



2.0 THE PLANNING ALTERNATIVES



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2.1 ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

The planning process included consideration of a range of alternatives for the future management of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Four alternatives were developed and evaluated for their performance in meeting the mission and goals set forth in Section 1.3: the No Action Alternative (A) and three Action Alternatives (B, C, and D). The evaluation was based on the varying emphases placed by the alternatives on the 13 strategies presented in Section 1.3 to achieve the mission and goals (Table 2-1).

As part of the planning process, a series of public meetings was conducted at which the alternatives were presented for review. Based upon the evaluation of the alternatives and public comment, Alternative D (Layers) was selected as the Preferred Alternative developed into the recommended plan described in Section 2.2.

Alternatives Considered

- **A: No Action**
- **B: Places**
- **C: Experiences**
- **D: Layers (Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative)**

2.1.1 Alternative A: No Action

Alternative A does not propose any change to the current operation and management of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Although the Schuylkill River Valley has been designated as a National Heritage Area, current programs and levels of funding would continue to be administered by SRGA and no additional funding would be provided.

- Based upon Heritage Parks funding for the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor through 2002, approximately \$350,000 a year would be provided for heritage-related projects following the direction set by the 1995 *Management Action Plan*. This funding would leverage approximately \$650,000 a year in public and institutional matching funds (\$1.86 for each \$1.00 in direct funding), resulting in a total investment of approximately \$1 million a year. Approximately 80% of the program funding would be comprised of relatively small grants (up to \$50,000) for a wide variety of local projects within the heritage area’s five counties. Examples of these projects include:

Documentation and designation of historic resources

- Tours and brochures
- Development of segments of the Schuylkill River trail
- Enhancements to local riverfront parks and boat landings as part of the Schuylkill River Water Trail
- Development of visitor gateway facilities in individual communities

The remaining approximately 20% of State Heritage Parks funding would be provided in amounts of up to \$75,000 for projects with area-wide impact. Examples of these projects include a heritage area public



Schuylkill River Trail, Valley Forge



Union Canal Towpath Trail, Bern Township

relations program, regional trail guides, and design of a heritage area signage system.

Because funding would remain at current levels, Alternative A would not increase the emphasis on any of the 13 strategies established for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area (Table 2-1). Thus it would be the least effective alternative in achieving the heritage area mission and goals related to resource conservation and enhancement, education and interpretation, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism.

Table 2-1. Alternatives Evaluation

STRATEGIES	ALTERNATIVES			
	A	B	C	D
1. Resource Conservation and Enhancement				
1A. Preserve and enhance historical and cultural resources	3	1	2	1
1B. Conserve and restore the Schuylkill River Valley's significant environmental resources, particularly those vital to the health of the River and its tributaries	3	2	1	1
1C. Advocate sustainable land use, open space and greenway planning and preservation related to the Schuylkill River Valley's cultural and natural landscapes	3	2	2	1
2. Education and Interpretation				
2A. Establish a consistent, area-wide framework for the interpretation of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources	3	1	1	1
2B. Connect heritage sites and resources through interpretive themes and products	3	2	1	1
2C. Support educational and research initiatives that teach the public about the Schuylkill River Valley's historical, cultural and natural heritage	3	2	2	1
3. Recreation				
3A. Complete development of the Schuylkill River trail system, including connections to tributary trails	3	2	1	1
3B. Enhance existing and provide new outdoor recreation opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage	3	2	1	1
4. Community Revitalization				
4A. Conserve and use heritage resources to foster sustainable economic activity in traditional centers	3	1	2	1
4B. Promote entrepreneurial activity and small business development related to the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources	3	1	2	1
5. Heritage Tourism				
5A. Use a distinct visual image and identity in the design of heritage area products such as informational materials, signage and interpretive exhibits	3	1	1	1
5B. Develop physical and programmatic linkages between heritage area destinations to assist visitors in experiencing the Schuylkill River Valley's diverse resources	3	2	1	1
5C. Promote awareness of and increase visitation in the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area through public relations and marketing programs	3	2	2	1

Alternatives: Degree of Emphasis:
 A – No Action 1 – Major Increase
 B – Places 2 – Moderate Increase
 C – Experiences 3 – No/Minor Increase
 D – Layers



2.1.2 Alternative B: Places

Alternative B would use heritage area strategies, programs, and funding to enhance geographically based clusters of heritage attractions and resources, or **places**. This alternative would be directed primarily towards local residents and their visiting friends and relatives and secondarily towards visitors with a more intense interest in heritage resources. Places would be identified and developed based upon the following criteria:

- Significant heritage resources and attractions (existing and potential) are present in relatively close proximity.
- Visitor infrastructure (shops, restaurants, lodging facilities, transportation access, etc.) is available or can be developed.
- Local heritage partners with the requisite skills and resources are present and willing to participate in enhancing the place.

Twelve potential places that meet or could be developed to meet the above criteria have been identified (Figure 2-1).¹ From north to south, these are:

- | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Ashland | 7. Pottstown/Hopewell |
| 2. Tamaqua | 8. Phoenixville/French Creek |
| 3. Pottsville | 9. Perkiomen |
| 4. Port Clinton | 10. Valley Forge |
| 5. Reading | 11. Manayunk/Wissahickon |
| 6. Oley Valley | 12. Philadelphia |

Although the emphasis of the Places Alternative is on locally based resources and attractions, connections would be made to the larger Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area as follows:

- Small gateway facilities would be established within each place to orient and provide information to visitors on local resources and attractions within the context of the larger heritage area.
- Local heritage programs and products would be developed to fit within a consistent, area-wide informational, interpretive, and public relations framework.

Because heritage area funding and resources would be largely directed towards local initiatives, Alternative B would place the greatest emphasis on geographically focused strategies, including preservation/enhancement of the heritage resources that comprise a place (Strategy 1A) and community revitalization (4A and 4B) (Table 2-1). Conversely, Alternative B would moderately increase the emphasis on



Bridge Street alley, Phoenixville



Port Clinton Transportation Museum



Lemon Hill Mansion, Philadelphia

¹ These places have been identified for **illustrative purposes only** and should not be considered to comprise a definitive list. Similarly, Figure 2-1 should not be interpreted as a definitive representation of the clusters of heritage attractions and resources that would be emphasized under the Places Alternative.



Pioneer Tunnel, Ashland

heritage area strategies involving establishment of regional linkages.

With respect to public investment, Alternative B assumes that the operation and management of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area would be enhanced through the appropriation of the authorized limit of \$1 million a year (no more than \$10 million total) in federal funding. This funding would be in addition to the current State Heritage Parks funding level of \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year. Alternative B further assumes that the synergistic effect of the combined federal and state funding would leverage public and institutional matching funds at a higher rate than under Alternative A. These matching funds are estimated at \$2.9 million (\$2.15 for every \$1.00 in direct funding), resulting in a total investment of approximately \$4.25 million a year.²

2.1.3 Alternative C: Experiences

Alternative C focuses on market or interest-based topics that would be used to organize and guide visitors' **experiences** of the heritage area. Strategies and programs would emphasize area-wide linkages, resources, and attractions that relate to these topics. This alternative would be directed primarily towards visitors with an intense interest in a particular heritage-related topic or topics and secondarily towards more casual users. Distinguishing elements of the Experiences Alternative include:

- Topically organized menus, itineraries, and event calendars would be developed to link heritage area resource and attractions. These programs and products would be developed to fit within a consistent, area-wide informational, interpretive, and public relations framework.
- Experiential “fill-ins” between attractions and resources would be developed. These fill-ins would be both resource-based (e.g., scenic roads) and program-based (e.g., audio tours).
- The Schuylkill River and associated trails (land and water) would be developed as a central spine to which programmatic and physical linkages would be made from the topics.
- Small gateway facilities would be distributed in key locations throughout the heritage area to orient and provide information to visitors, with an emphasis on the experiential topics.
- Partners with special interests, skills, and resources pertaining to particular topics would participate in developing linkages at a regional scale.



Mahanoy Area Downtown Center, Mahanoy City

² The estimated rate of leveraging is based on the types of public and institutional support and the level of recognition of the heritage area that could be expected under this alternative (see Appendix D).



Fifteen potential topics that might be addressed under this alternative have been identified and are listed alphabetically:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Agricultural History | 9. Historic Houses |
| 2. American Revolution | 10. Industrial History |
| 3. Art/Culture/Spectator | 11. Mining History |
| 4. Curiosities/Oddities | 12. Outdoor Recreation |
| 5. Ecology/Environmental History | 13. Scenic Landscape |
| 6. Ethnic/Cultural/Religious | 14. Shopping |
| 7. Fairs/Festivals/Community Days | 15. Transportation |
| 8. Food and Drink | |

These topics have been identified for illustrative purposes only and should not be interpreted as all-inclusive or definitive. Figure 2-2 is similarly illustrative in nature, showing conceptual linkages between selected attractions/resources pertaining to five of the topics. The Schuylkill River and Perkiomen Creek are shown as providing linkages related to multiple heritage topics. Thus the Schuylkill River/trail system in particular can function as a central, organizing “spine” that ties together sites and experiences throughout the heritage area.

The Experiences Alternative would place the greatest emphasis on strategies designed to link resources at an area-wide or regional level (Table 2-1). These strategies include regional-scale preservation/restoration of environmental resources (1B) and development of outdoor recreational opportunities (3A and 3B), establishment of interpretive linkages (2B), and developing physical linkages to promote heritage tourism (5B). Conversely, Alternative C would moderately increase the emphasis on “place-based” strategies such as community revitalization (4A and 4B). It would require more sophisticated levels of management and coordination than Alternative B because of its emphasis on regional connections.

With respect to public investment, Alternative C assumes that the operation and management of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area would be enhanced through the appropriation of the authorized limit of \$1 million a year (no more than \$10 million total) in federal funding. This funding would be in addition to the current State Heritage Parks funding level of \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year. Alternative C further assumes that the synergistic effect of the combined federal and state funding would leverage public and institutional matching funds at a rate similar to Alternative B and higher than Alternative A. These matching funds are estimated at \$2.9



Hay Creek Festival, Geigertown



Manayunk Indian Summer Festival, Philadelphia



Strawberry Mansion Bridge, Philadelphia

³ The estimated rate of leveraging is based on the types of public and institutional support and the level of recognition of the heritage area that could be expected under this alternative (see Appendix D).



