

2010 PROGRESS REPORT



SCHUYLKILL ACTION NETWORK

Protecting Schuylkill Waters • www.SchuylkillWaters.org

Members of the Schuylkill Action Network share information, expertise, and technology to help each other achieve a shared vision of clean water and a healthy environment for the Schuylkill River and its tributaries.

BUFFER THE SCHUYLKILL INITIATIVE

In 2009, the Schuylkill Action Network (SAN) defined a new initiative aimed at restoring, protecting, and enhancing riparian buffers throughout the Schuylkill River Watershed. Riparian buffers, which are a band of trees, shrubs, or grasses that border a river or creek, help filter pollution and keep the water clean. SAN workgroups are actively working to implement buffer-related projects.

The SAN stormwater workgroup has created the Schuylkill Action Students (SAS) program, working with schools to install riparian buffers on their campuses. Schools, which are among the largest landowners in the watershed, create one of the greatest opportunities for restoring streamside buffers. This program first looked at large tracts of school property with streamside access and then ranked them by the percentage of land located within 200 ft. of a stream. The initial phase of the program will target schools in the Wissahickon and Perkiomen Creek watersheds. In 2010, the workgroup plans to complete a total of four projects, two in each watershed.



On May 1, 2009, the Schuylkill Conservation District and the Schuylkill Headwaters Association carried out the Anthracite Region's first Anthracite Regional Reforestation Initiative (ARRI) pilot project.

The Abandoned Mine Drainage workgroup has kicked off a new initiative of restoring abandoned mine lands to native hardwood forests as opposed to the common practice of planting grasses. This approach offers additional environmental benefits such as reducing soil erosion, enhancing wildlife habitat, improving air quality, and creating more options for recreation. The workgroup completed its first project last May and plans to complete two similar projects in 2010.

The Watershed Land Collaborative workgroup continues to identify innovative strategies for forested buffer protection. Through its land prioritization model, the workgroup is analyzing prioritization results to identify the highest priority lands in the watershed. This information will be used to target outreach to select municipalities on land and buffer protection tools and resources.

Together, these efforts will protect, conserve, and restore the forested riparian areas throughout the Schuylkill River Watershed and offer a wide range of potential benefits, including cleaner water, greater wildlife diversity, and more natural stream flows. Restored buffers will also offer many social benefits such as educational opportunities, enhanced aesthetics, and a higher quality of life for residents.



Guntz Farm Agricultural Project



Wheeler Run Project, existing wooden flume.

SCHUYLKILL RIVER RESTORATION FUND

In 2009, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area distributed \$175,000 for projects aimed at improving the health of the Schuylkill River Watershed. The two projects that were selected benefit the entire watershed because they reduce the amount of pollution that enters creeks, and ultimately, the river, which is a source of drinking water for over one million people.

Berks County Conservancy – Guntz Farm Agricultural Project – \$75,000

This project will implement Agriculture Best Management Practices on the Guntz Farm, which is located at the confluence of the Little Manatawny and Manatawny Creeks. The project will construct a concrete manure storage facility, install streambank fencing and cattle crossings, and reduce barnyard stormwater pollution. The project will control streambank erosion and prevent manure from entering the creeks.

Schuylkill Headwaters Association – Wheeler Run Project – \$100,000

This project will replace the existing Wheeler Run Flume with a large-diameter plastic pipe, preventing clean water from entering the Pine Knot Mine pool and getting polluted. Currently, the mine pool drains through the Pine Knot Discharge, which is the watershed's largest source of abandoned mine drainage pollution.

The SAN continually seeks additional funding for project implementation and is currently working on a plan to grow the restoration fund. Each dollar invested in cleaning up the Schuylkill Watershed is an investment in improving the quality of life in this region. To date, this grant program has awarded over \$750,000. Visit www.SchuylkillRiver.org for more information about this fund.

