



SCHUYLKILL RIVER
GREENWAYS
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Connecting with the River

2026-2030 Strategic Plan



Connecting with the River

Prepared for:



SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAYS

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Managed by the Schuylkill River Greenways Association
140 College Drive, Pottstown, PA 19464
Phone: 484-945-0200 • Fax: 484-945-0204
www.schuylkillriver.org

Lead Agencies:



A MEMBER OF THE
**National Heritage
Area System**

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	4
Mission	5
Executive Summary	6
Introduction.....	7
History of the River and its Surrounding Region	8
SRG's History	9
What Is a Heritage Area?	10
Schuylkill River Trail.....	12
SRG's Programs	13
Schuylkill River Restoration Fund	14
Educational Outreach	14
Partners in Progress	15
SRG's Economic Impact.....	15
Previous Organizational Plans	
2003 Management Action Plan.....	16
2017 Strategic Plan – (Re)Turn to the River	17
Mission	17
Vision.....	17
Overview of the Planning Process for Current Plan: Connecting with the River	
Overview of Planning Process.....	18
Strategic Alignment Project	18
Strategic Planning Project.....	19
Outline of Process:	20
Schuylkill River Greenways Connecting with the River Strategic Plan	
Mission Statement.....	22
Vision Statement.....	22
Impact Statement.....	22
Strategic Approaches	
Strategy One	23
Strategy Two.....	26
Strategy Three.....	30
Strategy Four	33
Strategy Five	36

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SRG Staff

Elaine Paul Schaefer – *Executive Director*
Timothy Fenchel – *Deputy Director*
Crystal McGettigan – *Finance Director*
Kent Himmelright – *Trails Director*
Julia Hurle – *Senior Project Manager (Part-Time)*
Jacob Gardner – *Trails Project Manager*
Rosemary Keane – *Communications Director*
Ayashe Ramey – *Education Director*
Alex Shandera – *Events and Development Coordinator*
Kim Mooney – *Administrative Coordinator & HR*
Rachel Crabb – *Sustainability Project Coordinator via AmeriCorps Vista*

SRG Board of Directors

President: John Wolfe
Vice President: Kathryn Hoffman
Secretary: Jan Marie Allen
Treasurer: JR Fisher, *Aranda Group*
Executive Committee Member:
Dodson Dietrich, *Hewlett-Packard*
Mitul Ajmera, *Constellation Energy*
Roseann Bar, *Montgomery County Community College*
Marc J. Cammarata, P.E., *Philadelphia Water Department*
Chris Cleary, *Vanguard Financial Group*
Michael Krumholz, *Prudeo Partners*
Carter Lester, *Retired Pastor*
Mark Nevenglosky, *Comcast*
Kristie Otto, *Vanguard Financial*
J. Manly Parks, *Duane Morris*
Shane Reustle
Barry Scatton, *Morgan & Morgan*
Marria Walsh
Ira Walton, *United Environmental Services*

Board Liaisons

Amy Ruhe, *Valley Forge NHP and Hopewell Furnace NHS*
The Honorable David G. Argall, *PA State Senate*
Danielle Guttman, *PA DCNR*

Compass Pro Bono Team

Lead Consultant:
Marshall H. Ginn, *Principal, Capital Philanthropy*
Elena Bachrach, Ph.D.,
Small Business Owner of Writing Art
Cricket Brien, *Landscape Architect; Former Executive Director of the Tyler Arboretum*
Chris Chappell, *Management Consultant, BDO*
Stephanie Prevost, *Law professor, Lehigh University*
Jay Rose, *Retired IT Professional*
Josh Sterling, *Accenture*

Strategic Plan Update Steering Committee

John Wolfe, *President of the SRG Board of Directors*
Jan Marie Allen, *SRG Board Member*
Mark Nevenglosky, *SRG Board Member*
Elaine Paul Schaefer, *SRG Executive Director*
Tim Fenchel, *SRG Deputy Director*
Kent Himmelright, *SRG Trails Director*
Mandy Fitzpatrick,
Executive Director of Schuylkill Vision
Jordan Rajan, *Funder and Partner Constellation Energy*
Craig Calistra, *Funder and Partner Pottstown Regional Community Foundation*
Candy Trace, *Donor, Sponsor, Member and Heritage Legacy Society*
Danielle Gutman, *DCNR*

SRG acknowledges and thanks the National Park Service and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for their continued partnership and leadership, which includes their support of this planning project through the National and State Heritage Area programs. In addition, this project was financed in part by funding from both agencies. The efforts of all who contributed to this document are greatly appreciated.

UPDATED MISSION

Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area (SRG) promotes stewardship and economic growth by championing and protecting the abundant natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources in the Heritage Area with a focus on connecting all communities to the Schuylkill River and Schuylkill River Trail.

UPDATED VISION

By cultivating a true sense of place, SRG will foster a thriving and vibrant region that attracts economic investment, promotes community pride, attracts residents and visitors, and strengthens partnerships among all communities. Through engagement, education, conservancy of the river, and trail building, SRG will highlight and elevate the region's distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources for current and future generations.

UPDATED IMPACT STATEMENT

As SRG achieves its mission, it will create a significant, profound, and enduring impact on those who live, work, visit, study, recreate, and conduct business in the many counties through which the Schuylkill River flows, including Philadelphia, Montgomery, Chester, Schuylkill, and Berks Counties. SRG's impact will be seen in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- SRG has changed perceptions of the Schuylkill River. Current and future residents understand and appreciate the positive benefits of having the many natural, cultural, historic, and recreational assets in their own communities.
- Residents and visitors of all ages and abilities are able to find safe access to and enjoy the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail, as well as historic and cultural sites within the Schuylkill River Heritage Area.
- SRG has succeeded in connecting the public to the enduring heritage of the Schuylkill River through education, conservation, and recreation.
- There has been significant progress toward completion of all 120 miles of the Schuylkill River Land Trail from Frackville to Philadelphia.
- There has been a measurable increase of support from government leaders at the national, state, and local levels. Government leaders understand and appreciate their role in supporting projects and initiatives that strengthen the river, trail, and Heritage Area, and the impact those initiatives have on the entire region's economic vitality and sustainability.
- Current and future businesses who operate all along the Schuylkill River have taken action to engage with a thriving and healthy Schuylkill River Watershed to benefit their stakeholders, customers, and employees.
- Based on their shared understanding of the importance of the Schuylkill River, residents, visitors, trail users, businesses, and others are willing to commit financial resources, become members of the organization, volunteer their time, and add their voice in advocacy in support of SRG, its projects, programs, and events.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Schuylkill River Greenways National and State Heritage Area (SRG) celebrates the tremendously valuable resource that is the Schuylkill River and its companion Schuylkill River Trail. Encompassing 1.2 million acres over 1,700 square miles, SRG links over 3 million people across 5 counties to the unparalleled opportunities afforded by the river, its trails and the watershed. By encouraging stewardship and appreciation of the natural, cultural, historic, and recreational opportunities provided to residents and visitors alike, SRG also seeks to leverage the economic and community development benefits to the region.

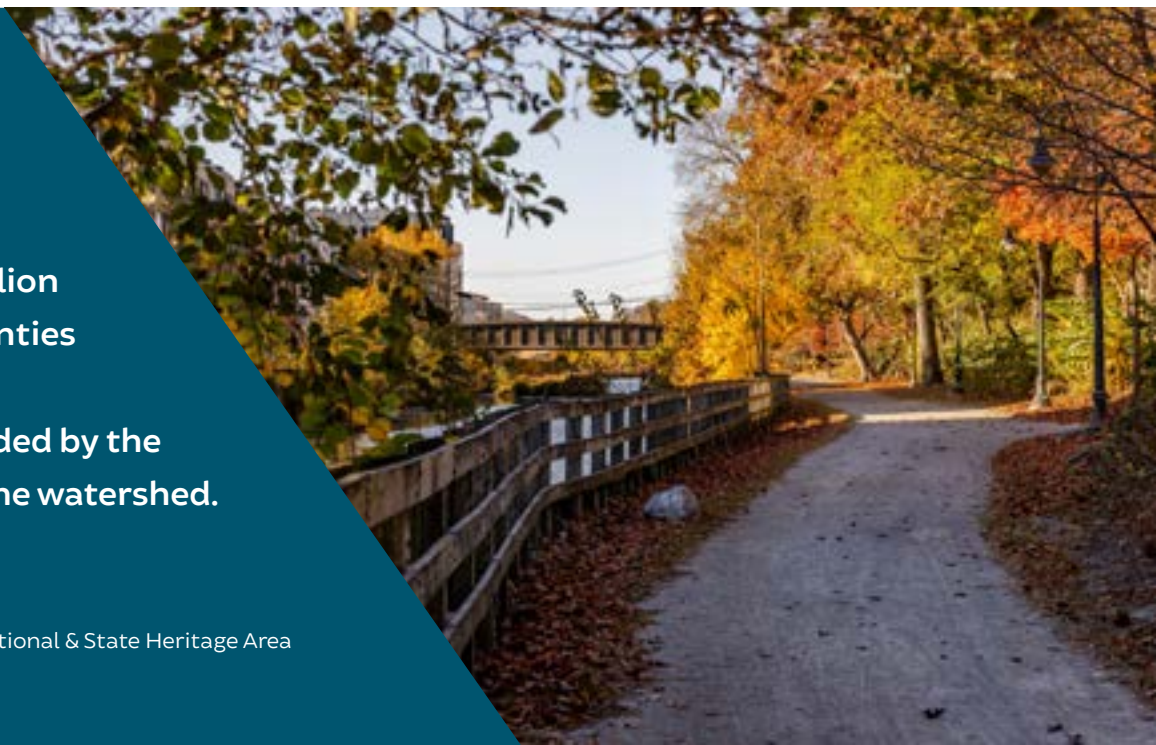
Making the most of the advantages and possibilities of the shared historic and natural heritage of the Schuylkill River region requires partnership, strategic planning and goal setting. In accordance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Heritage Park program requirements, a Management Action Plan was completed for the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor just prior to its official designation in 1995. Following the subsequent designation by the United States Congress in 2000 as a National Heritage Area, SRG created a new Management Action Plan to further define its mission, vision, goals and strategies; build consensus on priorities; focus energy and activity; and develop partnerships. In 2003 – *Living with the River* – was approved and outlined goals related to the key areas of resource preservation and enhancement, education and interpretation, recreation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism.