Fairmount Waterworks, Philadelphia

million (\$2.15 for every \$1.00 in direct funding), resulting in a total investment of approximately \$4.25 million a year.³

2.1.4 Alternative D: Layers (Preferred and Environmentally Preferred Alternative)

Depicted for illustrative purposes in Figure 2-3, Alternative D is a combination of the first two Action Alternatives (B and C). It would pursue development of intersecting **layers** in the form of 1) clusters of resources/attractions (places) and 2) area-wide topics that thematically connect the places. Thus the Layers Alternative would be directed both to casual users (local residents and their visiting friends and relatives) and to more serious heritage tourists. Linkages among and between places and themes are central to this alternative:

- Persons attracted to a place to explore a particular topic may discover and pursue another topic or topics of interest that they learn about in experiencing the place.
- Residents of or casual visitors to a place may discover topics of interest and thus be enticed to explore thematically linked resources and attractions elsewhere in the heritage area.

Alternative D is more comprehensive than Alternatives B and C in that it would simultaneously pursue place-based and regional connection strategies. To accomplish this, it is assumed that Alternative D would significantly increase the emphasis placed on all of the strategies (Table 2-1). It would require the most sophisticated levels of management and coordination of the three Action Alternatives.

With respect to public investment, Alternative D assumes that the appropriation of the authorized limit of \$1 million a year in federal funding (no more than \$10 million total). This funding would be in addition to the current State Heritage Parks funding level of \$300,000 to \$400,000 a year. In this respect Alternative D is identical to Alternatives B and C. However, it is assumed that the synergistic effect of combining both federal and state funding **and** the place-based and experiential strategies of Alternatives B and C, respectively, would leverage public and institutional matching funds at a higher rate than either of those two alternatives. These matching funds are estimated at \$3.9 million (\$2.89

for every \$1.00 in direct funding), resulting in a total investment of approximately \$5.25 million a year. Thus Alternative D would achieve the highest levels of public and institutional investment in heritage-related programs and initiatives of any of the alternatives.

On an overall basis, the Layers Alternative is considered to be the most effective of the Action Alternatives in meeting the heritage area mission and goals. It is the **Environmentally Preferred Alternative** because it has the highest potential of all the alternatives to leverage resources and



Downtown Pottstown



partnerships for the protection and enhancement of natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources. While this alternative is projected to result in the greatest increase in visitation of all of the alternatives, any environmental impacts resulting from the increased visitation are expected to be minor and will be more than outweighed by positive benefits associated with the protection and enhancement of natural, historical, cultural, and recreational resources (see Table 4-3, Comparison of Environmental Impacts of Alternatives). The Layers Alternative also emerged as the consensus alternative of choice at the public meetings. Therefore, the Layers Alternative has been selected as the *Preferred Alternative* for development into the recommended plan described in Section 2.2.

2.2 THE PLAN

The plan developed from the Preferred Alternative provides a management framework and guide for decision-making by the Schuylkill River Greenway Association (SRGA) and its heritage partner organizations as they work to achieve the mission and goals for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. The plan includes the following elements:

- **Plan Goals** establish broad directions for future initiatives and programs in support of the heritage area mission. The goals address resource conservation and enhancement, education and interpretation, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism (see Section 1.3).
- **Plan Strategies** describe the types of programs and actions that will be carried out through partnerships of public and private heritage area agencies, organizations, and institutions to achieve the mission and goals. A total of 13 strategies have been identified, each of which addresses a subject area related to one of the five goals.
- An **Implementation and Management** section provides direction for decisions and actions that will be taken to implement the Plan. Included are:
 - Principles and criteria for decision-making
 - Definition of SRGA's role as the heritage area management entity
 - Action programs to be undertaken as priorities during the first two years of plan implementation
 - Guidance for monitoring success in achieving the plan

2.2.1 Plan Strategies

The Layers Alternative is the Preferred and the Environmentally Preferred Alternative. It focuses both on clusters of heritage resources and on developing linkages between those clusters.



Downtown Tamaqua



Reading Riverfront Park

Resource Conservation and Enhancement Goal

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

A wide range of strategies is proposed to “activate” the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Although these strategies are assigned to discrete goals, they are designed to intersect, overlap, and complement one another in achieving the basic purposes of the heritage area. The primary interpretive themes—Making History, Creating Community, and Reclaiming the River—are integral to and interwoven throughout the strategies. In keeping with the purpose of the Plan as a management framework and guide for decision-making, the strategies are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive in nature. Rather they have been crafted to illustrate the various ways heritage partners can work together to preserve and enhance the area’s historical, cultural, natural, and recreational heritage. Because the Schuylkill River Valley is a dynamic and evolving region, new opportunities will continue to emerge that support the heritage area goals and strategies. Berks County’s Schuylkill Riverfront Revitalization project in Reading and the plans by the National Audubon Society to establish a flagship environmental education center in Montgomery County at Mill Grove, John J. Audubon’s first American home, are examples of two initiatives launched while the Management Plan was in preparation.

1. RESOURCE CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT

1A. Preserve and enhance historical and cultural resources.

Historic preservation is part of the discourse between past, present, and future. John Lawrence of Tulane University describes this dynamic:

*The basic purpose of preservation is not to arrest time, but to mediate sensitively with the forces of change. It is to understand the present as a product of the past and a modifier of the future.*⁴

Two elements of this approach deserve emphasis. First, preservation is not a product, but rather a **process**, and therefore it is ongoing. Second, preservation requires **understanding**, hence the need for systematic research and documentation to support preservation efforts. Systematic documentation also helps to sustain interpretive links (Strategies 2A and 2B) and education (Strategy 2C).

Over recent decades, preservation activities—in the Schuylkill River Valley and elsewhere—have intensified. Historic preservation has expanded in scope and in scale. Moreover, the preservation movement recognizes many different kinds of intervention: preservation (maintenance as is), conservation (stabilization and repair), restoration (return to an earlier condition), reconstruction (replication), and rehabilitation (adaptive re-use). Instances of these different preservation practices can presently be found within the heritage area (e.g., adaptive

⁴ Quoted in Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*



reuse of the SRGA headquarters building in Pottstown and the Foundry Building in Phoenixville; reconstruction of the soldiers' huts at Valley Forge National Historical Park).

In its initial stages, the preservation movement concentrated primarily on single sites and structures, mostly associated with prominent people and events. Valley Forge, the Daniel Boone Homestead, and Pennypacker Mills are salient instances of this impulse. Over time, the preservation movement has broadened in scope beyond single buildings to include assemblages of structures, neighborhoods, and landscapes. Community goals in these efforts range from protection of historic structures, traditional aesthetics, or property values to growth management to economic revitalization and heritage tourism. In recent years, new attention is being paid to preservation of rural landscapes, including open space, farms, and forests (see Strategy 3B).

Within the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, numerous resources have been identified as historically significant, ranging from cultural landscapes to single structures. Historic districts and historical commissions, preservation and conservation organizations, historical societies, public agencies, and other groups have already taken responsibility for the stewardship of many different kinds of resources. The need to sustain these resources is already widely recognized within the heritage area.

However, the conditions under which these resources exist vary widely within the region. While some resources fall within the purview of historic districts or historical commissions—as is the case in many Chester County communities and in Philadelphia, for example—other areas have listed relatively few significant sites and resources or have few mechanisms in place to promote stewardship, even in the public sector. Schuylkill County has few sites listed on the National Register of Historical Places, although it has numerous landscapes, sites, and structures of historical significance. Achieving greater consistency in standards across the region—while recognizing particular local circumstances and concerns—is an integral part of the Management Plan preservation strategy.

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area offers opportunities to promote the preservation and enhancement of these resources at a regional level. These efforts can take two related, but distinct forms:

1. A focus on stewardship of heritage resources of regional (as distinct from local) significance
2. An effort to raise the levels of stewardship practice to a more consistent level throughout the heritage area among public agencies, private organizations, and individuals engaged in historic preservation



Foundry Building, Phoenixville

Numerous public and private groups are involved in stewardship of the Schuylkill River Valley's cultural and historic resources. Entities ranging from local historical societies to watershed restoration groups to governmental commissions and agencies have important roles to play in implementing the Management Plan.



Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Elverson

The Chester County Historic Preservation Network is an example of regional preservation effort involving educational programming and workshops. The network of 700 volunteers encompasses municipal Historical Commissions, Historic Architectural Review Boards, and local historical societies.

Examples of possible initiatives include:

- ***Build on existing regional linkages:*** Completion of the Schuylkill River Trail system (see Strategy 3A) and development of a visual design framework (see Strategy 5A) will call out many significant historical and cultural resources and help to promote new awareness of stewardship responsibilities. The Schuylkill River itself is only the most prominent instance of reclamation within the Heritage Area: many sites can be directly linked to the theme of reclamation. Thematic linkages will draw visitors to established sites that serve as models for good stewardship. The theme of reclamation can be developed through interpretive programs and displays at many sites, giving visitors concrete instances of stewardship at work.
- ***Coordinate regional preservation efforts:*** Preservation efforts operate largely at the local or county level. While this reflects local conditions and circumstances, collaboration among preservation agencies throughout the region can help to articulate a set of basic standards for resource preservation and to promote local preservation efforts. A regional preservation “roundtable” could serve as a vehicle for exchanging information and providing instances of “best practice.” Such a roundtable could coordinate and promote local activities such as an annual schedule of preservation events. It could also serve as a vehicle for developing new voluntary partnerships among preservation agencies, organizations, and concerned individuals.
- ***Promote programs that feature “best practice” in stewardship:*** Heritage preservation operates most powerfully and perhaps meaningfully at the local level and these local preservation efforts now address whole communities, historic districts, single sites, and even rooms and assemblages in historical museums. At the local, county, and regional levels, tours and publications can encourage awareness and appreciation of “best practice” in historic and cultural preservation. Such programs are already conducted annually in Berks County, for example. Comparable programs can be developed in other locales, as well as on a regional level.
- ***Encourage voluntary stewardship of significant sites:*** Regional efforts are needed to help promote stewardship by private owners of significant historical resources. Many such resources lie outside preservation districts where regulatory or other approaches can encourage restoration and/or adaptive re-use. Coordinated publicity and dissemination of standards can help to encourage voluntary stewardship of resources that are deemed to be regionally significant. Public-private partnerships can help to engage private agencies, organizations and citizens in the preservation of regionally significant



resources and encourage use of the full range of preservation tools, such as tax credits for rehabilitation or adaptive reuse, conservation easements, assessments, zoning and development reviews, and public recognition/interpretation.

- **Mitigate the impacts of increased use at established sites:** A heritage tourism increases within the Schuylkill River Valley, pressures on established cultural and historical resources will also expand. Many of the best-known and active sites and resources will be involved in regional efforts to promote tourism and local visitation. Such regional marketing should be informed by a stewardship ethic and clear standards that encourage established sites to protect their resources from the wear-and-tear that accompanies increased usage.
- **Identify, document, and protect additional historical and cultural resources:** Identification, research, and designation are important starting points for historic resource stewardship. In some locales, resources are being systematically inventoried, and designation through the state and national registers is commonly practiced. In addition to setting standards for stewardship, effective local and county efforts can be leveraged to encourage studies that help to fill in gaps in particular parts of the heritage area. Most efforts to identify and document heritage resources will likely be carried out at the local level but, by framing them in a regional context, each local effort can achieve greater significance and improve its chances for funding.

