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Schuylkill River Trail Set to Grow in Chesco



Trail in Chester County is next in line for construction.

“The Schuylkill River Heritage Area is looking forward to a new partnership with Chester County in developing this important link,” said SRHA Executive Director Kurt Zwikl. “This new piece of trail will provide valuable fitness and recreational opportunities for residents throughout the area.”

Construction won't begin right away. The Round 21 Preservation Partnership Grant totals just over \$1 million, but since the project is expected to cost \$1.8 million,

additional grant funds must be acquired. The SRHA is seeking matching dollars from the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, through a grant round that won't be awarded until the fall. Once all funds are in place, construction will happen in three phases, likely to start in the spring of 2010.

When complete, the Schuylkill River Trail will stretch an estimated 130-miles along the Schuylkill River, from Philadelphia to Pottsville. Several large sections of the trail are already complete, including pieces from Philadelphia to Mont Clare (26 miles), Pottstown to Reading (19 miles) and Hamburg to Auburn (7.5 miles).

Trail enthusiasts are always wondering when the Schuylkill River Trail will connect in Chester County. We finally have an answer! The Schuylkill River Heritage Area has received a \$1 million Preservation Partnership grant from Chester County commissioners to build the first 3.5 mile piece of trail that will eventually link Pottstown to Mont Clare.

This marks the first step toward closing what is a key missing link that stretches about 14 miles from Mont Clare to Pottstown. Once that entire gap is closed, trail users will be able to get on the trail in Philadelphia and hike or bike all the way to Reading—a distance of nearly 60 miles.

The initial 3.5-mile piece to be constructed will take the trail from Cromby, located just west of Phoenixville, through Spring City and up to the Pennhurst site. It will run through parts of East Vincent Township, Spring City Borough and East Pikeland Township.



Communities are ready to make connections to the trail.



Heritage Grants Awarded

In November, the Schuylkill River Heritage Area received \$98,000 in project grants from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The funds were awarded as part of a \$44 million state disbursement that will support recreation, conservation and heritage projects and studies throughout Pennsylvania. The SRHA will use its funds to support four projects and one special purpose study. Those include:

SCHUYLKILL RIVER ACADEMIC AND HERITAGE INTERPRETIVE CENTER—\$40,000

Grantee: Schuylkill River Heritage Area
Project Scope: To create and install a Heritage Area Interpretive Center titled “River of Revolutions,” in the SRHA’s office headquarters, in Pottstown.

BLACK ROCK SANCTUARY INTERPRETIVE DISPLAYS—\$13,800

Grantee: Chester County Parks and Recreation
Project Scope: To design and install interactive stations and binocular stations at Black Rock Sanctuary in Phoenixville, to teach visitors about the concept of a watershed and allow them to view geological specimens, the watershed area and wildlife from elevated vantage points.

ARCHAEOLOGY FIELD SCHOOL—\$15,000

Grantee: The Speaker’s House
Project Scope: To implement a multi-year, six-week summer archaeology field school at the Speaker’s House in the Borough of Trappe, Montgomery County, to provide training for future archaeologists and to use archaeological evidence to enhance the historical record of the property and its inhabitants.

SCHUYLKILL RIVER DESILTING PROJECT HISTORY STUDY—\$20,000

Grantee: Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Project Scope: To develop a narrative history of the geology, geography and settlement of the watershed. History will focus on construction of transportation facilities (canals and railroads) to transport coal, the growth of mining in the Schuylkill River watershed, factors that drove that growth, the environmental factors that led to a public call for clean-up, and, ultimately, the undertaking of the desilting project.

MINI-GRANT PROGRAM—\$10,000

Project Scope: Ten grantees will receive small \$1,000 grants to assist with small-scale projects such as developing educational materials and implementing programs or events.



Right: Shelley Speirs, PA Dept. of Community and Economic Development talks about the importance of community hospitality to trail users

Over 130 at Trail Towns Conference

“THE TRAIL TOWNS PROGRAM IS ABOUT ECONOMIC RECOVERY FOR COMMUNITIES ALONG THE PASSAGE.”

Cathy McCollom, regional director of The Progress Fund’s Trail Town Program.

The Schuylkill River Trail can be an economic boon to communities along its path. At the SRHA’s Trail Towns Conference on March 19, more than 130 representatives from various businesses, governments and organizations came out to learn how the trail’s growing popularity can help revitalize municipalities.

The conference, over a year in the planning, was an overwhelming success. Speakers included an impressive slate of 12 experts who presented ideas for business and community initiatives to help stimulate economic growth in towns all along the trail.

The keynote address was given by Cathy McCollom, regional director of The Progress Fund’s Trail Town Program, which has successfully promoted business development along the 150-mile Great Allegheny Trail.

While all trails can help stimulate local economies, the Schuylkill River Trail is particularly promising in this regard because of its length, which, when complete, will total over 130 miles. Studies show that the longer a trail is the farther people will travel to use it. And, people who come from out of town will spend four times as much as local users. Those who stay overnight will spend even more.

At the conference, a promotional film about the Schuylkill River Trail was debuted, and discussions focused on the needs of area businesses, the role of local governments and the importance of hospitality training.

As a result of the conference, Heritage Area staff members hope to put together a short presentation, that they can offer to municipalities and agencies in the future. Such presentations are expected to encourage others to join the effort to build on the trail’s economic potential.

Funding for the workshop came from the William Penn Foundation, Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Greater Philadelphia Tourism and Marketing Corporation and Wallace, Roberts and Todd.

