



SUMMARY



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A Special Place in Our Nation's History

Few places in America can claim the Schuylkill River Valley's importance in history. A variety of peoples—from the Lenni Lenapi to the first European settlers to the many other ethnic groups who migrated to the Schuylkill region over time—have called the River Valley home. Its abundant natural resources and productive soils made it an early industrial center and breadbasket for the colonies. During the American Revolution, the perseverance and sacrifice of George Washington's army at Valley Forge played a key role in the birth of a new nation. The 19th century witnessed the emergence of the Schuylkill Valley as one of the world's leading manufacturing regions, fueled in large part by anthracite coal mined from Schuylkill County. The Schuylkill River and canal system were one of the major arteries of the Industrial Revolution, transporting coal, manufactured goods, and crops to the port of Philadelphia. Industrial and mining activities impacted the Schuylkill River Valley's water resources, leading to a new chapter in its history in the 20th century—one of environmental reclamation and water quality restoration on a massive scale, accompanied by the emergence of outdoor recreation as a major activity.

Today the Schuylkill River Valley is a diverse and dynamic region. The River Valley's five counties—Berks, Chester, Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill—are inhabited by some 3.2 million people. The Valley boasts abundant cultural, natural, and recreational resources; landmark sites of national significance; and historic communities and landscapes with uncounted stories to tell of the region's heritage. Nevertheless, while much of the region's past survives in the present, some significant challenges exist if the past is to be carried forward into the future.

Heritage Area Designation

In 1995, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania designated the Schuylkill River and its major tributaries as a Heritage Corridor under the Heritage Parks Program and the *Schuylkill Heritage Corridor Management Action Plan* was approved.¹ In 2000, the United States Congress acknowledged the River Valley's national significance by designating the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. As established by Congress, the mission of the heritage area is:

To conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources related to the industrial and cultural heritage of the Schuylkill River Valley.



Coal miners, Schuylkill County

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area encompass the watershed of the Schuylkill River in Berks, Chester, Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Schuylkill Counties.

¹ This plan replaces the 1995 *Management Action Plan* for the Schuylkill Heritage Corridor under the State Heritage Parks Program.



The Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA) is the designated management organization for the heritage area. This Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) sets out a comprehensive strategy for collaborative actions over time by SRGA and other heritage area organizations, governments, institutions, and citizens to achieve the mission.

Looking Towards the Future

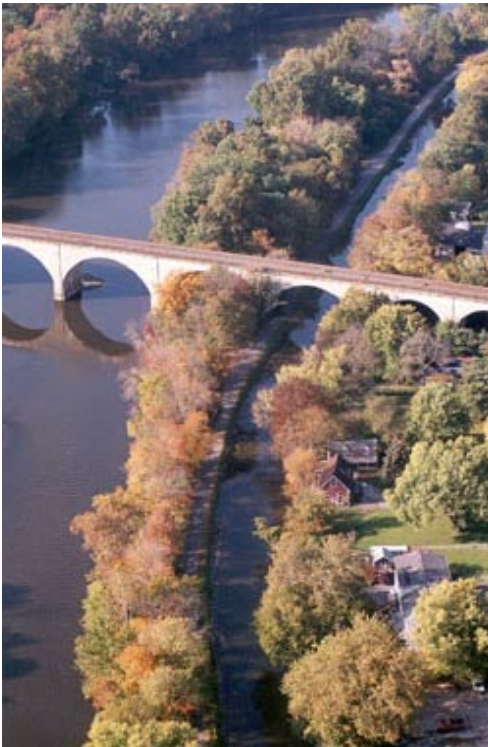
The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is grounded in the past and the region's historical, cultural, and environmental heritage. However, the Management Plan is a forward-looking document, one that lays out a strategy to be implemented over a time horizon of ten years to promote quality of life, sense of place, and sustainable economic activity through the preservation, enhancement, and development of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources. The Plan is motivated by the prospect of a better future that is captured by SRGA's Vision Statement:

We envision a Schuylkill River region fully revitalized and restored: A region whose citizens understand, value and are fully committed to preserving and sustaining their cultural heritage and natural environment for future generations.

The potential benefits for the Schuylkill River Valley's residents are many, including:

- historic resources and landscapes preserved as part of community life;
- waters and other natural resources protected and restored;
- historic boroughs and towns revitalized through heritage-related economic development;
- increased outdoor recreational opportunities; and
- enhanced community pride and identity.

