

Update on Sambo Creek Renaming Effort

by Ketryn Zychal

The BWA welcomes our new board member Dr. Christopher Brooks to lead our effort to rename Sambo Creek.

Chris is a faculty member in the history department at East Stroudsburg University, specializing in constitutional law. He received his Dr. Phil. at the University of Kassel in Germany and is fluent in the German language. Dr. Brooks will be writing a series of articles on the historical inaccuracy of using "placeholders" like "Sambo" to refer to people of African descent. The BWA plans to host a symposium during the upcoming academic year to highlight the long history of African Americans in Monroe County so that we may learn the names of some of the people who came here centuries ago. Surely, a real person's name would be a better choice for the creek's name.

Our board member, Bob Labar, has been testing the water quality in Sambo Creek with his 7th grade students from J.T. Lambert school for the past few years. His students are enthusiastic supporters of the effort

to rename the creek, and will be participating in the project as a service learning project.

Where is Sambo Creek?

Sambo Creek begins in Middle Smithfield Township and enters Brodhead Creek in the Borough of East Stroudsburg. A 302 million gallon reservoir in the headwaters of Sambo Creek- built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA)- provides East Stroudsburg and parts of Stroud and Smithfield townships with drinking water. Because of its importance as a life-sustaining



Dr. Christopher Brooks

waterway, Sambo Creek is an important symbol in Monroe County. Why rename this creek?

Some of you may recall BWA's efforts to draw attention to the creeks in the watershed through the grant-supported process of posting signs identifying the creeks in places where county roads crossed the creeks. Shortly after the Sambo Creek sign was posted, complaints about the use of a racist name were received and the signs were stolen.

In 2008, I submitted a petition to the United States Geological Survey (as an individual—not on behalf of the BWA) to rename the creek "Reservoir Run." I did this after receiving information from a colleague at the Pocono Record, Dave Pierce, that Sambo Creek was listed as "N*gger Run" on an antique map he saw on the wall of the District Magistrate's office in Middle Smithfield Township. I said to him, "You've got to be kidding me." He said he looked at the map carefully, and he was pretty sure it was where Sambo Creek was located, though there was no water reservoir pictured on the map.

He was partially right. The creek with the N-word is currently an unnamed tributary to Sambo Creek that flows through Lake Valhalla. Eventually, I located the antique map in the 1874 Beers Atlas, available at the Hughes Library or the Monroe County Historical Society. When I filed the petition with USGS in 2008, I assumed that everyone would approve of changing the name of Sambo Creek, given that one of its tributaries was formerly called by the N-word.

The name Reservoir Run did not meet with universal approval among the elected officials and county employees who were asked to comment by USGS. According to USGS files, only 3 of the 7 municipal officials who were asked to comment on the proposed name change supported it. One person rejected the idea commenting that it was "taking political correctness too far." John Donahue, Superintendent of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, concurrently submitted a petition to rename Sambo Island in the Delaware River to Turtle Island.

USGS did not approve either name change. In 2010, I asked the BWA to join me in supporting the name change, and to help find a name that would meet with community approval. Bob Labar stepped up to the plate with his students and now Chris Brooks has joined us as well.

We will keep you posted on Chris's articles and the symposium.

Up and Down the Brodhead

by Mary E. Price

*Up and down the Brodhead
That's the place to be
When summer's hot and dusty
And trout are swimming free;
Pull 'em in and think about
The friends you used to know;
Up and down the Brodhead
Let your memory go.*

*Up and down the Brodhead,
Bait your hook and sigh,
Skeeters buzzing overhead,
Trout a-skimming by.
Up with the first of morning,
You and Jim and Bill,
Up and down the Brodhead
Into the morning chill.*

*Up and down the Brodhead,
How the hours flew
With the current 'gainst your waders,
Meeting friends you knew;
And you called to them in passing,
"How's your luck today?"
Up and down the Brodhead,
That's the place to play.*

*Up and down the Brodhead,
Trudging home at night,
Basket swinging full of fish,
Waders getting tight;
Match your fish with Jim and Bill,
Tell them whom you met,
Up and down the Brodhead
Days you won't forget.*

*Up and Down the Brodhead,
Sit by the evening blaze;
Smoke your pipe and drink a bit
To pals of other days:
Pals you've lost in the rush of life,
Sportsmen fine and true,
Up and down the Brodhead
In memory wait for you.*