

On April 25, 2023 the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance was awarded a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence for the Veterans Memorial Field Improvement Project. The Governor's Awards highlight the best in environmental innovation and expertise in the Commonwealth. The celebratory dinner in Harrisburg provides an opportunity to recognize individuals and organizations who are making significant improvements- for environmental health and community well-being. The leaders of SRRA are, without question, doing both!

In 1980, the Rural Abandoned Mine Project (RAMP) restored a high wall stripping pit on the south side of the Borough of Kulpmont with plans that it was to become a recreation complex. However, after the high wall project was completed, the site was left unmaintained and quickly fell into disrepair.

Prior to 2016 the 'recreation complex' was underutilized; the walking track was in need of repair, the stream channel had no vegetation, and the site lacked amenities. Believing in the site's potential, the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance applied for and was awarded the first of six PADEP Environmental Education grants directed toward the site. Since 2016, hundreds of students have participated in events highlighting the history of coal mining in the region and the effects of coal mining both on the surface landscape and in the form of acid mine discharges impacting local streams. Students have also learned what a healthy stream looks like and how planting riparian buffers can restore impaired streams.

The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance was able to secure funding and support from both public and private partners to implement improvements to the complex. Volunteers built a foot bridge in 2017 to connect the recreational site to the Borough. The bridge became the catalyst for even more improvements. Penn State Master Gardeners worked with volunteers to install a pollinator garden. PADCNR funded a restroom project that utilizes 'green' construction, including rainwater capture flushing toilets, solar power, recycled materials, and a rain garden. A grant from the Sierra Club was combined with environmental penalty money levied against a pipeline builder to restore a section of wetlands feeding Quaker Run. The design and permits, paid for by the environmental penalty, were used to apply for and secure a \$548,000 Growing Greener Plus grant to restore the stream channel through the recreation complex and seal the stream bottom preventing water from entering the mine pool and becoming polluted.

These improvements to Veteran's Memorial Field have made it an asset to the community, attracting hundreds of people who now utilize and enjoy the space daily.

SCROLL TO NEXT PAGE FOR PHOTGRAPHS

Photographs from the site and the project:

Volunteers help plant a pollinator garden:



SCRA takes students to Weiser State Forest to view a healthy stream.



The project and the volunteers get some local press coverage!



HARRY DEITZ, FOR THE NEWS-ITEM

Earth Day cleanup held at Kulpmont park

More than 50 volunteers turned out Saturday to clean up sections of Kulpmont Veterans Memorial Park. Activities included planting trees and removing litter at and near the pollination garden.

Success requires dedication, perseverance, and FUNDING!

