



SCHUYLKILL RIVER NATIONAL & STATE HERITAGE AREA

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Schuylkill River Trail Thun Section now Complete From Pottstown to Reading

BIRDSBORO--The Schuylkill River Heritage Area cut the ribbon on a new .68 mile addition to the Schuylkill River Trail's Thun Section on Friday, signaling the completion of the last link in the 19-mile Pottstown-to-Reading piece.

While small, the new trail segment is significant because it closes the final gap in the portion of trail that stretches from Pottstown's Riverfront Park to Reading Area Community College. In addition, directional signs have recently been erected along a four-mile on-road piece connecting Birdsboro to Gibraltar, ensuring that trail users can easily find their way along the roadway and back onto the off-road trail that continues another 6.75 miles to RACC.

The .68-mile trail addition includes .28 miles of new crushed stone trail located behind the Optimists' Baseball Field in Birdsboro, as well as a .40-mile shared-road connection along Armorcast Road.

The ribbon was cut by Birdsboro Mayor Robert Myers at a ceremony attended by about 80 people. Speakers included Michael DiBerardinis, Secretary, and Congressman Jim Gerlach.

"This trail honors the past and the wonderful history of the Schuylkill River, but it also looks to the future," observed guest speaker Michael DiBerardinis, Secretary of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources "The future is the new economy built on accessibility, built on clean, built on green, built on the values of conservation."

Congressman Jim Gerlach also spoke, as did State Representative David Kessler, Berks County Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt and Kurt Zwinkl, executive director of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. All speakers noted the partnerships and commitment necessary to construct the 19-miles of trail

The Schuylkill River Heritage Area began construction on the first four-mile piece of the trail in Berks County in 1991. Since that time, the trail has been built gradually with assistance and funding from a number of public and private partners and with the help of volunteers.

The final link in Birdsboro was made possible by Greg Flynn, owner of the former Armorcast property. Flynn has agreed to allow the non-profit Schuylkill River Heritage Area to build the trail on his property and to access it from the privately owned Armorcast Road. The \$28,000 construction project was done by Barwis Construction, LLC, of Limekiln.

Funding for the Pottstown-to-Reading section was provided by DCNR, PA Department of Transportation, Montgomery County, Berks County, Pottstown Area Health and Wellness Foundation, Wyomissing Foundation and the William Penn Foundation.

The Thun Trail is part of the larger Schuylkill River Trail, which when complete will stretch the entire length of the 130-mile Schuylkill River, from Philadelphia to Pottsville. Several large sections of the trail are already complete, including pieces from Philadelphia to Oaks (about 20 miles), Pottstown to Reading (19 miles) and Hamburg to Auburn (7.5 miles).

The Birdsboro trail dedication was held in partnership with the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape Initiative, a DCNR program that seeks to work collaboratively across its bureaus and with external partners on land conservation, locally-driven planning, and community economic revitalization efforts that are tied to the protection of our natural resources and cultural assets. The Schuylkill Highlands is an area that includes 139 municipalities in portions of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh and Montgomery Counties.

The Schuylkill River National and State Heritage Area is a non-profit organization that uses conservation, education, recreation, tourism, and cultural and historic preservation as tools for community revitalization and economic development. For more information visit www.schuylkillriver.org.