



**Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council (LDWS)
2020: A Year in Review
Twenty Years of Supporting the Free-Flowing River**

About the Lower Delaware

Designated in 2000, the LDWS represents nonprofits, governmental entities, and the general public on both sides of the River in the 64 mile long corridor in Pennsylvania and New Jersey running from Easton, PA to Washington Crossing, PA. Guided by the Management Plan, the Council focuses work on six goals: water quality, natural resources, historic resources, recreation, economic development, and open space preservation. To acknowledge the Lower Delaware’s 20-year anniversary, the national Partnership Wild and Scenic News, featured the River in the November 2020 issue:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/lower-delaware-wild-and-scenic-river.htm>.

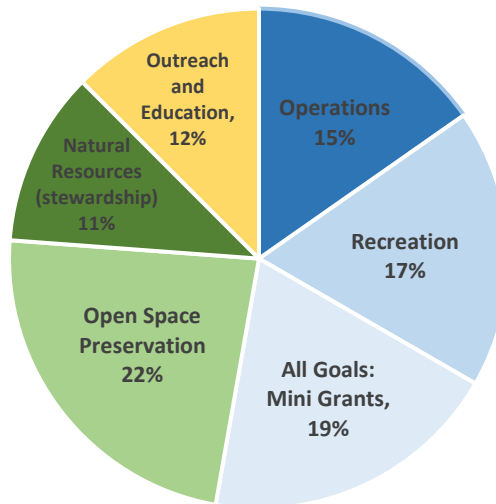
Delaware River: 2020 River of the Year

American Rivers bestowed this honor to recognize progress in water quality, river restoration and community revitalization. “The Delaware River is a national success story,” said Bob Irvin, President and CEO of American Rivers. “The River of the Year honor recognizes the hard work of many local advocates who understand that a healthy Delaware River is vital to the health of millions of people.”

Funding & Partners

Thanks to funding from the Wild and Scenic Partnership Program of the National Park Service, the Lower Delaware invested \$150,000 in the corridor over the last year.

Wild and Scenic Budget Breakdown



Four partners shared in the work:

Delaware River Greenway Partnership (DRGP)

<https://www.delawarerivergreenwaypartnership.org/>

DRGP is proud to coordinate the activities of the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Steering Committee and Management Council. In doing so, DRGP plans and coordinates meetings, drafts and distributes e-newsletters, and all public communications and comment letters. DRGP worked with a river use study consultant to begin the research process and organized a town hall to encourage participation in the study questionnaire. Managing the annual mini-grant program open to schools,

governmental entities, and nonprofits in the corridor is also a big piece of DRGP's work. These initiatives, programs, and communications can be found at <https://www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org/>, hosted and maintained by DRGP.

Heritage Conservancy

<https://heritageconservancy.org/>

Heritage Conservancy completed two conservation easements permanently protecting 44 acres in Northampton and Bucks Counties, PA. Heritage is also working on the preservation of four additional conservation easements totaling almost 150 acres in the LDWS corridor in Bucks and Northampton Counties. Working in the Cooks Creek Watershed in Springfield Township Bucks County, Heritage staff and volunteers restored approximately 445 feet of riparian buffer along the stream corridor in its Fuller Pursell Nature Preserve.

Hunterdon Land Trust (HLT)

<https://www.hunterdonlandtrust.org/>

In 2020 HLT preserved two properties totaling 110 acres of permanently protected open space and continued to work on 12 active land projects totaling 788 acres in the corridor. HLT completed a management plan for Holland Highlands Preserve, continued to manage the 20-member deer hunting team, assessed the conservation status of 20 Wild & Scenic fee and easement properties, coordinated ongoing volunteer activities, and began to develop HLT's Trail Walkers program (a group of Citizen Stewards who regularly assess and help maintain the trails on the preserves). Finally, HLT conducted outreach to over 2,300 supporters in public communications to highlight newly preserved properties, Delaware River educational programming, Wild & Scenic properties to visit, and to encourage participation in the Lower Delaware river use questionnaire.

