Schuylkill River PA

WHY IS THIS WATERSHED SPECIAL?

The historic Schuylkill River is not only a working river but also the source of drinking water for more than 1.5 million people. At 130 miles long, with more than 180 tributaries, the Schuylkill drains 2,000 square miles of southeastern Pennsylvania and is the largest tributary to the Delaware Estuary. The watershed is diverse, flowing from the Appalachians through rich farmland and low rolling hills into the highly urbanized Atlantic coastal plain.

ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Industrialization and mining in the 19th and 20th centuries left the Schuylkill as one of the nation's most polluted rivers. In recent years, however, the river's water quality has improved and migratory fish are returning, but problems remain. Major causes of degradation include stormwater runoff, agricultural practices, abandoned mine drainage, and sewage overflows.

- Stormwater is the primary cause of impairment, with a total of 273 stormwater impaired stream miles. Most of these are within Montgomery and Philadelphia counties, the watershed's most populous.
- A restoration analysis found that it would cost approximately $288 million to design and reconstruct all impaired stream miles according to natural stream channel design principles. Because this is not a feasible restoration strategy, the Stormwater Workgroup must ensure that the most recent and proven stormwater controls are used in future development and when retrofitting older areas developed without adequate controls.

Last year's winner of the Annual Urban Fun Fishing Fest in the Schuylkill River.

RESTORATION ACTIVITIES

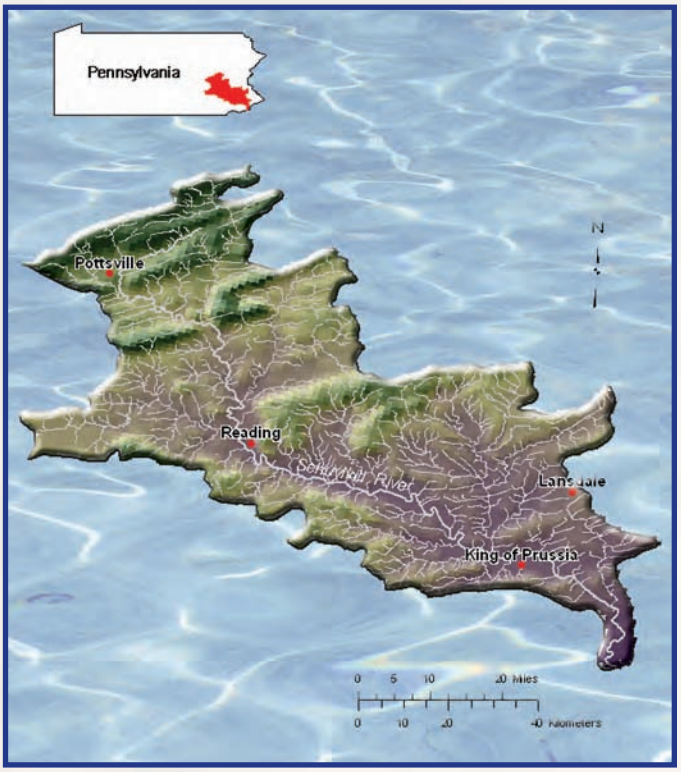
A near-term restoration initiative was developed to address stormwater runoff, agricultural practices, and abandoned mine drainage, to promote market-based strategies, and to evaluate the efficacy of the Schuylkill Action Network as an interjurisdictional approach to water quality management. These efforts will help meet the requirements and balance the priorities of the Safe Drinking Water Act and the Clean Water Act, by creating a "fishable, swimmable, and drinkable" Schuylkill River. EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds will be used to achieve four specific goals:

- Achieve measurable pollution reductions
- Provide a model for moving from source water assessment to protection and demonstrate a cooperative approach to maintaining coordinated actions under the Safe Drinking Water Act and Clean Water Act for a large watershed
- Conduct demonstration projects and explore market-based initiatives
- Implement, over the next 3 years, more than 40 demonstration projects relating to stormwater impacts, agricultural impacts, abandoned mine drainage impacts, and market-based strategies

A STRONG PARTNERSHIP FOR CHANGE

EPA Targeted Watersheds Grant funds will be used under the leadership of Philadelphia Water Department and the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary to aid the Schuylkill Action Network's many partners. These include:

- State agencies
- Local watershed organizations
- Water suppliers
- Local governments
- Federal government agencies



School children signing the Constitution of the Schuylkill Action Network (SAN), which is an agreement of watershed residents to join in the SAN's efforts to restore and protect the Schuylkill River.

Various boats on the Schuylkill River along Boathouse Row near Philadelphia.

"This is a truly collaborative initiative, with thirteen organizations and agencies implementing 40 diverse projects spread throughout a watershed almost 2,000 square miles in size. The project managers are all committed and energized for putting the funds to work on the ground, and I'm excited to be part of making that happen."

– Jennifer Adkins, Schuylkill Targeted Watershed Grant Coordinator, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary

Targeted Watersheds