Historic preservation is an ongoing process, as in each generation new resources become eligible for designation, protective mechanisms (e.g., easements), and tax benefits. By adding new heritage resources to recognized listings, public agencies, private organizations, and individuals can enhance public awareness of stewardship and encourage a growing number of property owners and managers to participate in public-private partnerships and other voluntary preservation programs.

Because the Schuylkill River Valley is a National Heritage Area, cooperating partners will need to be cognizant of the national preservation standards embodied in *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Additional resources are available through programs of the National Trust for Historic Preservation and National Park Service, including Heritage Preservation Services, the Historic American Buildings Survey, the National Center for Recreation and Conservation, the American Indian Liaison Office, and the National Register of Historic Places. The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) oversees the historic resource listing process in Pennsylvania for the National Register of Historic Places. The Commission has records that are available for researchers. Private, not-

The world's largest remaining coal breaker, the *St. Nicholas Coal Breaker* in Schuylkill County is an example of a privately owned site that could potentially be developed into a major interpretive resource.



St. Nicholas Coal Breaker, Schuylkill County



for-profit organizations, such as the Institute for Cultural Partnerships in Harrisburg and the Philadelphia Folklife Project, can help to broaden preservation perspectives to include aspects of folklife and traditional cultures.

Cultural and historical resource preservation is, and will continue to be, the foundation for heritage interpretation, education, and visitation in the Schuylkill River Valley. Preserving legacies from the past creates cultural capital for the present and for future generations. This kind of stewardship or curatorial management is essential to protect the irreplaceable, while making the meaning of our built environments accessible to residents and visitors alike.

1B. Conserve and restore the Schuylkill River Valley's significant environmental resources, particularly those vital to the health of the River and its tributaries.



Valley Forge National Historical Park

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area encompasses rich environmental resources, such as the River, its tributary streams, and other surface water; ridges, forests, and wildlife habitat areas; and productive farmland soils. The River Valley's heritage is essentially the story of human interaction with these resources over time. For more than 200 years, development of dams and canals changed the hydrology of the river, while mining and industry changed the face of the River Valley's landscape. By the mid 1800s the Schuylkill could no longer support fishing and recreation, but served as a transportation corridor and waste disposal system for the booming anthracite coal industry that helped fuel the nation's industrial revolution.

The Schuylkill River today is dramatically cleaner than it was 40 to 50 years ago. The aftereffects of heavy industry and mining—mine waste deposits in waterways, acid mine drainage, flooding and stream bank erosion, etc.—still affect the region's rivers and tributaries, but are being actively and successfully mitigated. Much of this success has depended on grassroots watershed initiatives with support from local, state and federal partners. Beginning with the revegetation of forests through the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s, the state and federal governments have worked to address the environmental effects of mining across the State of Pennsylvania. An important historical example with national significance as an environmental restoration project is the Schuylkill River Desilting Project constructed in the late 1940s and early 1950s to abate the impacts of coal mine sediments.

Recent decades have seen renewed interest in preserving and restoring environmental resources, as evidenced by governmental initiatives at the state and local levels and the many private, non-profit conservation and watershed groups that are active within the Schuylkill River



Valley. Examples of recent planning studies that are currently being implemented include:

- *The Montgomery County Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study*, sponsored by Montgomery County to protect water quality, promote and conserve open space, and preserve wildlife habitat and natural woodlands along the river.
- The *Schuylkill River Watershed Conservation Plan*, prepared through a partnership between The Conservation Fund, Natural Lands Trust, and the Patrick Center for Environmental Research at the Academy of Natural Sciences. This Plan is designed to be a guidebook for municipalities, conservation groups, and citizens interested in taking steps to enhance the long-term health of the Schuylkill River watershed.

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area provides an opportunity to further promote environmental restoration and preservation **at a regional level** through partnerships among interested agencies and organizations and to tie these efforts to cultural resource preservation and interpretation. Examples of potential initiatives include:

- **Develop a regional greenway strategy:** Building on the model provided by the *Montgomery County Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study*, public and private agencies and organizations at the local, regional and state level could work towards development of a regional greenway system along the Schuylkill River and its major tributaries. As part of this strategy, environmental preservation and restoration efforts should focus on the River, streams, and their adjacent riparian zones (e.g., through the reestablishment of native vegetation along river or stream banks).
- **Develop a regional water quality monitoring program:** The Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Schuylkill Office of the Delaware Riverkeeper, Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, and Philadelphia Water Department are examples of organizations that are currently engaged in water quality related programs and projects within the Schuylkill River Valley. A major opportunity exists to bring the efforts of such organizations together in a regional initiative to monitor the water quality of the Schuylkill River and its tributaries. The purpose of this program would be to establish a consistent baseline for measuring water quality conditions throughout the watershed, evaluating the effects of completed water quality improvement projects, and identifying where new projects are needed. In addition, the program could include an outreach component to educate the public about the results (e.g., regular publication of a “river water quality index”).



Passive Acid Mine Drainage Treatment System, Newkirk Tunnel

Current water quality programs in the Schuylkill River Valley range from education and monitoring involving citizen volunteers to assessments to specific improvement projects (e.g., addressing acid mine drainage in Schuylkill County).



Water Quality Testing



Blue Marsh Lake, Leesport

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area contains several Important Bird Areas as designated by Pennsylvania Audubon: Blue Marsh Lake, Lake Ontelaunee, and a section of the Kittatinny Ridge/ Blue Mountain Corridor. Designation of other potential Important Bird Areas should be explored as a means to recognize and promote protection of sensitive habitat when developing interpretive trails.



Suburban Sprawl

- ***Establish a network of special birding areas and develop associated educational/interpretive trails:*** Birding is a popular activity within the Schuylkill River Valley, anchored by the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, an international leader in raptor conservation. Another important site is Mill Grove, a wildlife sanctuary and the first home of naturalist John James Audubon, located near the Schuylkill River in Montgomery County. The Schuylkill River de-silting basins offer potential for wildlife habitat restoration, as is currently being done in the Phoenixville area by Chester County in cooperation with the National Wildlife Service. An integrated regional strategy could be developed to identify and promote protection of important migratory flyways and other existing and potential bird habitat areas within the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. As part of this strategy, such habitat areas could be programmatically linked through a system of educational/interpretive informational materials, exhibits, and trails. This system would increase heritage area visitation by attracting birders from inside and outside the region and would teach visitors and residents about this important resource.

1C. Advocate sustainable land use, open space, and greenway planning and preservation related to the Schuylkill River Valley's cultural and natural landscapes.

The Schuylkill River Valley's historical, cultural, and natural resources have been shaped by centuries of human activity: cultivation, resource extraction, manufacturing, commerce, and (in recent decades) suburban and exurban development. The results of this latest trend are visible throughout the heritage area. Shopping centers, office parks, and residential subdivisions have proliferated, particularly in the growth areas of Montgomery, Chester, and Berks Counties. At the same time, older urban centers located along the Schuylkill River have declined as population and economic activity have shifted to new hubs of commerce, such as King of Prussia. These trends have impacted heritage resources ranging from rural agricultural landscapes that are being consumed by "sprawl" development to urban historic properties that are deteriorating due to the lack of economically feasible uses. If the River Valley's cultural landscapes and other valuable heritage resources are to be preserved for future generations, proactive planning and growth management is needed at the regional and local levels to promote sustainable development.

The need to manage growth to protect the Schuylkill River Valley's cultural and natural resources is widely recognized and is being addressed by a variety of governmental planning and preservation initiatives at the state, county, and local levels. Examples include Pennsylvania's Growing Greener and Statewide Greenways Programs,



as well agricultural conservation easement purchase programs in Berks, Chester, Montgomery, and Schuylkill Counties. In addition to government agencies, a number of private, nonprofit organizations are actively involved in heritage resource preservation within the River Valley. These organizations range from regional entities such as Natural Lands Trust to county nonprofits such as the Berks County Conservancy and Montgomery Lands Trust to watershed-based groups such as the French and Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust and Schuylkill Headwaters Association.

The Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is not a regulatory initiative, nor can federal funds received through this program be used to acquire real property or an interest in real property. While there is no intent to dictate regional or local policy or legislation, a tremendous opportunity exists to build on current planning and preservation programs through voluntary partnerships involving public and private agencies, organizations, and citizens in the preservation and enhancement of heritage resources. Examples of these partnerships include:

- ***Advocate for the protection of heritage resources and related open space areas determined to be regionally significant:*** These efforts would pool the resources of federal, state, county, and local governments and private organizations in initiatives to protect important resources in targeted areas (e.g., intact agricultural landscapes, greenway corridors along the Schuylkill River and its tributaries, etc.). A variety of techniques to protect significant cultural, historical, and natural resources could be used by public and private sector heritage partners, such as public land acquisition or purchase of development rights on farmland, voluntary conservation easements by private landowners, and creative development options.
- ***Support the implementation of land use plans that integrate heritage resource preservation and enhancement as policy recommendations:*** As authorized by the Pennsylvania Municipalities Planning Code, neighboring communities could address heritage resource preservation at a regional level through cooperative inter-governmental agreements and the development of multi-municipal plans. State and county government and private organizations could provide funding, technical assistance, or other forms of support for these or similar efforts at a local municipal level. As an example, Chester and Montgomery Counties have active programs in place to provide technical and funding assistance to local municipalities in support of planning objectives such as preservation of open space and natural resources.
- ***Evaluate the effects on heritage resources of projects of***



Schuylkill County Courthouse, Pottsville



Historic RittenhouseTown, Philadelphia



Cabela's, Hamburg

regional impact: Certain public or private development projects are of such scope or magnitude that they will have major ramifications for the Schuylkill River Valley's future. For example, the Schuylkill Valley Metro, a 62-mile rail transit corridor planned between Philadelphia and Reading, has the potential to reduce automobile dependency and contribute to the revitalization of the heritage area's urban communities. In another example, the Cabela's outdoor superstore planned for the I-78/Route 61 interchange near the Berks/Schuylkill county line will provide a major local economic boost and supports the heritage-related theme of outdoor recreation, but could result in secondary development that impacts local communities with limited carrying capacity (e.g., Port Clinton). Interested organizations and agencies could come together on a project-by-project basis to proactively address such issues. This involvement could range from simple project endorsement and support to providing assistance to municipalities in planning to maximize the positive and minimize the negative effects of such projects on heritage resources.