In 2017, after completing the goals and tasks identified in *Living with the River*, SRG updated their plan with a new strategic plan titled, *(Re)Turn to the River*, which provided SRG with the opportunity to evaluate progress made against the 2003 goals, establish new benchmarks and milestones, and reconfirm our commitment to continue leading the region in leveraging the economic development, recreational, and heritage tourism opportunities of our Heritage Area.

The 2017 planning process also provided the opportunity to bring together key stakeholders to redefine core values and review and refocus our mission and vision. Through active engagement and thoughtful discussion with board members, key stakeholders and community members, SRG created updated mission and vision statements to encompass our guiding principles and reflect current status, purpose and potential for 2017 to 2026.

The updated Strategic Plan, *Connecting with the River*, envisions the next era for SRG and will guide our continued pursuit of our mission and vision from 2026 to 2030.

Encompassing 1.2 million acres over 1,700 square miles, SRG links over 3 million people across 5 counties to the unparalleled opportunities afforded by the river, its trails and the watershed.



The Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area (SRG), encompassing parts of Schuylkill, Berks, Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties in Pennsylvania, started out in 1974 as a small, nonprofit organization based in Wyomissing, focusing on a simple but powerful mission: restoring the Schuylkill River and creating a corridor of green space along its banks. In the subsequent decades, we've held true to that mission, even as we have expanded our vision of what a clean and accessible river could mean to this region.

Today, we see the Schuylkill River and the Schuylkill River Trail – the land and water trails – as platforms for the revitalization of the communities through which they pass:

- As platforms for engaging residents and visitors with nationally significant revolutionary, industrial and environmental history.
- As platforms for improving public health by encouraging safe, close-to-home outdoor recreation.
- Finally—and perhaps most importantly—as platforms for reconnecting our youth and our residents to the incredible natural and historic areas in their own backyards and encouraging them to become stewards of those resources.

At the same time, we continue proudly to honor and celebrate the Schuylkill River watershed's heritage as one of America's most significant cultural, historical and industrial regions.

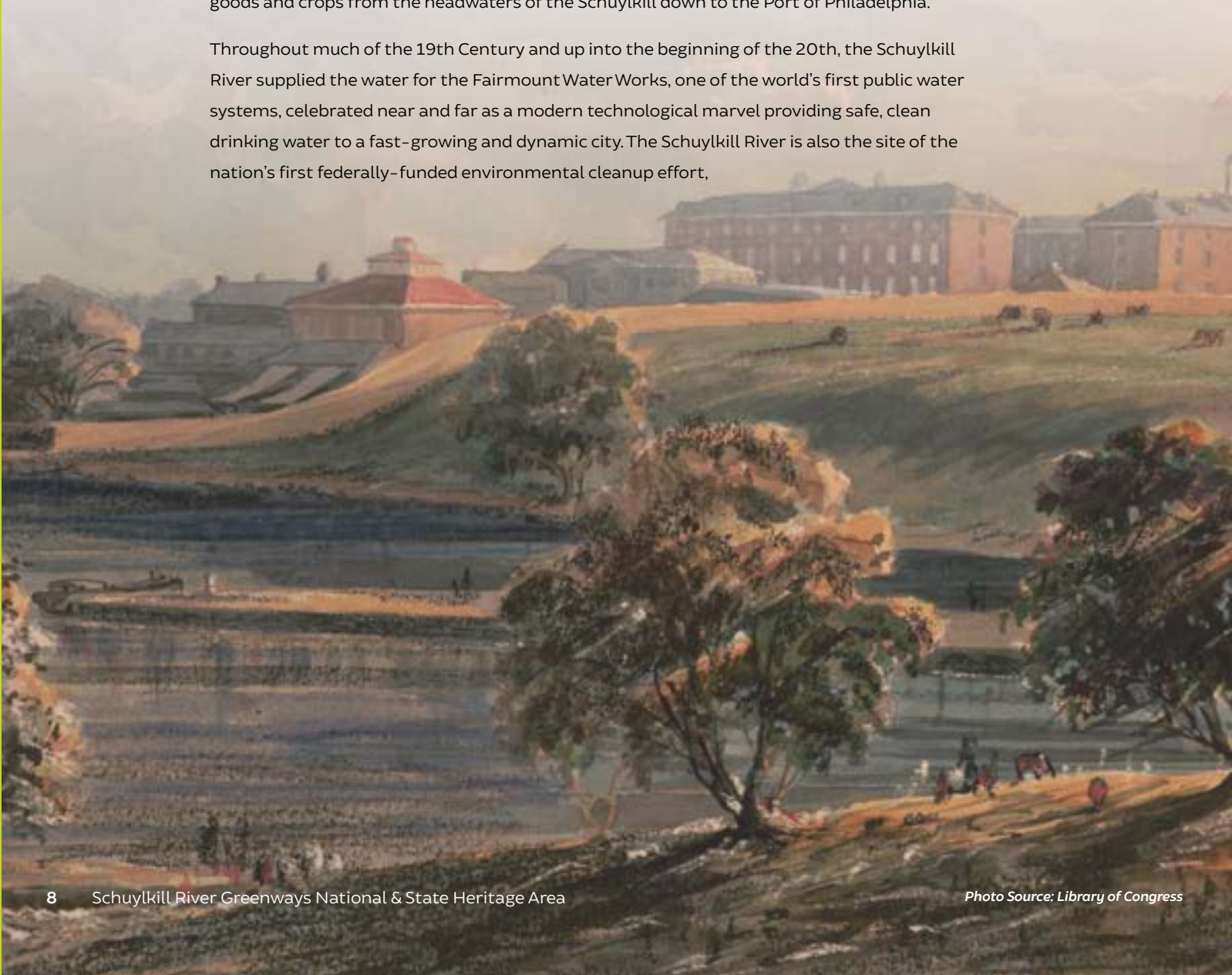
History of the River and its Surrounding Region

The Schuylkill River played a role of national prominence throughout America's history, especially in the American, Industrial and Environmental Revolutions. Originally known as "Ganshowahanna" or Falling Water by the Lenni Lenape, the first inhabitants of this region, the River eventually was renamed "Skokihl" or Hidden River by the Dutch who arrived as the first European explorers of the area in the 1600s.

Later referred to as the Revolutionary River for its historic role in the evolution of our nation, the Schuylkill River's impact on the region's development, growth and significance cannot be ignored. Growing along the shores of the Schuylkill up to the banks of the Delaware, Philadelphia emerged as a pivotal city in the nation's dawning years, its first capital and the birthplace of our democracy. Significant events during the Revolutionary War played out in and along the Schuylkill River, especially at Valley Forge.

The Schuylkill River fueled the region's growth and prosperity throughout the 1800s, supporting agriculture and manufacturing, most notably in the industries of iron, steel, coal and textiles. The Schuylkill Navigation System provided for the transport of coal, manufactured goods and crops from the headwaters of the Schuylkill down to the Port of Philadelphia.

Throughout much of the 19th Century and up into the beginning of the 20th, the Schuylkill River supplied the water for the Fairmount Water Works, one of the world's first public water systems, celebrated near and far as a modern technological marvel providing safe, clean drinking water to a fast-growing and dynamic city. The Schuylkill River is also the site of the nation's first federally-funded environmental cleanup effort,



SRG's History

Founded in 1974 as the Schuylkill River Greenways Association, focused on the preservation of the riverfront in Berks County, the organization has grown in its mission and geographic scope over the years. Today, SRG is still managed by the Schuylkill River Greenways Association as a nonprofit organization, yet that name is reserved for legal and financial purposes only. Guided by a Board of Directors (ranging from 15–25 people) and supported by a staff of eight to ten employees, SRG is funded to execute its work through federal (NPS) and state (DCNR) budget appropriations and also through grants and donations from foundations, corporations and individuals committed to advancing SRG's mission and to promoting the critical importance of the Schuylkill River as a vital part of the region's present and future health and vitality.

Spanning the entire Schuylkill River watershed, Schuylkill River Greenways NHA (SRG) includes parts of five counties from its headwaters in Schuylkill County, and continuing down through Berks, Chester and Montgomery Counties to its terminus in the City and County of Philadelphia. A watershed is defined as a river or creek and all of the land area that drains into it. The Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area is over 1,700 square miles in area containing over 1.2 million acres. Nearly a third of the state's population lives within its boundaries and nearly 25% of the nation's population lives within a five-hour drive.

**Within the boundaries
of the Heritage Area,
there are**

5

National Park Partners

Valley Forge National Historical Park
Independence National Historical Park
Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site
Appalachian National Scenic Trail
Washington–Rochambeau National Historic Trail
September 11th National Memorial Trail

**Within the boundaries
of the Heritage Area,
there are**

6

Pennsylvania State Parks

Fort Washington State Park
Evansburg State Park
French Creek State Park
Nolde Forest Environmental Education Center
Locust Lake State Park
Tuscarora State Park



WHAT IS A HERITAGE AREA?

A Heritage Area is a large, lived-in landscape where historic, cultural, and natural resources combine to tell a nationally significant story. These areas are managed through community-driven efforts and partnerships, and aim to conserve and promote heritage, boost local economies through projects, partnerships, and tourism, and strive to connect individuals and communities to recreational and educational opportunities. Unlike national parks, they are not federally owned, and property within them remains in private, state, or local ownership. The National Heritage Area program is managed by the National Park Service while the Pennsylvania State Heritage Area program is led by the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

With the region's significant history and impact in mind, Congress designated the Schuylkill River watershed a National Heritage Area in 2000. The Schuylkill River watershed had already been designated a Pennsylvania Heritage Area by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) in 1995. National and State Heritage Areas work to revitalize and restore the region through natural and cultural resource preservation, education, recreation, community revitalization and heritage tourism.

