that wells in parts of Nockamixon have dropped 100 feet in 15 years. What should the township’s response be to this information?

**ALESSI** – As water is crucial to our rural township, Nockamixon’s board of supervisors should pass and enforce local ordinances limiting excessive commercial withdrawals in order to safeguard residents’ well water and aquifers. Working with the Bridgeton-Nockamixon-Tinicum Groundwater Committee and continuing to study and document well water levels are both important. In addition, Nockamixon needs to continue to work with the school district and other large users to ensure responsible usage as well as with residents in the affected areas.

**BAHNCK** – Well monitoring needs to continue in the township, especially in those areas of concern. We need to watch to see if the water level is stabilizing, recovering or continuing to drop. We should also identify large water users and develop a plan to encourage water use reduction and water-saving devices. I intend to seek any available grant money to aid the township in the mapping and monitoring process.

**FRITZ** – Over the past years, the water level has dropped precipitously in a few areas, and some residents have been forced to deepen existing wells or dig new ones. I believe this is the natural result of allowing too much development in areas with only a limited amount of available water and little recharge capacity. The new well protection ordinance has gone a long way in setting standards that should prevent this situation in the future. I’m proud to say that I, as a member of the EAC, was involved in crafting this ordinance. However, for the area or areas that have this current problem, the township has a responsibility to try to measure and understand the factors causing it, and then take what measures it can to make sure that all water users in that area are using water in an equitable manner that can be sustained over time.

**SADOW** – Evaluate the information, pinpoint the problem areas, develop a long-range plan to reduce the amount of water used, and still maintain the same end result required by the users. The township has committees with knowledgeable resources available to achieve this goal.

## 3. What do you see as the future of on-lot wells and septic systems in Nockamixon?

**ALESSI** – If we implement water-saving measures now, I believe that in the future Nockamixon Township will continue to enjoy both private well water and private septic systems. The alternatives—public water and/or public sewer systems—are extraordinarily expensive for residents due to high construction costs. This would necessitate local government tax increases, special assessment taxes, and individual installation fees, as well as continuing user fees. I know this from my experience on the municipal board of my prior hometown. We definitely want to avoid installing public water and public sewer systems in Nockamixon.

**BAHNCK** – On-lot wells and septic systems are still a viable and preferred means for current and future sustainable growth, so we can keep the rural character of the township. Reducing housing density will also help, and has been encouraged by ordinances adopted in the last 5 years that require a minimum lot size of 2 acres, with 2 approved septic sites per lot.

**FRITZ** – I hope and believe that on-lot wells and septic systems have a long and happy future here in Nockamixon. By this, I mean that the alternative—County Water and Sewer—would irresistibly encourage building and development that would turn our comparatively spacious Township into another crowded area like Dublin or Richland. To keep our wells and septic systems happy (functioning well), we need to pay attention to water availability as discussed above and start paying much more attention to maintaining the health and viability of our existing septic systems.

**SADOW** – Nockamixon Township can remain a community using on-site wells and septic systems into the future by maintaining responsible, sustainable growth and development by enforcing the ordinances presently in place. The two key ordinances for this are the groundwater well ordinance presently in place and the new Act 537 currently in draft form, moving forward and soon to be adopted.

*continued on page 8*

## Nockamixon Supervisor Race: A Candidate Overview

### 4. What would you do to preserve the rural qualities that make Nockamixon such a desirable place to live?

**ALESSI** – Nockamixon’s rural nature, beauty and heritage are the reasons my husband and I moved here, and I think we all agree that these qualities must be preserved. To do so, I would increase open space preservation, adopt additional measures—such as flexible development ordinances—to encourage sustainable developments, and provide additional subdivision planning guidance—such as encouraging building away from road frontages—to improve our views and vistas.

The most important of these measures, however, is the preservation of more open space. Open space preservation means that properties will never, ever be built upon. When we save them by attaching easements to their deeds, we save them forever. Thankfully, we are not alone in our desire to protect open space. Land conservancies and Bucks County’s Open Space Program help us keep Nockamixon rural, and we need to continue to work with them as partners.

**BAHNCK** – We need to continue the open space program funded through the EIT. There are already a number of ordinances that preserve the rural qualities of the township. These include ordinances that require larger lot sizes, water well performance testing prior to building, and increased building setbacks. They also address environmental concerns such as wetlands preservation and avoiding steep slopes to keep them undisturbed and not encourage runoff, to name a few. Assuring compliance to these ordinances preserves the rural characteristics of the township, so that’s what I’ll do.