Education and Interpretation Goal

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

Primary Interpretive Themes

- Making History
- Creating Community
- Reclaiming the River

2. EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION

2A. Establish a consistent, area-wide framework for the interpretation of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources.

Heritage interpretation draws together historic preservation, tourism, and the "experience industries." It interprets local culture and history and makes it accessible to the public by providing interpretive experiences for visitors and tourists.⁵

Heritage interpretation is rooted in the authentic history of a place and embraced by the resident population. Indeed, effective interpretation is based on the premise that cultural storytelling is aimed first at the resident population, then at visitors from other places.

The three primary interpretive themes described in Section 1.4 of this Management Plan are grounded in what has been termed "the new cultural history." Many historians are interested not just in the facts of experience, but in how historical experiences were felt and understood by people in past times. These understandings, in turn, were expressed in stories and narratives that make sense out of the raw material of lived experience. The primary interpretive themes reflect the stories and narratives that are evident in local texts, images, sites, rituals, and reminiscences.

Adoption of primary interpretive themes that focus on history, community, and ecology is an essential beginning to implementing a consistent regional approach to interpretation of the Schuylkill River

⁵ Norman Tyler, *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practices*



Valley’s heritage resources. Among the next steps will be to develop a framework for applying these themes in informational and interpretive materials and displays, including visual design standards (see Strategy 5A). This framework will guide how the primary themes can be incorporated at the site and resource levels and fleshed out through the development of sub-themes and related stories to the benefit of both individual sites and the heritage area as a whole. Within the overarching interpretive framework, institutions, sites, historic districts, parklands, and other heritage resources can develop a multiplicity of stories that attract users, engage their attention, and inform their awareness. Strategy 2B describes more specifically the application of the framework at the regional and local levels.

2B. Connect heritage sites and resources through interpretive themes and products.

The historical and cultural resources of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area are varied and significant. To enhance their attractiveness, to make them accessible, and to highlight their meaning and significance, thematically related sites and resources must be linked to one another through information services, publications, tours, events, etc. In fact, since this heritage area abuts others with resources that overlap or complement those of the Schuylkill River Valley, it makes sense to look beyond its borders to linkages with heritage resources in nearby regions.

The Management Plan preferred alternative (Alternative D) proposes to develop intersecting layers in the form of area-wide topics (experiences) and clusters of resources (places). These complementary approaches will require distinct modes of implementation and development.

Connections must be integral to both approaches—at the regional level for experiential topics and at the local level for clusters. Building regional and local interpretive connections are discussed in turn below.

Regional Connections

Creating linkages among related heritage resources can begin most readily at the regional rather than the local level. The Schuylkill River Trail system is being implemented and can serve to link multiple sites along its route. Several topical linkages are also in place. Development of shared informational templates and visual design standards will also help to build regional identity and to connect related sites. Approaches that might be used to deepen current linkages and add new ones over time include:

- ***Build on existing thematic programs:*** The search for programmatic linkages is not starting from scratch. For example, the annual Schuylkill River Sojourn sponsored by SRGA links



Berks County Farm

Examples of existing physical and programmatic linkages:

- **Schuylkill River Water Trail**
- **Molly Maguire Auto Tour**
- **Maiden Creek Watershed Driving Tour**
- **Schuylkill River Towns Driving Tour**



Schuylkill River Sojourn

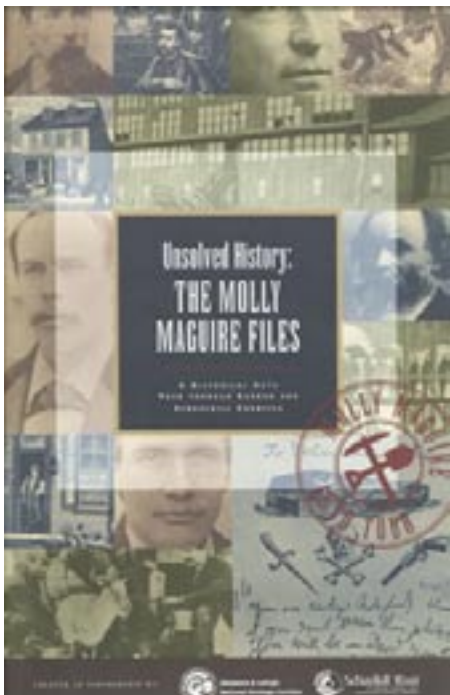
several communities and their resources along the River. Chester County sponsors a coordinated series of tours and open houses that emphasize historic preservation. Auto tours focused on heritage topics have been developed in Schuylkill (Molly Maguires) and Berks (Maiden Creek Watershed, Schuylkill River Towns) Counties. A number of environmental education centers that share agendas and curricula are located in the heritage area.

Additional interpretive linkages could be readily organized, drawing on topically related sites and resources. Parks and arboreta within the Schuylkill River Valley provide access to a variety of landscapes. Historic house museums (guided tours) and historic districts (walking tours) can be linked to reflect similarities in contemporary sites or historical sequences of sites, while industrial and transportation sites can be linked to show the interrelated parts of different economic systems or the changing nature of successive economies. The Management Plan itself suggests a variety of ways to link heritage sites and resources by reading the landscapes of history.

- **Develop density along thematic linkages:** Developing thematic or experiential linkages might begin with segments that are modest in scope and require a moderate effort and commitment by residents and visitors to navigate. Extended linkages can easily overreach themselves and lose would-be visitors part-way. Shorter segments linking nearby clusters and providing clearly defined beginnings, middles, and ends are more likely to be effective building blocks in the long run than linkages that require people to travel from one end of the heritage area to another.

Once linkages are developed, it will become important to fill in the gaps that lie between scattered resources and sites. A wide range of programmatic components can be used to increase the density of visitor experiences between sites. Examples include audio tapes and brochures for self-guided thematic tours; trained guides and docents who can join tour groups between heritage sites to provide commentary, entertainment, local color, and reminiscences; interpretive signage; and waysides and overlooks that help to break up lengthy trips between distant resources. If there is one thing certain, no amount of research, planning, and other investment will make a thematic linkage effective if visitors are tired or hungry. Thus visitor services, most especially rest stops and quality local restaurants, will be of critical importance in making linkages effective.

- **Develop partnerships with nearby heritage areas and other heritage resources of national significance:** The Schuylkill River Valley abuts other significant heritage areas and clusters of



Molly Maguire Auto Tour brochure



prominent heritage attractions. To the south lies the Brandywine River Valley with a host of well-known heritage attractions, such as Winterthur, Longwood Gardens, Hagley, Rockwood, and the Brandywine River Museum. To the north lie the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor and the Lackawanna Valley National Heritage Area, which together contain numerous sites that complement those of the Schuylkill River Valley. At the lower end of the heritage area is the City of Philadelphia, which for decades has marketed itself as the site of Independence Hall and the Liberty Bell. Opportunities for joint interpretation and promotion among these various regions are numerous. For example, interpretive linkages could be strengthened between heritage resources/attractions in Philadelphia and the Schuylkill River Valley, with information on the Schuylkill River Valley as a heritage destination provided at the Independence Visitor Center. As called for by the congressional legislation that designated the Lackawanna Valley and Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Areas, these two areas and the Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor should work together to tell the story of the culture and heritage of the anthracite coal region.



Independence Hall, Philadelphia

- **Promote awareness of heritage sites and attractions among local residents:** Because the Management Plan emphasizes engaging local residents and their visiting friends and relatives (VFRs) as well as heritage tourists, local resources make an especially important starting point for linkages. Nearby history is all too often overlooked, especially by local residents and agencies. Special events; feature articles and series in local print and broadcast media; neighborhood walking tours; and continuing education courses are all excellent vehicles for disseminating heritage awareness among local constituencies. Bringing history to the people and creating heritage appreciation among local residents is a key to creating larger regional linkages that depend upon awareness of local resources in the context of the heritage area as a whole. Educating and involving the media in informing the public about the importance of the River Valley's heritage resources will be an important part of this effort.



Peter Wentz Farmstead, Worcester

Collaboration may be as simple as getting the local sites to display and distribute the brochures that are developed to link resources in different parts of the heritage area that express similar themes. Seasonal programs, special events, and celebrations sponsored by local sites and organizations can be coordinated to provide building blocks for thematic linkages. In Chester County, for example, the Mill at Anselma, Chester Springs Library, Historic Yellow Springs, Chester Springs Studio, and Green Valley Association's Welkinweir collaborate in weekend special events.



Mill at Anselma Water Wheel, Chester Springs

Local Connections

The Schuylkill River Valley supports numerous constituencies and organizations that can benefit from participation in heritage area initiatives and programs. Each of these groups, however, has its own agenda, its own particular circumstances, and its own organizational culture, the conditions on which it focuses its attentions and energies. Thus the area-wide interpretive framework described in Strategy 2A must be integrated into the agendas and cultures of local groups if it is to be successful. Potential approaches to accomplishing this include:

- ***Encourage partnerships among heritage resources within local clusters:*** The Management Plan identifies a dozen places or clusters of heritage resources that could potentially become building blocks for interpretation. However, local heritage organizations often operate without much awareness of sister organizations in the same locale. On occasion, local organizations may join together for a special event or initiative, and sometimes they lend support to one another in the form of co-sponsorships. Developing a viable, effective interpretive framework at the local level will necessitate much more intensive, sustained interaction among sites and resources located within the clusters. Bringing local groups together for regular meetings and roundtable discussions will be an important step in developing effective, coordinated interpretation.
- ***Promote familiarity with other heritage area resources:*** Integrating interpretive themes at the local level might entail a series of round-robin visits or an all-day excursion so that staff and citizen leaders experience first-hand the other heritage resources in their local cluster. A next step might be for representatives of resources within a local cluster to make excursions outside of their own locale to visit heritage resources located within other heritage area clusters. In this way similar sites and organizations can become acquainted and begin to conceptualize how they can collaborate with one another in telling thematic stories; representatives of dissimilar resources may discover ways to complement each other.
- ***Root the framework in local organizations:*** Initial field visits might be followed by a series of planning meetings in which each resource contributes to the identification of stories, themes, and experiences that will enrich understanding of local narratives and the heritage area as a whole. Out of these planning sessions can come new initiatives, collaborative publications, and programs. Training sessions for institutional staff and volunteers will also be a useful tool in making the interpretive framework an integral part of each resource's day-to-day awareness, operations, and activities.



Application of the interpretive framework at the regional and local levels will be an on-going, open-ended process, for which SRGA as the heritage area management entity will serve as catalyst and coordinator. Partnerships among regionally and locally based heritage sites and organizations will be essential in this process. Ultimately, full implementation of the interpretive framework, while regional in scope, will occur locally. When local heritage resources acquire ownership of the interpretive framework and primary themes and adapt them to their own institutional purposes, the framework will be transformed from words on paper to operational reality.

