



# SAN CONNECTIONS

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Schuylkill Action Network

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[www.SchuylkillWaters.org](http://www.SchuylkillWaters.org)

July 2009

## SWIG Celebration Honors Partners

SAN members and guests gathered on June 2nd to celebrate the successful completion of the SWIG projects. Jennifer Adkins (PDE) and Jon Capacasa (EPA) welcomed the crowd. Chuck Kanetsky (EPA) and Kelly Anderson (PWD) highlighted many of the projects that occurred over the 4-year grant period. Later, Lisa Wool (PDE) presented the new website. Prior to the event, non-SAN member partners were nominated to receive special recognition. The winners received a personalized copy of *Flow: The Life and Times of Philadelphia's Schuylkill River* signed by the author, Beth Kephart, as well as a framed Schuylkill photo. Reading Anthracite won in the Abandoned Mine Drainage category for granting easements on approximately 15 acres of land to build three treatment systems and for granting access to the Pine Knot study area. Improvements to preserved farmland won Mark Leshner the award in the Agriculture Category. Jim Coffey, a teacher in the Upper Perkiomen High School, was recognized for leadership with the Education Outreach Award. The Norristown Area School District and the Spring-Ford School District shared the Stormwater award for their willingness to modify campus property to improve stormwater management. The ceremony concluded with a tour of the Brookside Country Club's stream restoration project -- a true SWIG success story showing the benefits of dam removal.

## Fish Kill Still A Mystery

By Christopher Ruvo, *The Intelligencer*, June 24, 2009

*Edited by the SAN Editorial Staff*



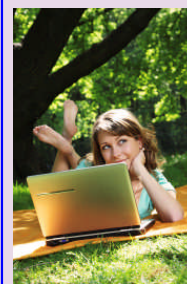
A fish kill in Franconia will likely remain a mystery. The PADEP has been unable to determine what killed an unknown number of fish in a tributary of the Indian Creek [in June 2009]. A PADEP field team investigated and [collected] water samples. However, the test results turned up nothing, and the field team couldn't reach a conclusion. PADEP spokesman Dennis Harney said consistent rain probably washed away whatever contaminants might have been present before officials could analyze the kill. The rain also made it difficult to tally the amount of fish that died because the heavy water flows likely washed smaller fish down stream. The Indian Creek did not appear to be affected by the toxin that disturbed the tributary. Harney said officials monitor the tributary. He encouraged the public to contact the DEP if something seems amiss in a local waterway. "This case highlights the need for people who live and work in these areas to be aware of their surroundings and to report anything out of the ordinary to us immediately," Harney said.



### Inside This Issue...

2	<i>Schools Honored With Source Water Protection Award</i>
2	<i>Montgomery Co. Comm. College Receives EPA Grant</i>
2	<i>Two Wastewater Plants Propose to Combine</i>
3	<i>Schuylkill River Trail Adds Two New Sections</i>
4	<i>Explore the New SAN Website</i>
5	<i>Water Project Stagnates</i>
5	<i>Merck Applying Settlement Funds to Water Cleaner</i>
6	<i>Proposed Strip Mining in Schuylkill County</i>
6	<i>Tunnel Approved; Upcoming Meetings and More...</i>

### Check out what's happening in the Schuylkill!



Find out about projects and news near you. Have you spent some time on, in or by the Schuylkill River? Share your story, photos and videos at the new SAN website:

[www.SchuylkillWaters.org](http://www.SchuylkillWaters.org)

### Ideas for the next edition of SAN Connections?

Contact Chuck Kanetsky, EPA  
215-814-2735, [kanetsky.charles@epa.gov](mailto:kanetsky.charles@epa.gov)

## Schools Honored at Annual Source Water Protection Award Ceremony



Above: Shelby Cleveland, Shaquille Watson and Caleb Stratten proudly display the award to Lingelbach Elementary School. *Photo courtesy of Philadelphia Tribune;* Below: Kutztown students demonstrate their monitoring skills while Michael Sherman of the PADEP looks on.



