



GREEN VALLEYS
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION

Fall 2014

Streamlines

*Schuylkill Water Stewards: the 2014 class of
volunteers*

*Forested Buffer Restoration Continues While
Legislators Undermine Buffer Rules*

Grants support Nature-Inspired Infrastructure

50th Challenge Fund Update

2014 Excellence in Conservation Award

Schuylkill Highlands Cluster Monitoring

GREEN VALLEYS WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION at
WELKINWEIR

The mission of Green Valleys Watershed Association is to protect, preserve, and restore the natural waterways of northern Chester County. We inspire, educate, and involve our community to make a difference for our generation and for generations to come.

Welkinweir -- Our headquarters in East Nantmeal Township, Chester County, is a spectacular property which showcases our organization's Mission. Originally home of founding members Everett and Grace Rodebaugh, the 197 acres of permanently preserved land features a 55-acre arboretum, ecologically diverse wetlands, forested riparian buffers, meadows, and forest habitats. The property hosts many of our environmental education programs, along with an ever-growing collection of sustainability demonstration projects.

Weekday visiting hours and information on page 2.

1368 Prizer Road Pottstown, PA 19465
Phone (610) 469-4900
Fax (610) 469-4990
E-mail gva@greenvalleys.org
Web www.greenvalleys.org

Officers

Ed Bacon- President
Allen Heist- Vice President
John Eldridge- Treasurer
Jo-an Rehtin- Secretary

Staff

Victoria Laubach- Executive Director
victoria@greenvalleys.org
Dawn White- Education Coordinator
dwhite@greenvalleys.org
Michael Bullard- Watershed Science Coordinator
mikeb@greenvalleys.org
Kelsey Stanton- Communications Coordinator & Watershed Restoration
kelsey@greenvalleys.org
Margot Taylor- Watershed Restoration Coordinator & Nature Educator
margot@greenvalleys.org
Elaine Armbrust- Bookkeeper
elaine@greenvalleys.org

Cover Image:

The French Creek near St. Peters Village in autumn.

© 2013 by Ed Bacon. All rights reserved.

From the Director

We are proud of our fifty years of achievements. At our Annual Celebration, Chester County Commissioner Kathi Cozzone, on behalf of the County Commissioners, recognized this landmark anniversary with a citation (*excerpted here*): *"The Board of Commissioners, County of Chester, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania congratulates the staff, board members, and volunteers of Green Valleys Watershed Association on the occasion of the organization's 50th anniversary, and thanks them for their commitment to serving the citizens of Chester County."*

We thank you, our members and supporters, for your dedication to Green Valleys and its mission to preserve, protect, restore, and advocate for our streams. In 1979 when Dr. Ralph Heister became the organization's second president, he recognized Green Valleys' potential to be a leading force in the improvement of our environment and to become active in its defense and preservation. While the issues that affect our streams and other natural resources may change over time, it remains our mission to defend and preserve the resources of our area that we so greatly value.

We embark on our next fifty years with many strong and growing programs & services, including the three-year William Penn Foundation's Delaware River Watershed Initiative. The DRWI is an ambitious collaboration of leading conservation organizations who are aligning their work to protect land, restore streams, test innovative approaches in ecologically significant places, and monitor results over time in the Delaware River Basin.

Yours in the watersheds,



Thank you to our Annual Celebration supporters!

Special thanks to our event sponsors: PECO; David & Cherie Zelinger; French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust; John Funk & Elaine FitzSimons; Lawrence & Harriet Stone; National Penn Bank; Caroline Amidon; Ed & Jane Bacon; Joan Baker & Ben James; Rob Beideman of Bartlett Tree Experts; Caryl Ann & Stephen Cooper; Kate & Kell Damsgaard; John & Mary Ellen Eldridge; Ralph & Terri Heister; Elaine Husted; Carl Landis, CPF; Victoria Laubach & Michael Bullard; Jim & Joan Moore; Gary & Anne Murphy; Lawrence & Eleanor Newman; Christopher & DeeAnne Orzechowski; Senator John Rafferty; Jo-An & Larry Rehtin; and Glenn & Nancy Wenger.