2C. Support educational and research initiatives that teach the public about the Schuylkill River Valley’s historical, cultural, and natural heritage.

Educating the public about the Schuylkill River Valley’s rich heritage resources will require a special kind of effort. Learning goes on throughout life, so the audience is potentially very large. Education means “to draw out” or elicit, so this strategy requires the sustained engagement of a population that is very diverse in age, background, and interests. To address this challenge, public educational and research efforts focusing on the Schuylkill River Valley’s heritage resources must involve a variety of partners and embrace the full range of prospective audiences. These efforts should build on the strong educational and research institutions and programs that currently exist in the region, with the objective of identifying “catalytic” projects and coordinating local initiatives that advance public understanding of the Schuylkill River Valley. Potential initiatives include:

- ***Integrate the history of the Schuylkill River Valley into local school curricula:*** Local history is mandated in the elementary grades by Pennsylvania law, meaning that every school district within the heritage area is already teaching some form of regional history. However, very little research and publication has been done on the Schuylkill River Valley as an historical region, so current teaching and learning generally cannot embrace the full range of heritage area stories and themes. Convening a group of area educators to organize a local history curriculum with a regional perspective can greatly strengthen public understanding of the Schuylkill River Valley’s history.
- ***Build on existing environmental educational resources and programs:*** The Schuylkill River Valley is rich in environmental education centers and nature preserves, and the story of reclaiming the River is one of the Management Plan’s three primary interpretive themes. The heritage area provides an opportunity for environmental educators, curriculum specialists, and scholars to promote an

The Center for Community Leadership at Albright College in Reading, the Pennsylvania German Archives and Studies at Ursinus College in Collegeville, and the Center for Sustainable Communities at the Temple University Ambler Campus are examples of local college resources that could be tapped for adult education programs, workshops for local officials, and other purposes.



informed, consistent interpretation of the regional environment, including the story of the continuing impacts of human activities on environmental resources. There is also rich potential to link and make more intensive use of heritage area resources and sites for experiential learning and discovery related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural environment.



Wyomissing Creek

- **Take advantage of the region's institutions of higher education:** The heritage area and the Philadelphia metropolitan area support numerous universities and colleges offering rich potential for heritage-related research, interpretation, and public education. One possible route would be to work with area institutions to support gifted faculty in developing new courses on regional history, with a special emphasis on field studies. Modest, one-time grants would create recyclable courses that engage young adults, year after year. In addition, faculty who chose to prepare courses on area history would become important resources for curriculum development (see above); for continuing education, colloquia, and workshops; and for publications (see below).



Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education, Philadelphia

- **Promote adult education programs focused on the Schuylkill River Valley:** Educational programs for adults can be developed in multiple forms. Many high schools and colleges offer continuing or lifelong education programs, including programs for parents of matriculated students and college alumni. If half a dozen outstanding faculty members of area colleges were to develop expertise on the region's history, they could offer a variety of continuing education courses of longer or shorter duration for diverse audiences. Additional resources might be found at universities such as Penn State (especially in cultural geography), the University of Pennsylvania, the University of Delaware, and Temple.
- **Utilize emerging technologies in public education efforts:** Recent innovations in telecommunications make it feasible to make use of a single teacher or lecture in multiple contexts. Lectures can be delivered to multiple sites (with interactive capabilities). Papers can be easily attached to websites and made available on-line. Links between websites enable browsers to find and enjoy historical materials on related resources. Chat rooms and other real-time electronic conversations encourage lively, free-ranging discussions.
- **Reach out to "local influentials":** This inclusive category might include elected officials, leading educators, planning professionals, community activists, reporters for press and media, and board members of cultural and heritage institutions. The new Mid-Atlantic Center for the Humanities at Rutgers University, Camden (in collaboration with Temple University) has been exploring ways to



engage such persons in consideration of the humanities. It might be possible to develop a series of pilot programs that engage community influentials in discourse about the resources, sites, themes, and stories of the heritage area.

- **Develop a lively, compelling, well-documented history of the Schuylkill River Valley:** Commissioned in collaboration with a local college and/or one or another leading historical agency, this history could be developed in print and/or other media format, such as video or CD-ROM. Township histories are also needed, but are less useful for heritage area education if an overarching framework is lacking.

3. RECREATION

3A. Complete development of the Schuylkill River trail system, including connections to tributary trails.

The Schuylkill River and its tributaries provide the main continuous linkages among sites and resources throughout the heritage area. Since its inception the State Heritage Parks Program has focused on development of **recreational land and water trails** along the length of the Schuylkill River as a major priority. Considerable progress has been made in this effort. The entire length of the land trail from Philadelphia to Pottsville (with the exception of the Reading to Hamburg segment) has been completed, is funded and in design, or is under study.

In a separate initiative, several organizations have partnered in the continuing development of the Schuylkill River Water Trail, a system of boat landings and parks providing public access to the River. A detailed informational pamphlet – the Schuylkill River Water Trail Guide—has been prepared for this system.

With regard to tributary trails, Montgomery County is completing a continuous trail along the Perkiomen Creek from the Schuylkill River to Green Lane Reservoir. Another significant segment is in place along the Tulpehocken Creek in the vicinity of the Berks County Heritage Center.

Completing the Schuylkill River land and water trail systems will continue to be a major priority for the heritage area. Land trail development efforts should include moving the Reading to Hamburg section forward, adding on to and completing key gaps between existing trail segments, and connecting to trails along tributary streams (e.g., Tulpehocken Creek). Water trail development efforts should continue to upgrade existing landings and establish new ones in environmentally appropriate locations.

Providing linkages from the recreational trails to cultural and natural resources through **interpretive trails** (coordinated informational packets, interpretive exhibits, and trail markers) should be another focus

Recreation Goal

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

Building on Success

Partners in the development of the Schuylkill River Water Trail include SRGA, Pennsylvania DCNR and Fish and Boat Commission, the Schuylkill Headwaters Association, and the Eastern Schuylkill Recreation Commission. Twenty-five landings have been established or upgraded to date with 23 potential additional locations identified.



of Schuylkill River trail system development. Prime candidates include:

- Remaining vestiges of the **Schuylkill Navigation Canal**, such as the Allegheny Aqueduct and Felix Dam in Berks County, Frick's Lock Village in Chester County, the Oakes Reach section in Montgomery County, and Manayunk Canal in Philadelphia
- Basins and related facilities developed for the **Schuylkill River Desilting Project** (e.g., Black Rock Preserve Interpretation Trail in Chester County), which have both recreational and interpretive potential due to their role in a nationally significant environmental restoration project
- Establishment of a **birding trail** (see Resource Conservation and Enhancement Strategy 1B)



Valley Forge National Historical Park

Valley Forge National Historical Park provides a major opportunity for a partnership to better connect historical and recreational resources and interpret them within the larger context of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area.

Valley Forge National Historical Park provides a good example of how the Schuylkill River recreational trail system can connect to heritage resource interpretation. Despite the fact that it is the terminus of two major trails (the Valley Forge to Philadelphia Trail and the Horseshoe Trail that runs west to the Appalachian Trail north of Hershey), currently there is limited interaction between the park's historic and recreational resources. The Betzwood picnic area, for example, is a major recreational attraction located along the Schuylkill River Trail but lacks installations (kiosks, signage, etc.) providing information on historic resources and interpretive facilities elsewhere in the park. The planned development of the National Center for the American Revolution could provide the impetus for an initiative to better connect the park's historical and recreational resources and to interpret them in the context of the larger Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. This initiative would involve the National Park Service, National Center, and SRGA as primary partners.

3B. Enhance existing and provide new outdoor recreational opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage.

Outdoor recreation tied to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural resources is a major heritage area attraction. Recreational activities such as hiking, biking, fishing, hunting, and nature observation draw visitors and raise the quality of life for residents. Strategy 3A addresses the Schuylkill River Valley trail system, which is emerging as a major regional recreational resource. As described in Section 3.3, other regionally important recreational resources include the Appalachian and Horseshoe Trails; state gamelands, forest, and parks; Hawk Mountain Sanctuary; Blue Marsh Lake; and regional parks such as Fairmount Park and Green Lane Reservoir. These resources provide opportunities to attract visitors from inside and outside the Schuylkill River Valley who



have a special interest in outdoor recreation or who may be interested in combining historical and cultural experiences with recreational/nature-oriented activities.

Characterized by extensive forests, state parks, and state gamelands, the Ridge and Valley landscapes of northern Berks and Schuylkill Counties are particularly well suited to supporting increased outdoor recreational activity that attracts visitors and contributes to the local economy. Momentum will be provided by the Cabela's superstore planned for the I-78/Route 61 interchange, in close proximity to the Appalachian Trail. This store will be a major attraction that draws visitors from a large market area extending well beyond the heritage area. Specific actions that can be taken to enhance existing and provide new outdoor recreational opportunities include:

- ***Explore opportunities to make publicly owned properties that are not currently accessible or have restricted access open to the public.*** Lake Ontelaunee in Berks County and Owl Creek Reservoir in Schuylkill County are examples of scenic properties that are not currently accessible but which could potentially be opened up for some degree of recreational usage in cooperation with their respective owners (the Reading Water Authority and Tamaqua Water Authority). In another example, the state gamelands (including over 18,000 acres in Berks, over 31,000 acres in Schuylkill County, and additional lands in Chester and Montgomery Counties) afford significant opportunities for enhanced recreational visitation. The 2001 *North Berks Land Utilization/Reconnections Planning Study*, sponsored by SRGA and the North Berks Recreation Corporation, provides another example of the potential that exists. This study recommends public access and recreational improvements to the 252-acre Kernsville Dam Impounding Basin Site, a site next to Hamburg managed by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Abandoned Mines and Reclamation. Other desilting basins managed by the State offer similar opportunities for enhanced public access and recreation.
- ***Support land conservation efforts to build integrated networks of protected lands that support natural habitat and related recreational activities.*** From the standpoint of the heritage area, the priority should be on preserving properties of regional significance, such as large natural habitat areas or greenway corridors along the Schuylkill River and its major tributaries. Berks, Chester, and Montgomery Counties have completed open space plans that can provide guidance for this effort in those three counties. The 1996 *Montgomery County Open Space Plan: Creating an Open Space Legacy*, for example, identifies lands with over 1,000 acres of contiguous habitat and four major greenways (Schuylkill River and the Perkiomen, Pennypack, and Wissahickon Creeks) as priorities for



Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, Kempton



Lower Perkiomen Valley Park, Oaks



preservation. Chester County's 2002 *Linking Landscapes: A Plan for the Protected Open Space Network in Chester County, PA* recommends that 5,000 acres a year be protected throughout the county through conservation easements by private landowners or by public in-fee acquisition. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania can also play a major role in protecting lands for outdoor recreation purposes, as in the recent acquisition of property in Schuylkill County from the Atlas Powder Company to augment state gamelands.

