

MIRACLE OF BEECH CREEK

Good day everyone...it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Beech Creek is a small tributary which flows toward the north, out of Centre County, and into the west branch of the Susquehanna River at Lock Haven. It is a unique run of water in that it is the Susquehanna River system purifier--like a heart that takes blood, purifies it to send it resurging back into the body. That's what Beech Creek does! I first came across the story about a dozen years ago when there occurred a big fish kill along the west side of the Susquehanna, below where the West Branch enters the main stream. Fishermen and sportsmen were shocked and wanted to know why such a kill of fish. The answer was mine drainage, coming out of the hills of Clearfield County--acids of such content that the fish were killed. Well, why then--why not regularly, was the question. And the answer was--Beech Creek. You see, the water in Beech Creek is of alkali content--running through the limestone hills of Centre County toward Lock Haven, Beech Creek brings its alkaline content into the Susquehanna. Normally, the combination of the acids and alkali at that point neutralize the river as it rushes downstream--and fresh water prevails the rest of the distance to the Chesapeake. Of course, when there are heavy rains to the west--more acids come out of the earth and mines--and Beech Creek, with its purifiers cannot work hard enough to neutralize--then fish and other life is killed in the river. Simple as that. This miracle of constant fresh water is one of the wonders of

Pennsylvania's natural resources--and this is not the only place where the phenomenon occurs. The Schuylkill River is thus refreshed north of Reading; out of the hills runs another heart-pumping-type creek; Maiden Creek--and Maiden hits the Schuylkill, with its coal acids, and at that point, the Schuylkill freshens, instead of running down to Philadelphia in acid condition. I am not naturalist enough to enjoy simply the scientific explanation of the wonder of these two creeks; rather there is enough Walt Disney in me that I believe in the miracle of such freshening of our water supply, simply because by nature, limestone makes these creeks alkaline and they make acid rivers fresh, permit fish to live and people to drink the waters of Pennsylvania rivers. This is a wholesome and wonderful thing; act of Nature or of God; the simple story of the Miracle of Beech Creek, with its heart-pumping action of limestone water which purifies the acidic wastes man's industry had poured into our rivers. Downriver from the acids, water is purified again, and to me, that's one of Pennsylvania's great miracles.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.