The Schuylkill Action Network (SAN) recognized three schools in the Schuylkill River watershed for their dedication to watershed education during a ceremony on May 6<sup>th</sup> in celebration of National Drinking Water Week. The 2009 SAN Source Water Protection Education Award was presented to the Anna L. Lingelbach Elementary School (Philadelphia School District); the Kutztown Area Middle School; and the Reading Area Community College. Each school took a unique approach to educating the community about water-creating an inventory of watersheds, planting walking trail, compiling sketches and reflective and retrofitting campus water fountains with a spout specially designed to accommodate water bottles. Lingelbach student Shelby Cleveland said earning the award felt "like it was the best thing that happened to me and our school. I felt really proud about the school and the classes that participated."

"If you don't take care of what you've got, there won't be anything left."

- 9 year old Caleb Stratten, Lingelbach Elementary

A special award was presented to the Reading Eagle newspaper in appreciation of their multimedia series about the Schuylkill River. Over 60 students listened attentively to the keynote speaker, local news anchor Dawn Timmeney, of WCAU (NBC10) television station. After the ceremony, the students had an opportunity to participate in an interactive water quality demonstration given by the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.

## Montgomery County Community College Receives EPA Grant

The EPA awarded \$200,000 to the college to convert a portion of a former PECO maintenance building on the college's West Campus into classrooms for environmental education. Pottstown Borough purchased the building using grant funding and is under agreement to sell the building to the college for \$1. "Brownfields initiatives demonstrate how environmental protection and economic development work hand-in-hand," said William C. Early, Acting Administrator for the EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region. "Along with generating new jobs, these grants will help bring productive use to community eyesores that have been unused for years and turn them into assets that benefit the community, the environment and the economy," he said. The Pottstown project has been funded through stimulus money, according to a release from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. It was the only project in all of Southeast Pennsylvania selected from this fund.

## Two Wastewater Systems Propose to Combine

North Wales and Upper Gwynedd Townships recently submitted a joint \$13.258 million H<sub>2</sub>O grant to the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development which could be used to upgrade the Upper Gwynedd Township Wastewater Treatment Facility, consolidating their wastewater treatment systems. Discussions with Upper Gwynedd are in the conceptual stage, according to Bob Bender, executive director North Wales Water Authority. Any consolidations would not affect North Wales Water Authority customers, according to Bender. He said the authority would continue to own the delivery system and the manhole covers, and that billing and service would not change. A one-mile underground pipe would need to be installed. The proposed partnership could create significant savings for both municipalities, said James Santi, Township Commissioners President in Upper Gwynedd.



## Schuylkill River Trail Adds Two Sections

By Stephan Sailsbury, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 3, 2009; Edited by the SAN Editorial Staff

In a year, if all goes as planned, a dreary field of weeds near the east bank of the Schuylkill will be replaced by a three-quarter-mile sweep of greensward and asphalt pathway - the newest portion of the Schuylkill River Trail park and path, currently running south from Montgomery County through [Philadelphia] and

stopping at Locust Street. Two new parcels, amounting to about 12 acres, have been acquired and deposited with Fairmount Park by the Schuylkill River Development Corporation [SRDC], which is charged with reclaiming as much of the riverfront as possible for use by city residents. At its last public meeting before closing down for good after 142 years, the Fairmount Park Commission accepted both parcels. The first new river parcel is known as Dupont Crescent. It runs roughly from the 34th Street-University Avenue Bridge, under the Grays Ferry Avenue Bridge and on to Wharton Street in a small neighborhood known as Forgotten Bottom. This parcel, which traces a sharp bend in the river, is located behind the DuPont Marshall Laboratory, a research facility noted for development of vehicle coatings and paint. (DuPont plans to close the lab this month.) The city acquired a ribbon of DuPont riverfront about 200 feet wide, much of it contaminated by heavy metals from



paint testing. SRDC cleaned up the toxic areas last fall and is now prepared to create a strip of parkland stretching behind the DuPont lab building and the Waste Management trash-interchange site next to it.

