

Schuylkill Headwaters

Fall 2015, Vol. 12

This
Summer,
we:

- Led 14 high school students on a 125-mile educational expedition
- Installed 19 bluebird nest boxes around SCEETR
- Won Project of the Year

The 2015 Schuylkill Acts & Impacts team.



Schuylkill Acts and Impacts 2015: An Expedition to Inspire Watershed Action

From July 11-18, Schuylkill Headwaters Association, in partnership with Fairmount Water Works and Take It Outdoors Adventures, led 14 students on a trip via kayak and van through the entire 125-mile Schuylkill River watershed. The trip was designed to highlight an array of issues impacting water quality in the Schuylkill River through guided tours, programming, and applied service work and then offer hands-on solutions to these problems. The participants represented a range of ages, from high school freshmen to a senior who just graduated, and came from various communities within the five counties that make up the Schuylkill River watershed.

The eight day journey started in Schuylkill County where the students toured a coal mine and spent a half day performing several water quality tests that provided a look at the effects of abandoned mine drainage in the county. Next the students kayaked a 14-mile stretch of the Schuylkill River starting in Schuylkill Haven and ending in Port Clinton. From there, the expedition progressed to Berks County to see the effects of agriculture on water quality. The students toured a farm that had many agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs) in place, and then spent a few hours performing a service project planting native trees in a riparian buffer on the farm land. In Chester and Montgomery Counties the students looked at land preservation and conservation easement properties and how protecting lands from development can have a major impact on water quality. The students toured Crow's Nest Preserve where they learned about Natural Lands Trust and also got to see Green Valleys Watershed Association's property at Welkinweir. For the final part of the trip, the students were taken into Philadelphia where they toured many green stormwater infrastructure projects. They also toured the Fairmount Water Works, a historic pumping station for drinking water on the Schuylkill River, which is now converted into an educational learning center. They got to kayak right into Philadelphia along Boathouse Row, an experience not to be forgotten. (story continued on next page)



Schuylkill Acts & Impacts students participate in a service project planting native trees in a riparian buffer zone.

Photographs by David Dannenberg.

Schuylkill Acts & Impacts

On the final night of the expedition, the Schuylkill Acts and Impacts team members were granted the opportunity to be the first ever campers at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Philadelphia. John Heinz NWR contains a large freshwater tidal marsh and is home to many important bird species. It was an amazing experience to be the first group to camp overnight on the refuge!

The trip was funded mainly through sponsorships from local organizations located throughout the watershed. Now that the trip is ended, students will be matched with a sponsor organization and will be required to report back to that organization about their experiences during the trip, whether that be through a paper, a presentation, attending a meeting, etc. The goal is to keep the students engaged in environmental and conservation work that is happening in their local communities and possibly have a mentor through the sponsor organization that can help guide them with their future career options and choices. **SHA greatly thanks all of our wonderful sponsors and contributors for once again making this trip possible!**

Schuylkill Acts & Impacts participants enjoy the week's activities.

Photographs by Bill Reichert and David Dannenberg.





Port Carbon Cub scouts posing with a nest box they assembled.



Nest box made with real bark from a dead tree.

This July, SHA once again teamed up with the Port Carbon Cub Scout Pack 604 for the annual Bluebird Nest Box event. The scouts were provided with bluebird nest box kits donated by the Pennsylvania Game Commission and assembled the kits with the help of their parents. On the evening of July 1, the scouts and their parents came out to Silver Creek Environmental Education Trail and Recreation Park (SCEETR) to install posts and hang the boxes. The scouts got a lesson on why creating more habitat for bluebirds is beneficial and how they should place and position their boxes on the post. Not only are the scouts getting to participate in hands-on outdoor conservation work, but they are also helping to increase the biodiversity around our AMD treatment systems by attracting bluebirds and other native species to the nest boxes. Since the boxes have been installed, several bluebirds have been observed using the nest boxes.

In October, the Tiger scouts of Port Carbon will be coming out to SCEETR to clean out the nest boxes in order to winterize them. SHA looks forward to continuing this partnership with the Port Carbon Scouts for years to come.

Photographs
by Alexa
Kramer and
Bill Reichert.

[Thinking of installing a rain barrel on your own property?](#)

Schuykill Headwaters Association currently has 6 empty barrels available. With a fixture kit, these barrels can easily be turned into rain barrels. There is no cost but donations are accepted. To get a rain barrel for your own property contact Alexa Kramer, Outreach and Education Coordinator, at outreach@schuykillheadwaters.org or (570) 622-3742, ext. 119.



Project SOLO Begins in Schuylkill County

Schuylkill Headwaters Association has partnered with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA) to bring Project SOLO (Schuylkill Outdoor Leadership Odyssey) to Schuylkill County. Project SOLO is an environmental education mentoring program for urban youth created by the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA). SOLO aims to introduce students to the Schuylkill River and educate them on careers related to the environmental sciences and outdoors, while simultaneously increasing their knowledge and awareness of the world around them.

