

2.0 FOREWORD

This River Conservation Plan for the Schuylkill River watershed has been produced through a partnership between The Conservation Fund (TCF), Natural Lands Trust (NLT) and the Patrick Center for Environmental Research at the Academy of Natural Sciences (PCER - ANS).

The Plan is designed to be a guidebook for municipalities, conservation groups, and citizens interested in taking steps to enhance the long-term health of the Schuylkill River watershed. However, due to the regional nature of the assessments in this project, it is likely that municipalities and nonprofits will be the primary users. Municipalities and nonprofits may, in turn, use the Plan to engage landowners and citizens in implementing the recommendations developed in this Plan.

The Plan focuses on three major areas of interest:

- An analysis of watershed lands required for ecosystem sustainability;
- A broad-scale analysis of water quality; and
- An assessment of watershed institutions (public agencies and nonprofit organizations).

While agricultural, scenic, cultural, historic and recreational resources are acknowledged as critical aspects of the watershed community and part of the comprehensive planning process, they have not been specifically addressed in this Plan due to the agreed-upon scope of work, the scale of the watershed assessment (almost 2,000 square miles) and the limited resources available. A tight focus on the three primary areas of interest was required to meet the goals of the project.

2.1 Goals and Principles

Goals for the Plan were established in the contract with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), as follows:

- Identify conservation issues important to local communities and governing agencies;
- Conduct a broad scale inventory and assessment of land and water resources to establish priorities;
- Make recommendations for a watershed-wide conservation agenda to guide future studies and actions at the site-specific, local community level; and
- Make recommendations for a management structure to implement the recommendations of the report.

The Plan includes a summary of findings on existing physical and institutional conditions, input from government agencies, municipal and county officials, as well as private citizens, solicited through public meetings, surveys, and interviews.

The Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan is constructed on the general principles noted below. Throughout the report, more specific goals, objectives and recommendations developed from these primary principles are described.

- General Awareness

The Schuylkill River system should come to be widely understood as a common, connecting resource of local and regional importance and great beauty.

- Coordinated Action

Through the coordinated actions of all parties – municipalities, agencies, landowners, citizens, institutions, and private groups – the ecology and water quality, as well as beauty of the Schuylkill River, its tributaries and watershed should be preserved and, where possible, improved. Smart Growth polices can be used to help direct new development that is deemed essential to the areas of the watershed where impacts on water and ecological health can be minimized.

- Central Role of Municipalities

Municipalities, and organizations sponsored by municipalities, should pursue the recommendations found in this Conservation Plan, using matching funding sources such as the Pennsylvania Rivers Conservation Program.

It is important to realize that the landscape, water quality and institutional issues addressed in the Plan are inter-related, making their separation into discrete topics at times artificial. Some of the most important recommendations, for example, a commitment to preserving and enhancing riparian buffers, address multiple issues simultaneously. Repetition has been avoided where possible, although recommendations that address multiple issues have been discussed in several places. This should help readers understand the multiple objectives of these recommendations.

2.2 Project Documentation

The documents produced through this planning effort for the Schuylkill River watershed, and information on where they can be found, are presented below.

- The Executive Summary to the Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan

An Executive Summary to the Conservation Plan is available as a separate document, and also included as Chapter 1 of the Plan. The intent of this summary is to present key issues and conditions in the watershed, and to describe the three focal analyses performed and their related recommendations. A printed copy of the Executive Summary is available to the public on request. Please address requests for printed copies of the Executive Summary to the Natural Lands Trust at the address provided below, or submit requests via the Plan’s website, <http://www.schuylkillplan.org/>.

- The Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan

The complete River Conservation Plan for the Schuylkill River watershed is provided, by section, in PDF format online at <http://www.schuylkillplan.org>. This document can be downloaded and read using the free Adobe Acrobat™ software available on the Internet. The Plan contains 7 sections:

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| Chapter 1.0 | Executive Summary |
| Chapter 2.0 | Foreword |
| Chapter 3.0 | Watershed Characterization |
| Chapter 4.0 | Identification of Major Watershed Issues |

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| Chapter 5.0 | Water Quality |
| Chapter 6.0 | Promoting a Sustainable Landscape |
| Chapter 7.0 | Institutional Assessment |

Maps referenced in these chapters of the Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan also are provided separately as PDF files on the website. A limited number of printed copies of the full Plan are available for review at the following locations.

- Planning Commissions: Berks, Montgomery and Schuylkill Counties
 - National Resource Conservation Service: Berks, Montgomery, and Schuylkill
 - Philadelphia Free Library
 - Schuylkill Resource Conservation District
 - Other locations as noted on the project website at: <http://www.schuylkillplan.org>.
- Maps
- Color and grayscale maps referenced in the Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan can be viewed on the website (<http://www.schuylkillplan.org>). Maps are referenced by name in the text of the Plan. Printed copies of the maps also are available with the full Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan at the selected locations listed above.
- Online Reference Documents
- Supplementary reference documents, such as large tables and general maps related to the water quality, landscape and institutional analyses, are compiled in the online Reference Documents. These documents are referenced in the chapters of the Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan. The Reference Documents are available online in PDF format at <http://www.schuylkillplan.org>. Paper copies of these Reference Documents have been distributed only to the project funders, to the Technical Advisory Committee, and along with the printed copies of the full Plan distributed at selected locations throughout the watershed as noted above.

2.3 Project Team and Funding

The Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan was produced with financial assistance from the Pennsylvania DCNR's "Rivers Conservation Program," which awarded a planning grant to the project in 1997. A matching grant also was provided for the project from The William Penn Foundation.

When the Pennsylvania DCNR approves the final version, this Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan will be submitted for inclusion on the Pennsylvania Rivers Registry, providing the basis for DCNR matching grants to municipalities and nonprofits that are interested in implementing the recommendations provided in this report. Some of the watershed municipalities and nonprofits have provided a preliminary list of their proposed implementation projects in the online Reference Document [Potential Implementation Projects](#) to this Plan.

Different sections of the Schuylkill Watershed Conservation Plan were drafted by the project team. Your comments on any sections are welcome. However, please recognize that these comments may not be

addressed directly until the next updating of the Plan. Please address comments to the project team as follows (complete contact information is provided below).

- Executive Summary, Foreword, Watershed Characterization, Identification of Major Watershed Issues and Promoting a Sustainable Landscape (Chapters 1- 4, and 6): Clare Billett, Natural Lands Trust
- Water Quality (Chapter 5): Tom Johnson, Patrick Center for Environmental Research, ANS
- Institutional Assessment (Chapter 7): Anne Desmarais, National Office, The Conservation Fund

Contact information for each project team member is given below, and via the project web page at <http://www.schuylkillplan.org>. In order to ensure appropriate documentation of your issues and concerns please submit written comments only.

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