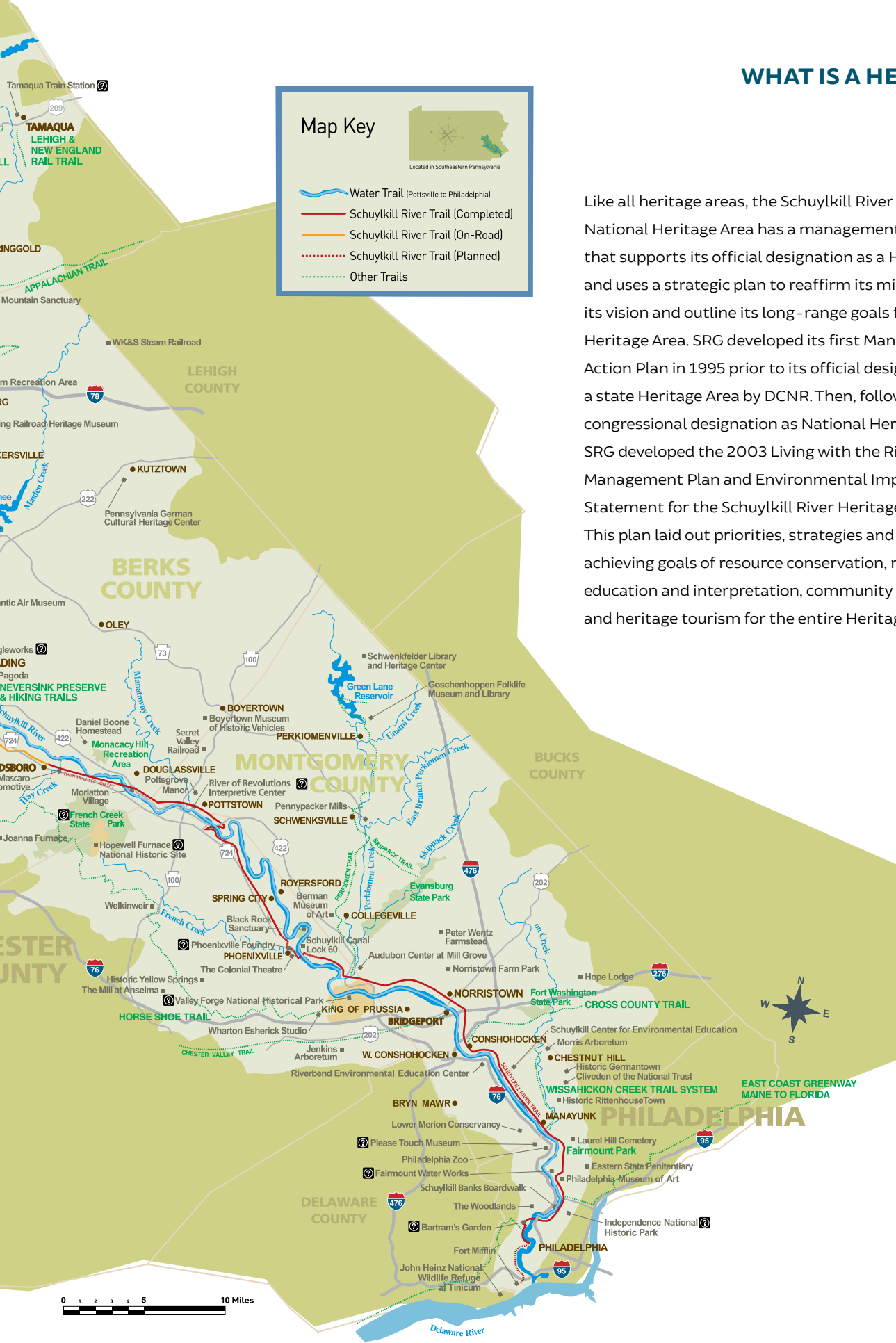
As both a National Heritage Area and a Pennsylvania Heritage Area, SRG benefits from these two designations that complement and support each other.

SRG exists to conserve, interpret and develop the historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the region surrounding the Schuylkill River and its watershed. All of these resources are brought together and leveraged through SRG to convey the uniquely rich story of a specific landscape – the Schuylkill River Valley – that is critically important to our nation's birth, development and progress.

Any region or area designated as a National Heritage Area is affiliated with the National Park Service (NPS), but the land is neither owned nor managed by the NPS. Each National Heritage Area can access technical support, planning resources and limited financial assistance from the NPS, but maintains individual management to determine the best ways to link its specific heritage stories to its local community and celebrate its history in collaboration with local partners.



WHAT IS A HERITAGE AREA?



Like all heritage areas, the Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area has a management action plan that supports its official designation as a Heritage Area and uses a strategic plan to reaffirm its mission, update its vision and outline its long-range goals for the Heritage Area. SRG developed its first Management Action Plan in 1995 prior to its official designation as a state Heritage Area by DCNR. Then, following its congressional designation as National Heritage Area, SRG developed the 2003 Living with the River: The Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. This plan laid out priorities, strategies and tasks for achieving goals of resource conservation, recreation, education and interpretation, community revitalization, and heritage tourism for the entire Heritage Area.

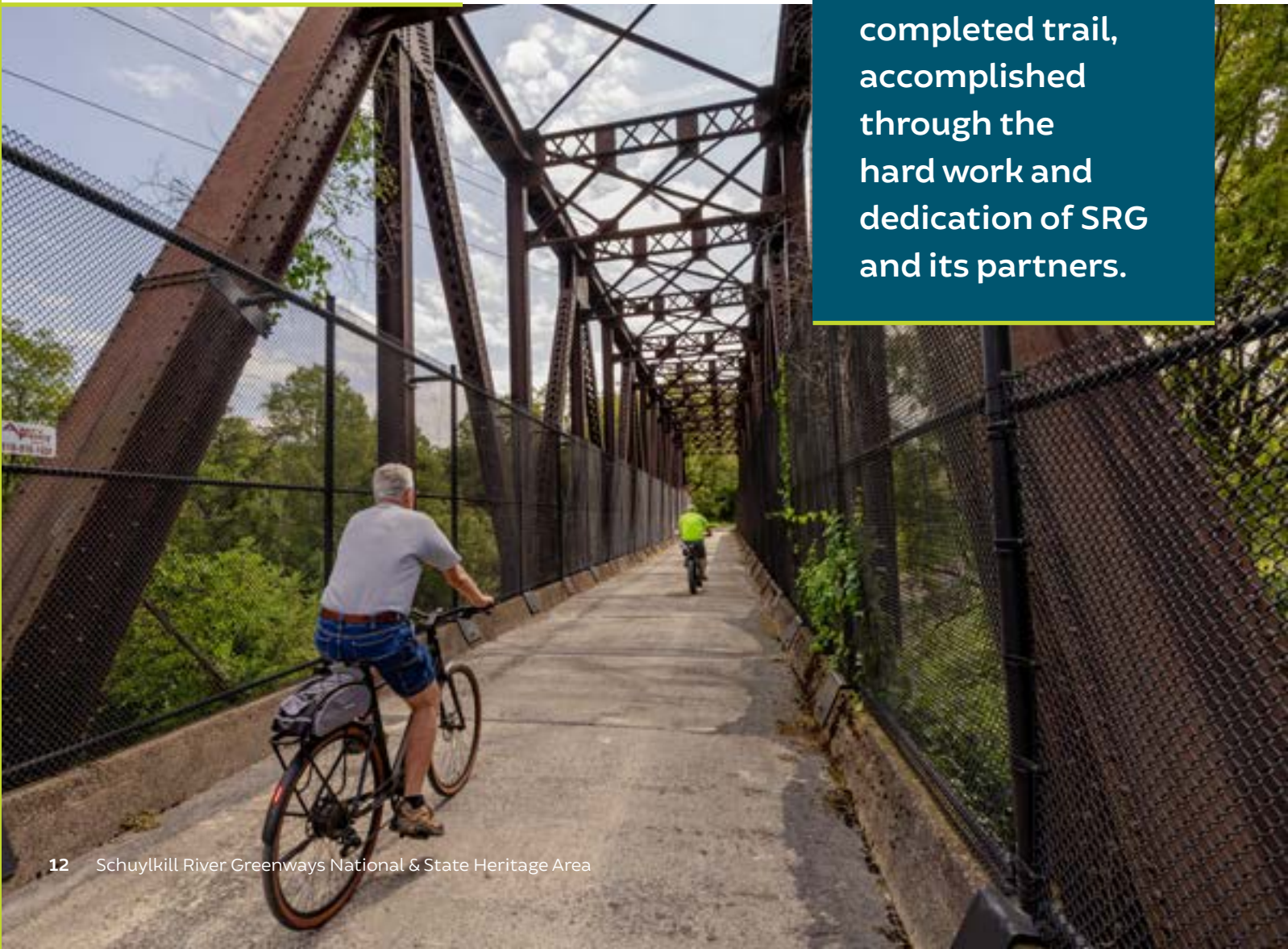
SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

SRG's signature project has been to trace the course of the Schuylkill River itself with a 120-mile land trail that connects Schuylkill County to Philadelphia. The Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) is all about bringing people to the Schuylkill River and the communities that surround it.

Today, there are over 80 miles of completed trail, accomplished through the hard work and dedication of SRG and partners: supporting the vision, convening meetings, acquiring rights-of-way, connecting partners, pursuing grants, leveraging funding, mediating issues, and building and maintaining trails through volunteer support. The SRT serves as the point of access for thousands of users to hike, run, bike, walk and explore along the Schuylkill River and its surrounding towns and communities. The SRT also provides connections for both the National and State Park sites within the Heritage Area. SRG owns the trail in Berks and Schuylkill Counties and is also responsible for building and maintaining it in both Counties. In Chester, Montgomery and Philadelphia Counties, the trail is owned and managed by a variety of entities, with SRG serving as a facilitator and consultant on trail development and management.

Schuylkill River Trail in Schuylkill County, near the Kernsville Trailhead.

Today, there are over 80 miles of completed trail, accomplished through the hard work and dedication of SRG and its partners.



Complementary to the Schuylkill River Trail, SRG is championing the organization and development of the Schuylkill River Water Trail to support paddling and other river-based recreation on the river. Developing and updating maps and public access points are the major focus of this effort, which are being prepared in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Water Trails Partnership.