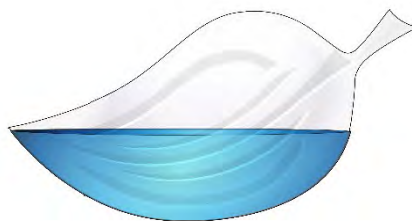
We thank Chari Towne of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network for giving a fascinating presentation at our Annual Celebration, about the ground-breaking restoration of the Schuylkill River in the mid-20th century. Chari's presentation was made possible by a grant from the Consortium for Scientific Assistance to Watersheds (C-SAW). And **Congratulations** to our 50/50 Raffle winners, Colleen & Duane Stanton!

Save the Date



Our **Holiday Open House** will take place on **Sunday, December 7, from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. at Welkinweir.** Our lovely home will be festively decorated by the Conestoga Garden Club and Owen J. Roberts horticulture students. Spread the holiday cheer by bringing an appetizer or dessert to share the bounty! Donations are welcome; please RSVP at (610) 469-4900 or gva@greenvalleys.org. *Photo courtesy of Jack Paolini.*

Don't forget to support our 50th Anniversary Challenge Fund!



50th Anniversary Challenge Fund Update

Challenge Grant: \$50,000
Matching Funds: \$22,000
Progress: 44%!

We are **44% of the way to our Challenge Fund goal**, where we are raising an additional \$50,000 to match the \$50,000 challenge presented to us by our members, George & Christy Martin and Harriet & Larry Stone! If supporters and members like you help us meet our goal, our generous donors will match the funds dollar-for-dollar. In the weeks ahead, look for our **2014 Annual Appeal** in the mail, which will go towards reaching our Challenge Fund goal. The Fund will help ensure that Green Valleys is able to keep our watershed stewardship, science, and education programs going strong for the next 50 years and beyond. Please contribute if you have not already!

Water Quality Monitoring Plan Implemented

Over the past 15 months we have been working with our partners in the Schuylkill Highlands Cluster to design and implement a comprehensive monitoring program. The plan uses several strategies which together will be providing detailed water quality information at many places throughout the watersheds. With this information, we can understand ongoing trends, the relative success of conservation programs, and quantify existing & emerging threats to our watersheds. Look for a full report on the monitoring plan in our winter issue of *Streamlines*. –Michael Bullard



2014 Excellence in Conservation Award

Congratulations to Michael Bullard for receiving the 2014 Excellence in Conservation Award presented by the Schuylkill Highlands CLI, recognizing him as an “outstanding Professional Leader in the Schuylkill Highlands Conservation Landscape”. Michael has been Green Valleys’ Watershed Science Coordinator since 2011.

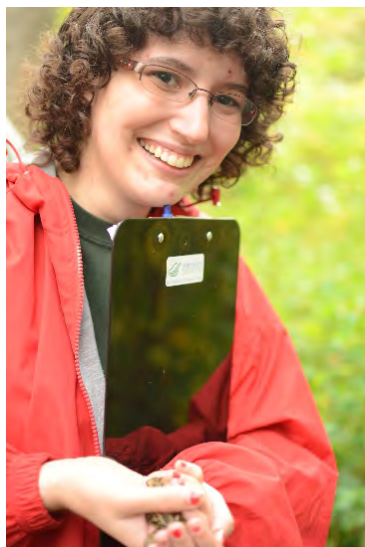
Schuylkill Water Stewards: A Review of Our 2014 Class of Volunteers!

Our first class of Schuylkill Water Stewards (SWS) will soon be graduating! These citizen scientists will be working within the William Penn Foundation’s Schuylkill Highlands and Middle Schuylkill Clusters. A collaborative effort of partners, under William Penn’s Delaware River Watershed Initiative, recruited and taught SWS about the importance of healthy watersheds and the impacts of pollution on them; water quality & in-stream habitat monitoring; natural resource conservation; riparian buffers; and the roles volunteers can perform. Lessons have taken place in locations throughout our focus area, and have included both in-class learning and field work in and around streams. The diversity of the volunteers’ backgrounds and experience is astonishing but they are all united by their deep interest in watershed health, and an enthusiasm to learn how to study and protect it.



The first class introduced the Foundation’s initiative to protect and restore the Delaware River watershed as a source of drinking water for millions of people from the Foundation’s Watershed Protection Program Officer, Clare Billett. Throughout the classes, volunteers gained an understanding of how their work within the SWS program would connect with conservation and restoration efforts within the Schuylkill River watershed, the Delaware’s largest tributary. Guest speakers, such as Jan Bowers, Chester County Water Resources Authority, underscored the importance of monitoring water quality to determine the need for and efficacy of watershed conservation; while Chari Towne, Schuylkill Watershed Specialist for the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, took volunteers on a virtual tour of the Schuylkill’s watershed character and history; and Valley Forge Trout Unlimited members Frank Donohoe and Pete Goodman spoke about the importance of volunteer action to protect our water resources.