Concerted, coordinated action at all levels – from grassroots citizen groups to regional heritage organizations to state and federal agencies – will be required to fully realize the heritage area's vast potential and to maximize its benefits for residents of the Schuylkill River Valley. SRGA will act as a catalyst for positive change effectuated through collaborative initiatives involving numerous private and public sector partners. These initiatives will build on the progress made in implementing the 1995 *Management Action Plan* and on the accomplishments of the many individuals and groups already working to preserve and enhance the Schuylkill River Valley's cultural, environmental, and recreational resources. ***The end result will be a truly revitalized and restored Schuylkill River region.***



Oakes Reach Canal, Mont Clare



Pennypacker Mill, Schwenksville



What is the Management Plan?

The Management Plan is, first and foremost, a guide for decision-making. Recognizing that the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area will evolve over time as a result of voluntary actions and partnerships among numerous organizations within the watershed, the Plan does not attempt to prescribe a detailed list of actions. Rather, it provides the direction, criteria, and processes needed to establish priorities and to make informed decisions. It establishes an overall structure for conserving, enhancing, and linking heritage resources in the form of goals, strategies, and primary interpretive themes. It illustrates and provides examples of the ways that public and private partners can work together to achieve the heritage area mission. Finally, it sets some basic priorities for heritage area programs over the next two years, along with guidance for monitoring success in achieving the goals.

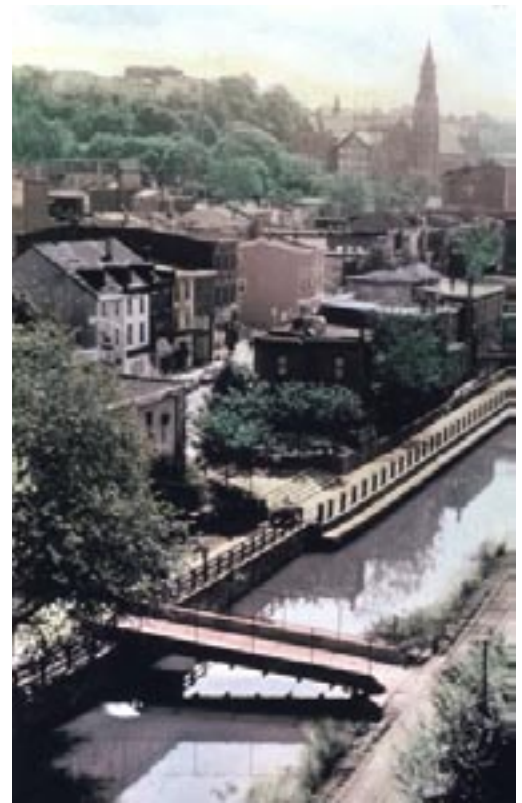
Goals and Strategies

Heritage areas combine preservation of historical, cultural, and natural resources, recreation, and education with tourism and small business development in strategic initiatives to enhance the economy and quality of life of local communities. In support of this basic purpose, the Management Plan establishes *goals and strategies* for five key areas:

1. Resource Conservation and Enhancement
2. Education and Interpretation
3. Recreation
4. Community Revitalization
5. Heritage Tourism

Resource Conservation and Enhancement Strategies

- Preserve and enhance historical and cultural resources.
- Preserve and restore the Schuylkill River Valley’s significant environmental resources, particularly those vital to the health of the River and its tributaries.
- Support sustainable land use, open space, and greenway planning and preservation related to the Schuylkill River Valley’s cultural and natural landscapes.



Manayunk Canal and Tow Path, Philadelphia

Resource Conservation and Enhancement Goal

Conserve and enhance the Schuylkill River Valley’s significant historical, cultural, and natural resources.



Education and Interpretation Goal

Foster awareness and appreciation of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources and the stories they have to tell.

Recreation Goal

Increase outdoor recreational opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage.

Community Revitalization Goal

Strengthen the Schuylkill River Valley's historic communities through sustainable community development related to heritage resources.

Heritage Tourism Goal

Increase heritage tourism and associated economic benefits for the Schuylkill River Valley region and its communities.

Education and Interpretation Strategies

- Establish a consistent, area-wide framework for the interpretation of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources.
- Connect heritage sites and resources through interpretive themes and products.
- Support educational and research initiatives that teach the public about the Schuylkill River Valley's historical, cultural, and natural heritage.

Recreation Strategies

- Complete development of the Schuylkill River trail system, including connections to tributary trails.
- Enhance existing and provide new outdoor recreational opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage.

Community Revitalization Strategies

- Conserve and use heritage resources to foster sustainable economic activity in traditional centers.
- Promote entrepreneurial activity and small business development related to the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources.