But the Schuylkill River Trail(s) are just two of many aspects of how SRG drives economic and community development:

- Towns and cities along the river's banks take advantage of the commercial and recreational opportunities afforded by their scenic waterfronts with restaurants, sports/outdoor outfitters, rental companies, shops and hotels.
- Regional gems within the Heritage Area along the river such as Fairmount Park, Valley Forge National Historical Park, Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Appalachian National Scenic Trail, French Creek State Park and Hawk Mountain increase popularity and relevancy of the SRT for history buffs, school/educational trips, outdoor adventurers, birders and tourists alike.
- The waterways of the Schuylkill River offer countless recreational opportunities for boating, fishing, kayaking, birding and other activities, and serve as a venue for various regattas, races, charity events and other large-group water activities. One such activity is SRG's own Schuylkill River Sojourn, an annual event established in 1999 to raise awareness of the river and its significance to the region; actively and personally engage people with the river; educate people about the region and its cultural heritage; promote an appreciation for water conservation, nature and the environment; highlight community revitalization initiatives along the waterfront; and promote tourism. Other SRG events such as the *Scenes of the Schuylkill Art Show*, the popular *Pedal and Paddle* outings, and the *Ride for the River* bike ride highlight the myriad of opportunities for people to enjoy various aspects of the river and the trail.



When people become connected and they have a relationship with the river because they bike there, they fish there, they paint there and do art there; then they fall in love with the river and become ambassadors of the river.

- Elaine Schaefer, SRG Executive Director



SCHUYLKILL RIVER RESTORATION FUND & EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Schuylkill River Restoration Fund

Arising from the interest and awareness generated by the Schuylkill River Trail and events along the River, SRG has the opportunity to highlight the critical importance of water quality, especially insofar as the Schuylkill River remains the source of drinking water for almost 2 million people in the region. Therefore, SRG is dedicated to its role as the administrator of the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund, which provides grants to government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and watershed groups for projects that improve the quality of water in the watershed. Since its inception in 2006, the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund has distributed more than \$6 million and leveraged another \$15 million for 150 projects that protect and restore the Schuylkill River. Supporting projects that improve water quality throughout the Schuylkill River region, the Fund continues to promote and advance the decades-long work of dozens of partners and agencies working to restore and promote the river's health.



Educational Outreach

SRG also promotes the importance of water quality and watershed protection through youth-based education programs. The Schuylkill Explorers program, aimed at elementary school student groups, provides K-8 students the opportunity to explore the trail, learn about the river's history and significance, and develop an awareness of environmental concerns.

The Schuylkill Environmental Career Opportunities Program (SECO) orients students to not only the Schuylkill River Watershed, but also the different environmental partners working together within it. Students visit a variety of locations close to their school including state, federal, local, and non-profit organizations as well as privately owned sustainable businesses to learn about different careers and career paths available to them in their area. This is a career-oriented program that fosters interest in environmental and sustainability fields and helps students network with field professionals. Schuylkill ECO is available to high school classrooms within the Schuylkill River Heritage Area/Watershed.

Each year over 1,000 students and youth engage in our programs.



Each year over 1,000 students and youth engage in our programs.

Partners in Progress

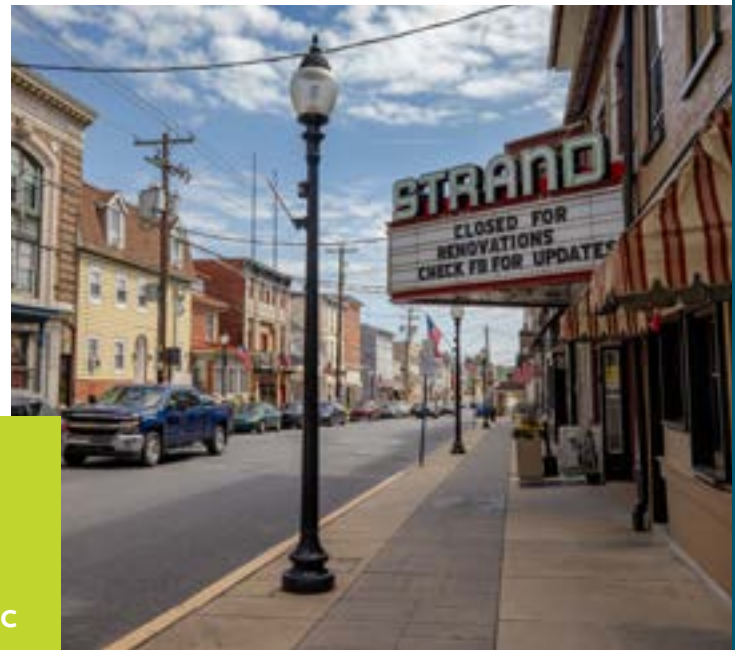
Another of the core commitments of SRG is to facilitate partnerships and strengthen local capacity. SRG works to maintain both formal and informal partnerships to promote common goals and leverage resources, engaging with well over 250 partners each year. Partnerships serve to extend SRG's capacity and reach, support the staff in carrying out diverse activities and facilitate the exchange of mutually beneficial information and resources. These partnerships include federal, state and county agencies including the National Park Service, the PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and the County Commissioners. SRG has demonstrated leadership in partnerships in the region, including Circuit Coalition, Delaware River Basin Commission, Schuylkill Action Network and the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. SRG works closely with private foundations and corporations, including the William Penn Foundation, Constellation Energy, the Philadelphia Water Department as well as other private partners like Sly Fox Brewing. SRG works directly with local townships, boroughs and cities throughout the five-county region.

SRG's Economic Impact

The economic benefits derived by the region from SRG are real and significant. The findings of a 2012 comprehensive economic impact study of six National Heritage Area sites (including SRG) conducted by Tripp Umbach were impressive: the natural, historic, and recreational features of SRG annually generate \$589.9 million in economic impact, support 6,154 jobs and create \$37.7 million in tax revenue.

The natural, historic, and recreational features of SRG annually generate **\$589.9** million in economic impact, support **6,154** jobs and create **\$37.7** million in tax revenue.

This significant impact, realized through SRG's commitment to its mission, leverages public/private partnerships to support historic preservation, natural resource conservation, recreation, heritage tourism, educational projects and commercial development in and among the communities in the region.



PREVIOUS ORGANIZATIONAL PLANS

2003 Management Action Plan

Upon receiving National Heritage Area designation in 2000, SRG was required to complete a Management Action Plan to serve as a guide for the organization's new role. Recognizing that the Schuylkill River National Heritage Area would evolve over time as a result of voluntary actions and partnerships among numerous organizations within the watershed, this plan did not attempt to prescribe a detailed list of actions. Rather, it provided direction, criteria and processes needed to establish priorities and to make informed decisions. It established an overall structure for conserving, enhancing, and linking heritage resources in the form of goals, strategies and primary interpretive themes. It illustrated and provided examples of the ways that public and private partnerships could work together to achieve the heritage area mission.

Mission and Vision statements were developed as follows:

Mission

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

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.

More specifically, it defined three interpretive themes to provide a unifying framework in which to consider both present and future goals and strategies for SRG. These themes were: (1) Making History, (2) Creating Community, and (3) Restoring the River.

Beneath these themes were five goals that drove our initial work as a National Heritage Area.

Goal 1: Conserve and enhance the Schuylkill River Valley's regionally significant historical, cultural and natural resources.

Goal 2: Foster awareness and appreciation of the Schuylkill River Valley's heritage resources and the stories they have to tell.

Goal 3: Increase outdoor recreational opportunities related to the Schuylkill River Valley's natural and cultural heritage.

Goal 4: Strengthen the Schuylkill River Valley's historic communities through sustainable community development related to heritage resources.

Goal 5: Increase heritage tourism and associated economic benefits for the Schuylkill River Valley region and its communities.

These themes and goals, which overlap and interconnect, remain relevant today.

In 2015, after over a dozen years of implementing and successfully accomplishing the tasks communicated in the Management Action Plan, SRG began the process of updating our plan.

Building on the tremendous progress made since 2003 and on the existing strategic framework, a new plan was completed that was visionary in its forward-thinking approach but remained consistent with the interpretive themes from *Living with the River*. This new plan evaluated the goals stated in the 2003 Management Action Plan, charted achievements and milestones, recommitted to a mission and vision for the future, set strategic priorities moving forward, and identify action items for future work.

A central part of this plan involved gathering input from the Heritage Area's key stakeholders – staff, board members, partners and community members; assessing trends; identifying organizational needs and capabilities; defining program strengths and weaknesses; and thinking creatively about where SRG should be headed and how to get there.

In 2017, the SRG Board of Directors approved the new strategic plan titled, *(Re)Turn to the River*. The core components of this plan were new goals aimed at continuing to carry out our legacy as a Heritage Area while working to engage communities, residents and visitors.

The mission and vision statement developed through and stated in *(Re)Turn to the River* were:

Mission:

Our mission is to connect residents, visitors and communities to the Schuylkill River and the Schuylkill River Trail by serving as a catalyst for civic engagement and economic development in order to foster stewardship of the watershed and its heritage.

Vision:

The five-county Heritage Area is a thriving and economically vibrant region whose residents, visitors and communities understand, value and are fully committed to the stewardship of the Schuylkill River watershed and its heritage.

Five organization goals were defined in *(Re)Turn to the River*, which were:

GOAL 1: COMPLETE THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER TRAIL

Advance the completion of the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail through direct implementation and collaborative partnerships.

GOAL 2: CONNECT COMMUNITIES TO THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER

Create and leverage physical connections to the River and the Trail to foster residents' appreciation and stewardship for these resources and to enhance the economic vitality and promote heritage tourism of our river communities.

GOAL 3: RESTORE AND PROTECT THE SCHUYLKILL RIVER WATERSHED

Improve the quality of the water in the watershed through public/private partnerships, in particular serving as the administrator for the Schuylkill River Restoration Fund.

GOAL 4: ENGAGE EXISTING AND NEW CONSTITUENCIES

Build constituencies that value, advocate for and participate in the protection of the Schuylkill River and its history through educational programming and events that focus on recreation, heritage, arts and culture, and health and wellness.

GOAL 5: IMPROVE SRHA AS AN ORGANIZATION

Continue to develop the board, staff and volunteers so they are empowered to act as stewards of the organization and high-capacity advocates for its mission in the region.

