

Franklin County Watershed Association SUCCESS STORY

By: Franklin County
Government

Eco Park Improvements and Visitor Promotion

SUMMARY

The Franklin County Eco Park highlights a five acre forested riparian buffer along the Falling Spring Branch, a constructed wetland area, and a warm season grass planting of approximately three acres. The riparian buffer was planted approximately 10 years ago.

Improvements to the park through this project include new interpretive signage, replacement tree identification signs, extension of the walking path and planting 125 new seedlings. Two educational events will help draw visitors to the park and provide an overview on forest management and watershed resources.



CHALLENGE

The Franklin County Eco Park is one of Guilford Township and the Greater Chambersburg Area's best kept secrets. It presents many opportunities for wildlife watching and passive recreation in a beautiful streamside setting, but not many local residents know about the park. It was once used by local elementary schools and educators, but has become less used over the years. The tree identification signs that were once instructive for landowners have become faded over the past ten years. Invasive species have grown in many areas throughout the woodland, and were in need of removal.

The Eco Park was clearly in need of an image makeover, and a renewed management plan to bolster the riparian forest and grassland ecosystems supported by the landscape. Events to draw in and engage visitors could help towards the long term sustainability of the park.

FUNDING

Grant Award: \$5,545

Total Project Cost: \$13,895.67

PARTNERSHIP IS KEY

The Franklin County Watershed Association is a partnership of individuals from the general public, Franklin County Conservation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Pheasants Forever, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Franklin County Government. The Rotary Club and Bartlett Tree Experts also assisted in this project through participating in tree plantings, contributing plant materials and woodchips for the walkway. Penn State Mont Alto students and Forestry professor assisted with maintenance tasks and the fall foliage walk.



SOUTH MOUNTAIN
PARTNERSHIP



SOLUTION

DCNR's Service Forester developed a Forest Management Plan for the Eco Park, which included removal of invasive species, creation of downed woody debris areas for wildlife habitat and planting of native seedlings to support increased biodiversity at the site. Volunteers began implementing this plan through the project.

The Franklin County Watershed Association planned and executed two events to highlight the forestry demonstration aspects of the park, and to engage the public in interpretive activities that made use of the new signage that was provided through this project.

RESULTS

Attendees at the fall foliage walk remarked at how relaxing it was to spend a late afternoon among the trees, and how knowledgeable professor Craig Houghton was about all the different species of trees. Some said they had no idea the park existed. The Franklin County Watershed Association members conducted many of the maintenance and planting activities at the park, and it was a great team building experience to work incrementally toward the vision of the project.

Volunteer teams from Rotary Club of Chambersburg, the 11/30 Network of Franklin County Young Professionals, and Penn State Mont Alto forestry students conducted additional planting and maintenance activities at the park, and these presented opportunities for further public awareness about the park and its trail. The Franklin County Watershed Association was contacted recently about hosting a 2020 Earth Day Celebration at the Eco Park, and the use of the park for that event could further support ongoing sustainability of the park for years to come.

Our goal is to let more members of the community in on the secret.

Contact

Franklin County Watershed
Association

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Franklin County WIP 3 Next Phase

PA's Watershed Implementation Plan Phase 3 (WIP 3) has been completed and submitted to EPA. Efforts are now focused on meeting the pollutant reduction goals by 2025. The implementation phase for the 4 original pilot counties is underway. A WIP 3 Coordinator position is expected to be placed in Franklin County in early 2020. This position will most likely be housed with the Franklin County Conservation District or the Franklin County Planning Commission. The coordinator's duties will include working with local partners to bring together expertise and resources in an effort to get Best Management Practices (BMPs) implemented on the County's landscape.

Another aspect of the implementation phase will include verification of BMPs already installed and tracking newly installed BMPs. There is talk of using remote sensing (high resolution aerial maps) and possibly a more extensive BMP survey similar to the one Penn State did several years ago. Newly installed BMPs are proposed to be tracked using FieldDocs and Practice Keeper, two computer tracking programs.

Franklin County's County Action Plan (CAP), our local part of PA's WIP 3, contains a number of BMPs selected to reach our reduction goal. The list of Ag BMPs includes enhanced nutrient management, barnyard runoff controls, ag waste storage facilities, cover crop plantings, no-till systems, ag erosion & sediment control plans, manure management plans, forested and grass buffers, and others. Stormwater BMPs include tree plantings, forest buffers, rain gardens, stream restoration projects, post construction stormwater management plans with control measures, erosion and sediment control plans with measures, infiltration basins and Bioswales.

A growing number of financial assistance programs for landowners and municipalities for BMP implementation purposes, are being announced. Programs vary from grants, low interest loans, block grants, PA income tax credits (REAP), etc.

If you have any questions concerning WIP 3 or are interested in learning more about BMPs and implementation funding assistance programs, please contact the Conservation District for assistance. You can view Franklin County's Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan on FCCD's website at www.franklinccd.org.

Basic Riparian Buffer Checklist

- Contact partners
- Conduct site visit to collect info. for design & get landowner input on:
 - planting location(s)
 - species selection
 - seedling size (augered vs. shoveled holes)
 - planting density
- PA One-Call
- Develop design
- Calculate cost estimate
- Seek funding
- Staged before/pre-install pictures
- Order plants & shelters
- Schedule planting date & rain date
- Find volunteers
- Find equipment (shovels, mallets, planting bars, rebar, wheelbarrows, etc.)
- Find skilled person to do planting & tube install demonstrations
- Staged after/post-install pictures
- Maintenance during initial 3-5 years

Technical Riparian Buffer Checklist

- Initial site visit
- If landowner is a farmer who cooperates with FSA, have farmer initiate HEL & wetland determination
- Site visit to collect info. for design & get landowner input on:
 - planting location(s)
 - species selection
 - seedling size (augered vs. shoveled holes)
 - planting density
- Design Phase PA One-Call and mark site with white flags (required at least 10 working days, but no more than 90 working days, prior to final design approval)
- Complete design*
- Calculate cost estimate*
- Staged before/pre-con pictures
- Signatures
 - cooperator agreement
 - landowner agreement-see grant requirements
- Apply for grant funding
- Order plants & shelters
- Verify that contractor completes Construction Phase PA One-Call w/utility markings (required at least 3 working days, but no more than 10 working days, prior to excavation)
- Schedule planting date & rain date
- Flag holes
- Schedule hole augering
- Schedule plant delivery
- Place plants & tubes by holes
- Find volunteers
- Find equipment to borrow (shovels, mallets, planting bars, rebar, wheelbarrows, etc.)
- Find skilled group leaders
- Find skilled person to do planting & tube install demonstrations if needed
- Get landowner & contractor signatures for certification documents
- Collect receipts and complete reimbursement process
- Staged after/post-con pictures
- Maintenance during initial 3-5 years

*Task typically outsourced