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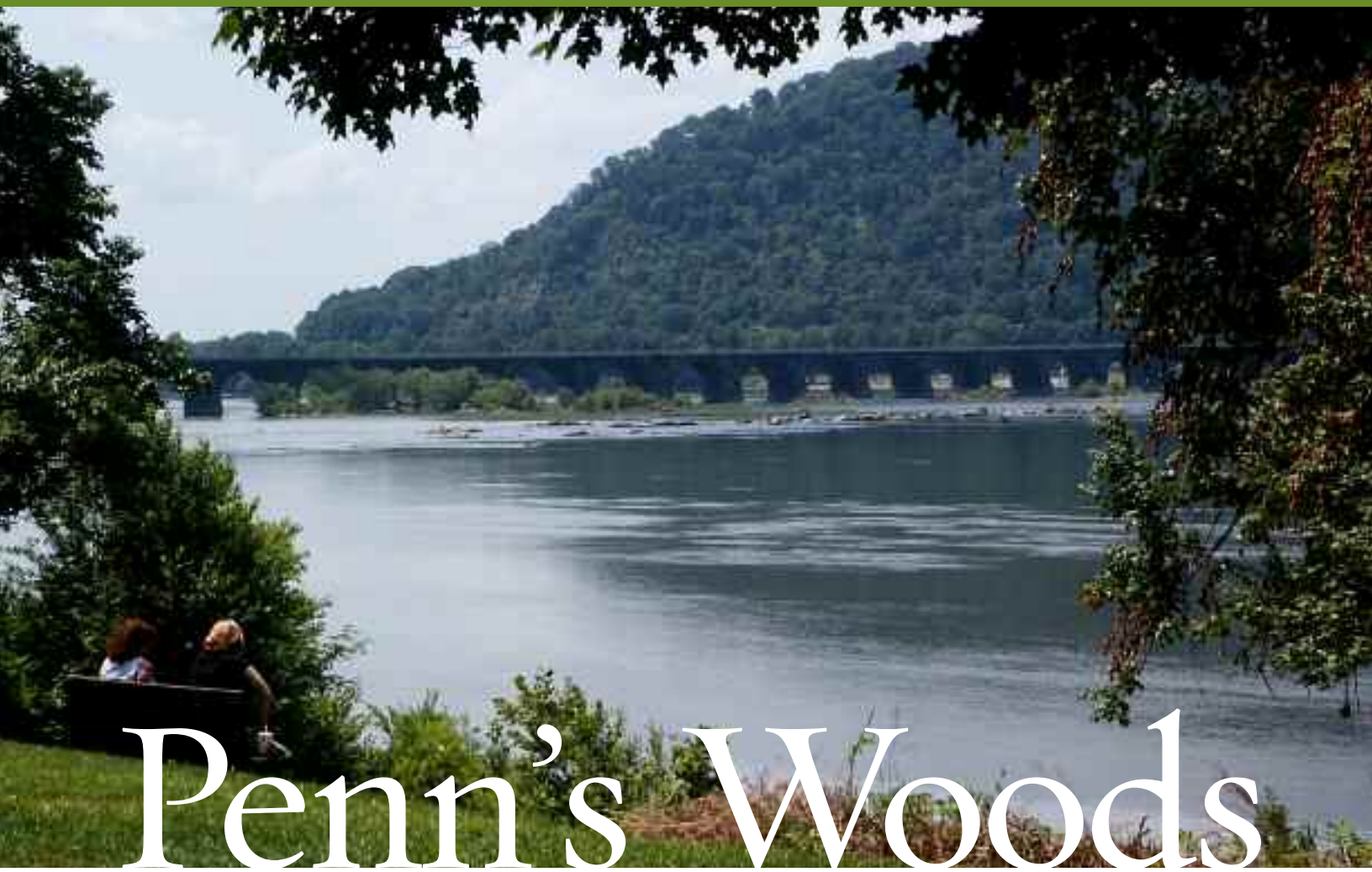

Penn's Woods

Fresh Water

Great Rivers, Great Risks, Great Opportunities

Conservationists are often quoted as saying, "Think globally and act locally." This is especially true for Pennsylvania's vast river systems, because an action taken in one place will directly affect areas hundreds or thousands of miles away.

