

Cobbs Creek: A Water Quality Retrospective

By Kate Doms

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Cobbs Creek is a tributary of the Darby Creek whose watershed comprises 27% of the Darby watershed. The Cobbs arises in three places: the East Branch and West Branch of the Indian Creek arise in Narberth and Lower Merion Township, Montgomery Co., respectively. The third source is the Cobbs Creek arising in Haverford Township, Delaware Co. The Cobbs forms the boundary between Philadelphia and Delaware Counties. It meets the Darby Creek in Colwyn Borough, Delaware Co. and they flow as one to the Delaware through the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

The Cobbs watershed includes 33 miles of streams. The towns through which the Cobbs flows include areas of multi- and single family homes in the upper watershed. Multi- and single family homes in the more densely populated lower watershed are mixed with commercial properties. The watershed is home to a total of 230,000 residents. In the spring 2015 issue of the *Valley*, Dr. Rich Horwitz discusses the historical use of the watershed, some of which helped to lead to its present need for our attention.

The Philadelphia Water Department (PWD, 2009) identified several water quality issues in the Cobbs watershed that we can all work to solve including: (1) trash, (2) low dissolved oxygen, (3) low base water flow in dry spells and raging floods after storms, (4) bacteria, (5) metals, and (6) erosion destroying streambanks and filling the waterways with sediment.

Studies of the macroinvertebrates over the last decade by the PA Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP, 2013) yielded scores of 11 to 28 on a scale of 100 in the middle and lower Cobbs watershed and similar scores in the middle and lower Darby; higher scores are recorded elsewhere, in the Ridley Creek Watershed, for example. An earlier study by the PWD (PWD, 2009) found all testing sites on the Cobbs to be moderately to severely impaired on the basis of macroinvertebrate assessment. If you would like to join us in monitoring water quality in the Cobbs please contact Derron LaBrake at dlabrake@wetlandsandecology.com or Kate Goddard Doms at kgoddard@ursinus.edu.

Bibliography:

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