- ***Continue water quality improvements to promote healthy fisheries throughout the Schuylkill River Valley:*** Fishing is a major recreational draw in the heritage area that has greatly benefited from water quality restoration efforts such as acid mine drainage treatment projects. Water quality improvement initiatives that contribute to maintaining and improving fisheries throughout the Schuylkill River Valley should continue.
- ***Promote the Schuylkill River Valley's outdoor recreational resources in heritage area marketing efforts.*** The Schuylkill River Valley is already well known for outdoor recreational activities ranging from hiking and biking along the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia and Montgomery County to hunting and fishing in Schuylkill County. Heritage area marketing efforts would benefit from targeting these resources for prospective visitors and linking them to other heritage attractions and resources.

4. COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

4A. Conserve and use heritage resources to foster sustainable economic activity in traditional centers.

Much of the Schuylkill River Valley's history and heritage is embodied in its traditional centers of human settlement. These centers range in size from small hamlets and villages to larger boroughs and (in the case of Philadelphia) a major city of 1.5 million, and in historical function from agricultural service centers to manufacturing hubs to railroad towns to river ports.

Each of the heritage area's five counties has multiple historic cities, boroughs, and/or smaller settlements that have long served as centers of activity and commerce for larger areas. Along the Schuylkill River, there are numerous historic industrial and service center communities dating back to colonial days. Places such as Pottsville, Reading, Pottstown, Phoenixville, and Norristown owe their existence to being located on the river and grew to prominence for that reason. Due to the concurrent trends of loss of industry and suburban sprawl, many of these centers have experienced economic and physical decline. However, these centers still possess rich heritage resources such as

Community Revitalization Goal

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



historic buildings, traditional downtowns, and riverfronts. In other communities around the country, heritage resources have been used to encourage reinvestment and revitalization through heritage tourism and by attracting residents to the authentic quality of life created by such resources.

Philadelphia's Manayunk is one well-known, successful example of using historic sites and themes to generate economic activity in the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Manayunk has experienced success in adaptively reusing historic structures for modern uses, resulting in the restructuring of the local economy around retail/visitor spending. In another example, the Yuengling Brewery tour in Pottsville draws about 45,000 visitors per year, about half of whom come from out of state. These visitors are drawn by the history of America's oldest active brewery and come to Pottsville to experience it. However, the economic development potential of heritage resources has been largely unrealized in most communities in the more rural parts of the heritage area.

In small towns and rural areas throughout the country, concerted efforts have been undertaken to translate historic buildings and sites, natural environments, and recreational resources into economic development engines. One nearby example is Jim Thorpe, located in the adjacent Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor in Carbon County, which has used its historic building stock, beautiful natural setting in the foothills of the Poconos, and proximity to both New York and Philadelphia to become a specialty retail destination. Lowell, MA is an example of a community that has used its industrial heritage to promote tourism and related economic development.

There are literally dozens of other examples of small towns throughout the country that have similarly capitalized on heritage resources to improve the local economy and quality of life. Many communities throughout the Schuylkill River Valley have the potential to enact such transformations. To do so, these communities need to:

1. Identify a particular niche based upon the nature and extent of the heritage resources within the community.
2. Put in place economic development strategies that capture the benefits of the identified niche.

There are four general types of heritage resources to consider in developing such a niche:

- **Historic buildings and sites:** Historic resources can function as visitor attractions or can be adaptively reused for new uses that contribute to community revitalization efforts.



Yuengling Brewery, Pottsville

To be effective in community revitalization, initiatives to take advantage of heritage resources must promote both quality of life and economic activity in a complementary fashion.



Pottsgrove Manor, Pottstown

- **Natural environments:** Waterfronts and other natural features can contribute to local community revitalization, particularly when public access is provided. Major opportunities exist for communities such as Conshohocken, Norristown, Phoenixville, and Pottsville to connect their downtown areas to the Schuylkill River waterfront.
- **Recreational resources:** Development of the Schuylkill River Trail system will create economic opportunities for a number of heritage area communities. Historic river towns are logical locations for trailheads and landings because they once hosted railroad stations and canal ports.
- **Local culture and stories:** The legacy of the Molly Maguires in Schuylkill County is an example of a compelling story that is being used to attract heritage visitors and contribute to local pride and community identity.

Capitalizing on different types of heritage resources will necessitate differing methods of fostering economic development. However, the overall approach and the general goal will be the same: to use existing historic, natural, recreational, or cultural resources to foster **sustainable economic development**. In this definition, “sustainable” signifies two primary characteristics:

1. Economic activity can be maintained well into the future.
2. Economic activity is respectful of heritage resources.

Examples of specific action steps that can be undertaken to pursue sustainable economic development in Schuylkill River Valley communities include:

- **Create a checklist of heritage resources:** Some localities may not be aware of exactly what is meant by heritage resources from the standpoint of sustainable economic development. A “checklist” of heritage resources could be developed and made available to local governments and/or economic development interests. This checklist could be used by local interests to help document heritage resources, thus providing a basis for understanding assets and challenges inherent in planning for heritage-related economic development.
- **Provide a database of relevant case studies:** Once communities have identified key assets, the next step is to help them conceptualize what can be done to capitalize on these resources. As mentioned above, many localities around the country have used heritage tourism as an economic development tool, providing an abundance of case studies. A summary of these case studies could be compiled and made available to local communities.

Examples of recreation-related revitalization opportunities:

The Borough of Schwenksville in Montgomery County is pursuing an economic revitalization strategy based upon its location on the Perkiomen Creek Trail under development by the County.

The intersection of the Appalachian and Schuylkill River trails provides a similar opportunity for Port Clinton in Schuylkill County.



- **Secure grants and loans for heritage-related revitalization initiatives:** Millions of dollars in grants and loans for the preservation and reuse of heritage resources are available from federal, state, and regional programs, ranging from historic preservation tax credits to economic incentives for small businesses to community development grant programs (see Appendix A). These funding sources could be used for heritage-related revitalization initiatives in local communities within the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Examples of such initiatives include the rehabilitation of significant historic properties or urban design improvements to enhance the character of and stimulate private investment in traditional downtowns or other historic centers. Similar to the checklist and database, information on these programs and how they contribute to achieving community revitalization could be compiled and made available to local communities within the heritage area.

4B. Promote entrepreneurial activity and small business development related to the Schuylkill River Valley’s heritage resources.

In considering the community revitalization prospects for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, a major concern is the quality of jobs created by additional heritage tourism activities. Tourism jobs are often stereotyped as low-wage ones that are usually filled by young and/or unskilled workers, and this may be true if the bulk of the jobs consist of positions such as counter help and maintenance staff. However, growth in the tourism industry does not have to fit the stereotype, and heritage tourism offers many opportunities to foster entrepreneurship in the region. Heritage tourism is, by definition, aimed at providing unique experiences to travelers:

*[Heritage tourism is] traveling to experience the places and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past.*⁶

In the context of business development, this means quaint inns, local restaurants and shops, non-traditional recreational opportunities, and one-of-a-kind visitor attractions. In order to provide these experiences, new businesses can (and indeed must) be started up.

At the present time, small business development tied to heritage tourism has been fairly limited in the region. In the urban areas of the Schuylkill River Valley (Philadelphia, Valley Forge, Reading), the restaurants, hotels, and shopping destinations serving tourists tend to be large in scale and are often part of national chains. In the more rural parts of the region, there are fewer resources for tourists, and those



Tamaqua Train Station

⁶National Heritage Tourism Research Forum, 1997



that do exist, even in the more remote areas of Schuylkill and Berks Counties, are also often part of national chains.

Regionally, there are a number of regional and local business and economic development organizations within the heritage area that fulfill many different functions, such as developing industrial parks, workforce training, and administering economic incentives. Currently, these organizations do not focus on creating jobs and businesses based on heritage tourism. Business and job creation will continue to be the responsibility of regional and local economic development agencies. However, the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area provides an opportunity to supplement these efforts by fostering the creation of businesses to serve the heritage tourism market. This will largely be accomplished through plan strategies that result in increased visitation through new or enhanced products, linkages, and marketing (e.g., 2B, 5B, and 5C). Increased visitation, in turn, will stimulate the creation of heritage-related business, thus enhancing the vitality of local economies. Other potential actions include:

- ***Help identify market niches:*** Tourism and economic development interests could come together to inventory tourism-related businesses that are currently lacking in portions of the heritage area, thus providing the basis for targeting market niches with potential. Tourism marketing agencies keep tabs on what visitors would like to see in an area, and lines of communication could be established to pass this information along to business development groups.
- ***Co-sponsor informational sessions:*** To help get the word out on heritage-related business opportunities and available resources, informational sessions on starting tourist-related could be sponsored by tourism marketing, business, and economic development interests. These sessions could be held in a number of different locations around the region.

5. HERITAGE TOURISM

5A. Use a distinct visual image and identity in the design of heritage area products such as informational materials, signage, and interpretive exhibits.

Increasing heritage tourism depends first and foremost on raising public awareness of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. Currently the heritage area has a low profile among the general public. Strategy 5C below describes public relations and marketing programs that can be undertaken to raise awareness of the heritage area, its attractions, and its resources, beginning with residents of the region. As part of this effort, a distinct visual image should be used to help “**brand**” the heritage area in the minds of the public. The existing logo

The major contribution made by the heritage area to small business development will be to promote increased visitation through heritage-related products, linkages, and marketing, thus stimulating economic activity.

Heritage Tourism Goal

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



developed by SRGA provides the basis for establishing a recognizable image. To promote a distinct visual identity for the heritage area, the logo should be used together with consistent guidelines for other design elements (color, font, materials, etc.) in the design of physical materials such as informational brochures, wayfinding/identification signage, and interpretive exhibits. Specific steps that should be taken to implement this strategy include:

1. Develop prototypical designs for heritage area graphic products, including informational brochures, signage, and interpretive exhibits.
2. Develop a model informational brochure based upon the prototypical design.
3. Implement model signage and interpretive exhibit installations at high visibility locations to illustrate how the prototypical designs can be applied to heritage area attractions and resources.
4. Work with attractions and organizations throughout the heritage area, including the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, to integrate the logo and design guidelines into graphic products and installations that support the message and themes of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area.

5B. Develop physical and programmatic linkages between heritage area destinations to assist visitors in experiencing the Schuylkill River Valley's diverse resources.