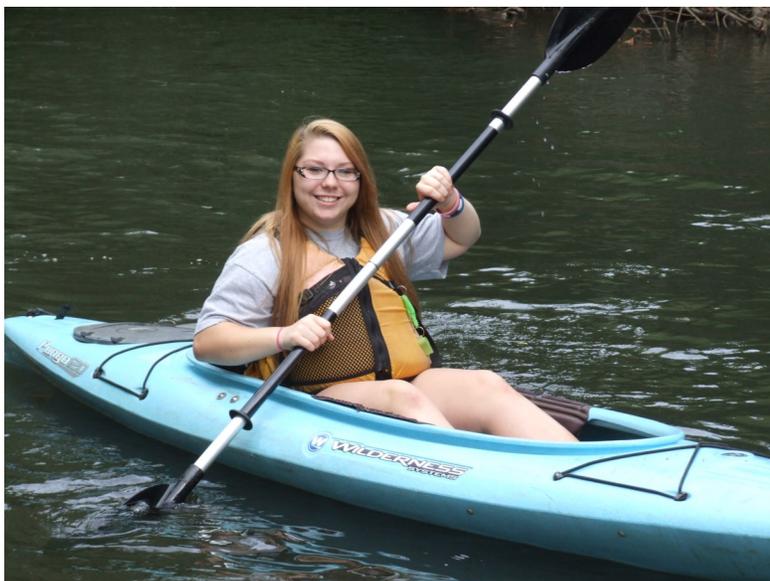
Project SOLO was officially started on September 11, 2015 and is being run with the 8th grade class at Gillingham Charter School consisting of 17 students. Overall, there will be ten classes and each class will have presentations from two professional mentors. Some of the classes will be used for field trips as well. Thus far, topics that have been covered by mentors in the 3 in-class sessions have been Watersheds, Heritage Areas, Water Quality and AMD, Soil Conservation, and Invasive Plant Identification. The class has also gone on two field trips, one of which was the capstone kayaking trip down the Schuylkill River. On September 21st, 15 students kayaked the 6.5 mile stretch from Schuylkill Haven to Landingville under the guidance of Take It Outdoors Adventures. The students braved the chilly morning and made a lot of memories by the end of the trip! The second field trip was to the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) in Landingville. The students walked a 3-4 mile section of the trail around the Landingville Marsh and learned about the efforts to make the SRT continuous from Schuylkill County to Philadelphia, the history of the Schuylkill Canal, and the importance of the Landingville area in Schuylkill River history.

The classes will continue into November with topics such as Environmental Engineering, Landscape Architecture, Forestry, and Geography being discussed. Another field trip to Sweet Arrow Lake County Park will be included in the fall programming.

Are you a teacher
wanting to know
more about
Project SOLO?
Contact Alexa
Kramer at
outreach@
schuylkillheadwa-
ters.org



Project SOLO student learns the proper way to paddle.



Project SOLO student looking happy while learning how to kayak.

Mary D Borehole Project Wins Project of the Year

In June, representatives from SHA attended the Northeastern Pennsylvania Nonprofit & Community Assistance Center's Community Awards Ceremony in Scranton, PA. SHA was nominated in the Environmental Category for the Mary D Borehole AMD Treatment System project. To our surprise, SHA ended up winning the Nonprofit and Community Assistance Center's Project of the Year award and was given a plaque and a \$2,000 award. SHA was nominated by Eileen Kuperavage, Director of the Schuylkill Area Community Foundation. The monetary award was used for the Schuylkill Acts and Impacts expedition that took place in July 2015. SHA would like to extend a thank you to both Eileen Kuperavage and the Northeastern Pennsylvania Nonprofit & Community Assistance Center for recognizing the hard work that was put into making the Mary D Borehole AMD Treatment System a successful project.

Blue Mountain Green Vision: Raingardens Thriving

Completion of the Blue Mountain Green Vision: Planting Rain Gardens for Community Change initiative took place in May 2015. During that month, the series of three rain gardens were planted with over 3,000 native plants by the entire 8th grade class at Blue Mountain Middle School. The previous erosion problem was significantly reduced by the construction of the rain gardens and the establishment of the native plants. Now in October, the plants are looking great and the gardens will soon be ready to be winterized. With the rain garden phase of the Green Vision project now complete, the focus is now being placed downstream. Several planning meetings have been held to target an area for improvement for next year's Green Vision project with the Blue Mountain 8th grade class, which will take place in May 2016.



Bridge Gets Installed at SCEETR



SHA has been working with Miller Bros. Construction for a few months in order to build a bridge at the Silver Creek Environmental Education Trail and Recreation Park (SCEETR). The bridge was built and installed in July and now the 0.9 mile loop around the system is continuous. Before the bridge was installed, trail users were not able to walk the entire loop. The addition of the bridge also makes SCEETR more accessible from the lower parking area. Now that the bridge has been installed, SHA plans to seek additional

grant funding to improve SCEETR and keep developing it into an area that will benefit school groups, professional groups, and everyday users.



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Upcoming Events

October 17, 2015: Fall Clean-up and Cook-out, Start 3:00 pm

Help Blue Mountain Wildlife (BMW) and the Schuylkill Headwaters Association end the summer season with a clean-up along the shore of the Kernsville Dam and Peace Rock Beach. Canoes, kayaks and other approved watercraft are welcome. Those on foot will be cleaning up the area around the Rock and the Peace Rock Beach on the Schuylkill County side of the river. Those who bring watercraft will help clean up the eastern shore of the Schuylkill. Meet us at the Upper Parking Lot in the Kernsville Dam Recreation Area (about a quarter mile past the Kernsville Dam itself on Kernsville Dam Road). Vehicles may be needed to ferry volunteers over to the Peace Rock Beach and back. SHA and BMW will provide bags, vests, gloves and other clean-up tools.

After the clean-up join us for a good old-fashioned cook-out with hot dogs and s'mores along the shore of the Schuylkill River. After the cook-out, Shea Marino will lead us on an Owl Prowl from the Upper Parking Lot toward The Rock and back. Learn about the nightly life of the nocturnal creatures at the Kerny, listen to the calls of the various owl species and maybe hear resident owls return our calls. Dress in layers and bring flashlights.

Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Inc.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS
POSTAGE
REQUIRED