At the completion of their training, each SWS is required to fulfill 20 hours of volunteer time, collecting water samples at a stream site within one of the two clusters that Green Valleys or the Academy of Natural Sciences will test for chemical and microbiological parameters. Stewards may also elect to participate in habitat assessments, stormwater monitoring, or macroinvertebrate collection. Their data will be utilized within the Delaware River Watershed Initiative to evaluate the long-term health of the Schuylkill’s tributaries, and will hopefully lead to future conservation projects in Berks & Chester Counties. We look forward to working with this and future classes of volunteer stewards, and to growing the capacity of the team for years to come! –Victoria Laubach & Kelsey Stanton



© Tom Davidock, PDE

Volunteers at work: Planting Trees to Protect Streams

In 2010 we initiated our Watershed Restoration Program, which focuses on restoring the streamside forest cover that once dominated Chester County's landscape along headwater streams. These forests are critical to protect water quality. So how are we doing? Extremely well: **from spring of 2010 through November 2014, over 6,424 trees and 227 shrubs have been planted, restoring nearly 1.3 miles of stream buffers in the French and Valley Creek watersheds. Wow!**

This work was accomplished with the help of nearly 1,000 volunteers, including employees from area businesses; community group members, our own Summer Nature Day campers; and high school & university students. Our volunteers, through the simple act of planting a tree (or 10) demonstrate they care about the land and its natural resources.

Our accomplishments would not have been possible without strong relationships with partner organizations such as Open Lands Conservancy, Valley Forge Trout Unlimited, Valley Forge National Park, French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust, Tredyffrin Township and



Top right: volunteers from Siemens' Green Team at Valley Creek preserve. *Middle:* AmeriCorps volunteer at Crabby Creek in the Valley Creek watershed.



their EAC, Camp Hill Special Schools, Bartlett Tree Experts, PA Landscape & Nursery Association, West Vincent Township, and the Valley Creek Coalition. Our funders—Tree Vitalize, DCNR, PA Horticulture Society, and an anonymous foundation—have helped us to make lasting impact.

We invite readers to visit us on Facebook to see our volunteers at work. If you have a stream that might benefit from a riparian buffer planting, please send an email to: margot@greenvalleys.org

—Margot Taylor

Past Forward, Part II

*Editor's note: This is a continuation of Susan Charkes' narrative in honor of Green Valleys' 50th Anniversary. In this section we continue to answer the question: **How has Green Valleys created an organization that continually works toward a better future?***

Advocacy and Partnerships. The "natural beauty and rural landscape" that still characterizes northern Chester County area today is no accident. It exists today because from the very beginning, so many people dedicated themselves to protect the future of the region by speaking up when it counted – before the future could be decided differently.

Advocacy means giving voice, and there are many times when a single voice is the one that is heard. A single voice can be amplified by partnering with other organizations to build on shared values. As described by Executive Director Bill Leber in 1981, "The task...is to masterfully weave volunteers, health officials, irate homeowners, builders, businessmen, scientists, and politicians, to work together, to iron out conflicts, and come to a consensus on the proper alternative action to insure a quality environment."

In its early years the Association was a solo voice in the region, the first to raise awareness of local issues such as the potential impact of a re-routed Route 29 on Pickering Creek. In the 1980s Green Valleys led a successful effort to designate much of French Creek as a Scenic River, which gives it regulatory protection from many activities that could degrade water quality. Green Valleys also worked with area coalitions on such issues as toxic waste, exemplified by the successful campaign to close the Knickerbocker Landfill. *(Continued next page)*



Phoenixville Area Middle School students, led by Margot Taylor, plant perennials in a bioswale installed near the school cafeteria to capture precipitation, improve drainage, and support pollinators such as the monarch butterfly. Phantom TV, the school district's student-run media club, will follow the bioswale's progress in a student-filmed documentary.