The size and complexity of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area highlight the need to connect diverse heritage attractions and resources if the heritage area is to realize its full potential. From a heritage tourism standpoint, the purpose of this strategy is to entice visitors to stay longer, visit multiple destinations, and make repeat visits, thus spending more money for the benefit of local communities. Two general types of linkages can be developed:

- ***Physical linkages***, such as walking/biking trails, designated scenic roads that link different heritage area communities and attractions, excursion trains or boats, etc.
- ***Programmatic linkages***, such as sample itineraries and marketing packages involving heritage attractions and private businesses, audio walking/driving tours, informational materials linking sites and resources related to special interest topics, coordinated festival and special event schedules, etc.

While the emphasis of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is on regional connections, linkages can be developed at the local level as well. Key regional connections include trails along the Schuylkill

Scenic road programs are administered by the Federal Highway Administration (National Scenic Byways Program) and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (Pennsylvania Scenic Byways Program). Pennsylvania byways are designated in support of local planning efforts to enhance and improve the visual impact of specific routes; maintain their natural resources and intrinsic qualities; and educate residents and visitors about the history and culture of the Commonwealth.



River and its tributaries (Strategy 3A) and other types of physical and programmatic linkages that tie together sites, communities, and resources located throughout the heritage area. At the local level, physical and programmatic linkages can enhance visitor appeal by increasing the perceived density of heritage experiences. Examples include walking routes demarcated by signage and brochures highlighting local attractions and businesses.

In developing physical and programmatic linkages, visitor orientation points or **gateways** will be important facilities that connect local places/ clusters of heritage resources to the larger heritage area. These gateways will be relatively small but publicly visible and accessible spaces that display and distribute information on the heritage area. Typically they will not be independently staffed but will be located as part of a larger facility operated by a local heritage partner. Heritage area gateways currently exist or are under development in Pottstown (SRGA headquarters), Phoenixville (larger than typical, Foundry Building renovation), Mahanoy City (storefront), and Tamaqua (train station renovation). Additional gateways should be developed in key places to orient visitors to both the larger heritage area and to local heritage resources and attractions. Consistent standards for gateway signage and displays should be included in the visual design framework that will be developed for the heritage area (Strategy 5A).



Mahanoy Area Downtown Center, Mahanoy City

5C. Promote awareness of and increase visitation in the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area through public relations and marketing programs.

Developing a regional marketing and promotional strategy is critical to achieving the heritage tourism goal. To be effective this strategy should work through existing organizations involved in tourism promotion in the Schuylkill River Valley, capitalize on new marketing and promotional opportunities provided by the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, and identify specific marketing and promotional tools that can be used to implement the strategy.

It should be noted at the onset that significant marketing expertise and resources are already in place within the Schuylkill River Valley. Each of the five counties has an active convention and visitors bureau involved in promoting tourism. Several of these organizations have significant financial resources, particularly those in the more developed, urbanized portions of the corridor. At the same time, however, the various organizations have different marketing and promotional priorities. In Schuylkill County, for example, outdoor recreation is the principal promotional focus, while in Berks County the focus shifts to outlet shopping. In Montgomery (Valley Forge) and Philadelphia Counties, the priorities are non-river related historic resources. Historically,

Tourism Promotion Agencies

- Chester County Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Greater Philadelphia Tourism Marketing Corporation
- Reading & Berks County Visitors Bureau
- Schuylkill County Visitors Bureau
- Valley Forge Convention and Visitors Bureau



heritage tourism in general and the Schuylkill River in particular have not been considered a high priority among many of these jurisdictions.

Another factor that affects the marketing of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, particularly in its northwest portion, is the geographic definition of state marketing regions and of other national/state heritage areas. For example, Schuylkill County's natural partners in promoting outdoor recreation are other tourism marketing regions such as the Poconos. Similarly, its strongest partners in the promotion of coal heritage are the adjacent Lackawanna Valley and Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Areas, rather than other jurisdictions within the Schuylkill River Valley.

In spite of the issues identified above, the overall outlook for enhanced promotion of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area is very positive. There are significant financial and non-financial resources in place that can be tapped for the benefit of the heritage area. The region's marketing organizations have expressed an interest in expanding the emphasis on heritage tourism and there is a significant base of potential visitation, including both residents and visitors from outside the region.

The overall marketing and promotional strategy for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area should be to establish the **heritage area brand**, and to build brand identity by working with and through existing regional organizations. Put another way, the main objective of marketing and promotion should be to increase awareness of the heritage area and its attractions. Actions that can be taken to help this objective include:

- **Continue to develop the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area website:** The current website managed by SRGA, www.schuylkillriver.org, provides a good orientation to the heritage area, including links to heritage resources and attractions within the region. This website could be further improved to include expanded information and linkages. Similarly, the websites of heritage area attractions and resources should include readily accessible information and links to the central SRGA website.
- **Conduct regional market research:** Based upon the Market Analysis conducted for the Management Plan (Appendix C), the primary target for the marketing and promotion strategy is the resident market of the five heritage area counties, including visiting friends and relatives. The secondary target is visitors from outside the region, particularly from the New York and Washington/Baltimore metropolitan areas. Additional market research should be conducted to further refine and identify target markets, to ensure the best use of marketing and promotional resources.



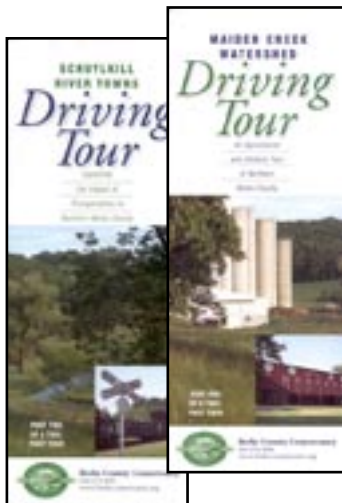
The King of Prussia Mall

The Market Analysis indicates that residents of the five heritage area counties, including visiting friends and relatives, comprise the primary heritage area market (i.e., with the greatest immediate potential for development). The secondary market—which can be tapped as the heritage area grows in recognition—consists of visitors from outside the heritage area, particularly nearby metropolitan areas.



Chief Robert Redhawk demonstrates Lenni Lenape traditions

- **Develop outreach programs such as a regional speakers bureau and attracting travel journalists:** A major strength of the heritage area resides in its wealth of site managers, representatives of agencies and organizations, and other individuals knowledgeable in the region’s heritage. A “speakers bureau” would tap this resource through lectures and presentations on heritage topics geared towards interested members of the public. Outreach efforts could include attracting regional and national travel journalists to visit and write about the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area.
- **Create visitor packages:** Sample visitor itineraries and packages should be prepared and distributed through regional tourism promotion agencies. These products will facilitate visitor access to heritage-related attractions and businesses and provide a stronger critical mass of products by linking these attractions and businesses to provide cohesive visitor experiences.
- **Develop informational materials to appeal to visitors with special interests:** Informational materials (printed and online) should be developed for major special interest topics such as industrial history, coal/mining history, outdoor recreation, etc. These materials can be used by tourism promotion agencies and other entities involved in heritage tourism to help promote the attractions and resources available in the heritage area.
- **Establish a marketing database and direct marketing initiative:** Heritage tourism attractions and organizations in the region could work together to create a database of visitors to the area, with particular attention to capturing email addresses. As specific opportunities arise (e.g., special events), information could be e-mailed to past visitors in the hopes of enticing them to make a return visit. (Research has shown that it is much easier to generate a return visit than it is to generate an initial visit to an area.)
- **Establish an enhanced public relations function within the SRGA:** One of the most effective tools in creating and maintaining awareness is public relations and, in the context of this plan, media coverage. To help increase the public visibility of the heritage area, the SRGA should establish an expanded staff communications function with a special focus on media relations, including such responsibilities as collecting newsworthy information, helping to craft press releases, and distributing the releases to print and broadcast media.



Berks County Driving Tour Brochures



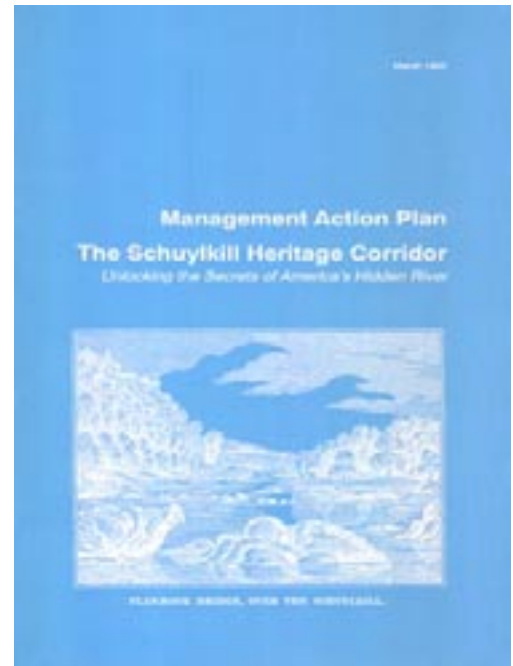
2.2.2 Implementation and Management

A. Principles for Implementation

A broad array of public and private sector agencies, organizations, and institutions will be involved in implementing the Management Plan. SRGA, the management entity for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area designated by Congress, will lead this effort, with the National Park Service and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (administrator of the Pennsylvania Heritage Parks Program) as key cooperating agencies. Plan implementation will build upon the successes achieved by SRGA and its heritage partners in implementing the 1995 *Management Action Plan for the Schuylkill Heritage Corridor*, as well as the work of other agencies and organizations involved in heritage preservation and development in the Schuylkill River Valley. Four overarching principles will guide implementation of the Management Plan:

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.
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.

As made clear by the discussion of plan strategies in Section 2.2.1, the heritage area mission and goals cannot be realized through independent action by SRGA, government, and other heritage organizations and institutions in the Schuylkill River Valley. Thus **partnerships** must be pursued at every level to maximize and leverage use of available financial, human, and organizational resources. **Linkages** are essential to tie together the Schuylkill River Valley's geographically and thematically diverse resources and to build a cohesive identity for the heritage area. Towards this end, implementation efforts should focus on those programs and actions that have the greatest **regional impact** based upon significance and contribution to increasing public awareness of the heritage area and its resources. At the same time, plan implementation must create tangible



1995 Management Action Plan for the Schuylkill Heritage Corridor



benefits for communities throughout the heritage area, by enhancing local quality of life and **sense of place**.

B. Project Evaluation Criteria

Maximizing use of the additional resources made available through National Heritage Area designation will be critical to successful realization of the Management Plan. The following evaluation criteria are proposed as a guide for assessing the importance of potential heritage programs, actions, and projects under consideration for implementation. A three-step evaluation system is proposed:

1. Measure the project against the Management Plan **goals**.
2. Measure the project against the Management Plan **implementation principles**.
3. Assess the **quality** of the potential project.