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR CURRENT PLAN: *Connecting with the River*

Overview of Planning Process

SRG's overall strategic planning process spanned the course of two years, from October 2023 to October 2025. Throughout the entire project, SRG was assisted by the non-profit consultant Compass Pro Bono, an organization that provides high quality strategic consulting to Philadelphia-area non-profit organizations at no or low cost. SRG worked with two different consultant teams from Compass, one team guided the work in assessing the strategic alignment of SRG's current programs to the mission, and the second team helped SRG use the results of that analysis to support a strategic planning process.

During the first strategic alignment project, a ten-person team from Compass spent months researching, benchmarking, interviewing and surveying the many different stakeholders in the SRG orbit, including board members, staff members, donors, funders, volunteers, partners, peer organizations and members of the public. The project culminated with the presentation of an assessment of our current program of work as well as recommendations for future initiatives.

The second project focused on developing a strategic plan to guide the organization for the next five years and beyond. This stage of the planning process was led by a lead consultant and involved six additional Compass volunteers. In addition, a Strategic Plan Steering Committee was appointed, comprised of board members, partners, funders, and staff members. This process relied heavily upon the work previously completed in the strategic alignment process, but included additional stakeholder interviews, benchmarking, surveys and staff and board work sessions. The Strategic Plan Steering Committee oversaw the entire process and provided input and feedback throughout the planning process. This project culminated in the adoption of the current strategic plan by the SRG Board of Directors in October of 2025.

Strategic Alignment Project

Project Timeline: October 2023 to May 2024

Approach: Fact Gathering, Analysis, and Recommendation

A premier destination for paddlers, the Schuylkill River Water Trail invites recreational motorboaters, water skiers, and rowers to get out on the water and explore its many scenic stretches and access points.



OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR CURRENT PLAN: *Connecting with the River*



Compass Pro Bono Team Members

Debbie Wong, *Senior Healthcare Executive*
Winslow Roche, *Business Architecture Analyst*
River Higbee-Velasquez, *Engagement Manager*
Dev Misra, *Consultant*
David Othmer, *Strategic Planning Consultant*
Frank Perras, *Leadership Development Consultant*
Viktorya Stebenkova, *Technical Project Manager*
Josh Sterling, *Delivery Lead*
Jillian Taylor, *Attorney*
Dana Baer, *Manager Corporate Audit*

- Analyzed data from SRG Leadership
- Performed extensive secondary research
- Stakeholder Breakdown: Interviewed 40 people:
 - 13 current/former board members
 - 8 staff and programs
 - 8 Funders/Donors
 - 6 Benchmark organizations
 - 5 Strategic business partners
- Stakeholder Breakdown: Surveyed 5 groups, 150 respondents
 - Board of Directors
 - Staff
 - Funders/Donors
 - Strategic Business Partners
 - Volunteers

The strategic alignment process culminated in a final report, which was presented to and accepted by the SRG Board of Directors in May of 2024.

Strategic Planning Project

Project Timeline: December 2024 to October 2025

Strategic Plan Update Steering Committee

John Wolfe, *President of the SRG Board of Directors*
Jan Marie Allen, *SRG Board Member*
Mark Nevenglosky, *SRG Board Member*
Elaine Paul Schaefer, *SRG Executive Director*
Tim Fenchel, *SRG Deputy Director*
Kent Himelright, *SRG Trails Director*
Mandy Fitzpatrick, *Executive Director of Schuylkill Vision*
Jordan Rajan, *Funder and Partner Constellation Energy*
Craig Calistra, *Funder and Partner Pottstown Regional Community Foundation*
Candy Trace, *Donor, Sponsor, Member and Heritage Legacy Society*
Danielle Gutman, *DCNR*

Compass Pro Bono Team

Lead Consultant: Marshall H. Ginn, *Principal, Capital Philanthropy*
Elena Bachrach, Ph.D., *Small Business Owner of Writing Art*
Cricket Brien, *Landscape Architect; Former Executive Director of the Tyler Arboretum*
Chris Chappell, *Management Consultant, BDO*
Stephanie Prevost, *Law professor, Lehigh University*
Jay Rose, *Retired IT Professional*

OVERVIEW OF THE PLANNING PROCESS FOR CURRENT PLAN: *Connecting with the River*

Outline of Process:

Winter/Spring 2025

- Compass Team conducts thorough review of all prior materials from Strategic Alignment Project and prior plans
- Initial drafting of key elements
- First meeting of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee
- Early discussions with staff to review all current programs, projects and initiatives
- Compass Team members engage with the Strategic Plan Steering Committee in one-on-one conversations
- Project team begins targeted conversations with stakeholders to gather feedback and perspective
- Staff small-group conversations
- Compass Team develops additional pieces of the plan, such as scenario planning structures and a program evaluation tool

Summer 2025

- Second meeting of the Strategic Plan Steering Committee
- Begin to integrate current programming catalog into the new strategy statements
- Continued development of plan components
- Compass Team continues to gather perspective from stakeholders
- Staff Workshop #1
- Compass Team participates in Sojourn activities as appropriate to gather stories and ideas
- Develop first draft of overall plan document, working with the staff and the Strategic Plan Steering Committee
- July SRG Board Meeting: in-depth conversation/retreat with the board to review the plan and SRG's path forward

Fall 2025

- Compass Team shares draft plan with staff
- Staff Workshop #2
- Compass Team reviews feedback from Steering Committee and staff
- Final draft version of Strategic Plan presented to Steering Committee for final edits and approval
- With Steering Committee's comments, final version of Strategic Plan prepared that will be presented to SRG

Board in September

- Final edits from Steering Committee, staff and SRG Board incorporated in to plan
- Board adopts plan at October board meeting



SCHUYLKILL RIVER
GREENWAYS
NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Connecting with the River

STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION STATEMENT

Schuylkill River Greenways National Heritage Area (SRG) promotes stewardship and economic growth by championing and protecting the abundant natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources in the Heritage Area with a focus on connecting all communities to the Schuylkill River and Schuylkill River Trail.

VISION STATEMENT

By cultivating a true sense of place, SRG will foster a thriving and vibrant region that attracts economic investment, promotes community pride, attracts residents and visitors, and strengthens partnerships among all communities. Through engagement, education, conservancy of the river, and trail building, SRG will highlight and elevate the region's distinctive natural, cultural, historic, and recreational resources for current and future generations.

IMPACT STATEMENT

As SRG achieves its mission, it will create a significant, profound, and enduring impact on those who live, work, visit, study, recreate, and conduct business in the many counties through which the Schuylkill River flows, including Philadelphia, Montgomery, Chester, Schuylkill, and Berks Counties. SRG's impact will be seen in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to:

- SRG has changed perceptions of the Schuylkill River. Current and future residents understand and appreciate the positive benefits of having the many natural, cultural, historic, and recreational assets in their own communities.
- Residents and visitors of all ages and abilities are able to find safe access to and enjoy the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail, as well as historic and cultural sites within the Schuylkill River Heritage Area.
- SRG has succeeded in connecting the public to the enduring heritage of the Schuylkill River through education, conservation, and recreation.
- There has been significant progress toward completion of all 120 miles of the Schuylkill River Land Trail from Frackville to Philadelphia.
- There has been a measurable increase of support from government leaders at the national, state, and local levels. Government leaders understand and appreciate their role in supporting projects and initiatives that strengthen the river, trail, and Heritage Area, and the impact those initiatives have on the entire region's economic vitality and sustainability.
- Current and future businesses who operate all along the Schuylkill River have taken action to engage with a thriving and healthy Schuylkill River Watershed to benefit their stakeholders, customers, and employees.
- Based on their shared understanding of the importance of the Schuylkill River, residents, visitors, trail users, businesses, and others are willing to commit financial resources, become members of the organization, volunteer their time, and add their voice in advocacy in support of SRG, its projects, programs, and events.

STRATEGY ONE:
Strengthen SRG’s Role as a Regional Leader

SRG is recognized as a leader in the region. SRG will convene stakeholders and partners to champion engagement, investment, and visitation to the varied natural, cultural, historic, and recreational assets of the Schuylkill River region.

Priorities:

- Cultivate a coalition of stakeholders, promote community partnerships, and champion a unified vision for the region.
- Ensure programming and messaging consistently promote SRG’s vision for the region, with a balance between regional leadership and program implementation.
- Engage and educate elected officials and agency staff to garner their support for our collective stakeholder vision.
- Promote responsible investment in and visitation of natural, cultural, historic, and recreational assets.

Action Item: Elevating SRG’s Role as Regional Leader and Convener	
Short-Term	<p>Conduct a thorough internal inventory of current leadership/partnership roles to identify gaps in coverage in different sections of the river.</p> <p>Examples: SAN, SHCL, Frick’s Lock Stakeholder Group, Tidal Schuylkill Committee, Middle Schuylkill Circuitry Partners Group, Schuylkill County SRT Partnership.</p> <p>Ensure all areas are covered and all issues are addressed within.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Once gaps in presence/leadership identified, create a plan to identify partners, and/or issues that need to be addressed. Reach out to partners and assemble coalition. Determine appropriate meeting approach and cadence.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Host five-county summit focused on entire watershed, Trail and River. Include County Commissioners and other key whole-river stakeholders identified in Year 1 (Philadelphia Water Department, as an example). Make this summit annual or bi-annual.</p>

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item:

Government and Business Partner Outreach and Education

Short-Term	<p>Assess current administrative practices in keeping current records of contacts of all levels of government: Congress, state, county, municipal.</p> <p>Investigate better infrastructure/software for record keeping and updating contacts (specifically for recording interactions). Could be accomplished by using Donor Perfect.</p> <p>Create new database of business contacts such as Chambers of Commerce, Sponsors, Donor Businesses, Trail Friendly Businesses.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Develop plan for consistent outreach to business database contacts.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Send quarterly updates to government and business database contacts.</p>

Auburn Bridge: The former Pennsylvania Railroad plate girder bridge now spans the Schuylkill River, connecting Berks and Schuylkill counties.

After a thoughtful rehab, it bridges the gap for a seamless 9.5-mile trail, offering stunning river views for cyclists and walkers alike.

