



GREEN VALLEYS ASSOCIATION AT WELKINWEIR

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46 Years of Advocacy and Education

Green Valleys Association enjoys a long record of accomplishments as a Watershed Advocacy and Education organization. 46 years ago the founders of GVA came together at Welkinweir to protect the French Creek from a dam which would have flooded the village of Pughtown and surrounding valleys. At the same time we organized the local call to action, GVA also recognized the complementary nature of environmental education in our 1965 bylaws: *The purpose and objectives of Green Valleys Association of Southeastern Pennsylvania shall be environmental education and the protection of natural resources in its area for present and future generations by fostering the wise use of land, air, and water, and by encouraging the protection of wildlife.*

Since our inception, our most successful programs have drawn upon professionals inside and outside the organization. The Sustainable Watershed Management (SWM) initiative lead by Dr. Ralph Heister and Cahill Associates s became the basis for state-wide best practices. The work to upgrade the status of local streams to an Exceptional Value rating begun under Dr. Heister and carried on under Dr. Klose raises these watersheds to the highest standards in the state. In these types of activities, we are refining our focus and will continue to provide regional leadership.

The move to Welkinweir twelve years ago, coupled with the success of programs like those mentioned, provided a catalyst for growth in the last decade. In response, the structure of GVA changed and new full-time positions were created. We have been reviewing the impact of that growth in the context of the realities we face in 2010. Compared to other larger watershed organizations, GVA has excellent opportunities in *every* area of watershed stewardship. In the next decade GVA seeks to balance our full range of services and programs across all categories of watershed stewardship including advocacy, education, monitoring, and restorations.

As with any nonprofit, the support for a program is an important measure of its worth. As part of our long term commitment to the community, we must remain financially stable. Recently the funding from the community and the foundations we receive has not been enough to support our all of our programs. As with any viable institution, we must periodically review what works well and what frankly cannot sustain itself. This is especially true during times of financial stress caused by the current economic environment.

In order to more effectively carry out our Mission to Protect and Preserve the Quality and Quantity of Water Resources; we are adjusting our structure and strategy to a more streamlined model for watershed stewardship organizations. First and foremost, GVA will do watershed advocacy *as a group*. The artificial distinction between the larger GVA organization and a single staff position is replaced with the principle that all employees share in GVA's advocacy efforts. To that point the staff position of Watershed Advocacy Director has been eliminated. Secondly, we will focus on bringing more watershed programs and watershed services to the community, and as advocates we will lead by example. Third, as we expand programs and services, we will continue our leadership in watershed management.

At this time, we recognize the years of committed service from John Hoekstra. He has been an active participant at countless meetings of municipalities and planning organizations. He has carried our message to politicians and state agencies, always championing the protection our watersheds. Our deepest gratitude and thanks go out to John.

In conclusion, GVA is poised for a successful decade of balanced growth. As our programs and services reach more of the community, so will our message.