

Protecting Drinking Water through Partnership in Maiden Creek Watershed

Schuylkill Action Network uses agricultural partnership to improve impaired watershed

The Problem:

The Maiden Creek Watershed comprises the northern portion of Berks County and the western end of Lehigh County in Pennsylvania. Lake Ontelaunee (1,082 acres) is in the lower portion of the watershed and serves as the drinking water source for the city of Reading (population 85,000). Lake Ontelaunee is listed as impaired from sediments and phosphorus. Several other municipalities use the Maiden Creek watershed for water supply including Hamburg, Kutztown, Topton, Lyons, and Manatawny.

The total watershed is 300 square miles and has about 421 miles of perennial streams. Approximately 58% of the watershed is used for agriculture. The Schuylkill Basin has 258 miles of agriculture-impaired streams—80% are located in Berks County.

The Approach:

In March 2003, a watershed approach was developed with local and regional partners. An executive steering committee was formed with Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Delaware River Basin Commission, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE), the City of Philadelphia, Water Department (PWD) and EPA Region 3 as the lead. The PWD and the PDE applied for and received a Targeted Watershed Implementation Grant of \$1.15 million from EPA. The grant was administered by the PDE and the PWD and through leveraging, provided \$3 million for water quality improvements, including over \$350,000 devoted to agricultural projects. Several workgroups were formed to address problems in the basin, including abandoned mine drainage, agriculture, stormwater, and others.

The Outcome:

Through an agriculture partnership effort which was led by the Berks County Conservation District, conservation plans were developed on more than 15 priority farms and best management practices were implemented, including 32,000 feet of stream bank fencing, 6,225 feet of native riparian buffer plantings, and the installation of 13 cattle crossings. Implementation activities of the Agricultural Workgroup are directed toward impaired streams and priority is given to headwater areas. EPA Region 3 works very closely with the NRCS personnel to determine the best places to leverage funding. Although the watershed grant has expired, work continues by leveraging funds from the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund (SRRF) with NRCS resources. The SRRF is a source of private funds donated by local entities. In 2011, the Berks County Conservancy applied for and received \$35,000 to match \$127,125 in EQIP funds from NRCS to do manure storage, barnyard controls and fencing on the Burkholder farm in the Maiden Creek Watershed.

For More Information:

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The Schuylkill Action Network:

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Key Collaborators

- Aqua Pennsylvania
- Berks County Conservation District
- Berks County Conservancy
- City of Philadelphia, Water Department
- Delaware River Basin Commission
- EPA Region 3
- Maiden Creek Watershed Association
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- PADEP
- Partnership for the Delaware Estuary
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection
- Reading Area Water Authority
- Spotts, Stevens, and McCoy, Inc.
- Western Berks Water Authority