Action Item:
Messaging and Promotion

<p>Short-Term</p>	<p>Identify in-house areas of expertise and at-the-ready presentations by staff members.</p> <p>Assemble a master list of marketing and communications contacts at peer organizations up and down the river.</p> <p>Work with website developer to make updates to the website.</p> <p>Take internal inventory/survey of how much time the communications team spends promoting events vs promoting the organization and our leadership role.</p>
<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Create a quarterly update system. This would entail a short written update, including photos, that will be featured on the website blog, in emails to elected officials, and regional business leaders. This update should be aligned with DCNR quarterly reporting.</p>
<p>Medium-Term</p>	<p>Consider a low-cost supplement to increase the capacity of the communications team and ensure balance. This could supplement could be an intern, consultant, or other.</p> <p>Create a story map for the website that features all partnerships in the region and SRG's leadership.</p> <p>Incorporate quarterly reports into the website.</p>
<p>Long-Term</p>	<p>Convene annual Zoom meeting of marketing and communications professionals to coordinate strategies, share calendars, share resources, learn of featured focus areas.</p> <p>Create an SRG Speaker Mini-Mart of offerings to go out into community and give presentations (i.e. on SRT developments, River Health, Invasive Management, etc.). Feature on website as free service available and promote this service to partners.</p>

STRATEGY TWO:
Complete the Schuylkill River Trail and
Improve Access to the Schuylkill River

SRG will work with local communities and stakeholders to complete the Schuylkill River Trail and improve the Schuylkill River Water Trail. SRG recognizes that the success of the land and water trails are closely linked.

Priorities:

- Prioritize construction of the Schuylkill River Trail and improvement of the Schuylkill River Water Trail.
- Identify and acquire new and recurring funding opportunities to support land acquisition, project design, construction, and maintenance.
- Acquire the property rights to complete the trail through Berks and Schuylkill Counties.
- Develop sustainable strategies to maintain the Schuylkill River Trail and the Schuylkill River Water Trail.
- Develop community support to complete, maintain, and improve the Schuylkill River Trail and Schuylkill River Water Trail.
- Improve and expand public access to the Schuylkill River Water Trail for all communities along the river.
- Advocate for and prioritize efforts to complete the gaps in the Schuylkill River Trail to create more contiguous trail sections.

Action Item: Construct the Schuylkill River Trail and improve the Schuylkill River Water Trail.	
Ongoing	Construct ten miles of trail. Construct or significantly improve five water landings. Identify the next 8 miles of the SRT to be constructed by working with communities, local governments, and partners on trail studies.
Medium-Term	Identify the values and challenges of the remaining sections of the Schuylkill River Trail.
Ongoing	Long-range strategic planning will be informed by community engagement and participation. This ensures that work is collaborative, community-focused, and responsive to community needs.

Action Item:

Identify and acquire new and recurring funding opportunities to support land acquisition, project design, construction, and maintenance.

Short-Term	Develop a plan for maintenance funding for the trail and bridges.
Medium-Term	Improve internal server data and file systems to streamline the application process and increase efficiency.
Ongoing	<p>Continually identify and apply for new funding opportunities.</p> <p>Leverage existing connections and outside expertise to maximize funding strategies and improve competitiveness of new applications.</p> <p>Coordinate with municipal grant professionals to compete for funding available only to municipalities, and to strengthen applications.</p> <p>Anticipate and plan for future shifts in grant opportunities.</p>

Action Item:

Acquire the property rights to complete the trail through Berks and Schuylkill Counties.

Short-Term	Create a coalition to acquire private land rights including internal staff, professional services, local champions, and board members.
Medium-Term	Execute agreements with legal professionals with expertise in title searching, real estate law, and other needs.
Ongoing	Actively pursue and engage with public landowners.

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item:

Develop sustainable strategies to maintain the Schuylkill River Trail.

Short-Term	Approach municipalities by communicating a list of tasks that can be reasonably transferred to their responsibility, informed by an understanding of their current and future capacity.
Long-Term	In Schuylkill County, engage officials about taking over ownership and/or maintenance of completed sections.
Long-Term	In Berks County, explore new ways to make trail ownership attractive.
Ongoing	Maintain ongoing and engaged relationships at all levels of government, priming officials to one day serve as leaders of the Schuylkill River Trail.

Action Item:

Develop community support to complete, maintain, and improve the Schuylkill River Trail and Schuylkill River Water Trail.

Ongoing	<p>Work with each community to provide amenities. Different communities have different desires and needs, and trail development should reflect that.</p> <p>Increase public communications about trail development, and the number of public meetings for projects. Ensure that future trail communities are made aware of the benefits of the trail coming to their communities.</p> <p>Convene manager groups to reaffirm a shared vision for the land and water trails, including the Schuylkill County Trail Coalition, the Schuylkill River Trail managers, and the Schuylkill River Water Trail Managers.</p> <p>Focus volunteer recruitment with the goal of having a volunteer force that is reflective of the region's demographics.</p>
----------------	---

Action Item:**Expand public access to the Schuylkill River Water Trail for all communities along the river**

Short-Term	Apply for National Water Trail designation and leverage that to improve reach, visibility, visitation, and perception of the Schuylkill River.
Medium-Term	Expand the focus of communications and programming surrounding the water trail beyond non-motorized boating. Champion the diverse outdoor recreation opportunities along the river including fishing, wildlife viewing, swimming, motorboating, hunting, etc.
Long-Term	Update the Water Trail Priority Plan every 5 years, and ensure the plan informs the work SRG participates in along the water trail.
Ongoing	<p>Partner closely with PA Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and other organizations to maximize the reach and quality of the Schuylkill River Water Trail.</p> <p>Work closely with municipalities to provide technical assistance for water trail management including assistance in acquiring funding for acquisition, design, engineering, construction, and maintenance of water trails.</p> <p>Continue to promote and educate individuals recreating on the river.</p>

SRG continues to expand its watershed education program, inspiring young people to appreciate and protect the environment

SRG facilitates community outreach initiatives and educational opportunities along the five-county heritage area along the Schuylkill River Trail.



STRATEGY THREE:

Educate and Engage Communities

SRG inspires excitement, curiosity, and stewardship for the Schuylkill River through hands-on learning and immersive experiences that enable communities to discover, enjoy, and care for the entire Heritage Area.

Priorities:

- Provide excellent, consistent and innovative programming and events for all communities that showcase and promote our natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources.
- Identify new, fresh, exciting learning experiences to promote education, recreation and stewardship that improve perceptions of the Schuylkill River.
- Develop interpretation, wayfinding and signage, native plantings, and views to enrich trail landscapes and create a consistent trail user experience from the Schuylkill Banks section in Philadelphia to the eventual terminus of the Heritage Area trail in Frackville.
- Create and implement a process and criteria to support continuous evaluation of all programs, events, and initiatives. Establish routine check-in and monitoring.

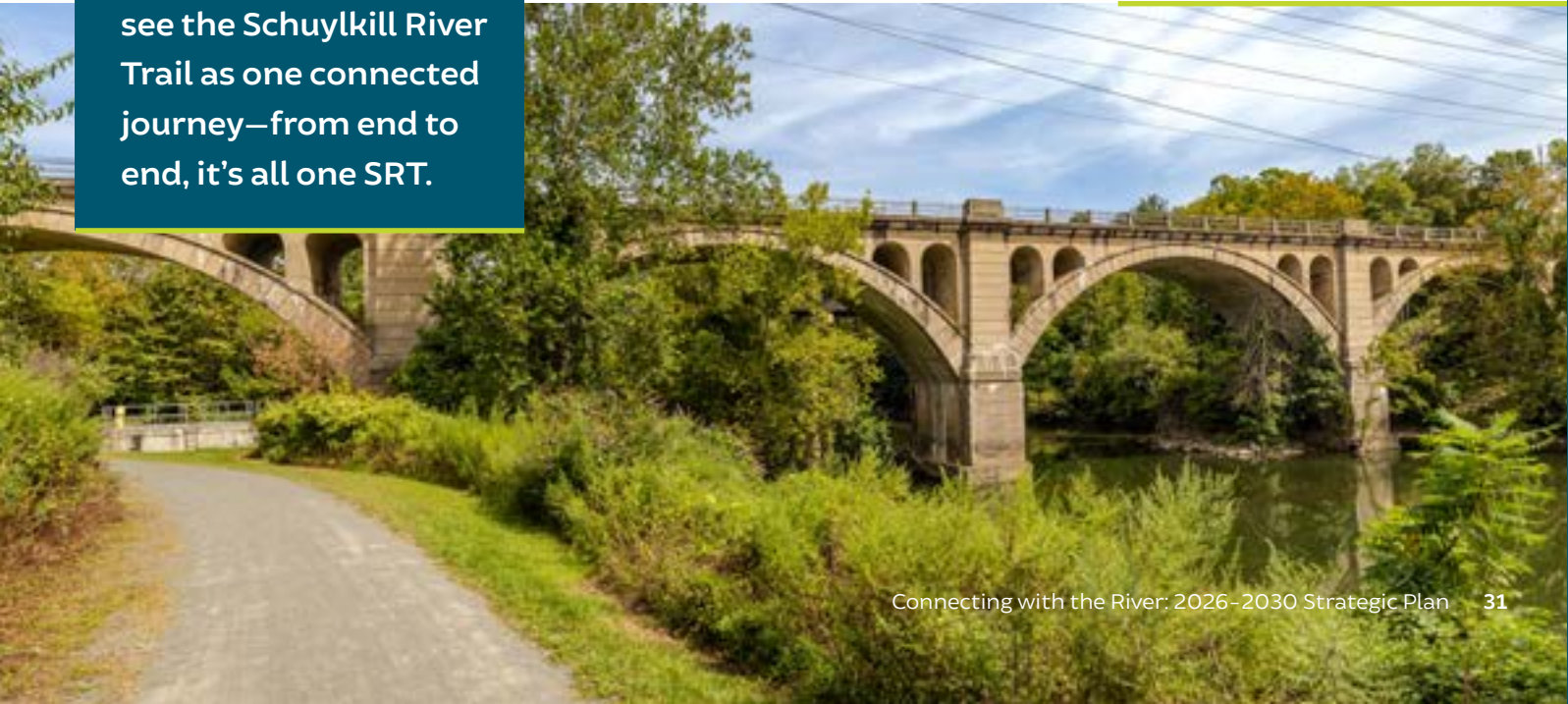
<p>Action Item:</p> <p>Create and implement a process to inventory and evaluate existing and new programming and events to assess feasibility, demonstrate impact, and guide new program and event development. Work with provided framework to develop meaningful internal and external review system based on measurable criteria for event and program success.</p>	
<p>Short-Term</p>	<p>Inventory all programs and events. Develop criteria to evaluate existing programs. Assess programs using these criteria to determine what works and what doesn't. Eliminate programs that do not serve the organization. Work with stakeholders to identify underserved communities where new programs and events should be implemented.</p>
<p>Medium-Term</p>	<p>Continuously evaluate new and existing programs and events and adjust what SRG offers based on the assessment. When programs or events are pitched to SRG, utilize the tool to guide level of involvement.</p>

Action Item:
Ensure SRG programs are excellent, consistent, and innovative.