The second of the new parcels will extend the river trail from its current terminus at Locust Street to South Street. But the sliver of land between the existing CSX railroad tracks and the river quickly narrows south of Locust, forcing a radical design solution to keep the trail going: SRDC will build a 2,000-foot boardwalk out into the river, connecting to the rebuilt South Street Bridge by ramp. The boardwalk will be 15 to 17 feet wide, with overlooks extending even farther out into the river. The DuPont Crescent section of what the development corporation has dubbed Schuylkill Banks will cost \$3 million. About \$500,000 has already been spent on hazardous-materials cleanup. That section will be bid this summer and could be completed by the end of next summer. While DuPont Crescent will be accessible from the 34th Street Bridge and from Wharton Street, the trail will exist as a disconnected strip, a forlorn lozenge flanking an industrial desert, at least for awhile. The boardwalk to South Street will be much more costly - roughly \$10 million - and more difficult to complete. [SRDC Executive Director Joe] Synchron said that he hoped for some state funding, but that the project is not, as they say, shovel-ready yet. The new South Street Bridge, however, scheduled for completion in late 2010, has a trail ramp integrated into its design, and Synchron hopes that will help push for completion of the boardwalk. No one, he believes, wants a ramp to nowhere.

At South Street, the trail will have to cross over to the west side of the river for the simple reason that the eastern bank of the river is still in active use by Peco. On the west side of the river, the Schuylkill Expressway blocks access to the water. Synchron believes a route can be found near the river. At 34th Street, the trail would cross back over along the existing bridge to the eastern bank, run down to the DuPont property and around the crescent on the newly acquired land. Just past the Grays Ferry Bridge, where an abandoned railroad swing bridge already exists, the trail would cross back over to the west bank and run down to Bartram's Garden. "That's where you want to be," said Synchron. "It sounds like a lot of crossing over the river, but guess what - that's what's cool about it. "We've got seven miles to go to the Delaware River," he said. "It's not possible to build [the trail] in order. So we say when you get it, build it, and if there's a gap, that will create an urgency to close that gap."



Explore the New SAN Website Today!

[www.SchuykillWaters.org](http://www.SchuykillWaters.org)



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### Featured Projects



River Clean-up and Mine Drainage Repair in Norristown PA



Education & Outreach Project, learn how you can be part of this important project.

[All Projects](#)

### WELCOME TO SAN

#### Schuykill Action Network

The purpose of the SAN is to improve the water resources of the Schuykill River watershed by working in partnership with state agencies, local watershed organizations, water suppliers, local governments, and the Federal government to transcend regulatory and jurisdictional boundaries in the implementation of protection measures.

[Get Involved](#)

### YOU CAN HELP!

Make a difference, help protect and restore a vital regional and natural resource. We need your help. Become a big part of history ...

**GET INVOLVED!**



### What's New at SAN

- Save the date! The SAN Annual Workshop will be held at Villanova University on October 14th, 2008.
- 2008 SAN Progress Report (pdf)
- PA DEP Secretary McGinty recognizes Schuykill County Conservation District with the 2007 Governor's Environmental Excellence Award.

### Schuykill Watershed

The purpose of the SAN is to improve the water resources of the Schuykill River watershed.

[Watershed Map](#)



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Site Design - Mobius New Media

Have you explored the new SAN website yet? Our web presence is totally redesigned. The public pages contain a wealth of information, including photographs, personal stories and news bulletins. Access to the new members-only online workgroup hub requires a password. If you are a workgroup member and have not yet received your password, simply click "Forgot Password" in the upper right hand corner. Provide your email address and, if your contact information is in our database, you'll receive an email with your password.

Are you new to the SAN? Choose "About SAN" in the blue title bar, then select "Get Involved." Complete the contact information form and you'll receive a response shortly.

The website also provides a helpful guide, *What Can You Do to Protect the Schuykill River?*, which provides easy tips you can use around your home, your school and in your community to keep the watershed healthy.

