



SOCIETY OF WOMEN ENVIRONMENTAL PROFESSIONALS

THREE RIVERS CHAPTER

April 2018 Newsletter, Issue 1

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Welcome to the first issue of the SWEP Three Rivers Newsletter! This is a semiannual publication and offers a closer look at SWEP, our members, and events. If you would like to contribute to our next issue, please contact our [Communications Committee Chair!](#)

A NOTE FROM YOUR 2018 SWEP CHAIR

I am pleased to be Chair for the 2018 year as well as a thought leader for creation of this group.

I wondered in the beginning about the need for this organization, another organization, for not only myself but other very busy career woman and mothers and thought carefully about taking on this responsibility. I know that other organizations in this region really cover a great canopy of need for women and industry professionals in the greater Pittsburgh area at present. I already am a member and a participant to many of them but with my environmental background, I felt my passion for the environment and my passion for my kids always had me in a mom -work -life balance juggle. So why join and lead another group when my schedule is already so busy?

I really want to know about the environmental movement and infrastructure in the area that I am raising my kids in and keep focus on that relevant information. The mission of SWEP – Three Rivers Chapter is to provide women environmental professionals, working within the Three Rivers region, a community that recognizes and supports women’s leadership and career development and provides a forum to share information and ideas and promote public service within the environmental field.

The group of ladies that are part of this Three Rivers Chapter Society of Women Environmental Professionals organization are true mentors and leaders. The presentations and conversations that we have lined up for this year as a program in addition to our on the ground volunteer opportunities really not only spotlight this region, but showcase passionate women empowerment. I hope that we can support each other through our career work life balances, create memories and help personal development, build upon and strengthen a network of environmental professionals, and educate ourselves on environmental needs and issues in the area in which we are living and supporting our families.

I look forward to knowing you and learning of the great wealth of information of environmental professionals in our region, [join us today](#).

Kristy Grigas

SWEP THREE RIVERS BOARD MEMBERS

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Visit our website at
www.swep3rivers.org
to learn more about SWEP!

RECENT EVENT: A CONVERSATION WITH CHERYL MOON-SIRIANNI, PE, DISTRICT EXECUTIVE, PENNDOT DISTRICT 11

What we learned: It has been a long winter. If you think it has been a long and unending winter, you are right. At least according to resident expert on the region's winter-weary roads, Cheryl Moon-Sirianni, District Executive, PennDOT District 11. She confirmed what we all know to be true – we had the wettest February on record, and it snowed on every single holiday since December, draining maintenance budgets and our winter spirits.

Yet, Cheryl's grace and sense of humor inspired and uplifted members and guests of the Society of Women Environmental Professionals – Three Rivers Chapter at as we continued our "Conversation With..." series. Speaking to a full house on a cold, snowy day in April, Cheryl brought to life the immense responsibility that rests upon PennDOT employees and gave us a better understanding of the importance of our transportation network to our regions quality of life and economy. PennDOT District 11 includes over 2500 miles of state highway, 1800 bridges, and four tunnels in Allegheny, Beaver, and Lawrence counties. With almost 2000 square miles and over 1.5 million people living in the District, it is also home to several major population centers, such as the City of Pittsburgh, that attract hundreds of thousands of commuters every day.

Bridge, Bridges, and more Bridges: Cheryl discussed the strides the state has made to replace state-owned bridges (District 11 reduced the number of deficient bridges from 600 in 2006 to 214 in 2017). While this reduction is significant, it does not tell the whole story and much remains to be done. The Transportation Bill, Act 89, provided additional revenue, but the presence of large river crossings in District 11 places increased stresses on its budget. For instance, Highland Park Bridge and the Tarentum Bridge were last rehabilitated in the 1980's but there remain many more critical structures such as the McKees Rocks Bridge, which is over a mile long and will have much greater rehabilitation costs. Failure to maintain this important traffic conduit would be a devastating blow to the local and regional economy.



Cheryl Moon-Sirianni, PE, District Executive, PennDOT District 11 (Photo Credit: Neil Richmond)

Yes – there are a lot of potholes. This winter season has taken its toll on our roads, and this could be the worst season for winter maintenance. PennDOT personnel are working overtime because of the amount and timing of snowfall over the last several months. As PennDOT maintenance crews have repaired roads with cold-patch as an interim fix until asphalt season begins, the weather has repeatedly responded with even more rain, counteracting repair efforts. Rain, rain, and more rain coupled with freeze/thaw cycles have added to pothole misery.

Relationships are important. As Cheryl reflected on her career of public service, she shared that the most enjoyable, and perhaps important, part of the job are the relationships and partnerships that she has nurtured. The resulting strong ties Cheryl has developed over the years were evident as she went through the room, greeting many by name and speaking to individual accomplishments from the stage.

Cheryl's advice for young women? Take chances early on in your career. Get involved with professional groups and network as much as possible. Take on challenges at work and ask for opportunities.

Thank you to Cheryl and to everyone who attended this event. SWEP Three Rivers has thoroughly enjoyed

hosting the “Conversation With” series and we are privileged to have the opportunity to connect professional women in the Pittsburgh region with successful women leaders. The generous support of our event sponsors – JMT (Platinum), GAI Consultants (Gold), Dawood Engineering (Bronze), Markosky Engineering Group (Bronze), and Williams (Student) – made this event a success and we truly appreciate their support.