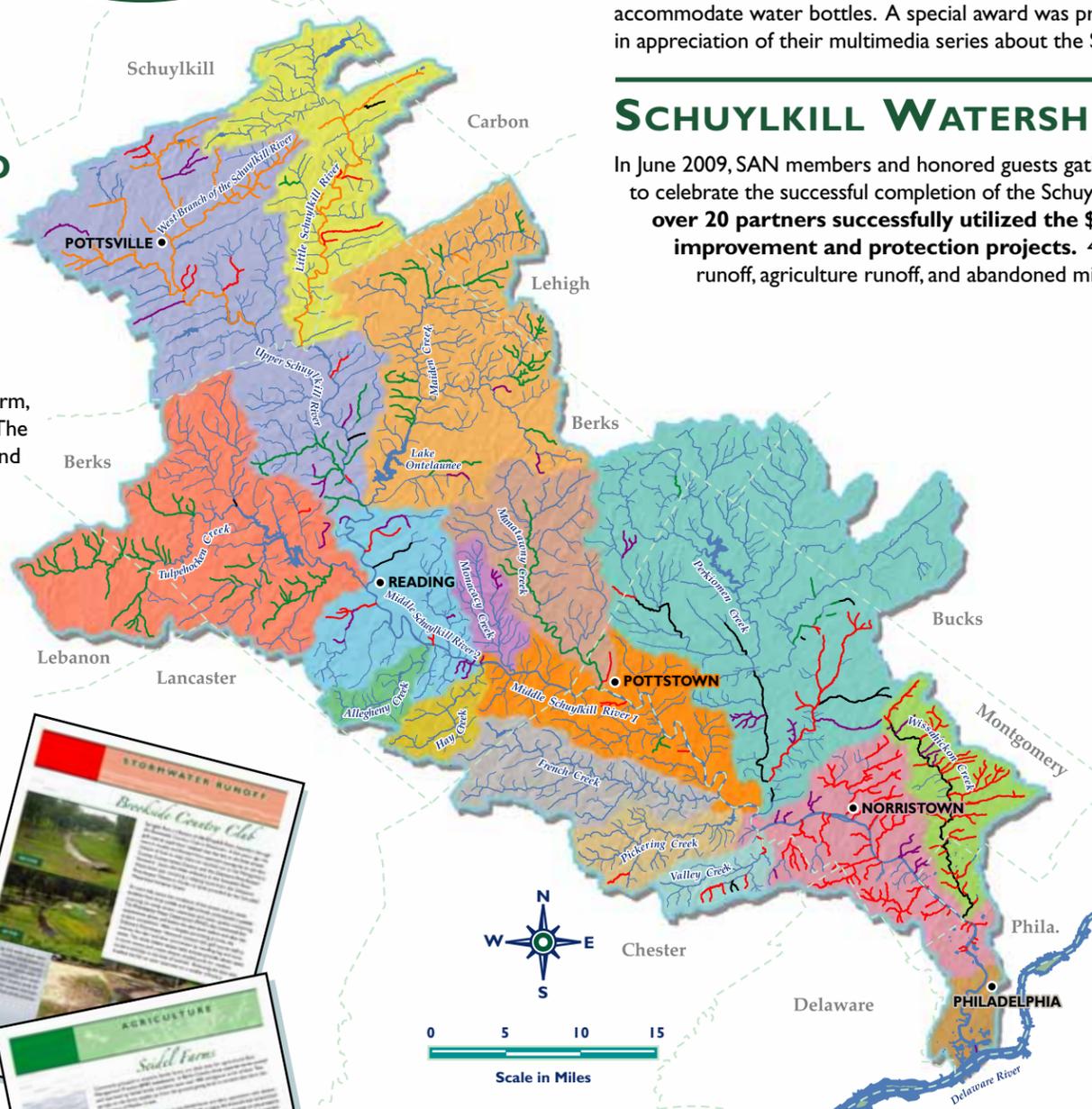
SCHUYLKILL STORIES

The SAN website has officially been up and running since April 2009 and is providing visitors with up-to-date watershed news, information on SAN projects, and a venue for workgroup members to communicate and share resources. Under the “Celebrating the Schuylkill” section of the website, visitors can share with others how they are interacting with the river. Visitors can upload text, pictures, videos, or links to tell their story. New features also allow users to share their stories through popular social networking sites and subscribe to RSS feeds, alerting them to website updates. The Schuylkill River and all of its tributaries are filled with a rich history that stems from many of our personal experiences, which we still continue to create.

