



## **SCHUYLKILL RIVER** NATIONAL & STATE HERITAGE AREA

Schuylkill River Heritage Area  
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### **Five Schuylkill River Communities Earn Grants Aimed at Connecting Trails to Businesses and Attractions**

POTTSTOWN—The Schuylkill River Heritage Area has awarded grants to five communities for projects intended to draw users of the Schuylkill River land and water trails to area downtowns, historic sites, restaurants and shops.

The communities of Pottstown, Phoenixville, Hamburg, Pottsville and East Falls were selected to receive funding from the Schuylkill River Heritage Area's (SRHA) new Heritage Towns and Tours initiative. (Please see attached sheet for details on each grant award).

Grant recipients will be awarded \$2,000 to support creation of a Heritage Action Plan using the SRHA's Heritage Towns and Tours Toolkit, and will receive up to \$5,000 in consultant support while developing the plan. Once a plan is completed and approved by the SRHA, awardees will be eligible for up to \$25,000 to enact it.

Recipients must then provide a 10 percent match and be able to complete all projects within 12-months.

The grants, made possible with funding from the William Penn Foundation, are intended to support communities along the Schuylkill River land and water trails with projects in three areas: improving connections between trails and towns, creating an identity and a sense of place, and marketing themselves as destinations.

"The Heritage Towns and Tours Program was established as part of our goal of using recreation and heritage tourism to help revitalize Heritage Area communities," said SRHA Executive Director Kurt Zwikl. "We are pleased to announce these grants, which will serve to improve the economy of municipalities that participate, and connect trail users to heritage resources throughout the region."

The five recipients were chosen from a pool of 16 applicants from the five county Heritage Area (Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery and Phoenixville). Grants were awarded based on a range of criteria, including how well applications adhered to the SRHA's initiatives; the ability of partners to carry out the projects in a 12-month period;

and the accessibility of the community to the Schuylkill River Trail or Schuylkill River Water Trail.

The grant program and the Heritage Towns and Tours concept grew out of the SRHA's successful Trail Town Conferences held over the past two years. Those conferences provided information to business and community leaders seeking to make their towns into destinations for trail users.

According to a 2009 Schuylkill River Trail user survey conducted by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, the trail, which currently has 56 completed miles, attracted over 800,000 visits and generated \$7.3 million in direct economic impact in 2008.

While the trail town concept can be applied to any community located along a trail, those along the Schuylkill River Trail have a particular advantage. Because the Schuylkill River Trail will, when complete, run 130 miles, it is more likely to attract tourists from outside the region. Studies show that people who come from out of town will spend four times as much as local users.

*The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area, managed by the non-profit Schuylkill River Greenway Association, uses conservation, education, recreation, tourism, and cultural and historic preservation as tools for community revitalization and economic development.*

*The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that foster rich cultural expression, strengthen children's futures, and deepen connections to nature and community. In partnership with others, the Foundation works to advance a vital, just and caring community. Learn more about the Foundation online at [www.william penn foundation.org](http://www.william penn foundation.org)*