UPCOMING EVENT: SAW MILL RUN STREAM CLEANUP

The Society of Women Professionals (SWEP) Three Rivers Chapter is pleased to partner with [Saw Mill Run Watershed Association](#) for a stream clean up in celebration of Earth Day - Saturday April 21 at 9:00 am in Castle Shannon Borough. Overall, the Saw Mill Run Watershed is approximately 19 square miles, including 12 separate municipalities and 14 City of Pittsburgh neighborhoods. The watershed is identified by its’ busy Route 51 Saw Mill Run Blvd highway corridor, the valley’s steep slopes, and high density of impervious areas from decades of urban development. These qualities also cause frequent flooding, trash accumulation, and have a negative impact on the water quality of the stream.

While most of the impacts are man-made, we can also be a part of the solution. Have you ever noticed the litter that is piling up in your local Rivers or streams? It takes away from the beauty and safety of our waterways. Further, rivers and streams provide 65% of our nation’s drinking water. Well you can do something about it by joining us for a cleanup effort with Saw Mill Run Watershed. You, your friends and others in our community can help make the stream safer, healthier and cleaner.

Please help is help our environment – rain or shine – and register today!

Arrive early for coffee and bagels. all volunteers are welcome to join SWEP Three Rivers for pizza and refreshments immediately following the stream cleanup. Lunch will be held at the [Hamilton Park Pavillion on Terrace Drive](#) (the upper pavilion, near the ball field).



Saw Mill Run, Castle Shannon, PA (Photo Credit: Saw Mill Run Watershed Association)

EVENT DETAILS:

When: Saturday, April 21, 2018

Time: 9:00 am

Where: James Street Parking Lot off Willow Avenue
near Someone Else's

Google Maps: <https://goo.gl/maps/u6iuxc1td1p>

Families are welcome, but minors must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

MEET A MEMBER: LISA WERDER BROWN

Lisa Werder Brown ([connect with Lisa on LinkedIn](#)) is the Director of Environmental Initiatives for Economic Development South and Executive Director of the [Saw Mill Run Watershed Association](#). Lisa sat down with us (over a virtual cup of coffee) and we loved getting to know her better. We hope you do too!

What do you find exciting or challenging about your job?

The most exciting thing about my job is having the opportunity to do something exceptionally transformative. For more than 50 years the Route 51 corridor into the City of Pittsburgh has been one of the most blighted corridors in the region. Route 51 follows the Saw Mill Run stream through a narrow valley lined with steep hillsides. Vacant and dilapidated buildings crowd the floodplain between the road and the stream experience frequent flooding and stand as a stark reminder of how environmental issues can have devastating impacts on the local property values and the economic viability of communities. As early as 1910,

Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. cautioned city leaders about developing the corridor, envisioning instead a park-like approach to the city lined with meadows and forested hillsides. The Saw Mill Run Watershed Association has resurrected Olmsted's vision and seeks to create the region's first Green Boulevard; designed to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of the corridor. For the last four years the Watershed Association has successfully advocated for city leaders and local foundations to embrace this long – term vision. This vision is my motivation, my challenge, and my inspiration – every day.



Photo Credit: Lisa Werder-Brown

What aspect of your education have you found most important in your career?

I graduated from Chatham when it was still a woman's college. Having the opportunity to study and problem solve with other women was such a profound experience. I value those years and the bonds I made with my classmates. When I think about the educational experience, specifically, I would say that Chatham's requirement for every student to complete a senior research thesis had the most impact on my career. This

process of "deep work", where you must completely immerse yourself in a topic, overcome self- doubt, and face critical analysis, is a powerful tool in building a resilient self- confident individual.

Where is a fun weekend destination in Pittsburgh?

This is a tough one. There are so many great things to do in and around Pittsburgh on the weekend, it's always so hard to choose. But, as an avid bicyclist, I can't wait until the weather gets warm enough spend a day on one of the many trails in the area. My husband and I often plan our route with a stop at a great little bistro in mind, always a welcome mid- ride break.

Tell us about a woman who inspires you.

My sister inspires me. She has overcome so many challenges in her life. She was married at 19 to a man, who for many reasons was a poor choice as a life partner. Her marriage ended in divorce and left her with significant financial burdens, low self- esteem, and in poor health. In addition, her oldest child is autistic, a diagnosis that wasn't made until he was a teenager. Despite these obstacles, she established a career and made a comfortable and enjoyable life for herself and her son.

What advice would you give someone starting out in the environmental industry?

Be open to change. What first might appear as a setback, is more often an opportunity for growth. Embrace those moments – you will be surprised!

Thanks Lisa!

Would you like to contribute to the next issue of our Newsletter? Contact the Communications Committee Chair , Amanda McNally (amcnally@geosyntec.com) with your ideas!

SWEP THREE RIVERS 2018 EVENT CALENDAR



Save the date for these upcoming events from SWEP Three Rivers. Details will be updated on our website and email list!

JANUARY							FEBRUARY							MARCH							APRIL						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
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SEPTEMBER							OCTOBER							NOVEMBER							DECEMBER						
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The Art of Possibilities for Environmental Professionals:
 A Conversation with Caren Glotfelty, Executive Director, Allegheny County Parks Foundation
 When: June 2018 (TBD)



Modernization of the Pittsburgh International Airport:
 A Conversation with Christina Cassotis, CEO Allegheny County Airport Authority
 When: Tuesday, September 25, 2018



ALLEGHENY COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

SWEP Three Rivers’ mission is to provide women environmental professionals, working within the Three Rivers region, a community that recognizes and supports women's leadership and career development and provides a forum to share information and ideas and promote public service within the environmental field.

Below: 2018 SWEP Three Rivers Board Members (left to right), Helen Humphreys, Mallory Griffin, Amie Courtney, Heather Tahon, Kristy Grigas, Cindy Zuch, Amanda McNally, Joy Ruff. Not pictured: Barb Hall. (Photo Credit: Neil Richmond)



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