Heritage Tourism Strategies

- Use a distinct visual image and identity in the design of heritage area products such as informational materials, signage, and interpretive exhibits.
- Develop physical and programmatic linkages between heritage area destinations to assist visitors in experiencing the Schuylkill River Valley's diverse resources.
- Promote awareness of and increase visitation in the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area through public relations and marketing programs.



Primary Interpretive Themes

Enhanced interpretation of the Schuylkill River Valley’s people and resources is an integral part of the Management Plan and is interwoven throughout the plan strategies. The Plan establishes three broad, unifying interpretive themes to link and inform the rich and diverse stories told by individual sites and attractions throughout the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. These themes are:

- 1. Making History:** The Schuylkill River Valley has a deep and rich historic legacy, and the theme of history-making—in the past and continuing to the present day—connects the whole length of the watershed.
- 2. Creating Community:** The Schuylkill River Valley is preeminently a place of communities, as expressed in its diverse cities, towns, villages, hamlets, and neighborhoods, and in its cultural and social organizations, institutions, and traditions.
- 3. Reclaiming the River:** Building on past and present efforts to protect and reclaim the Schuylkill River and its watershed, this theme links history and environment. It encourages residents and visitors to view the waters of the Schuylkill River and its tributaries as *a vital commons* and to lay claim to a shared heritage.

These three themes provide the framework within which a multiplicity of secondary themes and sub-themes can be developed to articulate and connect the stories of heritage resources throughout the Schuylkill River Valley.

Implementation and Management

Ultimately, implementation of the Management Plan will depend upon voluntary actions and partnerships involving numerous public and private sector agencies, organizations, and citizens. Thus the Plan is designed to provide an *implementation and management framework* for SRGA and its heritage partners as they work to achieve the mission and goals for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. The framework begins with four *principles for implementation*:

- 1. Partnerships:** Implement the Plan through collaborative partnerships involving the SRGA; federal, state, county, and local government; and private organizations, institutions, and businesses.
- 2. Linkages:** Establish a variety of programmatic and physical connections among sites, attractions, and resources throughout the heritage area.



Daniel Boone Homestead, Birdsboro



Schuylkill Navigation System, Berks County

Implementation and Management: Key Plan Components

- Principles for Implementation
- Project Evaluation Criteria
- Priority Action Programs



Foundry Building, Phoenixville

Priority Action Programs

- **Develop programmatic linkages to build the regional identity and image of the heritage area**
- **Work toward completion of the Schuylkill River Trail System**
- **Continue to develop a heritage area gateway system**
- **Initiate partnerships for additional projects of area-wide significance (e.g., water quality monitoring program, plan for the future use/interpretation of the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker)**

3. **Regional Impact:** Focus on programs and actions that will most effectively build a regional identity for and increase visitation within the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area.
4. **Sense of Place:** Enhance the quality of life of local communities through the conservation and development of heritage resources.

The Plan identifies *project evaluation criteria* as a key decision-making tool for use in assessing the importance of potential heritage programs, actions, and projects under consideration for implementation. These criteria address the following:

1. **The project must contribute to achieving one or more of the Management Plan goals** relating to resource conservation and enhancement, education and interpretation, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism.
2. **The project must exemplify the four principles of implementation to a high degree.** Of particular importance are that the project:
 - Involve and leverage the resources of two or more partners, including a sponsoring partner with sufficient capacity to manage the project following completion.
 - Integrate one or more of the interpretive themes: Making History, Creating Community, and Reclaiming the River.
 - Address a site(s) or resource(s) of regional significance.
 - Respect the carrying capacity of heritage resources.
3. **The project must exhibit a high degree of quality,** as measured by the following:
 - It displays a high level of **authenticity** in its treatment of heritage resources.
 - It embodies high standards of **planning and design.**
 - It incorporates the heritage area **branding** set by the area-wide informational framework and visual design standards to be developed as one of the priority action programs.

The strategies contained in the Management Plan include a wide range of initiatives, programs, and actions that can be carried out through partnerships of heritage organizations and institutions to achieve the heritage area mission and goals. The Plan identifies *several priority action programs* that are especially important to the success of the heritage area and thus are identified as priorities for the first two years of plan implementation.



