



Fall 2014, Vol. 10

## This Summer We:

- Completed the Schuylkill Acts & Impacts expedition!
- Installed 18 blue bird boxes with Cub Scouts
- Hosted environmental field days for 3 different groups
- Received 2 grants totaling \$60,000 to continue work being done on the Blue Mountain School District campus!



## Schuylkill Acts & Impacts: A Great Success!

From June 7-14, 2014, ten high school students from throughout the Schuylkill River watershed embarked on a 120-mile adventure from the river's headwaters in Tamaqua all the way to its confluence with the Delaware River in Philadelphia. The Schuylkill Headwaters Association, in collaboration with Outward Bound, Philadelphia, and over 25 sponsors and partnering organizations throughout the watershed, piloted this first year service-learning program and made it not only an expedition to inspire watershed action, but also a great success. For eight days and seven nights, the students from Schuylkill, Berks, Montgomery, Chester, and Philadelphia Counties traveled throughout the 2,000-square-mile watershed by canoe, foot, and van. Participants got to experience sleeping under the stars as they spent the week camping or staying in basic accommodations at various parks and preserves. They also spent the week learning about an array of issues that impact water quality of the Schuylkill River. Some of these issues included the legacy of coal mining on water quality; agricultural impacts including erosion and manure management; the role of land preservation in watershed health; and, the impacts of stormwater and impervious surfaces on water resources. Throughout the week, students were encouraged to think critically about these different issues, develop important problem solving skills, and how to take a hands-on approach to find solutions for these problems. (Continued on next page)



Schuylkill Acts & Impacts participants enjoy removing invasive plants and learning to paddle canoes.

Photographs by Sierra Gladfelter.



(Schuylkill Acts & Impacts continued...)

Although the weather was dreary for much of the trip, the attitudes and spirits of the students sure were not! They braved the rain, humidity, and dampness of the week all in order to keep learning and had a great time while doing it. The group of students really took the expedition seriously and participated in nightly reflection time where they got to think about the issues that were discussed during the day. At the end of the week, they had an extended reflection time to consider their own use of water and how they can take action in their own communities to help each of their local stretches of the watershed. To aid in their consideration of personal water use, they were provided with an opportunity binder, created by Sierra Gladfelter, which included many volunteer opportunities as well as internships with local environmental organizations. Even though the expedition is complete the work of the participants is not. They all have aspirations of becoming more actively involved in environmental stewardship whether it be in their schools, neighborhoods, or homes.

It was truly a great group of students and Schuylkill Headwaters wishes the best to them in their future of becoming inspirational environmental stewards. Schuylkill Headwaters would also like to thank all those involved who helped to make the pilot program a true success. Schuylkill Headwaters Association has partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department and the Schuylkill Action Network in order to make Schuylkill Acts & Impacts a sustainable program that can continue into the future.

Photographs by Sierra Gladfelter

The 2014  
Schuylkill  
Acts &  
Impacts  
team!



Participants look  
for macro-  
invertebrates and  
do a team  
building activity.





**Port Carbon Cub Scouts, with help from some parents, proudly install their hand-decorated bluebird boxes at the Mary D project site.**



This summer, the Schuylkill Headwaters Association once again partnered with the Port Carbon Cub Scout Pack to hang 18 bluebird boxes around two AMD treatment system sites. The Cub Scout Bluebird Box program began last summer and it was continued as an annual event this June. The Cub Scouts built the bluebird boxes at home using kits supplied by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and then decorated them any way they pleased. Schuylkill Headwaters Association assisted the scouts and their parents in hanging the boxes on pre-installed posts located around the Mary D ball field and AMD treatment system. Several boxes were also mounted on poles at the Silver Creek AMD treatment system. Outreach and Education Coordinator, Alexa Kramer, supplied the Cub Scouts with an educational activity based around the life cycles of bluebirds. Not only are the scouts getting the opportunity to participate in hands-on outdoor work, but they are also helping to increase the biodiversity around the AMD treatment systems by attracting bluebirds and other bird species to the nest boxes. SHA looks forward to working with the Port Carbon Cub Scouts again next summer on this annual event.

Photographs by Sierra Gladfelter

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### 2014 Annual PA Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference

This June, SHA staff attended the 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Abandoned Mine Reclamation Conference (AMR) held at the Ramada Inn and Conference Center in State College, PA. This year's theme was "Collaboration Is Essential". New to the conference this year was the opportunity for increased networking through either a golf outing or a trip to Penn's Cave. Two days were spent listening to knowledgeable speakers and browsing tables containing many informative resources. The conference featured technical presentations on abandoned mine reclamation and mine drainage remediation projects and also projects completed by power producers using coal refuse as an alternative energy.

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Are you a teacher looking to take your students on an outdoor environmental field trip?

## Environmental Field Days Prove to Be Beneficial

In June, the Schuylkill Headwaters Association, in partnership with the Schuylkill Conservation District, organized environmental field days for a few different student groups from Schuylkill and Berks Counties. On June 3<sup>rd</sup>, we were a part of Hamburg Middle School's Environmental Day, where we educated 5<sup>th</sup> grade students about water quality. The Environmental Day was held at the school campus instead of the Kernsville Dam due to threatening weather conditions. Members from SHA, the Schuylkill Conservation District, and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission teamed up to discuss with the students how macroinvertebrates can be an indicator of water quality. Students got to observe live macroinvertebrates and then use taxonomic keys to identify them and analyze the health of the river based on the insects that were found.

