

# **Delaware Riverkeeper Network Final Report**

## **2020 Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Mini-Grant Program**

### **Project Summary of Actions and Activities:**

The Lower Tohickon Creek has one of the longest standing community upgrade Exceptional Value (EV) petitions before the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The original petition was submitted by a land trust in 1995. Since then, multiple supplements have been submitted to the DEP. Data collection, compilation and summarizing conservation efforts and improvements continue to be implemented since the original submission to support the petition. In mid-April 2019, despite a strong showing of support from the community, DEP rejected the long-standing request to upgrade this well-loved stream. DEP proposed to downgrade the Lower Tohickon instead. DRN rallied and helped organize to fight this downgrade and DEP did agree to hold off on formalizing the downgrade. These efforts made possible by the generous support of the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Program have allowed us to continue to conduct and amplify this important work towards eventual achievement of Exceptional Value status for the Tohickon Watershed that we anticipate in the coming years. This proposal work focused on outreach to those who enjoy the Tohickon. DRN worked closely with project partners to raise awareness of the upgrade petition and to protect the Tohickon Creek Watershed from threats.

DRN spent strategic effort and time focused on advancing healthier Lake Nockamixon cold water releases to the Tohickon Creek. This effort targeted the Dept of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). DRN, the National Park Service and the Tinicum Conservancy are working jointly on these measures. DRN provided facilitation, technical comments and follow up on modeling reports and memos with DCNR staff and consultants throughout the summer and virtually met with DCNR's Deputy Director and extensive staff to press for a Phase 2 modeling study for dam releases. DRN conducted an October 18, 2020 field visit to Lake Nockamixon to conduct a wetland fringe vegetation survey and assess lake user concerns. On November 24, 2020 a large group virtual meeting took place to discuss next steps with DCNR and since then several phone meetings with technical DRN staff and DCNR have occurred. Next steps include setting up a work group to compliment and advance the much needed consideration of additional cold water releases from the dam to improve the water quality of the Lower Tohickon Creek and ensure Chapter 105 standards are being met by DCNR. At the current discharge rates, the Lower Tohickon Creek is being starved for the benefit of the lake users. The Lower Tohickon includes popular places like Ralph Stover State Park and other preserved lands and access points that deserve cool clear water that will ultimately improve benthic life within the stream. These cooler releases can also help with increasing climate change threats that face many of our tributary streams.

Informed and engaged community members are crucial to protecting our natural resources. Through our use of social media and sharing videos, we were able safely share with the public the recreational value of the Tohickon as well as the history behind the proposed downgrade. We created and utilized a series of seven videos to share stories of recreation and beauty in the Tohickon watershed and also developed videos to highlight emerging threats. DRN created a Tohickon Channel that will continue to grow into 2021. All videos are available at this Tohickon channel: <https://bit.ly/ExceptionalTohickon>. We also presented on the value of exceptional value (EV) streams and conserved lands at a session at the

Delaware Riverkeeper Network's annual Watershed Congress, held virtually in September 2020 – it was one of the largest attended break-out sessions of the Watershed Congress. We held and recorded a joint webinar with allies on November 19, 2020 to encourage statewide upgrades to advance throughout the Delaware River Watershed and review protections these upgrades provide. Tohickon partners and residents participated in this webinar.

DRN continues to watchdog the DEP triennial review. DRN leads and provides updates on the Tohickon and other upgrades to the statewide Campaign for Clean Water Exceptional Value team which meets monthly. DRN provided comment on ongoing stream upgrade bundles proposed of which one DEP package ended December 14, 2020 as well as Class A listings. We also continue to monitor for other emerging threats in the Tohickon that arise. We continue to watchdog the advancement on the UNT Bog run/Tohickon upgrade report which is working through the regulatory process and we participated in pollution hotline responses related to discharges from the RockHill mine that occurred during flooding this spring. Over the past several months, DRN attended three conditional use hearings and is assisting with technical monitoring pertaining to a proposed H&K quarry that would be blasted in the very headwaters of the Tohickon in Springfield Township where a mature forest and forested wetlands now thrive and is helping to engage Tohickon Watershed residents around that threat.

#### **Unexpected benefits/challenges:**

The COVID-19 pandemic created a new environment, with new challenges, for much of our work. While we were planning for this work, we had hoped the situation would evolve to allow us to lead a group hike with local leaders in the Tohickon Creek watershed. We ultimately decided in the interest of everyone's safety and health, it would be best to embrace the virtual option. Creating videos about the recreational and environmental benefits of the Tohickon watershed has allowed us to connect with even more folks, with our one video receiving more than 4,500 views with a reach of more than 8,000 people and an engagement level of 488. The videos aired on public television stations including Princeton Community TV, Temple University TV and stations in Oradell, New Jersey; Northeast Kingdom, Vermont; and Salem and Wakefield, Massachusetts. During these videos we did recruit climbers, kayakers and outdoor Tohickon adventurers to be a part of telling the virtual story of the Tohickon. These videos were also posted to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.

#### **Description of changes to timeline, funding needs or other pertinent changes:**

Our timeline for certain activities, such as hiking with elected officials to "champion" the Tohickon, has been pushed into 2021 based on upgrade work that developed with DCNR and other advancements that became more pressing, especially with election and COVID concerns. Additionally, our project budget projected the allowance of small, in person activities. Due to ongoing restrictions because of the pandemic, we opted to not hold any organized in person activities and use virtual means instead to connect with the public and strategic allies. We did conduct field work and interview users of the Tohickon watershed for video development. This change means we had to adjust our budget, with travel costs being lower than anticipated. We also did not need to purchase refreshments and out of safety concerns, we held no opportunities for the planned in-kind match. Matching funds from other funders were used for the project.



## Delaware Riverkeeper Network Financial Report

### Protecting the Tohickon Creek on Historical Community Upgrade Petition

	Wild & Scenic Funds Requested	Other Sources of Funds or In- Kind Support	Sub-Total (Proposed)	Project Totals (Actual)
<b>Expenses</b>				
Contractor Services: <i>(Approx. ____ hours @ \$____/hr including overhead expenses)</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Travel: <i>(Approx. 452 miles @ \$0.575/mile; supports 5 total trips for DRN staff to travel to the Tohickon area)</i>	\$100	\$160	\$260	\$34.50
Project Expenses: <i>(including costs, quantities and description of expense)</i> * Hero VIP Hike refreshments (25 people @\$6) * Printing of Outreach Materials * Video cards (2 @ approx. \$8/ea)	\$150	\$350	\$500	\$0
Other Expenses: Salary (including taxes and benefits)	\$3,750	\$7,930	\$11,730	\$11,260.81
In-kind - Intern Co-Op Match time and assistance, (Approx. 60 hours at \$25.43, Source: <i>Independent Sector</i> )	\$0	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$0
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$4,000</b>	<b>\$9,940</b>	<b>\$13,990</b>	<b>\$11,295.31</b>



## Delaware Riverkeeper Network Report

Copy of acknowledgement for the project, "Protecting the Tohickon Creek on Historical Community Upgrade Petition."



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### Delaware Riverkeeper Network video Tohickon Creek recreational value

46 views • Nov 30, 2020

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Kayaking, hiking, fishing and climbing. Those are some of the activities making the Tohickon Creek one of the top recreational sites along the Delaware River. The Delaware Riverkeeper Network, the Tinicum Conservancy and area residents continue to call on Pennsylvania environmental officials to upgrade protections for the stream.

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