

NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release
June 26, 2001**

**Governor Ridge Honors
The Township of Upper St. Clair
and
U S C Citizens for Land Stewardship
For Watershed Stewardship**

Harrisburg, PA(June 26)—Gov. Tom Ridge today recognized The Township of Upper St. Clair and U S C Citizens for Land Stewardship for their commitment to watershed restoration and environmental protection. The Township of Upper St. Clair and USC Citizens for Land Stewardship submitted one of only 25 projects from across Pennsylvania that was selected to receive a 2001 Governor's Award for Watershed Stewardship.

"I am pleased to congratulate the winners of the 2001 Governor's Award for Watershed Stewardship," Gov. Ridge said. "These individuals and organizations are reclaiming abandoned mine lands, protecting and restoring our valuable watersheds and reaching out to our communities to educate them about the importance of Pennsylvania's natural resources."

The Upper St. Clair Citizens for Land Stewardship approached the Township of Upper St. Clair in 1998 to form a partnership to improve the riparian buffer, water quality and stream beauty of McLaughlin Run, a tributary of Chartiers Creek. The vision was to stimulate community involvement by initiating a McLaughlin Run Watershed project focusing on non-point source pollution, improve water quality and environmental awareness.

Proposed as a single demonstration of non-point source pollution reduction and stream bank stabilization, the McLaughlin Run project also featured the additional benefits of enhanced flood protection and improved habitat for wildlife. Although it had limited watershed impact, its value was demonstrated through improved stream corridor management and conservation awareness.

The first phase of the project included the completion of a comprehensive watershed assessment, which provided a basis for targeted prioritized watershed restoration efforts. These new priorities laid the groundwork for even more opportunities for inter-municipal partnership and coordination, increasing public support and making watershed protection projects more cost-effective.

Today, the McLaughlin Run project continues to grow. Along one tributary, hundreds of feet of agricultural stream bank fencing were installed to protect the stream from livestock. Volunteers from the Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, school children and local service organizations planted native plants along hundreds of feet of the stream banks to reintroduce native species. An Eagle Scout project stenciled more than 500 storm drains in the community with a fish logo and the wording, "Dump No Waste- Drains to Stream." A day long educational session was held during Upper St. Clair Community Day, providing information to more than 300 Residents.

"We are proud of the Township, and Volunteers' hard work and dedication to watershed restoration and we're honored that Governor Ridge has selected us for this great distinction," said Douglas A. Watkins, Township Manager. "We understand the pride our community has in our beautiful landscape. We are dedicated to protecting the natural waterways and native wildlife and to helping preserve Pennsylvania's pristine environment for future generations."

Collectively, the inaugural year's winners installed five abandoned mine drainage (AMD) treatment systems, reclaimed eight acres of abandoned mine land, and improved 6.2 miles of impacted streamline. In addition, these winners also removed 1,000 pounds of trash from waterways, created 1,190 acres of wetlands, planted 16,151 trees and shrubs, and restored 43,221 feet of riparian buffer area. The effects of these accomplishments have been immediate, and invaluable.

This year marks the first annual Governor's Award for Watershed Stewardship. In 1999, Governor Tom Ridge signed into law "Growing Greener" – the largest-ever investment of state funds to address Pennsylvania's critical environmental issues. Since then, watershed groups, local governments and conservation districts have taken advantage of these state dollars to implement watershed protection projects. These awards honor the individuals and organizations engaged in safeguarding and enhancing our environment across Pennsylvania.

Projects are evaluated by an independent panel of judges, who select winners based on a variety of criteria, including economic and environmental impact, pollution prevention, teamwork, public service and educational efforts.

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