

# NIE Connect with your environment

Learn about environmental issues, in your community and how you can get involved.



MELINDA MEYER/Contributed photo

Pufferbelly and other historic buildings are the topic of a free presentation on Wednesday.

## Learn about Erie's historic buildings

Along with the natural landscape, the built landscape is a tangible expression of our richly layered social, cultural and industrial history.

"Taking Stock in Our Treasures, One Historic Building at a Time" is a showcase of the great buildings and architectural styles that were "discovered" and documented during the recently completed countywide inventory of historic resources.

Preservation Erie and Wise Preservation welcome you to a free presentation about this treasure trove of historic buildings

and sites on Wednesday from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at the Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. You will hear from those who worked on the inventory about the importance of northwest Pennsylvania's built landscape and how it shapes our sense of place.

Learn how the Boston Store, Erie Art Museum, Customs House, Lovell Place, Pufferbelly and other historic gems contribute to our collective regional identity on Wednesday. For more information, contact Melinda Meyer at 403-1772.

— Anna McCartney



TAYLA RUIZ/Contributed photo

Tom Cermak, Pennsylvania Sea Grant (PASG) coastal outreach specialist and local coordinator of the Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area, helps Penn State Behrend students remove invasive bush honeysuckle from Wintergreen Gorge. With funding from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, PASG and Behrend are working to develop a weed management plan that brings students and community members together to remove invasive species.

# In-depth project

## Students weed out invaders at Wintergreen Gorge

By ANNA MCCARTNEY  
Contributing writer

Wintergreen Gorge along Four Mile Creek is a popular destination for hikers, birders, fossil-hunters and others who simply use the stream to cool off on a hot day.

Because it's also a favorite of Penn State Behrend students, they are involved in creating a weed management and implementation plan to develop best management practices that protect the Gorge from invasive species.

With funding from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, and help from PA Sea Grant and Behrend faculty, they are working to develop a Weed Warrior program that brings students and community members together to remove invasive species found there.

In May and June, students will learn to identify target invasive plant populations and use GPS

equipment to inventory and track them on a baseline work map so they can prioritize future removal efforts. The data they collect will be added to existing information provided by the WPC about rare, threatened or endangered plant species so the plan will protect these assets while eliminating the harmful plants.

The management plan will require students to conduct research and determine immediate priorities and the best course of action to combat invasive species within the identified areas. Based upon the site conditions, students will also need to consider how to reintroduce native species once the invasives are removed.

Marti Martz, PA Sea Grant senior outreach specialist and project facilitator, anticipates that engaging Penn State students and community members in this effort will provide

several benefits. "There will be more 'boots on the ground' to help with removal and more opportunities to discuss impacts of invasives on native plants and the insects and animals that rely on these natives. Once people understand how invasive species degrade a habitat, they will be more vigilant about what they bring into their own yards," she said.

Sea Grant will also work with Ann Quinn, director of Greener Behrend, and the students to develop a Best Practices Guide that can be used by other universities or communities that want to control invasive species on their campus or other natural areas.

"This project not only provides valuable, hands-on experiences for students, but it also protects and enhances the ecological integrity of a wonderful community asset," said Tom Cermak, PA Sea Grant coastal outreach specialist

who is working with students to identify, track and remove invasives.

"We at Behrend are very excited to work with Sea Grant to eliminate invasive plant populations throughout Wintergreen Gorge. As these aggressive species are removed, they will be replaced with native plant communities, which will increase biodiversity and help keep the Wintergreen Gorge ecosystem in balance," said Quinn.

You can help maintain the beauty of this popular hiking and biking trail by volunteering to remove plants at two large group workdays this summer. Contact Martz at 217-9011, extension 104, or mam60@psu.edu, or Quinn at 898-6993 or abq1@psu.edu.

ANNA MCCARTNEY, a communications and education specialist for Pennsylvania Sea Grant, can be reached by e-mail at axm40@psu.edu.



▲ Abishek Mahat



▲ Mark Babkins

## Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful: 25 in 25 mini-grant program

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful is recognizing the organization's 25-year anniversary by providing 25 grants of up to \$1,000 in 25 days to celebrate 25 years of building clean and beautiful communities.

Grants will be awarded to KPB affiliates and other tax-exempt groups across Pennsylvania. This competitive grant program will provide support for diverse community improvement projects that fall under one of KPB's three focus areas of Pre-

vent It, Clean It or Keep It! Applications will be accepted until May 22.

You can also find the grant info at [www.keeppabeautiful.org/GrantsAwards/25in25.aspx](http://www.keeppabeautiful.org/GrantsAwards/25in25.aspx).

Grant winners will be announced from June 1-25 via social media, so be sure to check out the winners daily on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/pages/Keep-Pennsylvania-Beautiful/](http://www.facebook.com/pages/Keep-Pennsylvania-Beautiful/) and on Twitter at [twitter.com/ABeautifulPA](https://twitter.com/ABeautifulPA) starting on June 1.

— Anna McCartney



FILE PHOTO/Erie Times-News

Wintergreen Gorge along Four Mile Creek is a favorite destination for local citizens and Penn State Behrend students.



TAYLA RUIZ/Contributed photo

Behrend students will help develop a Best Practices Guide that can be used by universities or communities to control invasive species on their campus or other natural areas.



PENN STATE/Contributed photo

Landowners and managers have battled multiflora rose for years. Like other invasive plants, it steals space, nutrients, water and sunlight from native plants and trees.



NPS.GOV

Bush honeysuckle is a deciduous shrub that can grow up to 15 feet. This aggressive invader displaces many native plants, including wildflowers and dogwoods.

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Check out these websites to learn more:

- [www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNHI.aspx](http://www.naturalheritage.state.pa.us/CNHI.aspx)
- <http://waterlandlife.org/346/what-we-do>
- <http://paseagrant.org>
- [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/invasivetutorial)

Find examples of other volunteers who make the Erie community a better place to live, work and play.

What about you? Share a project or work you have done to improve the environment in your community. Include reasons why others should volunteer. Send your letters to [axm40@psu.edu](mailto:axm40@psu.edu) for possible publication in "your space."

