

## Creek Maintenance Fact Sheet

Upper Makefield Township receives many requests from residents concerning creek maintenance and realized that the Township should provide more information on this subject. This fact sheet has been prepared to provide information and resources to residents having a creek running through their property. These facts relate to bank repairs and projects and routine maintenance activities within the creek bed or on the creek banks.

Upper Makefield properties that contain portions of the three main creeks and associated tributaries (Houghs Creek, Jericho Creek, Pidcock Creek) as well as unnamed tributaries are mostly privately owned. That means the responsibility for creek bank/bed repairs and maintenance is the individual property owner(s).

Several State and Federal agencies have jurisdiction over the creeks. Since creeks are considered "Waters of the U.S." The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has the authority under the Clean Water Act (section 404) for activities such as placement of rip-rap (stone), placement of fill material, disturbance of stream banks, etc.

The creek channel is a dynamic environment, constantly changing, and erosion is a natural part of the creeks makeup. Some sections of creeks may require ongoing maintenance to keep the erosion in check, while other sections may need riparian buffer upgrades and/or maintenance. Riparian areas directly adjacent to the creek banks should maintained with trees and high grasses. These items help cool the waters in the creeks and filter out sediment which is harmful to creeks. As previously stated, the maintenance of creeks is the responsibility of the property owner and could require permitting from the State and federal Agencies, as well as, Upper Makefield Township.

Some activities that property owners do can be more harmful than helpful. For example, removing vegetation from the creek banks and mowing the lawn right up to the top of the creek banks is harmful to the creeks health. Vegetation is vital to keep erosion to a minimum and long grasses intercept sediment that is carried by stormwater runoff. Routine maintenance of large trees is also a important activity that provides the shade for the creek's water and provides benefits with regards to reducing stormwater runoff. If trees are not maintained, fallen trees and tree limbs will blocks the stream flow and collect debris which can cause flooding during a storm event. Also, placing firewood in close proximity to creek is ill advised. During flood events, the firewood can easily be swept away by swift moving waters and create problems downstream by clogging storm sewers or culverts. Listed below is a list of activities which do and do not require permits. Property owners are always encouraged to contact the State agencies and Upper Makefield Township before starting any work in or around creeks.

### **Activities that DO NOT require Permits:**

- Removing of trash or debris from the creek bank or in the creek bed.
- Minor Trimming of vegetation on the creek bank. Keep as much of the tree canopy as possible since the canopy provides shading for the creek's water.

### **Activities that DO Require Permits:**

- Large scale debris removal
- Vegetation or tree removal
- Alteration of creek channel or bank
- Stabilization of creek banks
- Dredging
- Dumping of dirt, rocks, concrete, etc. into channel or eroded banks.