

After restructuring in 2022, the Neshaminy Watershed Association (NWA) is back and better than ever! The volunteer members of this watershed organization steward 40.7 miles of Neshaminy Creek and its 236 square mile drainage area. A large portion of Bucks County and some of Montgomery County are included in the watershed. The stream is surrounded by mostly urban and suburban landscapes, which make it much more susceptible to pollution from urban stormwater runoff. Neshaminy Creek is a major tributary to the Delaware River. NWA focuses on protecting waterways through volunteer and educational efforts. POWR had the opportunity to talk with NWA's president, Ken Jones, about the challenges the organization has faced, its past successes, and its plans for the future.

The first iteration of an organization to protect Neshaminy Creek started in 2019 as the Neshaminy Creek Watershed Association. Volunteer leadership and engagement with NCWA declined and then lapsed for some time. Ken and several other Master Watershed Stewards, all trained through Penn State Extensions MWS program, got together to rebrand and rebuild the organization. In April of 2022 the organization became Neshaminy Watershed Association; 2023 was the first full year under its new name and new dedicated leadership. When asked about the initial challenges he faced, Ken responded that "everyone on the board is a doer," so one challenge they faced in the beginning was dividing up and assigning the work equitably and effectively. They have now decided on roles that allow operations to run smoothly.

Neshaminy Watershed Association makes it easy for volunteers to get involved in their projects. They have an online calendar that announces a variety of hands-on and learning opportunities. There is also an email list. Ken has a background in tech, so the website and systems are very modern and user friendly for the organizational leaders and volunteers looking to engage. Volunteers can help plant native trees in riparian and other critical areas within the watershed. They can also get experience in identifying native or invasive plants for enhanced management. NWA also has long-running volunteer programs including maintenance of sites such as their Pollinator Garden, or Watershed Wednesday, where volunteers clean up trash in parks and remove invasive species. On top of the great community work, NWA also has hard working group of board members from all walks of life. The board members and volunteers combine their efforts to keep their share of water pristine.

In 2023, NWA and their partners, including other Master Watershed Stewards, local residents, and others, planted 2,430 trees over seven sites. They also installed 2,900 live stakes on over 16 sites throughout the watershed. Live stakes are small tree cuttings driven directly into a stream bank. Unlike normal tree planting in riparian zones, live staking is low cost and easy to do. Instead of digging holes, volunteers simply drive the cuttings into the

bank. This process reduces erosion once the tree cuttings begin to establish their roots. To create a sustainable and large supply of these stakes, NWA has also established a live stake nursery at Core Creek Park. This park is located within the watershed and just another example of how the community can work together.

NWA has a lot of exciting plans for 2024 and the future of the organization. They were awarded a \$20,000 grant by the PA Department of Economic Development. With this, the organization plans to apply half of the awarded funds to enhanced and targeted public outreach and the other half towards future on-the-ground restoration projects. NWA also hopes to create relationships with other local organizations in the watershed. As Ken said, “You can’t do anything as an island.”

If you are interested in getting involved with the Neshaminy Watershed Association, their website can be found here: <https://neshaminy-watershed.org/>



Members of the Neshaminy Watershed Association with State Representative, Brian Monroe.