



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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***Big Spring Watershed Association Unveils
Native Plant Habitat Improvement Project in Newville Area***

Cumberland County, PA - The Big Spring Watershed Association (BSWA) recently completed the first phase of a Native Plant Habitat Improvement Project along the Big Spring Creek in Newville. The project is part of the Conservation District's pilot program to assist Watershed Associations with improving water quality. This first phase included developing a bird and pollinator habitat area near Big Spring Creek by the Nealy Road parking lot. The area provides food and cover for many of the creek's year-round residents, summer nesting, wintering and migratory birds. Pollinators will also benefit from the new habitat by having an area to feed and reproduce.

Initial planning for the habitat began in November 2016 by BSWA members and became a reality on June 15 and 16, 2017. Volunteers removed nearly 600 square feet of invasive plants from the area, replacing it with Side Oats Gramma grass, Butterfly Weed, Purple Coneflower and Sweet Goldenrod plugs – all native plants. Volunteers from BSWA and local gardeners will maintain the area. A second planting of 150 Little Bluestem grasses will take place in late July.

Partnerships with various agencies and individuals made this project possible, including the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (owner of the property where the habitat is located) and financial support from the Cumberland County Conservation District's Unconventional Gas Well Fund 2016 Watershed Mini-Grant Program.

More than 14 volunteers, including BSWA members, worked together to make this habitat a reality. Experienced local gardeners, Master Gardeners from Washington, DC, and Watershed Coordinators from the Alliance for Aquatic Resource Monitoring at Dickinson College, worked together to install the 350 plants planned for the habitat.

The second phase of the project involves the creation of a rock vane, to enhance the flow of the spring for fish habitat. It is anticipated this phase will be completed later this summer. For more information on the Cumberland County Conservation District's Watershed Program, visit <http://www.cumberlandcd.com>.

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