Priority Action Programs

PROGRAM/ACTION	ESTIMATED COST
1. Develop programmatic linkages to build the regional identity and image of the heritage area	
• Enhance the heritage area website	\$100,000
• Develop a visual design framework and standards to “brand” the heritage area	\$50,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design for wayfinding signage and implement model installations at key locations	\$200,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design/layout for informational materials and implement a model informational brochure	\$50,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design for interpretive exhibits and implement a model exhibit(s) at key heritage resource(s)	\$300,000
2. Work toward completion of the Schuylkill River Trail System	
• Recreational trail: – Develop a feasibility study/design for the Reading to Hamburg section – Complete selected critical gaps in the Schuylkill River trail and connections to tributary trails	\$700,000
• Water trail: – Establish new landings and upgrade existing ones at multiple locations along the Schuylkill River	\$300,000
• Interpretive trails: – Develop a plan for a Schuylkill Canal Interpretive Trail and begin implementation, possibly including as early actions an informational brochure and model interpretive installation in coordination with Action Program 1 – Develop a template for a birding trail (model trail guide and informational packet)	\$300,000
3. Continue to develop a heritage area gateway system	
• Identify and move forward with gateways at five locations, modeled after the existing locations	\$400,000
4. Work through the Schuylkill River Watershed Network or other partnership arrangement to initiate at least two additional projects of area-wide significance. The following are provided as examples:	
• Design and begin implementing a watershed-wide water quality monitoring program	\$350,000
• Work with property owners and the community to develop a feasibility study, economic assessment and plan for the future use/interpretation of the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker	\$200,000

Notes:

1. The estimated costs are not meant to be definitive, but rather to provide an idea of the level of financial resources that will be required to implement the action programs.
2. The estimated costs are to be shared among heritage partners

Planning Process

The process of preparing the Management Plan and EIS included extensive public participation and outreach. Public meetings in Pottsville, Pottstown, and Philadelphia were held in the initial stages of the project and again to consider plan alternatives. A third set of public meetings was conducted on the Draft Management Plan and EIS. In addition, members of the public were invited to share their thoughts and comments throughout the planning process via e-mail to the SRGA website (www.schuylkillriver.org).



Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton



Schuylkill River Sojourn



Locktender's House at Lock 60, Mont Clare



Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad, Port Clinton

A seven-person Steering Committee guided preparation of the Management Plan. A larger Task Force comprised of 23 citizens and officials representative of heritage interests within the Schuylkill River Valley provided input at key points in the planning process. Outreach efforts included interviews with representatives of federal, state, regional, and local governments; private organizations and institutions; and others with an interest in the future of the heritage area. Additional coordination was conducted with representatives of a range of federal and state agencies that would potentially have an interest in the Management Plan and EIS.

During the planning process, a range of alternatives for the future management of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area was considered. Four alternatives – No Action (continuation of the status quo) and three Action Alternatives – were developed and evaluated for their performance in meeting the heritage area mission and goals. Based upon this evaluation and input on the alternatives received at a series of public meetings, a ***Preferred Alternative*** was selected. Called the “Layers” Alternative, it calls for a comprehensive management strategy that focuses both on preserving and enhancing clusters of heritage resources/attractions (places) and on establishing thematic and physical connections between the places. The Layers Alternative is also the ***Environmentally Preferred Alternative*** because it has the highest potential of all the alternatives to leverage resources and partnerships for the protection and enhancement of natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources. The Layers Alternative was developed into the plan strategies and framework for implementation and management that form the heart of the Plan.

The anticipated environmental impacts of the four alternatives on the following five categories of resources are addressed in Chapter 4.0 (Environmental Consequences) of the Management Plan and EIS:

- Natural Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Recreational Resources
- Land Use
- Socio-economic Conditions

Because of the programmatic scope of the Management Plan and EIS, the Environmental Consequences chapter addresses the general types of impacts that could be associated with the strategies and actions emphasized by each of the alternatives rather than discussing the impacts at the site-specific project level. (Future actions may be required to undergo project level environmental assessment prior to implementation



as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).) Most of the impacts on environmental resources resulting from implementation of the Management Plan are expected to be positive because of the Plan's resource preservation and enhancement goals. There is the potential for impacts caused by increased visitation or certain types of development that may be generated as a secondary effect of programs and actions taken to implement the Plan. However, the Plan's emphasis on sustainable land use and community revitalization implies that most secondary development will be positive and intended. In addition, any adverse impacts due to visitation will likely be minimal and outweighed by the effects of improved economic vitality and resource preservation and enhancement. The evaluation criteria included in the Plan require that infrastructure be available or easily developable to accommodate increased visitation resulting from a project and that the project not have significant adverse impacts on or exceed the carrying capacity of environmental resources.

The results of public and agency review of the Draft Management Plan and EIS confirmed the direction set in the Plan, including the selection of the Preferred Alternative. Revisions have been made to portions of the Plan to respond to comments made during the review period.



Boathouse Row and Center City Philadelphia