

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Pennypack Creek River Conservation Plan is one component of ongoing efforts being conducted by the Philadelphia Water Department and the Pennypack Watershed Partnership to improve water quality, the environment and the quality of life of watershed residents. The principle goal of the conservation plan is to reconnect people to the Pennypack Creek through a two year, community based planning process. The planning process includes forming a diverse group of watershed stakeholders to act as a steering committee for the plan, engaging the public in the planning process through outreach and educational events and researching current and projected environmental and cultural conditions in the watershed. The project team will then compile all of this information into a document that provides a work plan to improve the watershed environment and promote the enjoyment of the Pennypack Creek.

The Pennypack Creek has historically meant many different things to different people. The creek has been a faithful partner in our region's economic growth, creating wealth by powering mills and facilitating settlement by providing water and carrying away waste. The creek has also served as a recreation destination for thousands of people who come to streamside parks to fish, picnic or simply contemplate nature. Paradoxically, the Pennypack Creek has also served as an instrument of destruction as flood waters have claimed property and even lives. The Pennypack Creek River Conservation Plan attempts to consider the watershed's complex evolution and develop goals that will provide benefits for everyone who values the creek and its watershed. The goals of River Conservation Plans reflect the diverse interests, concerns and needs of the watershed residents and will serve as a rallying point for a watershed community to improve their watershed and take a comprehensive look at their creek for the first time.

Information contained in this plan was gathered from existing studies, as well as input from community members, key person interviews, a public survey, workshops, neighborhood meetings and a stream visual assessment conducted by volunteers and staff of the Philadelphia Water Department Office of Watersheds. Analysis of Geographic Information System (GIS) data played a major role in the development of this plan and many GIS maps are included to enhance the understanding of the spatial relationships between watershed resources, opportunities and concerns. The fruits of existing planning efforts were also important to the development of the River Conservation Plan. Public participation from the Pennypack Park Master Plan, as well as the suburban community comprehensive plans, provides additional connections between this plan and the planning goals of the watershed stakeholders.

There are many opportunities to have a positive impact on the Pennypack Creek and its watershed and there are many organizations doing work to improve the watershed environment. Long-term improvement, however, requires that anyone who lives, works or recreates within the watershed does their part to reduce negative impacts on the natural resources of the watershed while creating the momentum to improve the watershed community. This is the ultimate goal of the River Conservation Plan – to get people involved as a positive force to improve the watershed. This document and planning effort will serve as a guiding document to continue working toward that ultimate goal.

This plan is organized by presenting the Issues, Challenges and Resources of the Pennypack Creek Watershed in Chapters Two through Seven. Chapter Eight contains the Goals and Management Options that were developed by the River Conservation Plan Steering Committee and through the Public Outreach process. The purpose of the Goals and Management Options is to protect and improve existing resources of the watershed and to address the issues and concerns affecting the watershed, its environment and communities. As such, Chapter Eight

represents the culmination of the two-year River Conservation Planning effort and is a must read chapter in this report.

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