This project was made possible by grants from WPSU/Penn State Public Media's *Water Blues Green Solutions* initiative; the Captain Planet Foundation; the Schuylkill Highlands CLI mini grant program administered by Natural Lands Trust & PA DCNR; milkweed plants were donated by Monarch Watch's *Bring Back the Monarchs* program, funded by the Natural Resources Defense Council.

(Continued from previous page) The credibility gained by early successes increased Green Valleys visibility and influence, drawing the Association into larger issues such as wetland loss. [“GVA made a positive impact by preventing the destruction of sensitive upland wetlands and educating the general public and municipal officials about the importance of wetlands for wildlife, flood protection and water quality,” recalls John Brunner, Executive Director 1989-1992.]

Partnerships are forged over time. The Association has worked with countless municipal, county and state officials to implement wise land-use planning and natural resource protection. This entails hours poring over documents, working with experts, testifying at late-night meetings, speaking with community groups and individual homeowners.

From its start as a watershed association whose purview crosses political boundaries, Green Valleys has been at the forefront of advocating for regional planning: encouraging municipalities to coordinate land use to halt the fragmentation of the landscape and to protect land at a watershed scale.

Green Valleys is now partnering with dozens of other regional organizations to optimize natural resource protection in future planning for the Schuylkill Highlands, the region that comprises the upper watersheds of the Schuylkill River and its tributaries.

Individual Involvement. While the Association has professional staff and a dedicated Board, our most important asset is our members and volunteers who are passionate about protecting the local environment. A community creates its own future through individual actions. In 1979 Ralph Heister, who followed Everett Rodebaugh as President, characterized the Association as “a local group of like-minded citizens democratically involving itself in the tough environmental issues with which we are confronted.” The issues that individuals have gotten involved in over the years have shaped the way we live now, by limiting land development, shutting down polluting sites, and obtaining protection for streams.

An association gives individuals a greater voice. It also creates opportunities for engagement. Early in its history the Association recognized the value of volunteers, with the Stream Watchers program. Volunteers acted as a “first alert” system to report pollution incidents to state and local officials. In the 1980’s the Association enlisted Wetland Watchers, who were trained by biologists to alert officials to illegal wetland filling.

Creating the Next Generation of Environmental Stewards...and there’s *always* a next generation.

“We expect to organize a junior unit,” announced Everett Rodebaugh in that first newsletter. “French Creek is fitted for both fun and learning. We intend to keep it that way.”

Building the future by engaging and educating young people has always been critical to our success. Every generation was once “the next generation.” The high school students that the Association involved with watershed assessment in 1964 are the old guard now.

Educational programs have evolved over the last 50 years. We still work with students at schools. Beginning in 1976 when GVA hired

Bill Leber as our first staff educator, we have provided education programs that teach young people not just to care about nature, but to love it, to encourage them to become lifelong stewards.

“The GVA is interested not only in the management of streams, the protection and growth of trees, but also the growth of our children into citizens truly concerned about their surroundings.” (Everett Rodebaugh, 1978). Combining learning with service makes students of all ages feel good about nature education. Planting trees and cleaning streams will no doubt be favorite projects far into the future.

And, what would Green Valleys be without summer camp? It is perhaps our most popular program in building the future. Young stewards are born here, learning to love nature as they’re immersed in nature play. As they mature, Green Valleys is still there to guide them and encourage their growth.

Kelsey Stanton, our Watershed Restoration Specialist, was inspired by her time at Summer Nature Camp to join her middle-school environmental club, which was and continues to be led by Green Valleys, to “learn to understand the ‘big picture’ with regards to protecting nature.” In high school she volunteered for stream cleanups. Even as a college undergraduate she interned at Welkinweir, and now she has returned as a staff member, communicating with members as newsletter editor, leading educational programs and organizing stream clean-ups. “I hope that my work will inspire young naturalists in the same way that Green Valleys has inspired me.”

Board member Whitney Graham began her Green Valleys career as a camper. Along with the thrill of finding pine cones and deer prints in the woods, she remembers “the horror...when I first learned what pollution was, and how it could get into the seemingly clean rivers in my community.” Using a model stream valley with sprinklings of dirt representing pollutants, the campers sprayed “rain” down the hills. “We watched dirt being washed into the little fake stream. It was the moment I discovered both the power of unintended consequences of human action, and my passion for not only enjoying, but protecting nature.” She returned as a counselor, taking young campers to scoop algae from the pond to see what tiny creatures hid within, reminding her of her own fun summer memories at camp. It was exciting to watch them make dozens of small discoveries every day about the plants, animals and water around them, just as she had years before.