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Look inside to learn about...

Director's Message

In our last issue of *Penn's Woods*, I wrote about the Conservancy's goal to safeguard the most significant global biological diversity by ensuring the protection of 10 percent of every major habitat type on Earth by the year 2015.

With its wealth of freshwater habitats, Pennsylvania has an especially important role to play in reaching this goal. Pennsylvania has more stream miles than any state except Alaska, and those streams support an astonishing array of species and natural communities. Beyond Pennsylvania, our streams directly affect the health and well-being of people and nature in almost every direction—from New York City, to the Delaware Bay, to the Chesapeake Bay, to the Ohio Valley, waters flowing from Pennsylvania provide drinking water, feed rich estuaries, support crops, and sustain a huge array of wildlife.

Pennsylvania's mighty rivers even affect the health of the Atlantic Ocean and its vast array of marine life, as well as the success of migrating birds as they traverse the globe.

In this issue of *Penn's Woods* we explore Pennsylvania's many freshwater systems and the great challenges facing them. We also share our vision of the ways in which the Conservancy's path-breaking work on great rivers around the world is helping us address these challenges on a scale large enough to make a difference.

Bill Kunze © George Gress/TNC

By harnessing the Conservancy's expertise and experience from around the world, Pennsylvania will make a substantial and lasting contribution to the goal of protecting 10 percent of the world's freshwater habitats. Our science-based methods and solution-oriented approach will be the backbone of our work as we address challenges that transcend political boundaries and engage others in our effort to ensure a sustainable planet.

And with what we learn here, we'll help others both inside the Conservancy and beyond to do this important work, as we are doing now in the Conservancy's new project in Mongolia.

With your support, we can protect globally significant aquatic diversity here, next door and around the world.

Sincerely,

Bill Kunze,
Pennsylvania State Director

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The Susquehanna River. © Marcus Schneck/TNC

Delaware's Popularity Threatens Sustainability

Butternut Island in the Delaware River. © George C. Gress/TNC

The Delaware—a nationally designated wild and scenic river— remains the longest undammed, free-flowing river on the East Coast.

Shad, sturgeon, eel and other species still migrate up through the Delaware River each spring. Raptors, shorebirds, songbirds and waterfowl still follow their migratory routes along the river's course. Native brook trout still course the headwater streams of the system. Rare plants, like rose stonecrop and miner's lettuce, still cling to the ragged escarpments overlooking the river's midsection.

They're all still part of the diversity of the 13,000-square-mile, Delaware River watershed, though often in much smaller and declining numbers. And today they're joined by a massive human population, nearly 20 million of whom depend on the river and its tributaries for their water supply. Millions more find their outdoor recreation on and along the river and bay.

"We have a whole range of competing uses for water throughout the system," notes Su Fanock, director of the Conservancy's Upper Delaware Landscape Program.

Development is eating up rural areas, beaches, salt marshes and riparian areas, bringing new roads, additional runoff and silting and increased sewage treatment discharge. Decades of converting land and controlling water flow have disturbed the river's natural rhythms. Invasive plants have taken hold.

To restore balance, the Conservancy has helped the Delaware River Basin Commission to design a sustainable flow management system that protects human lives and property, but modifies the frequency and duration of floods. That enables the flow to better mimic conditions needed for fish spawning and other natural events. The Conservancy also is working on riparian areas, vernal pools, fens, lakes and ponds throughout the basin to help protect the river and offset growing pressures.

As part of our statewide freshwater strategy, the Conservancy is focusing additional efforts on helping water management agencies determine how much water is needed in a river (and when) to sustain healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystems. Work also is underway on migratory fish, riparian areas, connectivity of natural sites, headwater tributaries, and invasive species containment and prevention.

A well-camouflaged lamprey along the bottom of the Delaware River. © George C. Gress/TNC

Conservancy Focuses on Great Lakes Region

Just off the coast of Erie, Pennsylvania, a 3,200-acre sandy peninsula juts into Lake Erie, fanning out at its tip to form a long arch in the water. Wildlife teems here, where dunes, wetlands, woodlands and lake forge the landscape.