Natural Lands

<https://natlands.org/>

Natural Lands is a regional non-profit conservation organization and land trust devoted to the preservation, conservation, and wise management of critical natural and cultural resources within the greater Delaware River watershed. Under the NPS cooperative agreement (CA), Natural Lands (NL) has been working with the Wild & Scenic partners to advance public understanding of natural resources within the watershed and to promote and implement land protection by municipalities and private landowners. NLT also formally managed the CA by collaborating with the partners on required reporting, documentation, and funding management.

LDWS Supported Programs

Recreation

River Use Capacity Study: Responding to COVID River Crowds - River towns faced a record number of visitors in 2020. The Council commissioned a study with the Shimoda Group to examine the recreational capacity of the Lower Delaware corridor. Providing a basis for future plans and actions which acknowledge the high level of recreational use, the study will address the values for which the Lower Delaware is federally protected. Data gathering included outreach to river users, business owners, and those representing governmental entities. The project included a questionnaire, town hall, and one-on-one interviews.

* **240** members of the public participated in an electronic questionnaire.

* **80** members of the public participated in a December virtual town hall style meeting to answer questions and share information about the River.

* **47** were formally interviewed by the Shimoda Group.

The final report will be released in the Summer of 2021.

Delaware River Sojourn - The Council proudly supports youth scholarships for the annual Delaware River Sojourn. This multiday guided kayak, camping trip, and educational event was cancelled in 2020 due to Covid but it is scheduled for August 2021 to run from Hancock, NJ to Phillipsburg, NJ. The purpose of the Sojourn is to heighten awareness of and appreciation for the Delaware River and its watershed. Learn more at

<https://delawareriversojourn.com/>.

Mini-Grant Program

Five grantees shared \$20,000 in funding for their projects this cycle focusing on stream and river bank restoration and conservation and water quality.

Stream & River Bank Restoration

Bridgetown Twp, PA (Upper Black Eddy): Delaware River Streambank Erosion Study - A water resource engineering firm examined multiple areas of concern, especially where the riverbank meets roadways in the Township. The final report recommended several stabilization techniques to address the erosion problems and the final report was submitted to PennDOT for consideration.

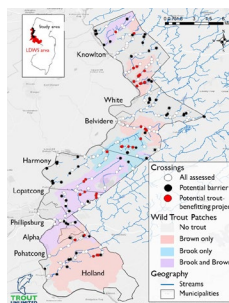
Bucks County Audubon Society Honey Hollow Watershed: Riparian Buffer Restoration Project - Volunteers removed invasive plants and planted native trees (and caged deer protection) that helped stabilize the East Branch of the Honey Hollow Creek. This will provide a vital habitat for birds and wildlife and overall improve the ecosystem.

Conservation & Water Quality

Delaware Riverkeeper Network: Protecting the Tohickon Creek on Historical Community Upgrade Petition - The Tohickon Creek Watershed has one of the longest standing community upgrade Exceptional Value (EV) petitions languishing in PA. To help ensure the tributary, which feeds the Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River and flows through iconic places like Ralph Stover State Park receive the protection it deserves, outreach was conducted to those who enjoy the Tohickon through meetings, webinars, videos and other communications.

NJ Conservation Foundation: Protecting Water Quality in the Delaware River Watershed - eDNA Testing for the Highly Invasive Chinese Pond Mussel - Nine ponds were treated in 2019 in order to eradicate a population of highly invasive Chinese pond mussel. The population is a direct threat to the Delaware River, as the ponds release water into the Wickecheoke Creek, which is a Delaware River tributary. Funding provided for the collection and analyzing of eDNA samples to see if the treatment was a success. It was determined that the mussel population persists and additional eradication efforts are needed.

