



# LOWER DELAWARE WILD AND SCENIC RIVER 2024 Annual Report

## About the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River

Designated in 2000, the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River is 64 miles of river that runs between New Jersey and Pennsylvania between Washington Crossing State Parks and Lower Mount Bethel Township, just south of Delaware Water Gap. The Wild and Scenic River Council is a collaborative of municipalities, state and federal agencies, nonprofit organizations, and public participant entities, representing both sides of the river, working together for the best interests of all.

Guided by the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Plan, the Council focuses work on six goals: water quality, natural resources, historic resources, recreation, economic development, and open space preservation.



The Delaware River Greenway Partnership (DRGP) is tasked with the providing administration of the business and meetings of the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River (LODE) Management Council and Steering Committee, administration of the Mini-Grant program, providing staff support to initiatives and projects of the Management Council, managing consultants as approved by the Steering Committee, and providing a point of contact and a face to the communications, outreach, and advocacy necessary to facilitate the general operations of the program.

## Funding & Partners

Thanks to funding from the Wild and Scenic Partnership Program of the National Park Service, the Lower Delaware invested \$210,000 in the corridor over the last year. These dollars leveraged over \$1,000,000 in other funds for projects throughout the corridor.

The Steering Committee is the voting management body of the Wild and Scenic Council. In 2024, broader Council meetings brought together over 40 attendees representing 20+ communities, 20 different agencies, and nonprofit organizations.

## Steering Committee 2024 Membership

Chairman Richard Dodds, Kingwood Twp  
Vice Chairman Marian Kyde, PhD, Tinicum Twp  
Mark Baum Biacker, Solebury Twp  
Matt Babbitt, Heritage Conservancy  
JR Fisher, DRGP  
Ron Gilliland, PA DCNR

Bob Hornby, Hunterdon County  
Jackie Middleton, Hunterdon Land Trust  
Angie Nagle, Bucks County Parks  
Chad Pindar, DRBC  
Lauren Seip, NJDEP  
Steph Vannais, NJDEP

**Delaware River Greenway Partnership (DRGP)**  
**P. O. Box 15, Stockton, NJ 08559**  
**[www.delawarerivergreenwaypartnership.org](http://www.delawarerivergreenwaypartnership.org)**

The Committee is supported by National Park Service Liaison Sarah Bursky, and DRGP Executive Director Alison Sommers-Sayre and Projects Coordinator Cindy Kunnas.

## Progress on Management Plan Goals Through Council Funding:

### Funding Open Space Preservation:

Several key nonprofit partners, including Hunterdon Land Trust and Heritage Conservancy, help the Council achieve its land conservation, historic preservation and stewardship goals. In 2024, some of the projects completed included:

- Preserved 105 acres in Hunterdon County (3 transactions).
- Stewarded 6 public preserves, including 10 stewardship volunteer days, 350 trees planted, and the addition of a kiosk and an interpretive sign in Hunterdon County.
- Preservation of 25 acres in Haycock Township in Bucks County  
Preservation projects are in progress for six properties in Bucks County (four in Springfield Township; one in Durham; and one in Bedminster Township).
- Preservation projects are in progress for six properties in Northampton County (four in Upper Mt. Bethel and two in Williams Township)
- Four conservation steward interns conducted multiple conservation projects over the summer of 2024. These projects included invasive species management at four different preserves and the planting of riparian buffers at three different preserves.

### Stewardship through Small Grants:

The Management Council’s “mini-grant program” is an effort to ensure that many small innovative projects happen across the watershed with federal funding. The applications are chosen based on our Management Council [goals](#).

- 2024 Cycle
  - o 13 applicants, several were new applicants.
  - o Videos are posted on DRGP’s [YouTube](#) channel with the headline LDWS Mini-Grant.
- List of awardees:
  - o **Bucks County Parks and Recreation**-Hal H. Clark Boat Launch, construction to begin next [year](#)
  - o **City of Lambertville Parks and Recreation**-Cavallo Park Riparian Buffer Restoration



**Delaware Riverkeeper Network**-Community Scientists Survey for the Lost Plant: Podostemum. The aquatic plant thrives in fast-flowing, well-oxygenated rivers/streams. Its presence is an indicator of high water quality and good river health, as it requires clear,

unpolluted water with stable substrates to grow.

- Mini-grant leveraged for over \$2,500 match.
- 105 volunteer hours.
- Mini-grant leveraged 2.4-to-1.
- Secured 2025 funding from the National Park Foundation to continue this effort.

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o **Eastern PA Alliance of Climbers**-High Rocks Improvement Project

- Trained 16 volunteers and park staff in sustainable trail design and construction techniques. 510 volunteer hours.
- Mini-grant leveraged to secure almost \$20,000 in additional funding,

o **Foodshed Alliance-Protecting the Paulins Kill**-Storytelling through Video. Over 900 views on YouTube as of March 2025.

o **Holland Township, NJ**-O'sakame Preserve Visitor Area Enhancement.

- Signs were installed detailing the preserve's history and conservation efforts in English.
- Added a QR code linking to a webpage that provides translations of the signs in Spanish.

o **Tinicum Township**-Backyard Environmental Stewardship in Tinicum (BEST) Initiative

- 82-100 workshop attendees
- 83 volunteer hours

o **Washington Crossing Park Association**-Continental Lane Forest Restoration in Washington Crossing State Park NJ.