"Presque Isle has an unusual collection of rare plant communities," says Nels Johnson, The Nature Conservancy's director of conservation programs in Pennsylvania.

In addition to harboring rare plants, this sand spit also serves as a main migratory bird stopover site, where more than 300 bird species can be seen gorging on lush pickings during the peak of spring migration.

"It's almost like an Atlantic Coast barrier island," says Johnson of the mosaic of beach, dune, forest and wetland communities, and their diverse plant and animal life. "It's one of the reasons the Conservancy has identified this site as a conservation priority."

Presque Isle is one of two priority Lake Erie sites in Pennsylvania that the Conservancy has included in its Great Lakes Conservation Blueprint. For years, the Conservancy has worked in the Great Lakes to promote innovative land management practices, battle invasive species and advocate for conservation-friendly policies.

"We're boosting conservation efforts in the Conneaut Creek watershed," says Johnson of the second priority Lake Erie site in Pennsylvania.

The Great Lakes Compact seeks balance of conservation and human needs. © Randall Edwards/TNC

An unusually diverse tributary to Lake Erie, Conneaut Creek flows into Ohio just before it enters the lake. The Conservancy recently included it as one of the 20 most important watersheds for conservation in the Great Lakes basin. Johnson says the border-crossing river provides a great setting for collaboration. "We're helping the Lake Erie Region Conservancy implement a recently completed watershed conservation plan that provides a new conservation framework for citizens' groups, land trusts and government agencies.

The Conservancy also has been promoting key policy initiatives, such as the Great Lakes Compact, that could have far-reaching effects within the basin.

And so far, these efforts seem to be paying off.

"The Pennsylvania House of Representatives recently passed the Great Lakes Compact," Johnson says. "This is definitely a step in the right direction toward the long-term environmental sustainability of the region."

Children explore the Lake Erie shoreline.
© Randall Edwards/TNC

Anonymous Donor Preserves Nature as Retirement Strategy

Maine's Moosehead Lake. © David McLain

Friends of The Nature Conservancy are often adventurous people, who have some wonderful stories to share about their wilderness encounters and how nature influences their lives. And it is not unusual for them to give back to nature in amazing but quiet ways, remaining anonymous. This story is about one of these people.

Our donor, a retired doctor from northwestern Pennsylvania, fell in love with the deep woods of Maine in the 1950s when he was stationed there as part of the U.S. Naval Air Command during the Korean War.

"I spent large blocks of time living outdoors and having all kinds of adventures," he recalls. Exploring the lakes and trails of the North Woods during off-duty periods led to encounters with a giant snapping turtle, day-long paddling tours on wilderness lakes and a dash through a crashing thunderstorm to save a blueberry pie from roaming critters.

His interest in and love of the outdoors continued when he returned to Pennsylvania. As a young family man, he remembers launching a canoe on French Creek and paddling five hours through snow, sleet and rain to arrive in Cambridge Springs "tired, but pleased with all the wild I canoed through."

It is this heritage that the doctor wants to pass on to future generations. As a conservationist, he has long encouraged individuals to "consider conserving on a personal basis. Buy a couple acres and keep it naturalistic by planting trees on it and allowing it to exist in a natural state." He has also regularly supported the Conservancy's work in Pennsylvania and at Maine's Moosehead Lake.

But as a savvy investor most of his adult life, he understands that to see long-term conservation success, we need to make an investment in nature on a larger scale, too. It was the investment opportunity that first caught his eye when he learned that he could establish a Charitable Gift Annuity with the Conservancy as the beneficiary.

"Eight percent [return] is pretty good," he explains about the annuity. "You can't buy much of anything out there at 8 percent unless you're willing to take on much more risk" than that offered by the annuity. And a Charitable Gift Annuity (CGA) is very different than a commercial annuity. A charitable gift annuity does not incur up-front fees and guarantees an income for life. It also may have tax benefits to individuals who wish to convert highly appreciated stock into retirement income.

By now the doctor has invested in his retirement by establishing several Charitable Gift Annuities with the Conservancy. The percentage return has increased for each new one, as his age at the time of acquisition has increased.

