

Erie County Conservation District Restores Cascade Creek



Cascade Creek is a heavily urbanized watershed located within Millcreek Township and the City of Erie that drains to Presque Isle Bay. The stream is heavily impacted by stormwater runoff, which is rainwater, snowmelt and other weather conditions that run directly from paved or compacted surfaces into our natural water supply. This runoff causes Cascade Creek to suffer from heavy erosion, loss of plant growth along the stream banks, and other negative conditions.

The major goals in restoring Cascade Creek's riparian zone include the reducing the amount of erosion and improving wildlife habitat. Outreach and education efforts have been used to highlight past mistakes and demonstrate solutions. The Erie County Conservation District has successfully completed two phases of stream restoration in Frontier Park in the City of Erie, and commenced its largest undertaking to date in July of 2012.

The first phase and second phase of streambank restoration used log vanes/rock weirs, live branch layering, and rock-toe protection to reduce the amount of sediment flowing downstream and manage stormwater. The third phase of streambank restoration began this summer, and entails the remaining portions of Cascade Creek within Frontier Park. The \$528,000 project (\$485,000 from EPA) will continue the above goals, as well as invasive species control of Japanese Knotweed. It is expected that this project in Frontier Park will eliminate more than 123.75 tons/yr. of sediment from entering Cascade Creek and Presque Isle Bay.

Due in part to the success of these projects, cooperating agencies have found both inspiration as well as funding to devote similar efforts to Cascade Creek. Pennsylvania Sea Grant, an integral project partner, has begun two subsequent phases of streambank stabilization on Cascade Creek in partnership with the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority. Including several other retention and stabilization projects in the Watershed, we have seen a radical transformation that began with Frontier Park and the Erie County Conservation District.