Make sure to visit the *Celebrating Schuykill Waters* section to learn about the enjoyment your neighbors have had along the river. Swimming in the Schuykill River, paddling with the Schuykill Sojourn, and finding an automobile in the river are among the fascinating stories you'll read. The students of Reading Area Community College provided a link to their public service announcement about storm water runoff in both English and Spanish! After you've read the stories of other river fans, please add your own! What do you enjoy most about the river? What fun memories can you share with other enthusiasts? The world wide web is waiting!

## Water Project Stagnates

By Dan Sokil, *The Lansdale Reporter*, June 24, 2009  
Edited by the SAN Editorial Staff

What happens when a project designed to purify rainwater running into Wissahickon Creek encounters the endless weeks of rain the area has experienced lately? "So far, it's been a fiasco. They spent all of that money to get the project done, and yet there's still water standing in three different places," said Wissahickon Creek Park neighbor Dave Brogan.

Plans have been discussed since 2006 for upgrades to the borough park, located along Norway Drive between Lansdale's Main Street and Knapp Road. Work on the park project began last fall, and so far has resulted in a realigned paved path through the park, with new lights and benches. However, week after week of rain has led to pools of rainwater collecting in the unfinished basins, and delays in completing the basins have created other problems for neighbors like Dave and his wife Robyn Brogan. "We have a garden in our back yard, but the mosquitoes back there are so bad from the water, that any time I go out there, within five minutes I'll have 10 bites," she said. Pools of standing water were visible in the park's retention basins during visits to the park [in June], at the bottom of grassy sloped hills.

"This was a pilot project, and the Environmental Protection Agency wanted this project to be done so that we could filter stormwater runoff, the water that comes off of the streets with motor oil, cigarette butts and trash in it, to be filtered before it goes back into the Wissahickon Creek. The concept is fantastic, but it looks like the design on this project has failed," [Borough Council President Jack] Hansen said.

[Lansdale's Parks and Recreation Director] could not be reached for comment on this story, but has said at council meetings that borough employees from his department have been out to the site recently, pumping water from the basins to help create conditions for the contractor to finish the project.

The original project cost of about \$600,000 was covered by county, state and federal grant funds, according to Reporter archives; Hansen said a recent change order will keep the project within that budget and there will be no cost overruns.

## Merck Applying Settlement Funds to Water Cleaner

By Bradley Schlegel, *The Lansdale Reporter*, June 24, 2009  
Edited by the SAN Editorial Staff

An ultraviolet disinfectant machine will be constructed at the township's wastewater treatment facility. Funding for 75 percent of the project will come from a federal and state settlement by Merck & Co. Inc. following an illegal chemical discharge three years ago, according to commissioners President James Santi. The implementation would allow the township to meet stringent statewide standards for removing trichloromethane (TCM) from its wastewater at the treatment facility, located off Township Line Road, according to Santi. He said the machine would significantly cleanse the discharged water.

The disinfectant machine — which removes residual TCM without using chlorine — is expected to cost about \$1.2 million, according to Santi. He said township officials learned in May their plan had been approved by U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and that a portion of the money has been released to the municipality.

In late 2007, Merck agreed to a \$20 million settlement after improperly releasing 25 gallons of potassium thiocyanate into a sewage treatment plant on June 13, 2006. The chemical, commonly used in vaccines and the manufacture of medicine, killed 1,000 fish. The company agreed to pay \$4.5 million to the state's Department of Environmental Protection and the EPA and invest \$10 million in plant upgrades. It also accepted a \$750,000 fine for violating Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Law, Solid Waste Management Act and Safe Drinking Water Act. Additional fines of \$750,000 were paid to the EPA and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

The pharmaceutical company agreed to fund any projects dealing with stream restoration, sediment reduction, habitat restoration or wetlands restoration as part of its punitive requirements, Merck spokesperson Connie Wickersham has said. Santi said he wasn't sure when the project will be put out to bid or construction would begin. "There are so many different things going on at the plant," he said. "Everything will have to be meshed and melded together."



