

Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Watershed Coalition of the
Lehigh Valley
www.watershedcoalitionlv.org

Lehigh Valley Master Watershed Steward Program

SUMMARY

The Lehigh Valley Master Watershed Steward Program is a collaborative volunteer program coordinated by Penn State Extension, which trains community volunteers in a formal 40 hour training program, completes their training through structured group projects, and then engages volunteers on an ongoing basis with opportunities throughout the watershed community. The program was created to augment the ranks of knowledgeable volunteers and staff working in water and natural resource conservation, connecting Stewards to existing opportunities with LVG Partners, and working with them to develop new ones.



CHALLENGE

There are many local, regional, and statewide watershed associations and consortiums which have been struggling to train and recruit volunteers able to carry out water resource outreach and education for many years. This program meets that need, which is widely and generally understood by state agencies, local politicians, community groups, schools and teachers, and environmental professionals.

FUNDING

Grant Award:
\$5,000.00

Match:
\$44,123.62

Total Project Cost:
\$49,123.62

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

Penn State Extension and the Northampton County Conservation District played integral roles in coordinating the Master Watershed Steward Program in the Lehigh Valley. The Wildlands Conservancy, Lehigh Gap Nature Center, DCNR, LVPC, and Nurture Nature Center staff helped provide training instruction and venues.



SOLUTION

Through Penn State Extension, the Watershed Coalition of the Lehigh Valley and other project partners, were able to train knowledgeable volunteers that can reach into the adult and school-age population to encourage stewardship and educate the community to increase the health of the Lehigh River watershed. Volunteers are continually engaged through monthly newsletters that detail volunteer opportunities in the Lehigh Valley. The program also provides “personalized” volunteer opportunities for the Stewards, connecting the volunteers with the types of opportunities they prefer.

RESULTS

The Master Watershed Steward Class of 2014 in Lehigh and Northampton counties was given pre- and post-evaluations to assess the 40 hour training curriculum. Average test scores increased from 73% to 84%. After completing the training program, the participants rated their confidence level in water resource topics that were addressed in the training curriculum; their overall confidence in curriculum topics increased by 66%.

In the spring of 2014, 18 participants completed Master Watershed Steward training. There are now a total of 35 Master Watershed Steward volunteers in Lehigh and Northampton counties. The volunteers assisted 13 community organizations, 4 municipalities, 2 schools and 2 state agencies with educational and on-the-ground projects. They reported 1,373 volunteer hours, with an estimated value of \$30,123.62, using the rate of \$21.94 per hour recommended by the Independent Sector of Washington, D.C.. During this period, they also reported making 1,544 educational contacts with the public. They also organized 3 rain barrel workshops with 34 total attendees. It is estimated that those rain barrels will capture 40,800 gallons of stormwater throughout the growing season.

Contact

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