

PREFACE

The year 2002 marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of the Pine Creek Watershed Association (“Pine Creek”). Pine Creek was officially incorporated as a Pennsylvania nonprofit organization in 1987, and it obtained its exempt status as a public charity from the Internal Revenue Service a year later. In May of 1988, the Pine Creek stream basin itself was upgraded to an EXCEPTIONAL VALUE stream under Chapters 93 and 95 of the Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP) rules and regulations.

Pine Creek’s mission is to ensure that the environmental rules and regulations governing streams, wetlands and watersheds are enforced and that open space, woodlands and special habitat areas are conserved in their natural state through land use regulation and through the purchase and/or donation of development rights.

Since its founding more than 15 years ago, Pine Creek has worked to protect the integrity of the stream basin for which it is named. It has assisted landowners to preserve beloved family lands, worked with governmental agencies and local townships to ensure sound land management practices, and monitored uncontrolled development in environmentally sensitive areas. Over the last fifteen years, Pine Creek has justifiably built a strong reputation as a protector of the natural resources of the Pine Creek Watershed and surrounding regions.

For example, in 1995, Pine Creek joined a community coalition (the “Oley Coalition”) to fight the Wissahickon Water Company of Philadelphia, which proposed to withdraw 288,000 gallons per day from a well drilled at the Lobachsville Trout Hatchery in Pike Township. Residents of the Oley area were concerned that numerous household wells and springs located in the area would experience drawdown from the operation of Wissahickon’s pumping well. In addition, experts testified that Wissahickon’s pumping would have caused irreparable damage to 65 acres of interconnected wetlands in the Pine Creek and Bieber Creek Watersheds (both Exceptional Value) and would have destroyed the habitat of numerous rare plant species and of a Federal threatened species.

After a precedent-setting decision handed down by the Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board in the Oley Coalition’s favor, Wissahickon finally decided to withdraw its permit applications and go home. Members of the Oley Coalition, in partnership with the Berks County Conservancy and assisted by a grant from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, then purchased the development rights to the Trout Hatchery site, thereby ensuring that the property will be preserved in its natural state in perpetuity. The permanent protection of the tract is a fitting end to a five-year long initiative by the Oley Coalition and its partners to save this unique tract from commercial exploitation.

In its ongoing efforts to conserve the natural resources of this community, Pine Creek has begun to look beyond the boundaries of its own watershed. It recognizes that, although watersheds have boundaries, the environmental issues and concerns facing our stream basin today do not. It is only through a sustained and persistent effort of our entire community that we will succeed in preserving the precious resources of the Pine Creek Watershed and other watersheds for generations yet to come.