Years later, she knew the perfect place to hold her wedding. “The young green of the woods ringing the pond highlighted the clear blue of the water, and created a beautiful, natural backdrop to a ceremony in the barn ruins. Welkinweir was a wonderful place to take an important step in my life, not only due to the allure of the lovely gardens, but because Welkinweir is the home of Green Valleys.”

Last, but not least...Love. A wedding is a fitting place to end this forward-looking retrospective. Ultimately the source of Green Valleys’ success in the future will arise from the same source as it has in the past. Just as we have for the past 50 years, and will continue for the next 50 and beyond, we will be developing and nurturing people’s love for the special place that is northern Chester County...just as the Association’s founders knew we would.



© Ed Bacon



© Ed Bacon



© Wendy Fox

From Here at Home...to Home at Welkinweir

In the beginning, Green Valleys operated in the time-honored fashion of most newly-fledged volunteer organizations: regular meetings at members' homes, and for larger meetings, wherever public space was available.

As membership and programs expanded, our organization sought a place to call home, initially renting space on the second floor of the West Vincent Township Building. In 1973, with the support of key board members, the organization purchased the circa-1860 Meetinghouse in Birchrunville. For nearly 25 years the Meetinghouse along the Birch Run was the center of activities, from office tasks to summer camp.

Everett and Grace Rodebaugh had acquired a 197-acre former farm in East Nantmeal in 1935 as a second home. With the same visionary sense that led them to found a watershed association, the Rodebaughs saw this property not as it was but as it could be, given time, devotion and love. They named the property Welkinweir, "sky-water" - appropriate to describe not only the beautiful valley but the expansive view of possibilities they saw here.

The Rodebaughs' love of history and nature, and their commitment to stewardship of the land, were given glorious expression at Welkinweir. They planted a variety of flowers, shrubs and trees; allowed native hardwood forests to take over fields that had been timbered or cleared for cultivation; and significantly expanded the farmhouse, whose original section dates to 1750. In 1976 they preserved the property with a perpetual conservation easement, with Green Valleys Association holding the easement.

Twenty-one years later, our organization's needs had grown, and we became the permanent owners of Welkinweir in 1997. The move gave Green Valleys a new presence in the community. "Welkinweir enables us to model the stewardship practices that we advocate", states Victoria Laubach, Executive Director. "It's one thing to read about rain gardens or landscaping for wildlife, but to be able to lean down and smell the flowers, or watch birds feed on berries in winter, enables the visitor to visualize doing it at home too."

Welkinweir enables the organization to reach out to the community. Visitors can explore trails that wind through the gardens to the woods and around the ponds and stream. "The more that people get outdoors and enjoy nature, the deeper their connection to the environment and the stronger their support for its protection," emphasizes Laubach. Most important for the future, Welkinweir is a child's paradise. "We've been able to greatly expand summer camp and nature education, and give children access to an incredible wealth of natural areas."

Welkinweir is also a tangible connection to Everett and Grace Rodebaugh that endures. By creating a beautiful place and protecting it with a perpetual easement, the Rodebaughs left us all a set of instructions for how to take care of this place they loved, and an inspiration for each of us to create the future that we envision.

Susan Charkes works as a freelance writer/editor, communications consultant, and in nonprofit management. She is the author and editor of several books & publications about the outdoors & land stewardship.

Support Welkinweir when you shop online for your garden!

Fall is the perfect time to plant bulbs for the spring! Now, when you shop online through www.bloominbucks.com, 25% of the proceeds will be donated to Green Valleys to support the estate & gardens of our headquarters. When you visit the website, select "Green Valleys Association of Southeastern PA" from the menu. You will then go to Brent & Becky's Bulbs website, where you can choose from a huge selection of bulbs, perennials, garden tools, and books. Whether you are beautifying your garden or searching for a gift, support Green Valleys and our beautiful home!

Visiting Welkinweir

The grounds are open to visitors **Monday - Friday, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.** Parking is available in the large parking lot west of the estate house. We may have special programs or private events occurring on weekends and we ask members who want to visit on the weekend, to **call during business hours** to inquire about availability. **We offer Saturday morning nature walks (see calendar) that are open to all, and we encourage participating in these walks.** We remind visitors bringing pets to **follow leash regulations and clean up after your dog (and encourage others to clean up after their dogs)** so that our policy of allowing dogs can continue.

