

20TH ANNIVERSARY

ANNUAL MEETING RECAP

2023 marks 20 years of the Schuylkill Action Network! To commemorate this milestone, partners came together from across the watershed for a celebratory annual meeting held at Elmwood Park Zoo in Norristown, nestled in the Stony Creek subwatershed. With a crowd of about 80 partners spanning many different organizations and sectors and ranging in their time of involvement from founding members to first-time attendees --this year's SANniversary was a success!

The theme, 'Then, Now, and the Future,' highlighted the power of the SAN's 20 years of partnership and collaborative success. The meeting kicked off with **Opening Remarks and Presentation** by Kelly Anderson, Philadelphia Water Department's (PWD) Director of the Office of Watersheds and SAN Executive Steering Committee Chair. Kelly spoke about PWD's involvement in the restoration of the Schuylkill River, including early issues impacting the river, and how partners have come together over the past two decades to tackle them as well as future priorities for the Schuylkill. Kelly emphasized the essential role of partnerships and the necessity to evolve as priorities and impacts on the river change.



Partners gathered for the 20th SANniversary at Elmwood Park Zoo

(From left to right) Virginia Vassalotti (EPA), Kathy Klein (PDE), Kate Hutelmyer (CCWRA), Alex Cupo (SBN), and Susan Myerov (PEC)

The SAN Stories Premiere was featured at our commemorative event. SAN Stories is a short documentary produced by SAN Fellow Kristen Cooney. It features partners representing different sectors and roles over 20 years of the SAN, capturing their perspectives on conservation successes, memories, and lessons learned along the way. [You can watch SAN Stories here.](#) Stay tuned for SAN Stories 'shorts', snackable content that will be posted to our media channels soon.



20th SANniversary Founders Panel

(From left to right and with current affiliation) Cathy Curran Myers (Reading EAC), Carol Collier (Drexel University Academy of Sciences), Chris Crockett (Aqua, an Essential Utility Company), Howard Neukrug (Water Center at Penn) and Panel Moderator Kim Fies (Berks County Department of Agriculture).

The **Founders Panel** featured significant figures in the SAN’s formation: Chris Crockett (Aqua), Howard Neukrug (Water Center at Penn), Carol Collier (Drexel University Academy of Natural Sciences), and Cathy Curran Myers (Reading EAC & formerly PA DEP). The founders came together to share their perspectives on the moments that brought SAN partners together in the early days as well as inspiration and ideas for what the future of the SAN holds.

The afternoon included Workgroup Updates covering a 20-year perspective on each of the SAN’s 5 core workgroups. Highlights from each workgroup are included below and on the following pages.

Workgroup Then & Now Overview

ABANDONED MINE DRAINAGE

- Watershed assessment and restoration efforts began in 1998
- Estimated \$15–20 million invested in the upper Schuylkill for AMD treatment projects!
- Maintenance and ongoing monitoring of AMD treatment systems are critical to their success in protecting downstream water quality into the future
- Tours of treatment sites have been a great connection point for partners

AGRICULTURE

- Evolution from single practice focus to comprehensive ‘whole farm’ planning and implementation
- Huge boost to agricultural restoration through targeted subwatershed funding programs (USDA NRCS National Water Quality Initiative, William Penn Foundation Delaware River Watershed Initiative) combined with Schuylkill River Restoration Fund (SRRF).
- New management regimes and technology plus generational transitions on farms.
- New support for Urban Agriculture efforts in Berks County and specifically the City of Reading

Former and current workgroup chairs take the stage to provide updates.

From left to right: Chris Anderson (EPA), Krista Seng (Aqua), and Alex Cupo (SBN); Joe Hebelka (PADEP) and Amanda Obosenko (Aqua); and Tim Fenchel (SRG).



Workgroup Then & Now Overview Cont.