Equally important to the doctor is the investment in conservation. After the doctor's lifetime, the Conservancy will be able to use the funds to continue protecting nature in Pennsylvania, in Maine and around the world.

For information on Charitable Gift Annuities, please call the Conservancy at (800) 756-2887.

The Upper Allegheny River provides both conservation and recreational values. © Darran Crabtree/TNC

Recoveries May Depend on Pennsylvania's "Old Growth" Rivers

Pennsylvania's "old growth" rivers may harbor species for recovering systems.

Many species that today occupy large portions of the eastern United States first evolved in the Upper Ohio and Upper Allegheny river system, and then colonized outward as glaciers retreated.

"There are fishes and mussels in the Upper Ohio and Upper Allegheny that are found nowhere else," explains Darran Crabtree, who directs Conservancy work there. "Some are isolated here. Others were once dominant across a much larger system, performing a much larger function within their ecosystem."

Some of the rivers of the system, such as French Creek, have been spared the worst impacts of human activities, he says, and "they are performing as a conservation refuge."

"They are as close to old-growth rivers as there are in this country. We're kind of ahead of the curve," he notes. "These are places we won't need to restore, but can work with as they are. Elsewhere we have had disturbances."

Priorities for the Conservancy, which has been working in the system since 1991, are "the more intact, higher-viability rivers" that may eventually provide seed animals for repopulating other, more degraded parts of the system, Crabtree says.

The Conservancy also aims to work with interested local landowners to protect at least 3,500 acres of the highest-priority floodplain and headwater habitats in the French Creek watershed—one of the most pristine rivers in Pennsylvania and a potential restoration source for rare and endangered species.

Fresh Water Flows with Expertise: A Conversation with Brian Richter

Brian Richter is co-leader of the Conservancy's Global Freshwater Team. From his office in Charlottesville, Virginia, he spoke with us about the group's work to broker exchanges of expertise and influence water policies from Virginia to Africa.

What led you to become a conservationist?

I grew up in San Diego and used to go to the San Diego Zoo, which is a spectacular place. Around fifth grade, I got really curious about the red dots on the exhibit signs for the endangered animals, so for a school project, I researched how some of them became endangered. I found these heart-wrenching stories about things like the oryx in northern Africa that were decimated during military conflicts. Soldiers would go out with machine guns for recreation and just blow away these beautiful animals. I got very emotional about that as a kid, so I'd say that's how I got into conservation, through the San Diego Zoo.

Why rivers?

In college, I got involved in an outdoor program leading river trips for students. The more I got involved in enjoying rivers, the more concerned I was by what was happening to them. I went back to graduate school to work on water resources, and that led me into wanting to do river conservation.

How does the Global Freshwater Team work with our field programs?

The Conservancy is working on more than 500 freshwater projects, all managed and led by state and country programs. Our global team designs and implements cross-cutting strategies that will benefit many of these field projects and other rivers and lakes around the world. In the process, we learn a great deal from the work being undertaken in the field projects, and we work closely with field staff to pilot-test our global strategies at their sites. It's really a two-way street. We can offer support to the field projects, and in turn, these "demonstration projects" become the proof-of-principle for global strategies we are trying to advance.

What's an example of a key demonstration site?

One is the Rivanna River here in Virginia. We worked successfully with Ridge Schuyler to influence the way the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County are planning for their future water supply. We're now working with the Virginia Program to take those same approaches to the whole state. In fact, we're trying to do this in a lot of places—work with a local project, with local municipalities, to demonstrate ecologically sustainable water policies and work to get them adopted at higher levels of government.

Your team's recent work with the Africa Program sounds interesting and ambitious.

It is. It's part of our global strategy to influence the way hydropower dams are being developed and operated. More than 8,000 large hydropower dams have already been built, and thousands more are being planned or under construction. When we learned about the Africa Program's interest in the Zambezi River, we were excited about its potential as a demonstration project to show how we can influence both existing and new hydropower dams. There are four existing dams and as many as eight new dams proposed in the Zambezi basin. So we are jumping in to work with the Africa Program. We helped hire a new project director for the Zambezi, and with the new plan we've collaborated on with WWF, we hope to have a big influence on hydropower along the Zambezi.

