



# Reconnect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, their affect on your community and actions for your involvement.



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

Safely dispose your unwanted meds at this Saturday's collection event.

## Get rid of old meds at drop-off events

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Do your part to protect water resources and keep your family safe!

Dispose your expired, unused and unwanted prescription drugs at a drop-off location on April 26 when communities across the United States are teaming up with the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) for another collection event. The service is free and anonymous, with no questions asked. For drop-off site locations, visit [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov) or call (800) 882-9539.

Traditional methods for disposing unused medications — flushing them down the toilet or throwing them in the trash — both pose threats to our water

supplies. Additionally, leftover medications are highly susceptible to diversion, misuse, and abuse. Studies show that a majority of abused prescription drugs are obtained from family and friends, or from the home medicine cabinet.

The DEA cannot accept liquids or needles or sharps, only pills or patches. If you are unable to attend this event and would like to learn more about what you can do to protect your family and the environment from leftover medications, please visit [paseagrant.org](http://paseagrant.org).

**ANNA McCARTNEY**, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at [acm40@psu.edu](mailto:acm40@psu.edu).



ANNA McCARTNEY/Contributed photo

The Iroquois Elementary rain garden also serves as an outdoor classroom.

## Iroquois students pour efforts into rain garden

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

A rain garden at Iroquois Elementary School is much more than a stormwater best management practice to improve the quality and quantity of water entering the stream. This rain garden also serves as an outdoor classroom for school students and Lawrence Park Township officials and residents.

Students are eagerly awaiting the reappearance of the native plants that were installed last year so they can witness the rain garden in action. Assuming an average of 42.77 inches of rain a year, the 1,225-square-foot garden will filter and keep 218,903 gallons of water from rushing into nearby

storm drains and streams. Parents and residents are encouraged to visit the rain garden and talk with the students to learn more about reducing stormwater from their property.

The garden was installed with help from Environment Erie and Pennsylvania Sea Grant, which also provided educational material for the teachers and students. The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and Freshwater Future provided funding for the project. For more information, contact Matt Pluta at [mpluta@environmenterie.org](mailto:mpluta@environmenterie.org).

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PA CRMP

Four Mile Creek begins an eight-mile journey to Lake Erie in Greene Township and flows through the municipalities of Harborcreek, Wesleyville and Lawrence Park, picking up litter and pollutants along the way and depositing them into the lake. Past mistakes throughout the watershed replaced natural riparian areas and floodplains with impervious areas and added dams and caps on the stream. To fix and prevent new mistakes that impair water quality and destroy habitat, we need a watershed effort and cooperation.

# MAJOR MILESTONES

## Creek restoration project pays off in east county

By ANNA McCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

We can deny that human activities have damaged the environment or we can fix and stop making the mistakes that jeopardize the very water we need to survive.

Some local groups and citizens have chosen to fix mistakes on Lake Erie streams, as is the case in this week's watershed focus on Four Mile Creek.

The creek begins its eight-mile journey to Lake Erie in Greene Township and flows through the municipalities of Harborcreek, Wesleyville and Lawrence Park. Its watershed is 11.93 square miles and includes densely developed areas from Route 5 to East 38th Street, as well as Penn State Behrend. Because of all those impervious surfaces, stormwater runoff is a major problem causing streambank erosion and carrying sediment, litter and other pollutants into the stream.

In 2004, the Pennsylvania Lake Erie Watershed Association created a strategic action plan to fix watershed problems. The Four Mile Creek subcommittee, including Don Benzckowski, Ron Dombrowiak, Ed Masteller and Dave Skellie, compiled a list of restoration, conservation and protection projects. Many of them have been achieved with help from community groups and citizens, and Penn State Behrend instructors and students.

Volunteers now document and remove trash from Four Mile Creek each year for the Pennsylvania Lake Erie International Coastal Cleanup. Skellie, a coastal land use and economic specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, and Ann Quinn, a Penn State Behrend lecturer in the School of Science and director of Greener Behrend, lead this effort. Skellie and Quinn have also been instrumental in securing funding and working on other projects.

"A stormwater control project completed in 2007 has substantially reduced erosion and sedimentation



FRAN SKELLIE/Contributed photo

Each year during the International Coastal Cleanup, Penn State Behrend students led by Dave Skellie and Ann Quinn document and remove trash from Four Mile Creek both upstream on the Behrend campus, and downstream near the lakeshore.



PA CRMP

The new fish ladder near the mouth of Four Mile Creek and new bypass nearby provide movement for steelhead and additional access for anglers. That's good for them and good for the local economy.



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Two rain gardens; a green roof and 200 news trees on the Behrend campus are helping to manage stormwater naturally. Because these installations capture and filter runoff, they reduce erosion and flooding and remove pollutants that impair the stream.

from Trout Run, a tributary of Four Mile Creek, which runs through the Behrend campus," said Skellie.

Skellie has been involved in other improvements that have returned the stream to a more natural flow, allowing fish to

swim from the mouth to upper reaches of the stream. Gone are two impediments in the stream, including one dam in Wesleyville, and a concrete-capped waterfall on Behrend's campus. Added were a fish ladder and a fish bypass,

both on Lawrence Park Golf Club property.

He also worked on a plan and grant for site improvements at Teker Park, a one-half acre park at Route 5 and Iroquois Avenue. This National Scenic Byway Program project will include landscaping, sidewalks, lighting and other amenities. Finally, a 2.77-acre property donation to the Lake Erie Region Conservancy will soon make 718 feet along Four Mile Creek in Wesleyville Borough available for public fishing access.

Quinn, meanwhile, spearheads sustainability efforts with faculty members, staff and students on many Behrend campus initiatives, including a green roof, two rain gardens and a TreeVitalize project that added more than 200 campus trees. "Because these projects help to manage stormwater, they help protect the Four Mile Creek subwatershed and Lake Erie," said Quinn. She is also leading an ecological overhaul and realignment of the Wintergreen Gorge trail, a popular destination for hikers, birders, fossil-hunters and others who simply use the stream to cool off on a hot day.

"These projects improve water quality, enable fish migration and benefit the local tourism industry. But more importantly, they demonstrate that people care enough to fix the environment and improve the quality of life," said Skellie.

You don't need to wait a single moment before starting to improve the PA Lake Erie Watershed. For information about the Four Mile Creek subwatershed, e-mail Skellie at [dus18@psu.edu](mailto:dus18@psu.edu) or Quinn at [abq1@psu.edu](mailto:abq1@psu.edu).

For information about other Lake Erie subwatersheds, e-mail Pat Lupo, [plupo@neighborhoodart.org](mailto:plupo@neighborhoodart.org) or Sarah Gallowa, [sgalloway@erie.pa.us](mailto:sgalloway@erie.pa.us).

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Fixing many of today's problems takes cooperation. Find articles that show how people work together to improve their community.

Have you participated in any projects at home, school or in your community that are fixing environmental mistakes that impair air and water quality and destroy wildlife habitat? Share your projects and photos for possible publication in the weekly "your space." Send them to [axm40@psu.edu](mailto:axm40@psu.edu).