Water Quality Programs for At-Risk Youth

In October, through a partnership with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA), Dawn White represented Green Valleys as a mentor for the Project SOLO program at Pottstown's Progressions School and Reading's ILEAD Charter School.

Schuylkill Outdoor Leadership Odyssey (SOLO) is an environmental education mentoring program that aims to provide hands-on educational opportunities that connect at-risk 9th and 10th grade students with the natural resources around their community. The program also introduces programming to spark interest in environmental careers by introducing them to professional mentors in the field. Schuylkill River Heritage Area (SRHA) received grant funding to carry out Project SOLO over a three-year timeline.

Green Valleys staff presented a program on water quality. Students at both schools witnessed the process of pollution using the hands-on Enviroscape™ watershed model, and examined live macroinvertebrates to learn how these aquatic insects are effective indicators of water health.

We look forward to this and other future projects with the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. The SHRA is managed by the non-profit Schuylkill River Greenway Association. For more information, visit <http://www.schuylkillriver.org>. -Dawn White



Thank you...

...to the Eddinger Family for their donation of a variety of children's craft materials. If you have unwanted items in your home or office that you think Green Valleys could use for our nature education programs, please contact Dawn White at (610) 469-8646.

Calendar

For information and registration, please contact Dawn White at 610-469-8646, or e-mail dwhite@greenvalleys.org.

November 22, 9:00a.m. - last Saturday Nature Walk of 2014

Enjoy a free, guided walk to observe wildlife in our nature sanctuary. Bring binoculars and field guides if you have them. *Registration not required.* Nature walks will resume in spring 2015.

Nature at Night - Hike & Campfire

Friday, January 30, 7:00-8:30p.m. (severe weather date Feb. 6)

Search for nocturnal animals and test your own senses in the darkness during a leisurely walk at Welkinweir. Listen for great horned owls calling for mates, look at the stars in the dark skies, and discover the wonders of nature on a winter night. Gather around a campfire for refreshments and stories. *Ages 6 to adult.*

Nature at Night fee per person: \$6 Green Valleys Members, \$8 Nonmembers. *Spaces limited. Advance registration required.*

Children's Programs at Henrietta Hankin, Phoenixville, ... and now Spring City Public Libraries!

Schedules for all three libraries will be available in December. Please look for our Environmental Education Events, under our Events Calendar at www.greenvalleys.org, or www.ccls.org for the schedule. Online registration is required at <http://www.ccls.org>.

Little Wonders & Kinder Nature Classes at Welkinweir

Little Wonders (*ages 2-3*) and Kinder Nature (*ages 3-5*) will resume in March 2015.

Please join us...

Your membership is an investment in clean water and healthy watersheds, for now and for future generations.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State ZIP _____

I would prefer to pay by:

Check (made payable to Green Valleys) Visa MasterCard

Discover American Express

Credit Card # _____

Exp. ___ / ___ CID _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Phone & e-mail needed to process credit card payments. We do not share your information with other charitable organizations.

Detach this form and mail with payment to:

**Green Valleys Watershed Association
1368 Prizer Road, Pottstown, PA 19465**

Online membership also available at www.greenvalleys.org

Dues and contributions are tax-deductible. Green Valleys is a registered charitable organization. A copy of registration and financial information is available by calling 1-800-732-0999. Registration does not imply endorsement.

MEMBERSHIP includes newsletter subscription, notice of special events and programs, and reduced rate to special programs, workshops, and summer nature camp.

Membership levels (please check one):

- Individual..... \$45
- Family..... \$60
- Naturalist..... \$100
- Environmentalist..... \$250
- Protector..... \$500
- Preservationist..... \$750
- Steward..... \$1,000

I am a: New Member Renewing Member

Please give to our 50th Anniversary Challenge Grant: \$ _____
Double your impact - Your gift will be matched up to \$50,000!

Please notify me of Green Valleys volunteer opportunities.

E-mail: _____

I prefer to receive my copy of Streamlines via: Mail E-mail

Visit our website at www.greenvalleys.org

Volume 50, Issue 4

FALL 2014

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

1368 PRIZER ROAD | POTTSTOWN, PA 19465

**GREEN VALLEYS
WATERSHED
ASSOCIATION**



Address service requested

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 82
Pottstown, PA