

EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Perkiomen Outreach Pilot

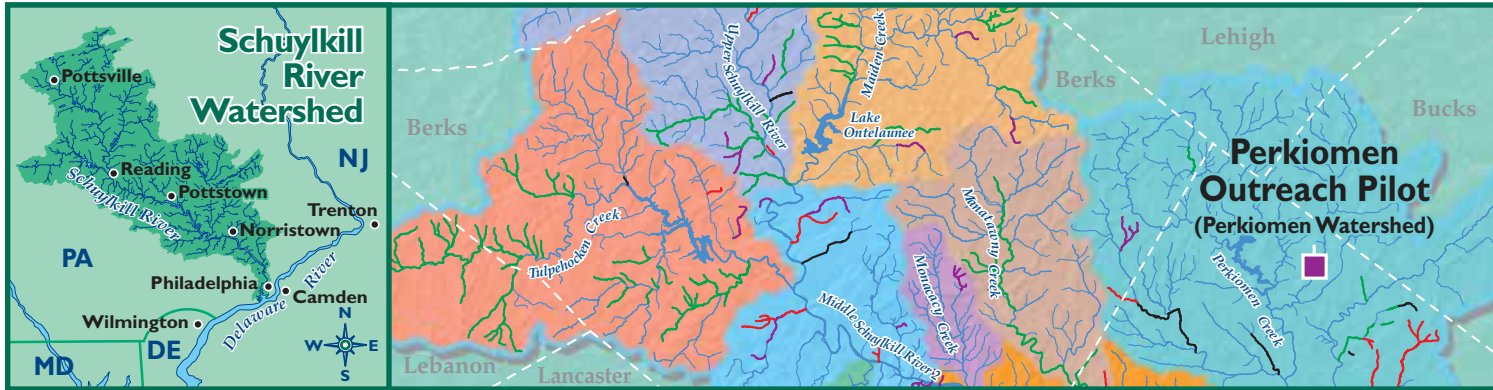


Focusing on 362 square miles, the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy (PWC) took on the huge task of launching a multi-year conservation, education, and cleanup program to address the specific needs of the Perkiomen Watershed. Funded in part by the Schuylkill Watershed Initiative Grant, this pilot program included two volunteer cleanup events, educational signage at restoration sites, distribution of 3,000 newsletters, municipal outreach and workshops, programs in 68 classrooms, a stormwater survey and award system, and a photography contest that received 100 entries.

According to PWC's Executive Director, people in the watershed need to understand that the creek is a "living organism" that faces serious threats from human activities on the land. The tiniest creatures at the bottom of the stream, macroinvertebrates, are

the first animals that suffer when stormwater washes pollutants (toxic chemicals, lawn fertilizers, and vehicle engine fluids) into the waterways. The high velocity of stormwater that results from non-permeable paved surfaces can wash away stream banks and bottoms and everything that lives in it, leaving behind a silted and barren streambed. These creatures support the food chain, and the loss of that layer threatens the entire ecosystem.





The Perkiomen Watershed has been identified as one of the most important areas of the Schuylkill River Watershed for protecting water quality. In 2007, the Schuylkill Action Network Watershed Land Protection Collaborative conducted an analysis of the Schuylkill River Watershed to identify the highest priority lands to protect for both habitat and water quality. Results confirmed that the headwaters of the Perkiomen are a hot-spot for protection efforts.

Educating thousands of students, residents, and decision makers, and employing the strength of hundreds of volunteers at cleanup projects, the Perkiomen Outreach Pilot sparked public interest and renewed stewardship in the watershed they call home. A record-breaking event in the watershed, the 2008 Stream Clean-Up included 500 registered volunteers working at 17 clean-up sites, filling three 40-yard dumpsters and retrieving 164 tires from the Perkiomen Creek and its tributaries. In addition, the PWC's Environmental Education outreach efforts have experienced a steady increase in program registrations, with the PWC on target to reach 10,000 applicants through the 2007/08 school year.



The Schuylkill Watershed Initiative Grant is a targeted watershed grant awarded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for the completion of a suite of water quality improvement demonstration projects in the Schuylkill River Watershed. The Perkiomen Outreach Pilot project is one of more than 40 projects that received funding from this source, in addition to other funds and/or support. The grant is administered by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary and the Philadelphia Water Department.