Trout Unlimited: LIDAR-based Fish Passage Assessment of Road-Stream Crossings - Roads cross streams at 40,000 locations in the Delaware River Basin. Where crossings are not properly designed, aquatic and terrestrial organism passage can be blocked, roads may flood, and erosion rates likely increase. A computer-based approach (high resolution LIDAR) was used to increase the efficiency of initial road-stream crossing assessment for fish passage. Completed at 76 crossings in Northwest NJ where they also had field-measured estimates of fish passage, the method was applied to 350 crossings in nine NJ municipalities in the LDWS corridor. Of the 350 crossings evaluated, 107 were identified as potential barriers to fish passage, 62 were in wild trout waters, and 34 locations are potentially ecologically significant.



Fish Passage Map

Communications, Issues, Meetings

Development Near the River: Outreach to Governmental Entities

LDWS submitted comment letters to express concerns and to share knowledge. Comment letters are posted on the LDWS homepage.

- **Municipal Ordinance: Bedminster, PA** – The Council hired a water resource engineer to evaluate a proposed stormwater ordinance. The engineering report was submitted as public comment to Bedminster in September.
- **Cell Tower: Holland Township, NJ** – The Council submitted public comment in November regarding a proposed cell tower to be built close to the River and located in a floodplain.

- **Quarry: Springfield Township, PA** – The Council submitted a public comment letter about a proposed new quarry to be built adjacent to the Tohickon Creek.
- **Warehouse Project, White Twp, NJ** – The Council submitted a public comment letter to the Township about a substantial warehouse project proposed along the River.
- **Francis E. Walter Dam, White Haven, PA** – NPS submitted a comment letter to the Army Corp of Engineers about the reevaluation study of the Dam and its capacity.
- **PennEast Pipeline (NJ, PA)** – The Council submitted multiple public comment letters throughout 2020 to the DRBC and FERC regarding PennEast proposals, submissions, and requested extensions.
- **Expansion: Trenton-Mercer Airport (Ewing, NJ)** - The Council submitted a letter to the multiple entities involved in the expansion project.

Major Environmental Concern In Hunterdon County, NJ

The Council continues to track the proposed rockfall mitigation project to run along Route 29 through Kingwood Twp, W. Amwell Twp, and Lambertville in an area known as the Devil’s Tea Table. The radical nature of the proposal will change the viewscape along the river for miles, potentially impact wells of homeowners due to the rockblasting, and affect endangered plant and animal species. The final NJDOT recommendations and engineering reports have not been released. The last time Council representatives were updated on the project was in December of 2019. A comprehensive list of news stories, resolutions, and project documents can be found on the [LDWS homepage](#). Over \$50 million is assigned to the project through the North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority. Already \$3 million has been spent to date.

Reengaging Through Virtual Meetings

Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Council held virtual meetings in June, September, and December. The March meeting was cancelled. Meetings were held virtually during business hours. Each meeting attracted 40-70 participants including members of the public and those representing nonprofits and governmental entities. The agenda for the final meeting of 2020 in December focused on updates about the river use capacity study, learning about 2021 budget planning, and hearing reports from 2020 mini-grantees. Agendas and minutes can be found at <https://www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org/index.php/resources/meeting-minutes>, while meeting notices posted on the Lower Delaware homepage, on the Lower Delaware [calendar](#) at www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org, and are included in Council e-newsletters.

Steering Committee 2020 Membership

Chairman Richard Dodds, Kingwood Twp, NJ; Vice Chairman Marian Kyde, PhD, Tinicum Twp, PA; Secretary Patti Ruby, Hunterdon Land Trust; Bethany Hare, PADCNR, Kris Kern, Heritage Conservancy, Evan Kwityn, Delaware River Basin Commission, Kate Raman, Natural Lands; Norm Torkelson, Delaware River Greenway Partnership; Michael Tropiano, NJDEP. The Committee is supported by National Park Service Liaison Sarah Bursky and Delaware River Greenway Partnership Executive Director Maryann Carroll.

Subscribe To LDWS Communications

To receive periodic electronic newsletters and communications, register at <https://www.lowerdelawarewildandscenic.org/index.php/contact-us>.

Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River

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