Short-Term	<p>Develop new programs and events that engage current members more deeply and attract new constituents. These events should be fun, easy, and casual enough that new people feel comfortable attending. For example, (Trails on Tap, Art in the Park, or fishing programs)</p> <p>Ensure that both new and existing programs are implemented and have impact in all five counties of the Heritage Area.</p> <p>Continue to offer a variety of education programs on-site and in schools that meet PA state standards curriculum. Work with Heritage Area teachers to ensure that SRG education programs are providing an experience that pairs well with classroom instruction.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Work with partners to identify indoor space for inclement weather and the off season, ensuring that SRG is able to deliver programming consistently throughout the year.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Develop and share programming more broadly and engage a broader audience. Create system wide events that bring all areas and audiences together.</p>

Our goal is for users to see the Schuylkill River Trail as one connected journey—from end to end, it's all one SRT.

The trail stretches over 120 miles, linking Philadelphia, Montgomery County, Berks County and Schuylkill County.



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item:

Convene with trail partners to create a cohesive trail identity and brand.

Short-Term	Explore opportunities with trail partners to create a more consistent brand and experience on the Schuylkill River Trail and Water Trail.
Medium-Term	Arrive at a consensus with trail partners on consistent branding with trail partners. SRG and partners work together to implement consistent branding and expand amenities such as parking, seating, lighting, restrooms, safety, and refreshment along the trail.
Long-Term	Create an all-trail event with our partners to emphasize trail connectivity and help users view the trail as a whole, rather than just sections.

Action Item:

Prioritize cultural and historical interpretation along the trail.

Short-Term	<p>Explore other Federal and State Heritage Areas to learn how they incorporate history into their trails and outdoor spaces. Determine what content we want to share and gather ideas on how to bring education directly to the Schuylkill River Trail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historical signs at important points along the trail.• Plant and animal identification signs along the trail.• Connect interpretation materials back to the Schuylkill River Greenways mobile app.
Medium-Term	Work with local historical societies to develop interpretive and educational materials.

STRATEGY FOUR: Natural Resource Conservation

Natural resource conservation is and should remain a central focus of SRG's programs and initiatives. SRG will strengthen and broaden appreciation and support for protecting the Schuylkill River and other natural resources in the watershed.

Priorities:

- Continue to manage and grow the Restoration Fund program with ongoing evaluation of the program to ensure its effectiveness.
- Build stewardship by aligning education and advocacy work with SRG commitment to natural resource conservation.
- In light of our changing climate, SRG will implement green design practices in existing and new trail construction and maintenance projects.
- Communicate the lasting impact of the Restoration Fund and the significance that a healthy Schuylkill River plays in our region.
- Continue to educate residents and communities on the current health of the river to overcome negative perceptions of the Schuylkill River.

Action Item: Schuylkill River Restoration Fund (SRRF)

Short-Term	<p>Evaluate SRRF program demand and current funding levels to determine future need.</p> <p>Update SRRF bylaws with Advisory Committee.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Evaluate and update the grant making and administration process including the online grant application portal, grant contract structure, and grantee reporting.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Evaluate diversity of applicants to the SRRF and identify ways to ensure all watershed partners know about and have the capacity to apply.</p> <p>Identify and cultivate potential new funders for the SRRF to increase funding levels based on evaluation results.</p> <p>Increase communication with grantees and partners to expand program messaging throughout the community to increase awareness and recognition of the SRRF.</p>

STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item:

Conservation in Education and Advocacy

Short-Term	<p>Evaluate and refine current education programs, outreach strategies, and curriculum to ensure they reflect and advance SRG's conservation values and PA state science standards.</p> <p>Implement "paperless" practices as best as possible for SRG events and program registration and participation.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Work with website designer to develop and launch an online education portal that increases visibility and participation in education programs.</p> <p>Strengthen and build new partnerships with schools, community groups, and other education partners to broaden reach and engage new priority audiences.</p> <p>Evaluate environmental impact of SRG's programs and events. Reduce waste and environmental footprint where possible.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Identify pathways for long term conservation education with individuals and groups (e.g. SECO, fellows) to foster deeper stewardship.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Incorporate consistent educational and conservation language in all materials and SRG's overall advocacy work.</p> <p>Evaluate and implement SRG's conservation messaging and principles into all programs and events.</p>



Action Item:

Conservation on the Schuylkill River Trail (SRT) and Schuylkill River Water Trail (SRWT)

Short-Term

Implement green design and environmental experiences in the selection process of project consultants and engineers.

Involve consultants in the evaluation and planning of new construction and maintenance projects to incorporate storm water best management practices to reduce erosion, maintenance costs, and negative impacts on the watershed.

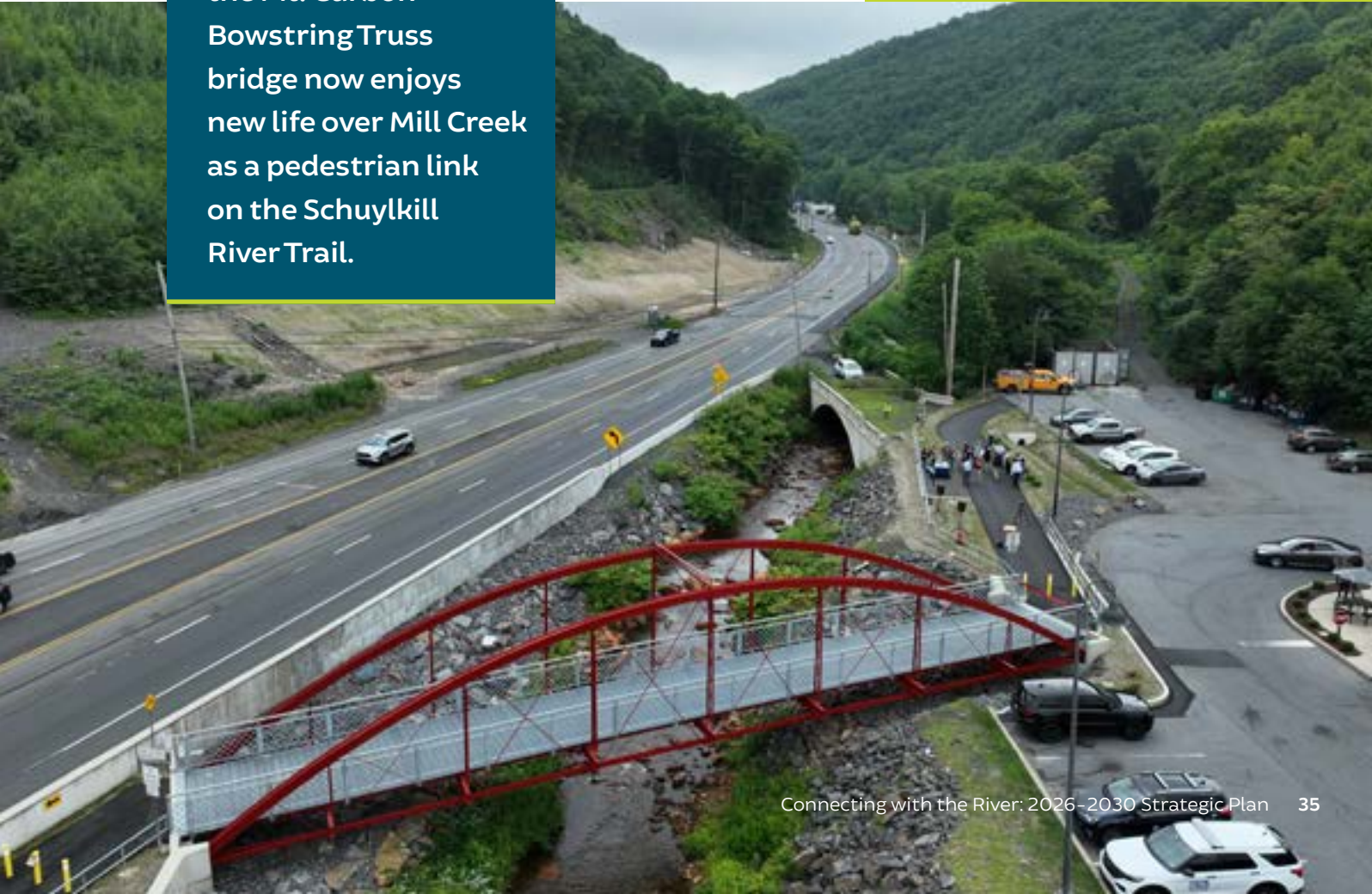
Long-Term

Manage trailside vegetation to promote native species and when possible work to remove non-native and invasive vegetation species.

Continue work with ambassadors and volunteers to educate and train them on identifying and removing invasive species along the trails.

Built in 1894, the Mt. Carbon Bowstring Truss bridge now enjoys new life over Mill Creek as a pedestrian link on the Schuylkill River Trail.

Mt. Carbon Bowstring Truss Bridge refurbished and funded by PennDOT along with additional money provided by Federal Highway Administration.*



STRATEGY FIVE:

Build Capacity for the Organization

SRG builds organizational capacity and expertise to effectively support its role as a regional leader and convener.

SRG will have the ability to respond and adapt to changing times and to secure and manage the resources needed to strengthen operations, ensure sufficient staffing, and manage volunteers.

