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# **Groups Work to Improve Habitat on Tuscarora Creek**

MARTINSBURG, WEST VIRGINIA — Better habitat for aquatic species, including deeper pools and cooler water, are part of the plans for a project to restore a stretch of Tuscarora Creek just west of Martinsburg, WV. Canaan Valley Institute (CVI) is excited about working with local landowners, the Berkeley County Farmland Protection Board, and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation on the project, expected to be constructed next summer.

This project is a result of hard work by members of the Opequon Creek Project Team (OCPT) to identify local landowners interested in improving natural habitat. OCPT and CVI are both pleased to see their work in the Opequon Creek watershed expand. Past restoration projects in Mill Creek, another tributary of the Opequon, have helped landowners stabilize eroding streambanks, reduce invasive species, improve habitat for fish, and create a forested buffer that filters stormwater and provides shading by increasing tree cover to cool the stream itself. The new project near Martinsburg will re-route the stream around an old dam. This dam prevents fish from moving upstream and downstream and also reduces stream velocities that are required to flush sediment present in all storm flows. These sediments build up on the stream bed above the dam covering important spawning beds for native fish and habitat for other aquatic bugs and organisms import to the ecology of the stream.

Residents will see some changes to the areas along the Tuscarora Pike. This new pattern will greatly improve fish habitat and increase the areas where people can fish. The re-routed stream will have small cascades, bends, and pools that provide additional habitat for cover, rearing, and foraging.

Planting native flowers, shrubs, and trees will prevent erosion on the streambank and will provide shading of the stream. CVI and the OCPT will be sharing these plans with local residents and talking about ways to improve views around the project area. CVI is currently working with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHIPO) to determine the appropriate mitigation for removing a portion of the structure.

Besides the stream restoration project, there is also funding available to help residents along the creek pump out their septic tanks and even replace septic systems that are not working the way they should. CVI project manager Kristin Mielcarek notes that projects work together. “We are helping homeowners create a value from a liability by providing 60% of the cost of a new septic system.”

For more information about these projects, please contact CVI at 800.922.3601 or visit the website at [www.canaanvi.org](http://www.canaanvi.org).

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**Canaan Valley Institute** has been working for nearly 20 years in the Central Appalachian Mountains to ensure our region has healthy streams — a critical economic engine for rural communities. CVI’s approach to ensuring clean and healthy rivers is particularly important because our work creates positive results environmentally AND economically. Visit The CVI on the Web at [www.canaanvi.org](http://www.canaanvi.org).