Moving back closer to home, could you speak briefly to the importance of our freshwater rivers on estuaries like the Chesapeake Bay?

Estuaries by definition have fresh water flowing into them. If you have the right amount of clean water flowing in and you get the right mix of nutrients, the right mix of salt and the right habitat formation as sediment is carried in, the estuary system works well. But things can go wrong. You can end up with too much nutri-

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Past Experience to Shape Future Work on Susquehanna

Anglers ply the waters of the Susquehanna downriver of the Rockville Bridge. © Marcus Schneck/TNC

The Susquehanna River is an icon for Pennsylvania. Its basin drains nearly two-thirds of the state. Its lovely tributaries and reaches, enormous in their scope and variety, provide vital fresh water to millions, support the Commonwealth's great agricultural traditions, offer famous fishing and recreation, and encompass some of the richest forests in the country.

Much good work is being done to protect this magnificent and highly threatened river. But its enormous size and complexity require a conservation approach of a breadth that is difficult to grasp.

The Nature Conservancy is framing an approach to conserving the Susquehanna aimed at supporting existing efforts and tackling the key threats that challenge the entire watershed.

The Conservancy's long experience developing ways to conserve large river systems around the world will be the key to success in this challenging effort.

Notes Mark Bryer, director of the Conservancy's Chesapeake Bay Initiative, "Because of the nature of our organization and our ability to learn from our other projects in places like the Upper Mississippi and the Yangtze River, we have the opportunity to bring a lot of good scientific work and perspective to the Susquehanna."

For example, elsewhere in its international network, the Conservancy has helped to influence the design and location of bridges, culverts, dams and fish passages, as well as bypass channels that support migratory movements of fish. The Susquehanna was once teeming with such fish, including the American shad, alewife, blueback herring and American eel. They are critical to the health of the river, but today they have almost totally disappeared.

"We're searching for creative ways to bring these migratory fish populations back to life in the Susquehanna," offers Nels Johnson, Pennsylvania's director of conservation. The Conservancy is studying the river to identify the most effective but practical steps to restore this valuable natural heritage.

The Conservancy also plans to focus on protecting for the riparian forest and undeveloped headwaters of two tributaries of the Susquehanna. The Yellow Breeches and Conodoguinet watersheds in Cumberland County are prime candidates, according to Anne Barrett, landscape project director.

Traditional land protection, floodplain restoration, managing stormwater runoff, working with landowners to reduce sediment and nutrient inputs on private lands, encouraging small artisan farms, and developing public greenways along rivers could all be critical.

Also, the Conservancy is leading efforts around the world, including in the Susquehanna Basin, to help water management agencies determine how much water is needed in a river (and when) to sustain healthy and diverse aquatic ecosystems. With knowledge about "ecological flows," dam operators and water management agencies can meet human needs for flood control, navigation and drinking water while ensuring that fish, mussels and freshwater habitats have what they need to thrive.

Positive impacts on the Susquehanna also will be felt in the Chesapeake. Bryer notes, "When you think of the health of the bay, you can't underestimate the influence of the Susquehanna. Half of the water flow in an average year and the majority of the pollution coming into the bay originates in the Susquehanna. But while our work on the Susquehanna is critical to the bay, its value for improving the streams and rivers in Pennsylvania is equally important. The Susquehanna is indispensable in its own right."

Michele DePhilip, Director of Freshwater Conservation

Michele DePhilip on a windy winter day along the Susquehanna River. © Marcus Schneck/TNC

As director of freshwater conservation in Pennsylvania, Michele DePhilip is tasked with leading projects for the state's three great river systems and its portion of the Great Lakes watershed.

No small feat, with water from Pennsylvania's rivers eventually reaching the Gulf of Mexico, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware Bay. For much of the eastern United States everyone lives downstream of DePhilip's project areas.

"Statewide, our long-term goal is to increase migratory fish runs in the Delaware and Susquehanna rivers, restore fish and rare mussel species in rivers where water quality and habitat conditions have improved, and reduce sediment and nutrient inputs to the Chesapeake Bay," she explains.

