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DEP presents awards for environmental excellence to area projects

NCPA Staff
Apr 29, 2022



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Fifteen projects across the state—completed by schools, businesses, and community organizations—have received the honor of a 2022 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

“It is always a privilege to spotlight people going above and beyond to improve the environment and make our great outdoor spaces more accessible,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “Each of the projects awarded this year will leave a positive lasting legacy for Pennsylvania.”

Applications were evaluated for their degree of environmental protection, innovation, partnership, economic impact, consideration of climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice, as well as outcomes achieved.

Collectively, the award-winning projects engaged hundreds of partners and resulted in:

- **2,470,000** gallons of treated stormwater
- **118** trees planted

- **32,552** shrubs planted
- **2,000** feet of trail created
- **200,000** pounds of acid mine drainage treated
- **8** miles of streams treated
- **242** acres of greenspace created
- **15** electric vehicles purchased
- **2,400** metric tons of CO₂ reduced
- **1,700,000** kilowatt hours saved
- **500** tons of material recycled

The 2022 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence were awarded to the following organizations in north central Pa. or statewide:

Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy & Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC) for Plunketts Creek Berm Removal at Proctor

In the 1940s a 10–12-foot earthen berm was constructed along 2,200 feet of the Creek to protect the former North Central Propagation Farm (now State Game Lands #134) operated by PGC from high water. The berm cut Plunketts Creek off from its floodplain.

The work also improved Huckle Run, a High-Quality stream with naturally reproducing trout. Plunketts Creek previously saw multiple 500-year floods in the past decade, but following restoration, Plunketts Creek flowed into its natural floodplain in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, protecting surrounding land and property.

Nurture Nature Center for Watershed-Friendly Properties

Nurture Nature Center and the Penn State Extension Master Watershed Steward program developed a Watershed Friendly Properties education and certification program to expand the number of watershed-friendly properties throughout PA, with the goal of educating residents, communities, educational institutions, and businesses about the value of a healthy watershed and best practices for improving water quality.

Over 600 Pennsylvania residents were reached through the project's outreach and presentations. To date, there have been a total of 300 applications with 270 passing (a 90% pass rate) and 250 "Watershed Friendly Property" signs have been mailed throughout the state representing 49 total counties (almost three-fourths of the state represented).

These are properties that are contributing to the health of PA's watersheds through practices such as rain gardens and other stormwater management strategies, cultivation of native vegetation, elimination of pollution sources, conservation of water (rain barrels), and more.

Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) for Activities and Education Portal

Initially developed as a response to the challenges that COVID guidance presented for teachers, parents, and Pennsylvania's angling and boating community in 2020, PFBC Education staff have spent the past year evolving the Activities and Education Portal into a one-stop environmental education shop that brings the "fishing, boating, and aquatic resource experience" to participants at home.

The PFBC Activities & Education Portal is an expansive resource for anyone interested in aquatic resources and fishing and boating opportunities throughout the Commonwealth, which includes videos, activities, printable documents, Pennsylvania League of Angling Youth (PLAY) newsletters, crafts, coloring pages, background information, and more.

Topics include: habitat, watersheds, and pollution; indigenous fish species; amphibians and reptiles; aquatic macroinvertebrates; fishing; fly fishing; kayak fishing; boating and water safety; and an overview of the PFBC.

To make educational materials more accessible to people experiencing a vision impairment, PFBC is now releasing audio versions of their most popular newsletters. As supplemental resources to the Read Along with PFBC video project, this project also created a downloadable coloring page and a variety of themed activities and education packages, all of which can be found on the Activities and Education Portal.

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