Come share your story!

http://www.schuylkillwaters.org/schuylkill_celebrate.cfm

Some of the Schuylkill Stories from 2008.



DRINKING WATER AWARDS

On May 6, the SAN recognized three schools in the Schuylkill River watershed for their dedication to watershed education. 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 students and the community about watershed protection, including creating an inventory of community impacts to watersheds, planting native vegetation along a walking trail, installing a rain garden, compiling original observational sketches and reflective essays into a field guide, and retrofitting campus water fountains with a spout specially designed to accommodate water bottles. A special award was presented to the *Reading Eagle* newspaper in appreciation of their multimedia series about the Schuylkill River.



Students at the Anna L. Lingelbach School

SCHUYLKILL WATERSHED INITIATIVE GRANT

In June 2009, SAN members and honored guests gathered at the Brookside Country Club in Pottstown, PA to celebrate the successful completion of the Schuylkill River Watershed Initiative Grant (SWIG). **Through this 4 year grant program, over 20 partners successfully utilized the \$1.5 million award to leverage an additional \$2 million for water quality improvement and protection projects.** 40 projects addressing the biggest threats to our water supply, including stormwater runoff, agriculture runoff, and abandoned mine drainage, were completed throughout the watershed.

SWIG Project Highlights:

- Installed approximately 40,000 ft. of streambank fencing, keeping cattle and infectious pathogens out of our water supply
- Planted 6,200 ft. of streamside buffers that will remove 360 tons/year of sediment, 512 tons/year of phosphorous, and 928 tons/year of nitrogen from agriculture land
- Certified 5 farms for environmental excellence
- Installed 9 major projects on schools, parks and other public spaces to clean stormwater and provide educational opportunities for watershed residents
- Constructed 3 projects expected to clean 6.5 million gallons of abandoned mine discharge per day and remove up to 780 tons of metals
- Completed a plan to clean an additional 35 million gallons per day of mine discharge
- Launched a new SAN website (www.schuylkillwaters.org) to highlight the Schuylkill River as a valuable resource
- Created 5 new Environmental Advisory Committees in priority areas

RIVER EVENTS

10th Annual Schuylkill River Sojourn	260 participants
2nd Schuylkill River Festival	5,000 participants
SheROX Philly Triathlon	1,500 participants
2008 Philly Fishing Festival	200 participants
Dragon Boat Races	154 teams
Philadelphia Women's Triathlon	1,600 participants
Philadelphia Insurance Triathlon	4,000 participants
Dad Vail Regatta	3,500 participants
Stotesbury Cup Regatta	5,100 participants



Philly Fishing Festival

Schuylkill River Sojourn

WORKGROUP UPDATES



Stormwater: In 2009, the workgroup focused its efforts on implementation projects, resulting in the formation of the Schuylkill Action Students program, a school based riparian planting program. The initial year will focus on 4 schools in the Wissahickon and Perkiomen watersheds, providing educators with classroom and technical support to complete a riparian restoration project on their school's campus. The goal of this initiative is to develop riparian corridors along priority, headwater streams. This past year, the workgroup also participated and displayed SAN materials at the Trail Towns Conference and the Schuylkill Watershed Congress, and provided support to various projects of SAN organizations such as GreenTreks, TreeVitalize, and the Montgomery County Planning Commission. Contact: Dee Ross 800-445-4935, ext. 106