Later in June, we got to host the Norm Thornburg Youth Environmental Field Camp for a day at the Silver Creek AMD treatment system in Blythe Township. Students from throughout Schuylkill County, ranging in age from 13-15 years, came to learn about legacy mining in the area and its effect on streams and rivers. SHA and the Schuylkill Conservation District educated students about abandoned mine drainage and what steps are being taken to clean up our streams. The students were led on a tour around the treatment system to see the different components of the system. They also learned about other conservation efforts that are in place such as the rain gardens that were installed and the ARRI tree plantings that are on the project site.

Seeing the benefits that these hands-on field days provide, SHA plans to coordinate several more tours/activities with local school districts and any other groups that are interested during the current academic year. **If you would like to set up a tour or outdoor field day, please contact Education and Outreach Coordinator, Alexa Kramer, at [outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org](mailto:outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org) or (570) 622-3742, ext. 119.**

## Saying Goodbye to Interns Megan and Kaitlin

This summer the Schuylkill Conservation District hosted two AmeriCorps Summer Associates, Megan McLaughlin of Schuylkill Haven and Kaitlin McDonald of New Philadelphia.



Throughout the summer, the interns assisted in several of the environmental education activities that SHA and the Conservation District were involved sponsored. The interns received first-hand experience of what work in the fields of conservation, watershed education, and environmental education will be like when they graduate. We wish the best of luck to the girls in their future careers!



Photographs by Bill Reichert.

## Look For Improvements at Blue Mountain School District Campus

Page 5

This summer, Schuylkill Headwaters Association was awarded two grants totaling \$60,000 to improve stormwater infrastructure on the Blue Mountain School District campus in Orwigsburg. A Watershed Education Protection Grant was awarded in the amount of \$5,000 from the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund (LWVPA-CEF) acting through its Water Resources Education Network (WREN) Project. A \$55,000 grant was awarded to SHA from Exelon Corp. through the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund and the Delaware River Basin Commission. SHA has partnered with Orwigsburg Borough, Blue Mountain School District, Orwigsburg Lions Club, and Schuylkill Conservation District, as well as Alfred Benesch & Co, and Miller Bros Construction Inc. to complete the “Blue Mountain Green Vision: Planting Rain Gardens for Community Change” initiative. In this final phase of the project, an existing stormwater swale which is heavily eroded, will be retrofitted into three rain gardens. Installation of the three new rain gardens will be completed by approximately 240 eighth grade students from the school district using native plants. Construction is estimated to start taking place in late September with the planting beginning in early October. Community Information Sessions will be held in November and again in March to inform local landowners about rain gardens and steps that can be taken to improve stormwater management. For information regarding the Community Information Sessions, please contact Education and Outreach Coordinator, Alexa Kramer, at [outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org](mailto:outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org).



**Existing stormwater swale that will be retrofitted into three new rain-gardens.**

## Schuylkill Headwaters Association Honors Founding Members

Photograph  
by Sierra  
Gladfelter.

On October 29, 2014, Schuylkill Headwaters will partner with the Schuylkill County Historical Society to host the presentation “Remembering and Recognizing the Schuylkill River” at the Majestic Theater in downtown Pottsville. During the evening, SHA will honor two of its founding members, Dave Derbes and Paul Lohin.

Both Dave and Paul have served in many different capacities to help Schuylkill Headwaters continue to be a leader in the watershed and in its community. Paul served Schuylkill Headwaters as President, Treasurer, Publicity Chairman and Board Member. Dave served as Vice President, President, newsletter editor, and Board Member. Both men offered their expertise and guidance creating the organization, supplying advice and oversight for projects, and developing the group’s direction for the future.

Dave is a lifelong angler and as such has always been deeply interested in water quality and the health of our streams. Dave wears many volunteer hats in the community and is very active with the Schuylkill County Historical Society, Schuylkill Trout Unlimited, and First Methodist Church, Pottsville. Paul is also a lifelong angler and hunter with a deep passion for the environment. Paul is a great source of history as it pertains to the local area surrounding Minersville and the Heckscherville Valley. He also serves the community with a deep involvement in Saints Peter and Paul Byzantine Catholic Church, Minersville and served as Chairman of the Schuylkill Conservation District Board of Directors.

Schuylkill Headwaters Association is grateful for the support and effort of these two fine men who prove that by working together we will make a difference in our communities. We invite you to come to the Majestic Theater on October 29 at 6:00 p.m. to celebrate and honor them.



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schuylkillheadwaters.org

### Upcoming Events...

**Wednesday, October 29, 2014, 6:00 p.m.**

“Remembering and Recognizing the Schuylkill River”

Join SHA and special guest Adam Levine, Historical Consultant for the Philadelphia Water Department, as he traces the history of Philadelphia’s relationship with the Schuylkill River. Majestic Theater, Pottsville, PA.

**Saturday, October 25, 2014, 9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m.**

Fall Farm Tour—Join the Schuylkill Conservation District on an agricultural tour where you will have the opportunity to visit Schuylkill County farms and learn more about local food grown in your own community! **Contact Missy Seigfried at the Schuylkill Conservation District for more information (570) 622-3742, ex. 111.**

**Fall Clean-Up**—Date to be determined

Look for upcoming information regarding a fall clean-up. **Interested in volunteering; contact Alexa Kramer at [outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org](mailto:outreach@schuylkillheadwaters.org) or call (570) 622-3742 Ext. 119.**

**Community Information Sessions—Wednesday, November 5, 2014, 5:30-7:00 p.m. & Saturday, November 8, 2014, 9:30-11:00 a.m. (Tentative)**

Two Community Information Sessions will be held to inform landowners about rain gardens and stormwater best management practices. A tour of the completed rain gardens on the school campus will be available. More information to come.

**Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Inc.**

P. O. Box 1385

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