"I never really thought that my experience (as a graduate student tracking the daily and seasonal movements of brown trout and walleye in Michigan's AuSable River) would be relevant to The Nature Conservancy, but now the organization is looking at barriers to fish migration and the like."

For the past 10 years since grad school, DePhilip has worked as an aquatic ecologist with the Conservancy's Great Lakes Program, helping to develop and apply a GIS-based aquatic habitat classification as a tool for conservation planning and leading an effort to identify areas significant for freshwater biodiversity.

Her new focus on the river systems will require a different mind-set, she explains. "The whole Atlantic Ocean orientation and being in a non-glaciated landscape is new to me, as is the idea that in some places sea lamprey are considered attractive."

Unchanged will be plenty of what Michele describes as a good day of work: "I like to be moving a couple different things along at once. The days that I feel are most satisfying are the days that I engaged a lot of people, because those are the days that I learn the most."

For more about Conservancy staff, visit nature.org/pennsylvania.

Conservancy team with Mongolian partners at Huntai National Park. © Susan Antenen/TNC.

Flexing our models in Mongolia

With years of experience on the ground in Mongolia, the World Wildlife Fund turned to The Nature Conservancy for a status check on how well the country's protected areas are protecting the full range of fish and wildlife there.

A Conservancy team—Michele DePhilip, Pennsylvania's director of freshwater conservation; Charles Ferree, GIS analyst and conservation planner in the Eastern Region Office; and Susan Antenen, Mongolia project director—developed a GIS-based series of maps of the Mongolian terrestrial and freshwater systems and took them to Mongolia for an on-site peer review.

"Our models are really flexible when figuring out how to represent important habitat characteristics with GIS," DePhilip explains. "And this was a good test of getting ourselves involved in a good, tangible project with a partner, as the Conservancy launches a new program in Mongolia."

The Conservancy team, now back in the states, is working on enhancements to the Mongolia strategy and sharing its findings with U.S. and international conservation partners.

Fresh Water *(continued from page 1)*

Rain or snow falling on Pennsylvania can travel thousands of miles, finding its way to the Chesapeake Bay via the Susquehanna River, to the Gulf of Mexico by way of the mighty Mississippi and to the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River via a multitude of rivers and streams. Along those thousands of miles of waterway, precipitation from Pennsylvania provides fresh water for thousands of farms, millions of people and uncounted wildlife.

For all those farms, people and wildlife in the eastern United States, "Pennsylvania really is a key watershed state," says Nels Johnson, Pennsylvania's director of conservation programs for The Nature Conservancy.

He explained that freshwater animals such as mussels, crayfish and amphibians are among the species most at risk of extinction in the United States, and they are critical to the overall health of freshwater systems. Changes in natural water flows, nutrient runoff and increases in sediment are altering what these species need to survive and will have a tremendous impact on the ability of Pennsylvania's rivers to provide drinking water and sustain life here and across the East Coast.

"The rivers share some threats, but each has its own unique threats as well," Johnson explains. What we've learned over the years is that we need to engage conservation throughout a river system if we are going to make a positive impact. For example, the Chesapeake Bay is a global conservation priority because it is the world's second largest estuary. However, the Susquehanna River provides just over half of the fresh water to the bay. If the Susquehanna is sick, it's very hard to improve the health of the bay.

And, while there have been reductions in the pollutants, high levels of nutrients, sediments and acid mine drainage continue to pour into Pennsylvania's rivers. The flow of water, and its allocation among competing interests from municipal water supplies to species and habitat needs, also is a growing concern. Dams, bridges, culverts and similar obstacles block the natural migratory routes of fish and other aquatic life that contribute to the overall health of the rivers.

Although the challenges to Pennsylvania's rivers may appear daunting, the Conservancy has a growing global tool kit to bring to bear against these threats. Our scientists here are building aquatic conservation models that were developed on places like the Mississippi, Yangtze and Zambezi rivers. And our expertise developed in Pennsylvania is being exported to place such as Mexico and Mongolia to develop practical water flow and conservation strategies that meet human needs while mimicking natural river flows. That will reduce dangerous flooding and sustain life for all who depend on a vibrant river.