Abandoned Mine Drainage: During 2009, the AMD workgroup completed several projects aimed at reducing the impact of legacy mining problems in the watershed. These projects included the installation of the Otto Mine Tunnel Discharge aeration system; West Branch Phase I Implementation of the Pine Knot Watershed Study; funding, design and permitting of the Wheeler Run project; and design and permitting of the Silver Creek discharge. The Schuylkill Headwaters Association (SHA) also received a grant from PA DEP to address 2 unstabilized mine forfeiture sites. The U.S. Geological Survey continues to monitor and develop a ground water model for the Upper Schuylkill Drainage Area, collecting quarterly water quality and annual biological data. Additionally, the SHA completed their first Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative Project, planting nearly 2000 trees on county owned mine lands. The AMD workgroup also gave many tours of their projects throughout the year. Contact: Dan Koury 570-621-3118

Education & Outreach: In April 2009, the E&O workgroup launched the SAN internal communications system and external website. The "external" public site includes a zoomable map cross-linked to information on SAN projects, photos and updates, as well as general information about the SAN and the Schuylkill Watershed. Through the "internal" workgroup hub, members can send out automated messages, share files, and make updates to the website. This important tool will bring an expanded awareness to projects, events, and issues in the Schuylkill Watershed. The website and workgroup hubs were designed to be content driven by SAN members. The SAN E&O workgroup will continue to refine and update the website, add new features, and promote its use with SAN members. Contact: Lisa Wool 800-445-4935, ext. 105

Agriculture: In 2009, the agricultural workgroup developed and installed BMPs including conservation and nutrient management plans, streambank/wetlands fencing, animal crossings, and riparian buffer plantings. In 2009, 5,410 feet of streambank fencing and 2 cattle crossings were installed on two properties in Berks County. Also, over 15 acres of riparian areas and 1,120 trees and shrubs were planted in the watershed. The workgroup partners also worked on a project at Angelic Park, creating 5 new acres of wetland habitat. The workgroup also initiated the *Partners for Clean Water Program*, creating a locally funded grants program for small agriculture projects in the watershed. The workgroup is looking for corporate donations to sustain program funds. Contact: Lyn O'Hare 610-621-2001

Pathogen Control and Compliance Assistance: The Pathogen/Compliance Workgroup took steps to address pathogen contributions in the watershed through improved reporting of sewage overflows; self assessment by local municipalities of sewer collection system capacity, maintenance, operation, and management; ensuring compliance with combined system regulation/requirements; targeted inspections; compliance assistance; and appropriate enforcement. The workgroup also supported various events and educational initiatives throughout the watershed, including the Berks County Pharmaceutical collection program, Montgomery County Wastewater Operator Certification Program, and outreach efforts for changes to the phosphate detergent law. Contact: Joe Hebelka 717-772-4014

Watershed Land Protection Collaborative: Over the past year, the workgroup continued to focus its attention on improving and refining strategies to target land protection to priority areas. The workgroup analyzed results from 2 case studies that identified land protection priorities in Berks and Montgomery counties. The workgroup also spent time re-analyzing prioritization results to target the most important areas for outreach/assistance. The model depicts high priority lands for both ecological conservation and source water protection and will be utilized in defining strategies for the SAN "Buffer the Schuylkill" campaign. The intention is to increase protection of these areas and provide targeted outreach and technical assistance to townships with large amounts of these priority lands. Contact: Laura Whalen 800-445-4935, ext. 107

Planning: In 2009, the Planning Committee worked with the Executive Steering Committee to hire a fulltime SAN Coordinator who now manages the day-to-day activities of the SAN and continues to grow, develop, and support collaborative programs and projects for water quality improvement in the watershed. The position is overseen by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. Additionally, the Planning Committee continued to support SAN implementation projects by assisting with the distribution and growth of the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund. In December, the Planning Committee organized the SAN Annual Workshop for 80 participants at Reading Area Community College. During the workshop, SAN members shared workgroup activities and participated in breakout sessions, which will provide a strong foundation for developing the next SAN strategic plan. Contact: Chuck Kanetsky 215-814-2735



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www.state.nj.us/drbc/



www.depweb.state.pa.us/river/czmp.htm



www.epa.gov/region03/

Funding for this project was provided by the PA Department of Environmental Protection through Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act administered by the US Environmental Protection Agency.