Step One: Management Plan Goals

The project must contribute to achieving at least one (and preferably more than one) of the Management Plan goals, as follows:

Resource Preservation and Enhancement

- The project will preserve or enhance a historical, cultural, and/or natural resource(s) of regional significance.

Education and Interpretation

- The project will increase public understanding and awareness of a significant heritage resource(s) and related stories.

Recreation

- The project will provide a significant outdoor recreational opportunity related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage.

Community Revitalization

- The project will make a significant contribution to revitalizing a local community through conservation and sustainable use of a heritage resource(s).

Heritage Tourism

- The project will significantly increase visitation to a heritage site(s) or resource(s), resulting in associated economic benefits.

If the project is determined to meet one or more of the above criteria, the evaluation process proceeds to Steps Two and Three.



Red Bridge over the Tulpehocken Creek, Bern Township



Boathouse Row, Philadelphia



Step Two: Management Plan Implementation Principles

The project must exemplify the implementation principles to a high degree, as measured by the following criteria:

Partnerships

- The project involves and leverages the resources of two or more partners.
- A sponsoring partner(s) with sufficient capacity will participate in implementing the project and will manage it following implementation.

Linkages

- The project relates to one or more of the interpretive themes: Making History, Creating Community, and Reclaiming the River.
- The project involves physical and/or programmatic connections between multiple heritage area sites or resources, with the highest priority placed on linkages to the Schuylkill River and its tributaries.

Regional Impact

- The project involves a site(s) or resource(s) of historical, cultural, recreational, and/or environmental regional significance.
- The project will significantly increase visitation.
- Infrastructure is in place or can be developed to accommodate the increased visitation.
- The project is consistent with and contributes to implementing the recommendations of regional plans (e.g., *Schuylkill River Watershed Conservation Plan*, *Montgomery County Schuylkill River Greenway Stewardship Study*, and *Chester County Landscapes*) related to heritage resource preservation and development.

Sense of Place

- The project will improve quality of life at the local level through benefits such as sustainable economic development, preservation or restoration of valuable resources, and/or increased community identity and pride.
- The project is consistent with the recommendations of local governmental plans related to heritage resource preservation and development.
- The project will not have significant adverse effects on or exceed the carrying capacity of historical, cultural, recreational, and/or environmental resources.



Newkirk Tunnel



Schuylkill Haven Park



A project will rate more highly based upon the number of the above criteria that apply, although it does not necessarily have to meet all of them. Criteria that must be met by all projects include:

- **Partnerships:** both criteria
- **Linkages:** relationship to interpretive themes
- **Regional Impact:** regional significance
- **Sense of Place:** carrying capacity

Step Three: Quality

The project must exhibit a high degree of quality, as measured by the following criteria:

- 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.

C. Management

As the management organization for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area, SRGA will function as a catalyst for implementation by mobilizing the partnerships needed to put the plan strategies into action. SRGA was formed in 1978 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization with a primary goal “to create in time a green corridor along the Schuylkill from Philadelphia up past Reading, Port Clinton and beyond.” SRGA assumed a regional leadership role in the designation of the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor as a Pennsylvania Heritage Park in 1995. SRGA has managed the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor since 1995, during which time it has administered 91 projects that have brought a total of approximately \$2.1 million in Heritage Parks Program funds to the region.

In assuming the expanded role of managing the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area in addition to the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, SRGA will continue to be guided by its established vision and mission:

Branding refers to establishing a recognizable image and identity for the heritage area in the minds of residents and visitors (see Strategies 5A and 5C).



Vision

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.

Mission

Our mission is to inform, coordinate, lead and assist communities, organizations and citizens achieve the stated vision.

This vision and mission will guide the long-range planning and day-to-day operational activities of SRGA in its function as the primary advocate for development of the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. SRGA's participation in specific heritage development projects and programs will be **partnership-based**, with its specific role varying according to the nature and area-wide importance of the project or program as follows:

1. The SRGA will **lead** programs and projects that:
 - rank highly when measured by the project evaluation criteria, and
 - are beyond the capabilities of other heritage partners to lead due to their geographic and/or programmatic scope.

Examples include completion of the Schuylkill River Trail System and development of a heritage area-wide framework for interpretive/informational materials.

2. The SRGA will **initiate and coordinate** programs and projects that:
 - rank highly when measured by the project evaluation criteria,
 - require an organization with broad interests in the heritage area to take an active role in getting them started (“catalytic” role), and
 - are of a scope and nature that lend themselves to execution by another heritage partner or a coalition of partners that pools their organizational skills and resources.

Examples include a watershed-wide water quality monitoring and development and implementation of preservation/visitor interpretation plans for regionally significant resources such as the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker.

Examples of programs/ projects to be led by SRGA:

- **Completion of the Schuylkill River Trail System (see Strategy 3A and Table 2-2)**
- **Development of an area-wide interpretive/informational framework (see Strategy 2A and Table 2-2)**

Examples of programs/ projects to be initiated and coordinated by SRGA:

- **Watershed-wide water quality monitoring (see Strategy 1B and Table 2-2)**
- **Development of a plan for the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker in Schuylkill County (see Table 2-2)**



3. The SRGA will **support** programs and projects that:
 - make significant contributions to achieving the heritage area mission and goals but rank less highly when measured by the project evaluation criteria, and
 - are initiated and implemented by other heritage partner(s).

Examples include open space or agricultural preservation programs that contribute to preserving local cultural landscapes within the heritage area.

Locally-based open space or agricultural preservation programs are examples of programs/projects to be supported by SRGA (see Strategy 1C).



Berks County Barn

The **Schuylkill River Watershed Network**, comprised of heritage and environmental organizations operating within the Schuylkill River watershed, will be a primary management mechanism for carrying out the partnerships needed to implement the Plan. Coordinated by SRGA, this network will bring public and private heritage partners together to work cooperatively on projects of watershed-wide significance, thus leveraging and maximizing the use of the financial and human resources available to the individual agencies and organizations. The network will operate through task forces formed to plan and implement priority, large-scale projects, such as a watershed-wide water quality monitoring program. The task force will design the project scope, form a project team comprised of the appropriate partners from inside and outside the Network, and identify outside resources as required.

The expanded responsibilities associated with managing the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area and the Schuylkill River Watershed Network will require SRGA to increase its staff resources. Specific capabilities that are needed include:

- **Network Coordination:** This capability is needed to support the Schuylkill River Watershed Network and to work with partner organizations to develop, administer, and implement Network projects and programs.
- **Communications:** An expanded communications capability is needed for plan strategies and actions such as developing an enhanced heritage area website, developing an enhanced public relations strategy, and supporting the Schuylkill River Watershed Network.
- **Landscape Architecture:** Landscape architectural expertise is needed for the management of heritage resource development projects to ensure adherence to high standards of planning and design.

D. Priority Action Programs

The plan strategies describe a wide range of initiatives, programs, and actions that can be carried out through partnerships to achieve the



heritage area mission and goals. Several action programs have been identified as priorities to be pursued by SRGA and its partners in the first two years of plan implementation. These priority action programs are identified in Table 2-2 along with order-of-magnitude estimates of required funding levels. These estimates 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.

E. Plan Monitoring

The priority action programs listed in Table 2-2 provide the starting point for efforts by SRGA and its heritage partners to implement the Management Plan. They represent the “tip of the iceberg” of the myriad of actions taken and decisions made over time by organizations, institutions, and local, county, state, and federal governments that will contribute to realizing the mission and goals for the Schuylkill River Valley National Heritage Area. The Plan is not intended to provide a prescriptive schedule for these actions and decisions, but rather to be a flexible and adaptive guide for informed decision-making on the projects and initiatives that are most important to the heritage area’s future as implementation moves forward. This basic purpose underscores the need for an ongoing monitoring process to measure success in achieving the heritage area mission and goals.

The plan horizon is ten years (until 2013), at which time a new plan will be prepared or other action taken in anticipation of the “sunsetting” of the authorizing legislation in 2015. The primary focus for plan monitoring by SRGA during this timeframe will be an annual review of progress made in working towards the Management Plan goals, to include the following steps:

1. Assess progress made in implementing the priority action programs over the previous year.
2. Measure progress in achieving the plan goals based upon defined indicators.
3. Develop a revised schedule of priority action programs based upon the previous two steps.
4. A more comprehensive assessment of progress made and update of the Management Plan should be conducted at the end of the first five years.

The following are examples of **indicators** or performance measures that can be used to assess progress in achieving the heritage area goals:

Resource Preservation and Enhancement

- Listed historic resources and districts
- Historic resource restorations and adaptive reuses



Schuylkill River Center at Riverfront Park, Pottstown



Virginville National Historic District



Table 2-2. Priority Action Programs

PROGRAM/ACTION	RELEVANT STRATEGY	ESTIMATED COST
1. Develop programmatic linkages to build the regional identity and image of the heritage area		
• Enhance the heritage area website	5C	\$100,000
• Develop a visual design framework and standards to “brand” the heritage area	5A	\$50,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design for wayfinding signage and implement model installations at key locations	5A	\$200,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design/layout for informational materials and implement a model informational brochure(s)	5A	\$50,000
• Using the visual design framework, develop a prototypical design for interpretive exhibits and implement a model exhibit(s) at a key heritage resource(s)	5A	\$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	3A	\$700,000
• Water trail: – Establish new landings and upgrade existing ones at multiple locations along the Schuylkill River	3A	\$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)	3A, 1B	\$300,000
3. Continue to develop a heritage area gateway system		
• Identify and move forward with gateways at five locations, modeled after existing installations	5B	\$400,000
4. Work through the Schuylkill River Watershed Network or other partnership arrangements 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	1B	\$350,000
• Work with the property owner and the community to develop a feasibility study, economic assessment, and plan for the future use/interpretation of the St. Nicholas Coal Breaker	1A	\$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.



Thun Trail Construction

- Protected open space acreage
- Water quality improvements

Education and Interpretation

- Improvements to existing interpretive exhibits and programs
- New interpretive exhibits and programs
- Interpretive products (tours, brochures, etc.)
- Heritage-related research and educational programs

Recreation

- Miles of recreational trail completed/under development/in design
- Improvements to existing water landings



- New water landings
- Regional parkland and gameland acreage

Community Revitalization

- Businesses created
- Total number of jobs
- Community-based revitalization initiatives

Heritage Tourism

- Total visitation
- Accommodations:
 - Hotel/motel tax collected
 - Length of stay
- Purchases:
 - Restaurant meals
 - Retail establishments
- Visitor gateways completed/under development



Locust Lake State Park, Barnesville