

## **Honey Hollow Watershed: Riparian Buffer Restoration Project (Year 3) Mini-Grant Final Report**

Bucks County Audubon Society at Honey Hollow is the steward of the historic Honey Hollow Watershed, which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as a National Historic Landmark in 2019. The farmers of the watershed banded together to develop soil, water and wildlife conservation measures that protected the watershed. In our commitment to be a steward of this historic watershed, we were excited to be able to continue the restoration of the east branch of the creek.

Now in its third year, the restoration continues to move up stream from the pond and wetland area where it began. The current location faces many issues, including stream bank erosion, sediment from erosion upstream, invasive plants, the increased stress of more severe storms, and a large loss of tree canopy due to dead Ash trees.

The project was done in close partnership with the Master Watershed Stewards, and Steward Joan Stelmach was instrumental in the project planning and recruiting of volunteers. In an effort to bring in more community volunteers, as well as provide much needed community service opportunities to local teens, we created a Teen Conservation Corps.



The Teen Conservation Corps was led by Alexa DiPrisco, our Conservation and Education Intern. Alexa, a student at Bucks County Community College, worked with the teens each Thursday morning in July. Ten teens attended at least one week of the program and in all the teens provided over 75 volunteer hours towards the project. Over the course of the five-week program, the teens removed invasive plants and planted 20 native plants in the area that they cleared.

We were so lucky to have Alexa with us this summer. She brought a wonderful energy to the project and was completely devoted to seeing the work completed. She



continued to assist with the workdays and was great with all of the volunteers on the project. Alexa also got a lot out of the experience.

*"My experience interning at Bucks County Audubon Society this summer was exceptional. From mid-June until mid-August, I was immersed in the nature of the Honey Hollow watershed and six miles worth of trails. Through this experience, I was able to educate children aged 4-10 on the natural world and guide teen stewards in the gratification of conservation work. Thank you to Bucks County Audubon Society for unforgettable summer of education, personal growth, and fulfillment." Alexa DePrisco, Education and Conservation Intern (Summer 2021)*



In addition to the Teen Conservation Corps, we hosted three volunteer workdays for Master Watershed Stewards and Bucks Audubon volunteers in August and September. Nine volunteers put in 45 volunteer hours over these workdays. We also hosted a community service day for students from The Solebury School. Twenty students and teachers participated in the day, contributing 40 hours of volunteer time and having a great time.

During the workdays, volunteers did significant work removing invasive plants (including the very difficult to remove multi-flora rose), planting native trees, shrubs and perennials that will help to stabilize the stream bank and provide vital habitat for birds and wildlife, and overall improving our stream ecosystem. In all 39 volunteers, put in 160 volunteer hours on this project, and planted almost 200 native perennials and shrubs and seeded the area with native seeds appropriate for riparian buffers.



Hurricane Ida in early September slowed down the plantings, as volunteers had to spend time replanting and re-caging trees and plants from this year and the past two years. Although the storm and flooding were severe, we are happy to report that only a couple of trees were lost.

We continue to work closely with Nick D'Amato from Gino's Native Plant Nursery in Wrightstown, and local Master Watershed Steward. Gino's was able to help with plant selection, as well as providing the plants at wholesale costs (allowing our plant budget to go further) and free delivery.



**Final Expenses:**

Staff Time:	Conservation and Education Intern	\$966 <sup>#</sup>
Plants:		
	Seeds	\$185
	Potted trees, shrubs and perennials	\$1,349*
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$2,500</b>



# The increase in staff time allowed our Conservation and Education Intern to also attend the other workdays held in August and September. Alexa was very invested in the project and did a great job of educating and working with volunteers of all ages.

\* Thanks to a grant from Tree Vitalize and support from a private donor, we were able to significantly expand the project area. With the focus of the Tree Vitalize funding being solely on trees, the plants selected through the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic funds were primarily shrubs, perennials and native seeds. This change allowed us to more fully plant the area and will hopefully reduce the amount of invasive plants regrowing in the area.