- Volunteers planted 288 trees and shrubs.
- 49 populations of invasive species eradicated and 29 controlled.
- Estimated 1,072 individual plants removed.
- 315 volunteer hours.

o **Ridge and Valley Charter School** - Water Quality Monitoring

### **Outreach and Education:**



Council members and partners work to highlight river-related concerns for the public and partners through a series of innovative activities:

#### **A Successful 2024 Sojourn!**

The annual River Sojourn draws participants from across the region to paddle the Wild and

Scenic River. Several Sojourn scholarships were funded by the Management Council. Up to 100 paddlers attended the sojourn each day.

### Additional Activities

- ✓ A New logo was unveiled! Special thanks to outreach volunteers
- ✓ An updated Junior Ranger booklet is being produced to educate local and visiting children on the Delaware River and the Wild & Scenic River program. The booklet is to be completed next year.
- ✓ The Council was represented at the Annual Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed Forum



### Partnering across the East Coast!

The biennial gathering of the Partnership Wild and Scenic River Councils provided an opportunity to talk about invasive species, program management, coordination between River programs, and more! 16 different Councils were represented, along with National Park Service staff.

### A Study for Expansion of the Designation!

Recognizing how successful this program has been for local communities for the last 20 years; partners have been hard at work talking to communities about whether they want to also be included in the designation. This “expansion study” is a project of the existing Council but offers the opportunity to spread funding further and protect more creeks and river miles!

- ✓ 30 Creeks are under study as well as part of the main river that was not designated in 2000.
- ✓ Presentations have been happening in local communities across the watershed
- ✓ Check out these articles about the effort:  
[Hopewell](#) Township and Upper [Makefield](#) Township.



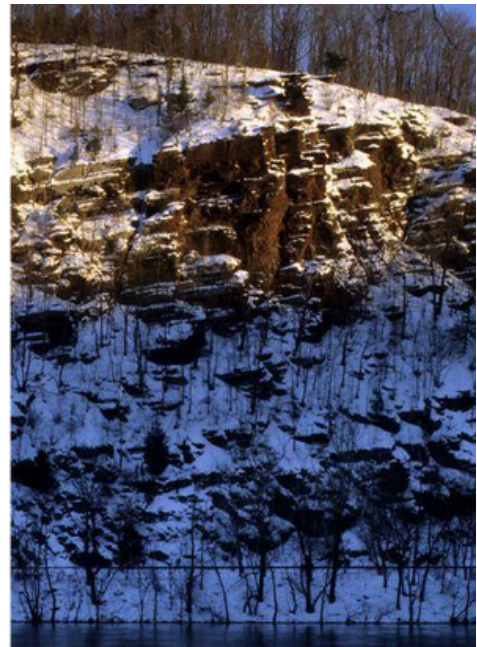
### **Visitor Use Management on the River: Working Towards Cross-River Collaboration**

With the consultant help of Biohabitats and a team of dedicated volunteers representing communities along the River, a Collaborative Action Plan was developed to guide potential projects in addressing issues caused by the various recreational uses of the river.

- The project planning area covers approximately 78 miles along the Delaware River.
- Planning process centered on two major Visitor Use Forums in spring and fall 2024. Eighteen access managers and related stakeholders attended each forum.
  - o Forums aimed to prioritize coordinated actions and create a concrete To-Do list for a 2–4-year timeline.
  - o Partners hoped that by addressing these near-term actions, inter-organizational communication and collaboration would improve, paving the way for future projects.

### **Resource Stewardship - Public Issues We Followed**

DRGP, in support of the LODE Management Council, provides a voice for concerns on a range of projects happening in the region. These projects at times may conflict with Management Council goals such as preserving natural resources, water quality, historical resources, recreation, and economic development (minimizing adverse impacts of development and encouragement of sustainable development). In 2024, the Council discussed bridge reconstructions, quarry developments, potential warehousing, rockfall mitigations, flooding and erosion, and a host of other public interest issues.



#### ***Examples:***

#### **NJ Rockfall Mitigation Projects Along Delaware River Scenic [Byway, Route 29:](#)**

The Council continues to monitor the proposed rockfall mitigation project along Route 29 in Kingwood Township, West Amwell Township, and the City of Lambertville in Hunterdon County. An additional project is proposed in Warren County along I-80. The radical nature of these proposals will alter the viewscape along the river for miles, potentially impact homeowners' wells due to rock blasting, and threaten endangered plant and animal species.

#### **Large-Scale Warehousing and Server Fields:**

Across the region, a range of warehousing and server field sites have been planned. The Council is participating in these discussions. While supportive of economic development for our communities, the goal is to site these projects appropriately, in areas best suited for development, leaving open space along the river intact.

#### **Flooding and Erosion of Riverbanks:**

Due to severe storms, there has been significant erosion along creeks and riverbanks everywhere. The Council has been working to support approaches to restoration. One such example is along Paunacussing Creek in Solebury Township, a designated creek, which has caused significant erosion along Fleecydale Road. The road has been closed since 2022. Solebury Township in PA and NPS are advising and addressing the erosion, which has affected homeowners, the Canal, and even gas line

crossings.

Thank you all for a great year!

The Wild and Scenic River Council invites all to attend meetings and get involved! Check us out at [www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org](http://www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org).