**FRITZ** – In the past few years, the Nockamixon Board of Supervisors has begun a very constructive process of passing ordinances like the SALDO development ordinance and the well ordinance. These should allow the Supervisors to keep development within the bounds of existing space and water, and thus preserve the rural character. However, these rules and procedures must be applied fairly and independently for them to work as planned. I, and Nancy Alessi as well, will apply them in this manner and not be influenced by old family or business ties. I should note that some non-rural improvements are beneficial, such as the new drugstore and the organic ice cream shop.

**SADOW** – I would enforce the ordinances presently in place that we designed to protect the Township’s rural qualities and characteristics. We should also continue the Open Space program with the available funds. During the past 8 years that I have been on the Nockamixon Planning Commission, we helped draft these ordinances with the future in mind. Our thoughts were: How do we want Nockamixon to look 20 to 30 years from now? Do we maintain the rural character, or do we steer the ship in another direction? The answer has always been, “MAINTAIN THE RURAL CHARACTER.”

### 5. Should Nockamixon secure a line of credit or a bond issue with EIT funds to purchase conservation easements?

**ALESSI** – As co-chair of the Nockamixon Township Open Space Committee, I am in the best position to thoughtfully answer this complicated question. In my view, a line of credit payable with Earned Income Tax (EIT) funds is the better choice. These EIT funds—the .25% income tax the voters approved in 2004 to be used only for open space preservation—provide an adequate, reliable source of funding for this purpose. However, Nockamixon Township receives these tax receipts only periodically, and they may not be available when needed. It is often the case that properties desirable for preservation become obtainable only once in a generation, as elderly residents downsize or move away, and the property is readied for sale to a new owner. When a landowner with a significant, desirable property approaches the Open Space Committee for help with that property’s preservation, Nockamixon Township needs to be able to respond in timely manner. If it doesn’t, a desirable property may be lost forever to development. A line of credit payable with EIT tax receipts could provide critical, timely funding. Let me emphasize that this line of credit would not necessitate any tax increase.

A bond issue is not a cost-effective choice for Nockamixon because of the many additional fees inherent in bonding, as the Open Space Committee learned last year during its financial analysis. The line of credit vs. bond issue question focuses on the need for additional open space funding. Another way to increase open space funds would be to sell two current township-owned, but unused, properties with open space easements attached to their deeds. Nockamixon would then be able to add those real estate sale proceeds to the open space fund.

We are a small township with a limited tax base. We need to save open space in a variety of creative ways. These methods could consist of a line of credit repaid with EIT taxes or the sale of unused properties, in cooperation with a group of assisting partners, such as the Bucks County Open Space Program, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and local land conservancies. By using the reasonable, readily available resources at our disposal, we can preserve additional desirable properties without raising taxes.

**BAHNCK** – Securing a line of credit with EIT funds or a bond issue without seeing the specific costs involved would be an irresponsible call on my part. You need the facts and figures in front of you to make such a decision, and that decision needs to come from the constituents. This issue would need to be thoroughly evaluated, and met with no new or any increase in taxes to township residents.

**FRITZ** – My answer at the moment is no. Until Nockamixon gets its budget problems in balance again, I think it would be irresponsible to add debt in another area. However, if a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came along to add a huge tract of land like the Roth farm in such a manner as would allow township residents access to use the open space, then I would want to be able to re-think my position on this particular issue.

**SADOW** – The present condition of the economy would have me lean toward the side of caution. How large of a burden do we put on the residents and taxpayers of Nockamixon Township for open space? The numbers need to be crunched. 

# Wolf at the Door: Gas and Oil Exploration Threatens Our Streams

By Todd Stone

Nockamixon is fortunate to have missed the first flurry of gas drilling in the Marcellus shale. The delays caused by Nockamixon Township enforcing its gas and oil ordinances, the lapsing of the DEP permit for drilling at Revere's Cabot site, and the dramatic fall in gas prices have kept the drilling from starting in Upper Bucks.

We are fortunate that the recent poisoning of Dimock Creek in Susquehanna County by a "fracking" fluid spill did not happen in the Gallows Run or Rapp Creek. But clearly, the drillers are moving closer to our watershed, and we are seeing growing numbers of cases of unsafe drilling practices in Pennsylvania. A gas well gets inspected usually only once during the drilling process by PADEP. That's simply not often enough, given the critical importance of maintaining clean groundwater and the drilling processes' potential for contaminating the aquifer.

The big players in gas and oil are not coming to Nockamixon. If there were huge profits to be made, they would already be here, but they're not. This doesn't free us from being ravaged by smaller operators, though. They're knocking at our region's door. With profit margins thin, they will need to shave expenses wherever possible. Every penny spent on safety is a penny not made in profit. And we—the residents and businesses who will remain long after

the energy companies have moved on—will have to live with the results.

These "accidents" are preventable. Drillers like Cabot Oil and Gas (responsible for the Dimock spill) need to be put on very short leashes.