## SAN Tours Agriculture Projects

Cold May showers didn't stop 25 people from visiting a number of farms in Berks County! The Schuylkill Action Network's Agriculture Workgroup conducted a tour of several farms in the Schuylkill River Watershed. Each farm had been part of a series of projects funded by an EPA grant that provided streambank fencing, livestock crossings, and other technical assistance to participating landowners. Each of the implemented Best Management Practices help to reduce sediment and manure from reaching local streams, and improve the water quality of the Schuylkill River.



A view of the Woolf Farm streambank fencing project.

## New Sewage Tunnel Approved

Reading City Council approved a new one mile-long sewage tunnel on June 8, 2009. The 10-foot diameter tunnel with an inner 7-foot pipe will extend from the existing Sixth & Canal Streets pumping station and convey sewage to Fritz's Island. A new pumping station below Fritz's Island will transmit sewage to the treatment plant. The existing 42-inch pipe will be refurbished with temporary pumps for use when the tunnel is out of service; the existing Sixth & Canal Streets pumping station will be demolished. Residents of Hazel Street cited concerns that tunneling would cause ground settling issues. The city conducted a series of test borings to show that the tunnel, 100 feet below the street, would not create a problem for the neighborhood. According to Councilman Jeffery S. Waltman Sr., who voted against the proposal, five years after agreeing to build the new \$250 million plant, under orders by the U.S. Justice Department, the city still doesn't have a plan in place to pay for it, he said in explanation of his vote.

## Proposed Strip Mining In Schuylkill County Concerns Neighbors

By Jennifer Borrasso, *WNEP 16*, June 30, 2009; Edited by the SAN Editorial Staff

A contentious crowd gathered on June 29, 2009 for a special public meeting in Schuylkill County over a possible strip mining operation. The controversy centers around Sharp Mountain in Schuylkill County. EOJ Incorporated is almost finished with a coal strip mining operation near Pottsville. Now the company wants to keep mining into Palo Alto. Residents such as the Jeffersons loathe the idea. "We are very upset. We don't want the dirt or the water running off the mountain. We feel it will devalue our homes," said Rosie Jefferson. Hundreds gathered at the Citizens Fire Company to voice their concerns to the man at the center of the strip mining project. "This is the 21st century all they are talking about is green, not black," said Robert Piacini of Palo Alto. "There's going to be a lot of noise and last, but not least, the environmental impact is going to be tremendous," echoed John Gall of Palo Alto. The closest house to the proposed project would be about 1,000 feet away. The owner of EOJ Incorporated, Joseph Zaprazny, proposed mining a little bit at a time and to come back to the Borough residents to see if they are satisfied. "We would like to strip a certain amount and make sure they are happy with what we are doing," Zaprazny said. Outside the meeting there was one supporter of the project. "It's his ground. I don't want someone telling me what I can't do on my ground. I think he's a stand-up guy. Any problems that would be caused by water I think he would stand behind," said Scott Thomas of Palo Alto. The decision on whether to allow the strip mining expansion will be up to the Schuylkill County Zoning Commission and the [Pennsylvania] Department of Environmental Protection.

## Dates to Remember

July 15	SAN Agriculture Meeting in Reading
July 23	SAN AMD Meeting in Pottsville
July 29	SAN Pathogen Meeting in Conshohocken
August 13	SAN Planning Meeting at EPA-Philadelphia
August 20	SAN Stormwater Meeting in Norristown
August 25	SAN Executive Steering Committee Meeting in Reading
September 10	SAN Planning Meeting at EPA-Philadelphia

## Live Viewing of Schuylkill Creatures

As part of the recent renovation of the Fairmount Dam Fishway, the underground viewing room was rehabilitated with waterproofing to avoid flooding and with a direct video feed to both the Fairmount Water Works Interpretive Center and the Philadelphia Zoo. The feed will show all of the fish species travelling upstream during peak season. Live images are captured by a camera through a window in one chamber of the fishway. The live camera feed can also be accessed via the internet:

[www.fairmountwaterworks.org](http://www.fairmountwaterworks.org)