Priorities:

- Align all communications, branding, marketing and community outreach with the Strategic Approaches.
- Measure, analyze, and evaluate plans, programs and projects to provide insight for growth and change and to help define success.
- Develop a future organizational chart informed by program review and evaluation.
- Balance board composition with SRG's evolving needs and provide board members with resources to support and advocate for the organization effectively.
- Implement a more robust volunteer engagement/management process to provide additional human resources for projects and public advocacy in the community, including a staff person dedicated to volunteer management.
- Evaluate revenue streams. Explore different models that focus more on private support and assess events in light of the need to produce revenue. SRG will focus on membership and membership giving.
- Focus on long-term financial stability through private fundraising, including successful completion of the Stewardship Fund Campaign.
- Position the trails staff to have the capacity to complete the Schuylkill River Trail and improve the Schuylkill River Water Trail.
- Adopt financial management policies that are in keeping with best practices and established standards.

Much of the SRT uses former Pennsylvania Railroad and Reading Railroad corridors, and is regularly ranked one of the best urban riverfront trails in the U.S.

The trail closely follows the Schuylkill River, offering abundant bird-watching, fishing spots, and forested stretches

Action Item:
Marketing and Branding

Short-Term

Survey board and staff to assess internal satisfaction with current branding and logo.

Confirm organization's emphasis on brand recognition to ensure consistency on all materials. This includes all general communications and events and will include designing one single volunteer shirt with universal branding for all events.

Identify/appoint ad hoc board subcommittee with staff and volunteers to focus marketing and communications.

Medium-Term

Establish internal policy to ensure all employees implement branding on all materials that are public facing. Update press kit and make it accessible to all staff.

Social media

- Research peer organizations social media platforms and programs
- Identify gaps or best practices that SRG should incorporate
- Create social media/PR plan
- Hire intern/fellow to focus solely on implementing the plan

Assess footprint in Philadelphia, Schuylkill, and Philadelphia suburb markets. Identify gaps and create plan to improve contacts and presence.



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item:

Evaluate Programs for Growth and Change

Short-Term	Establish a structured debrief template to be used by project leaders and main participants for each event and program.
Medium-Term	Store post-event debrief on company drive for each event, each year, to be available for future reference when event reoccurs.

Action Item:

Organizational Chart and Professional Development

Short-Term	Draft current organizational chart with titles and basic job descriptions, along with actual tasks performed (whether they are under job description or not).
Medium-Term	<p>Create future organizational chart and identify succession plan for top management.</p> <p>Request that each employee identify professional development goals and opportunities at annual review each December.</p>



Action Item:**Board Composition and Board Resources**

Short-Term	<p>Board governance subcommittee will assess current board make up in terms of geography, demographics, skills, expertise, and affiliation.</p> <p>Identify gaps in need.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Create written record of sought after characteristics of future board members and share with all board members and staff.</p> <p>Identify affinity groups and partnerships to help enlist and attract new board members to fill gaps in representation.</p> <p>Establish policy of general board training every other year and incorporate it into operational budget. There is potential for a partnership with LaSalle.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Upskill board members in personal networking and fundraising skills in particular.</p> <p>Ensure that communication with board members is consistent and strong and that the board feels welcome and engaged as volunteers.</p>

Many trailheads double as river access points, making it easy to combine biking and paddling.

Stretching over 135 miles from Schuylkill County to Philadelphia, the Schuylkill River provides paddling opportunities for experts or beginners.



STRATEGIC APPROACHES

Action Item: Strengthen Volunteer Program

Short-Term	Complete an evaluation of the current volunteer software program to determine if we need to replace with a better aligned software package. Transition to a new volunteer software program if deemed necessary.
Medium-Term	<p>Establish a Community Engagement Committee enlisting staff, board members, and community members to increase outreach in community and strengthen relationships with active members of community.</p> <p>Work with volunteer manager to create a holistic volunteer program focusing on communication, volunteer experience, and volunteer satisfaction.</p> <p>Establish internal procedure for volunteer solicitation and management for each program or event. Clarify that each project manager is responsible for engagement of volunteers for that event or program.</p> <p>Engage a part time volunteer manager, incorporate funding stipend into operational budget.</p>

Action Item: Strengthen Private Funding

Short-Term	Identify key employees to engage in professional development on grant mining
Medium-Term	<p>Reassess membership structure and explore measures to increase membership and giving.</p> <p>Explore capacity to hire a professional development staff member, either part-time or as a consultant.</p>
Ongoing	<p>Resource Strategy Committee should consider addition of new fundraising initiatives.</p> <p>Ensure that fundraising is incorporated into board training</p>

Action Item:
Administration

Short-Term	<p>Establish standard conventions for digital filing systems in company drive.</p> <p>Ensure each staff member is educated on proper conventions.</p>
Long-Term	<p>Develop government partnerships to transfer responsibility for the building and maintenance of the Schuylkill River Trail.</p>

Action Item:
Position the trails staff to have the capacity to complete the Schuylkill River Trail and improve the Schuylkill River Water Trail.

Short-Term	<p>Evaluate trails staff levels, responsibilities, expertise, workload redundancies, and capacity gaps to determine that the team has the appropriate staff power.</p>
Medium-Term	<p>Shift appropriate responsibilities to volunteers to maximize volunteer labor and improve trails staff capacity.</p> <p>Expand staff to include an individual with expertise in landscape architecture and graphic design to provide branding consistency and design expertise.</p>
ONGOING	<p>Ensure that the VISTA program continues to provide positive results to the organization through its capacity building services.</p> <p>Continue to work with the AmeriCorps VISTA program to support all trail work.</p>

Help Shape the Future of the Schuylkill River Trail

Schuylkill River Greenways is committed to this important and impactful strategic plan and we can only accomplish it with help from people who share our goals. If, like us, you love the Schuylkill River Trail, cherish a clean and healthy river, and appreciate the preservation of our region's heritage, we hope you will join us.

You can help us build more trail miles, protect the river and tell our region's story by becoming a member or making a gift today.

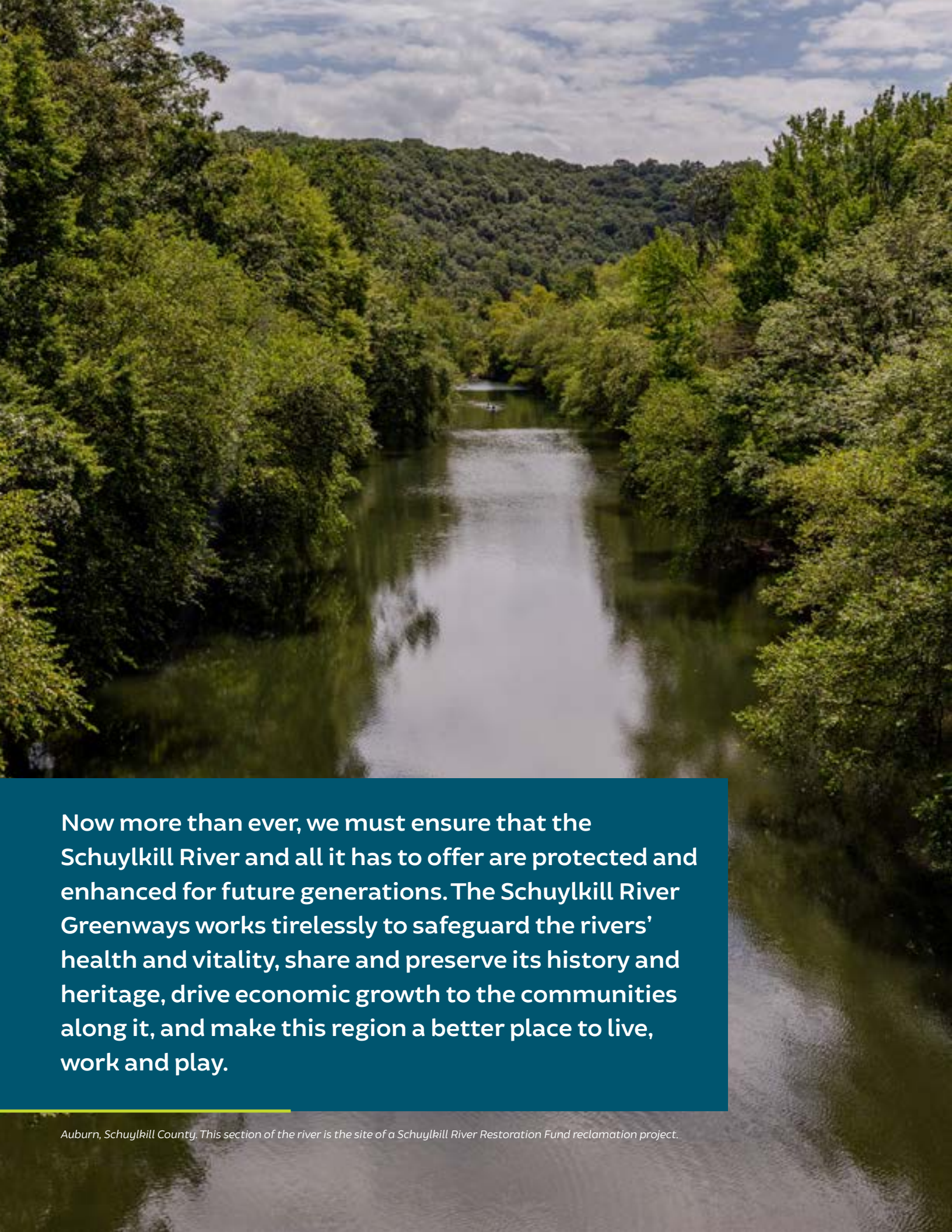
Your support makes a difference!

To join SRG, visit schuylkillriver.org, or scan the QR code below.



Give Today!





Now more than ever, we must ensure that the Schuylkill River and all it has to offer are protected and enhanced for future generations. The Schuylkill River Greenways works tirelessly to safeguard the rivers' health and vitality, share and preserve its history and heritage, drive economic growth to the communities along it, and make this region a better place to live, work and play.

Auburn, Schuylkill County. This section of the river is the site of a Schuylkill River Restoration Fund reclamation project.



SCHUYLKILL RIVER GREENWAYS

NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA

Managed by the Schuylkill River Greenways Association

140 College Drive, Pottstown, PA 19464

Phone: 484-945-0200 • Fax: 484-945-0204

www.schuylkillriver.org