We should all be calling for strictly enforced mandates for frequent on-site inspections by qualified, objective professionals. We should demand that any and all drilling sites be surrounded by real-time stream and well monitoring, spill berms and retention basins...all paid for by the drillers.

Most curious is the taking off the table of a gas drilling severance tax on resource extraction companies in the face of a proposal by Governor Ed Rendell for a 25% cut in the DEP budget. This tax would pay for any future remediation efforts needed...and we're sure there will be some.



*Lynn Island from the Palisades Bluffs. How long will Nockamixon residents and visitors be able to enjoy this bucolic view, unspoiled by oil rigs and their attendant noise, looking over a clean river unpolluted by toxic fracking fluid spills?*

— Photo by Linda Jenny

Fair is fair. What these companies consider thin profit margins actually comprise amounts any of us would find breathtaking. And the citizens of the commonwealth should profit at least a little from the resources being extracted from their own properties. This could be equitably done through a severance tax.

We as a community must remain vigilant. Contact your local state reps and the Governor to let them know how you feel about DEP budget cuts and the gas severance tax.

*The Gallows Run in winter, a view that's not too far off now.*

— Photo by Sandy Weber



## Want to learn more?

Visit [grwabucks.org](http://grwabucks.org) or follow these links:

### Toxic spills

- Dimock Creek – <http://www.propublica.org/feature/frack-fluid-spill-in-dimock-contaminates-stream-killing-fish-921>
- Dunkard Creek – <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/09263/999458-113.stm?cmpid=news.xml>

### Drilling

- <http://lizjubucar.wordpress.com/2009/08/31/nockamixon-township-peforms-baseline-water-tests/>
- <http://www.jblackford.com/Delaware%20News/Delaware%20News.html>
- [http://delawareriverkeeper.org/pdf/Gas\\_Drilling\\_fact\\_sheet\\_8\\_09.pdf](http://delawareriverkeeper.org/pdf/Gas_Drilling_fact_sheet_8_09.pdf)

# Bucks County Horse Park: A Jewel in Nockamixon Township

by Katherine Throckmorton

With open land disappearing at a rate of 6,000 acres per day—that's an incredible 250 acres an hour—the natural world is vanishing before our eyes. Part and parcel of this travesty is the disappearance of the space many count on for recreation: bird watching, hiking, and for those with a passion for horses, equestrian use. Fortunately, there are landowners who understand that you can't get back land that's already gone, so they factor

future generations into their land use decisions. Kurt and Barbara Schneider, along with Bucks County, are examples of such landowners.

In Jan. 2004, Kurt and Barbara Schneider sold the handsomely situated 123 acres they owned in Revere known as the "Bucks County Horse Park." But instead of selling the property to developers, which would likely have fetched a higher price, they sold the Park to Bucks County for preservation.

The Schneiders' land preservation mindset started years before the sale. In 1991, they were co-founders of an organization known as the Bucks County Horse Park ("BCHP"), a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, formed to manage the Park to preserve open space for equestrian use. BCHP's management of the Park continues today on behalf of the Bucks County Park and Recreation Department.

"Space for equestrian pursuits is disappearing at an alarming rate, partly due to development and partly because of large landowners who no longer want anyone on their property," explains Maureen Ferris, past president and now treasurer of BCHP, when asked about the Park's existence. "The Park offers a

place where horse enthusiasts can have a good time with their horses."

"And there's an added bonus," continues Ms. Ferris. "An attraction like this brings people into the area who will look to purchase property where they can keep their horses, and those properties are generally larger pieces of land that may otherwise be developed but for the horse owners."

Ms. Ferris' observation is borne out by a 2003 Penn State University study



— Photo by Steve Donovan

showing that Pennsylvania's horse industry is massive and thriving.

"The study shows that the equine industry is a tremendous force toward preservation of open space," Commissioner Richard Abbott of the State Horse Racing Commission was quoted as saying.

In addition to its role in Park preservation and maintenance, BCHP oversees its own easements and other agreements with landowners that provide for riding trails connected to and nearby the Park.

"The mission of BCHP includes serving the equestrian with competitive and educational experiences in all disciplines," explained Jacqui Richie, manager of BCHP. "We hold over 50 events annually at the Park including horse trials and eventing, dressage, hunter-jumper, English/Western and driving competitions, all for the amateur and more seasoned equestrian. There are various horse show series and a number of hunt paces on the trail system, in addition to

polocrosse competitions and exhibitions."

BCHP membership dues and revenue from day use passes and various events support upkeep of the park for the County. This upkeep includes insurance and maintenance of the spacious grounds and extensive facilities. The park is available for rent and use by outside organizations. A local 4-H group holds an annual Spook-a-Rama ride around Halloween, and the annual Nockamixon Township Community Day has been held there every September since its inception.