ENGAGEMENT AND STEWARDSHIP

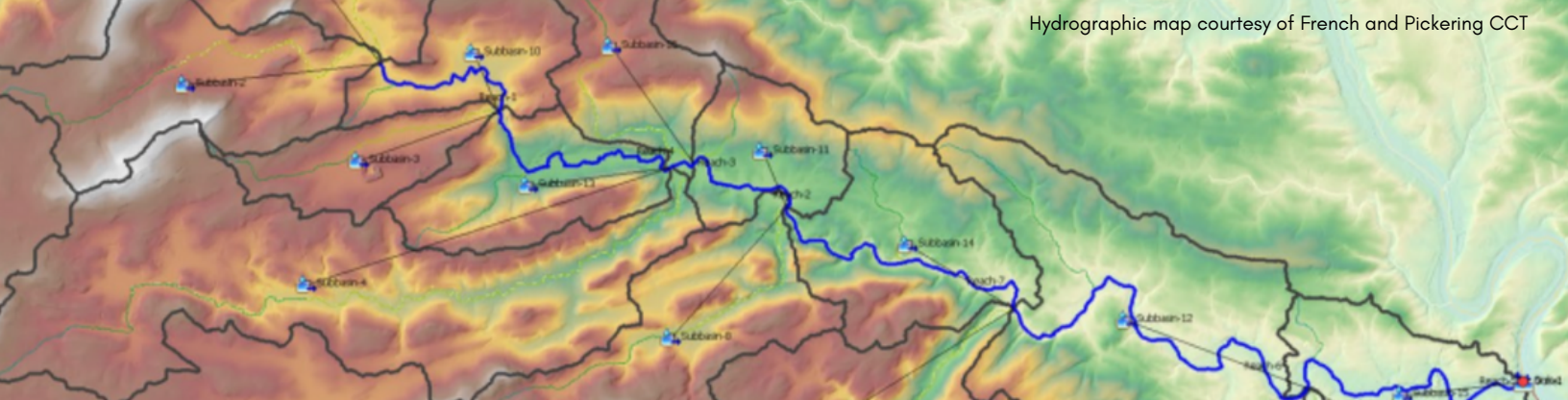
- Projects of past included Student Street Art Contests
- We are still carrying the torch on the Schuylkill Scrub and Scrub n Pub
- New projects include the Community of Communicators Virtual Partner Workshop and
- Hands-on Teacher Training Workshop at Green Lane with Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy

STORMWATER

- Schuylkill Action Students Kickoff and GSI at over 30 school campuses through this program
- SAN Retail Outreach Committee (SANROC) - cleanups, storm drain marking and King of Prussia mall retail outreach on best practices for stormwater management
- 2023 Olin Labs Circular Soil GSI Rain Garden Tour at Temple Boathouse in Philadelphia
- 2023 'Sold Out' Stormwater Operations and Maintenance Workshop

PATHOGENS AND POINT SOURCE

- Sewer System upgrades significantly reduced pathogen inputs
- Delaware Valley Early Warning System (EWS) facilitates information sharing
- Tours: Aqua Lab in Bryn Mawr and Upper Montgomery Joint Authority WWTP
- Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) Monitoring
- Green Lane Freshwater Mussel Rearing Center



Afternoon Sessions rotated between **Schuylkill Highlands Updates** and an **Elmwood Park Zoo Operations Tour**.

Karl Russek (French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust) presented on flooding projections in French and Pickering Creek subwatersheds attributed to impervious surfaces and landscape changes in Chester County combined with the exacerbating impacts of climate change. Karl also stressed the importance of communicating the connection between upstream land protection and source water protection for downstream communities and providing those downstream community members ample opportunities to connect and engage with the upstream landscape.

Vicky Laubach (Green Valleys Watershed Association) presented a rough cut of Freshwaters Illustrated's Schuylkill Watershed video series entitled *Hidden Worlds*. Generously funded by the William Penn Foundation via the Delaware River Watershed Initiative, this video highlights the unique species, communities, and human impacts in the Schuylkill Highlands region with beautiful stills and videos filmed across the watershed.



By Freshwaters Illustrated



Larry Lloyd (Berks Nature) was all smiles during the SANnual meeting's Elmwood Park Zoo tour.

During the Zoo tour, attendees learned about the history of the Elmwood Park Zoo and infrastructure changes underway across the campus.

The meeting concluded with Alphabet Soup & door prize announcements. Celebrations continued with a partner happy hour at another Norristown gem, Von C. Brewing.

Thank you our partners for the impactful and consistent work you've done since the dawn of the SAN and continue to do as the SAN moves forward into the future. **Let's continue to improve the Schuylkill waters together, drop by drop.**

THANK YOU PARTNERS!