"We have a real opportunity to demonstrate how to think of all those things together," notes Michele DePhilip, Pennsylvania's director of freshwater conservation. The Conservancy is drawing on all of its global freshwater experience to influence government policy, to work with private landowners on improving riparian areas and to find a solution that meets the needs of people and aquatic wildlife.

Richter *(continued from page 7)*

ent delivery, which is the case here with the Chesapeake. Where too much water is being taken from the rivers, the estuary becomes more saline. Natural fluctuations in salinity keep predators like oyster drills in check, but when the salinity increases and stabilizes, oyster drills explode and decimate your oyster population.

So the bay is one impetus behind our sustainable-flow work on, say, the Rivanna and Potomac in Virginia and Maryland.

Right. And Mark Bryer is working on these issues on the Susquehanna in Pennsylvania and Maryland as part of the Chesapeake Bay Initiative. We've also been working with the global marine team to design a strategy called "Summits to Seas." We're working on the rivers and watersheds that feed coastal areas, while the marine folks are lending their expertise to conservation plans for estuaries and near-coastal areas.

Speaking of collaboration, your team helps build expertise in other programs?

We have a curriculum of courses and conferences for staff and partners. The other way is through a new staff-exchange program. We've taken stock and it turns out more than 140 staff have some form of freshwater expertise. So the exchange will allow them to go outside their own programs and provide that expertise for a week or two, or a few months. The Eastern Region is already working on a staff exchange with our Northern Tropical Andes Program in South America.

Chapter Updates

Pennsylvania scientist assists in Mexico

In the lush landscape of Mexico's Sierra Madre de Chiapas, The Nature Conservancy is working with Mexican conservation partner Pronatura to connect previously protected tracts of old-growth forest by securing conservation easements on intervening, privately owned lands.

Through one-on-one meetings and visits from top scientists, Pronatura and the Conservancy have convinced landowners to secure 2,000 acres of protected lands, aiming for an additional 8,000 acres in the next two years.

Pennsylvania's Darran Crabtree recently returned from one of his regular visits to the region to share science-based tools developed in the United States and lend expertise on technical issues in Mexico.

"Conservation easements are considered more of a traditional type of strategy for the Conservancy in the U.S., but in Mexico they are a very new tool to conservation and are only now being applied for the first time in Chiapas." observes Crabtree. "This is a major step forward in protecting areas that we knew were critical but had little ability to influence before."

To learn more about the Conservancy's work in Mexico, visit nature.org/mexico.

Conservany joins forces to strengthen local conservation

French Creek flows nearly 120 miles from its headwaters in Chautauqua County, New York to its confluence with the Allegheny River at Franklin, Pennsylvania. The watershed is outstanding for the number and rarity of aquatic species—89 species of fish and 28 mussel species—making it the most biologically diverse waterway in the northeastern United States.

The conservation importance of French Creek is widely recognized by biologists and has involved efforts within the watershed from the Conservancy and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy for several years. Our two organizations are expanding our commitment by strengthening the French Creek Valley Conservancy.

A search is under way to hire a project manager who will develop land conservation projects, particularly those involving protected floodplains along French Creek and some of its tributaries.

To learn more about French Creek, visit "Places We Protect" at nature.org/pennsylvania.

Join the Conservancy in the field

Volunteer opportunities abound with The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania. To learn about opportunities in your neighborhood, visit nature.org/pennsylvania or call Molly Anderson, director of volunteer and outreach programs, at (717) 232-6001.

Freshwater Map

Make Charitable Gifts From Your IRA

A donor hike at South Overlook in West Branch Wilderness. © George Gress/TNC

If you are 70 1/2 or older, a new law (Pension Protection Act of 2006) allows you to make tax-free gifts to The Nature Conservancy from your Individual Retirement Account (IRA). The law is in effect for 2006-2007. **Contact The Nature Conservancy today to find out how you can take advantage of this two-year opportunity to make a gift that will help fund our conservation efforts around the world.**

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Please consult a qualified financial advisor before making a gift. PHOPM200702004

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