"The partnership between BCHP and the County creates a win-win situation for the open space efforts of Bucks County and for horse enthusiasts and residents," Liz Dudzinski, current president of BCHP, sums up.

Recreational memberships are issued for individuals who would rather walk than ride the trails. Spectators are welcome at events.

For additional information about the Bucks County Horse Park, including BCHP membership or getting involved as a volunteer or sponsor, go to [www.buckscountyhorsepark.org](http://www.buckscountyhorsepark.org) or contact Jacqui Richie at 610.847.8597.

For general information on equine land preservation, visit [www.elcr.org](http://www.elcr.org).

## Greener Pastures Can Mean Browner Streams

Proper stewardship of the large number of horse and cow pastures in the Gallows Run Watershed is key to protecting water quality in the stream. Too many pastures run right up to stream banks devoid of vegetation. This has several effects:

Vegetation root structure that prevents stream bank erosion is missing. Stormwater runoff from the pasture is quickly transported directly into the stream.

Compaction of the soil from constant horse or cow traffic prevents rainwater infiltration, robbing the local aquifer of natural recharge. Instead, the rain turns to runoff, which in turn can increase localized and downstream flooding.

Overgrazing and overuse of pastures can lead to bare patches where all the plants have been grazed or worn off.

*continued on page 11*

## Stream Buffer Do's and Don'ts

*continued from page 10*

These bare patches are also vulnerable to creating flash runoff in heavy rain events. The bare ground can't slow the runoff. Some of the valuable topsoil can get picked up and carried away by the runoff as silt. This gets deposited into the stream, where it will degrade habitat for aquatic life that requires clear water.

The sediment in stormwater runoff contains nutrients that encourage algae growth. When this gets washed into the waterway, it chokes off oxygen to underwater life. Runoff also carries pathogens and bacteria from animal droppings, all pollutants commonly associated with eroding, compacted and overused pastures.

### Solutions

- Fence off a minimum 20-foot buffer surrounding the streams. Replant buffers with native plant species.
- One animal water source should be located in a non-erosive area.
- Prevent pollutant-laden runoff from entering the stream with a stormwater bio-retention area. This consists of vegetated swales that allow water to naturally filter down through the ground without ever entering the waterway.

*Top right photo shows a healthy, well-planted stream buffer, while bottom right shows a stream bank badly in need of a well-planned vegetated zone.*



*continued from page 5*

## Infrastructure

### Kintnersville bridge replacement project planning completed

to the traditional appearance of Kintnersville's historic district, since it is located in such a visible and well-traveled part of town. The form-liner technology will allow the use of state-of-the-art building materials while retaining a more traditional look.

The Route 611 approaches will be widened to accommodate shoulders, a median strip and to provide for a south-bound left-turn lane, making it safer for drivers to negotiate than the current awkward and confusing traffic pattern. New

guide rails, end treatments and drainage improvements will be incorporated.

The reconfiguration of the intersection will require additional roadway construction over previously unpaved areas. Though this will improve access and mobility through the area, it will decrease permeable surfaces, further contributing to stormwater runoff volume.

The project will involve 1100 feet of roadway, including 62 feet of bridge span for the replacement structure. To minimize the project's impact during construction,

the new structures will be completed in stages. This will allow uninterrupted through traffic on Route 611, though a short detour may be required during the realignment of the intersection.

If necessary, this 11-mile detour will use only state-owned roads with no improvements. PennDOT assures that throughout construction, access to local homes and businesses will be maintained.

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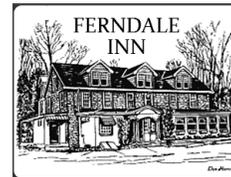
## Be there! Members' Meeting / Art Exhibit Reception

Join us for some fun, scrumptious food and great art at our Seventh Annual GRWA Members' Meeting at 4:30 p.m. on Sunday, November 22 at the lovely Ferndale Inn, at the corner of Route 611 and Church Hill Road in Ferndale.

Following at 5:00, we'll kick off the opening for our fundraiser, "Art for Conservation: Artists of the Gallows Run," with a wine and *hors d'oeuvres* reception until 8:00 p.m.

The exhibit will showcase works by local artists featuring preserved properties in the Gallows Run Watershed. 50% of the proceeds from art sales will fund land conservation efforts in Nockamixon Township, which comprises the largest part of our watershed.

Thanks to chef/owner Karen Baron for hosting our reception in her gorgeous, 18th century inn that reminds us of the importance of preserving the historic, rural character of our area for future generations. This event is made possible by our co-sponsor, the Heritage Conservancy of Bucks County, and through a grant from the Erwin J. and Gertrude K. Neusch Fund.



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