Pottstown Trail Earns Foundation Prestigious Award

We know the Pottstown Health and Wellness Foundation has done some tremendous things for the Schuylkill River Trail in the Pottstown Area. That’s why the Schuylkill River Heritage Area nominated them for the American Trails 2008 Trails for Health Award. In December, the foundation learned it had won the national award—a well-deserved recognition for its commitment to improving and promoting the trail.

This prestigious award is presented every other year, recognizing a community’s commitment to improving access to trails and promoting their use and importance for increasing physical activity. It also honors a commitment to long term change through community design, trail planning, physical activity promotion, and increased trail use.

The foundation has provided over \$160,000, both in grant funding and project costs in support of the trail since 2006. It invested additional funds to install interpretive signs along the Schuylkill River Trail from Pottstown’s Riverfront Park to the Berks/Montgomery

County line at Morlatton Village. The signs are designed to be informative yet encouraging to people exercising on the trail.

“We are very proud that we have received this award, but we share the honor with three local groups whose expertise and cooperation were vital to the project’s success,” states Dave Kraybill, Executive Director of the Pottstown Area Health & Wellness Foundation. “We had a vision to provide motivational information on the trail and with the dedicated help of The Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area we were able to bring it to life. We also had the cooperation of the Borough of Pottstown and the Montgomery County Parks & Heritage Services Department. Everyone’s willingness to see this project through to the end has ultimately benefited our



Right: One of Pottstown Health and Wellness’ signs along the Schuylkill River Trail explaining the trails’ healthy benefits.

Get Out and Enjoy!

Exhibits

Reading Public Museum
March 28, 2009 - June 28, 2009

Dinosaurs of the Deep: Savage Ancient Seas



Experience a world of huge carnivorous marine reptiles with double-hinged jaws and teeth in the middle of their palates, gigantic flesh-eating fish big enough to swallow an adult human being whole, flying reptiles with three-foot skulls and the biggest sea turtles to have ever lived. www.readingpublicmuseum.org

Philadelphia Museum of Art
Through May 17, 2009

Cézanne and Beyond

This exhibition features forty paintings and twenty watercolors and drawings by Cézanne, displayed alongside works by several artists for whom Cézanne has been a central inspiration and whose work reflects, both visually and poetically, Cézanne's extraordinary legacy. www.philamuseum.org.

Schwenkfelder Library and Heritage Center, Pennsburg
Through June 30, 2009

My Own Fairy Tale: Fanciful Art Dolls by Stacy Clark

Explore a wondrous world featuring new work by the artist Stacy Clark. Clark's individual, hand-sewn, painted, and stuffed figures are inspired by nursery rhymes, folklore, and fairy tales. The square gallery depicts four seasons: spring, summer, autumn, and winter; each corner features between 8-16 different characters from mythology, nursery rhymes, and folklore. In connection to this featured exhibit, all K-12 public, private, and homeschool students are invited to submit works of literature and art that explore themes and characters in folk, fantasy, and mythological genres for a grant funded exhibit in 2009. www.schwenkfelder.com/Museum_ChangingExhibits.htm

Historic Yellow Springs
April 25-May 10, 2009

36th Annual Yellow Springs Art Show and Sale

Featuring over 170 juried artists exhibiting in the area's finest show and sale of paintings, drawings, graphics and sculpture. www.yellowsprings.org



Open Gate by J. Scott Wolf, 2009
Yellow Springs Art Show Poster
Artist

Events

Historic Preservation Trust of Berks County
Saturday May 9, 2009 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Spring Luncheon and Plant Sale Enjoy a delightful luncheon at the Stone House on 1216 Parkside Drive North in Wyomissing, with music by violinist Barbara Lanya and advice on plants from Botanist Susan Munch of Alvernia University. www.historicpreservationtrust.org

Bartram's Garden, Philadelphia
Sunday, April 19, 2009 1-2 p.m.

Tulipmania

Gardener Nancy Wygant will share the fascinating story of tulips and show off the collection of rare bulbs in bloom at Bartram's Garden. www.bartramsgarden.org.

Sovereign Majestic Theater
Saturday April 25, 2009 7 p.m.

Jay Smar—Coal Mining and Folk Songs

Armed with 2 guitars, baritone vocals, claw-hammer banjo, and fiddling, singing, and flat-footin' (a form of clog-dancing), he serves his audience an "acoustic buffet" of traditional American and original folk, old time mountain music, bluegrass and gospel tunes, as well as coal mining songs of Northeast Pennsylvania preceded by their origin. Original and "covered" guitar instrumentals garnish this plate of cultural cuisine.



Reading and West Reading
April 17, 2009 - April 26, 2009

Third Annual Cherry Blossom Festival

Two weeks of events for the entire family in Reading and West Reading. See cherry blossoms, plant your own cherry tree, watch a parade, or visit a Ginza Arcade. There are also Earth Day activities, a Reading Phillies game, art at the GoggleWorks and other events. Sponsored by Greater Reading Visitors Bureau; presented by RiverPlace on the Schuylkill. Please see website for up-to-minute details! www.riverplacepa.com



Support the Schuylkill River Heritage Area

Join or renew online at www.schuylkillriver.org

The Schuylkill River National & State Heritage Area is dedicated to assisting communities, and citizens of the Schuylkill River region to preserve and sustain their cultural heritage and natural environment for future generations.

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pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES