

# Lehigh Valley Greenways Conservation Landscape SUCCESS STORY

By: Wildlands Conservancy  
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## Improving Habitat & Stewarding Riparian Areas (Awarded 2024)

### SUMMARY

Wildlands Conservancy, in partnership with public and private landowners throughout the Lehigh Valley, completed a successful second year of our volunteer-based Stream Team Program. With more than 100 community volunteers from June – September, Wildlands stewarded 40 acres at 18 riparian habitat restoration sites in Lehigh and Northampton Counties. We educated participants about the importance of riparian buffers for water quality and wildlife habitat, removed acres of invasive species, and stewarded thousands of plantings. Most sites are highly visible in public park systems and, because of efforts by Stream Team throughout the summer, act as models for the community of what streamside and natural resource management should look like while providing expanded opportunities for outdoor recreation.

### FUNDING

**Grant Award:**  
**\$6,000.00**

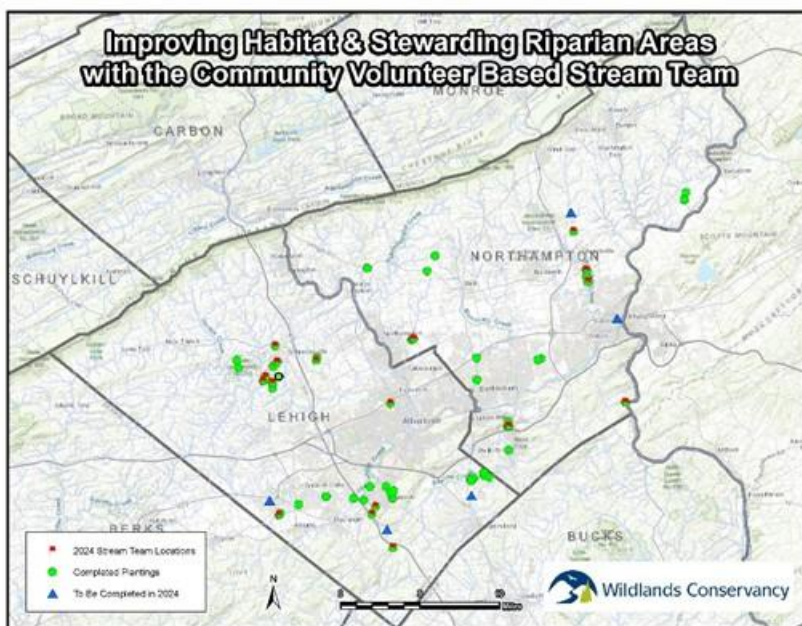
**Match:**  
**\$9,438.58**

**Total Project Cost:**  
**\$15,438.58**

### PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

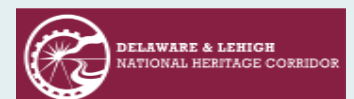
There are many strong partnerships throughout the Lehigh Valley dedicated to restoring riparian buffers. The following helped make Stream Team a success in 2024:

- Municipal partners: Northampton County, Lehigh County, Whitehall Township, North Whitehall Township, Emmaus Borough, Tatamy Borough, Palmer Township
- Conservation partners: Fry's Run Watershed Association, Bushkill Stream Conservancy, Little Lehigh Watershed Stewards, Lehigh County Fish and Game Protective Association, Lehigh County Conservation District



### CHALLENGE

Wildlands Conservancy has been restoring riparian buffers throughout the Lehigh Valley for the past several decades in pursuit of our mission to improve water quality and habitat throughout the region. Since 2017, when DCNR developed a dedicated funding source for riparian buffer restoration, we have established more than 70 acres of forested riparian buffer in the Lehigh Valley. While these sites will ultimately provide many benefits for air and water quality, the plantings will not be successful without stewardship in the first few years as they are getting established. However, with a stewardship staff of only two, this presents a challenge for the expanding number of acres to manage. We needed a way to increase our capacity to ensure these sites are successful as areas for wildlife habitat and public recreation. Most sites are on public property, so it also provides examples of well-managed streamside areas for park users. We have signage to explain the benefits of the project, but we want communities to see the plantings growing instead of invasive species taking over and empty tree tubes falling over.



## SOLUTION

In 2023, Wildlands Conservancy developed the Stream Team program which gathers volunteers from the community at different planting sites throughout the Lehigh Valley each week during the summer. Our pilot year was very successful, allowing us to provide stewardship for 19 planting sites throughout the Lehigh Valley. Wildlands continued this program in 2024 to provide stewardship for recent plantings to improve establishment, improve habitat by managing invasive species and encouraging the spread of natives, improve community perception of naturalized areas, increase capacity through community partnerships, and build a conservation ethic in the community through hands-on participation in restoration projects. Each week, participants were educated about riparian buffers, trained in stewardship techniques, and then provided invasive species management, assessment of plantings, and repair/replacement of deer protection.

## RESULTS

The second year of Stream Team was a huge success with support from partners, investment of time from the community, and plenty of stewardship. We are grateful to LVG for providing us this opportunity to:

- Engage and educate more than 80 total volunteers, with 52 of them participating in multiple weeks of Stream Team
- Document 305 volunteer conservation hours
- Provide stewardship at 19 sites, representing 40 acres of riparian buffer habitat, in Lehigh and Northampton Counties
- Remove harmful invasive species such as multiflora rose, Japanese knotweed, and Japanese hops before they took over the sites

### Contact



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