

Morrisville Riverfront Preserve

The Borough of Morrisville, in partnership with the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, is actively pursuing the restoration of 8.8 acres of land along the tidal portion of the Delaware River to be maintained as a natural preserve to maximize ecological assets and provide public passive recreation.

The Morrisville Riverfront Preserve is situated at the uppermost tidal area of the Delaware River, just below the “Falls of Trenton,” and the Special Protection Waters of the northern section.

Our objectives are to:

- Improve air and water quality;
- Improve wildlife habitat;
- Provide public access and educational opportunities; and,
- Improve floodplain function and flood protection.

In 2010, the site was re-zoned to natural lands designation and for community service use, and was preserved as open space. The area has received several herbicide treatments to combat Japanese knotweed and Chinese hops. Both species are highly invasive and choke out native plants.

In 2012, 110 native trees were planted throughout the Preserve. Our selection of species included sycamore, red maple, sweetgum, and river birch. Seeding with native grasses and herbaceous plants also took place throughout the Preserve in 2012.

Also in 2012, preliminary trails were established throughout the preserve. This required the rearrangement of large amounts of natural debris which had been left by floods. Trails may change over time as the site adapts to natural events.

In early 2013, large amounts of dumped concrete and asphalt were removed from the northern end of the Preserve. This area was then re-planted with a variety of 20 trees, 50 shrubs and 105 perennial plants and grasses, using only native species such as willow oak, river birch, red maple, red twig dogwood, clethra, winterberry, black-eyed susan, beebalm, and aster.

In spring of 2013, 139 native species of oak, birch and maple trees were planted.

The Morrisville Riverfront Preserve Management Plan has been completed, with adoption by the Morrisville Borough Council. This will guide our restoration efforts.

A sign to educate the public about the value of riparian buffers was developed by the EAC and installed at the northern entrance.

Funding for the project has been provided by the Bucks County Municipal Open Space Program, Coastal Zone Management Program (NOAA), Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds, Consortium for Scientific Awareness of Watersheds (PADEP), and Morrisville business and private donations.

Further aggressive restoration efforts are needed. Plans are for continued targeted herbicide treatments for Japanese knotweed, Chinese hops, and other invasive plants, essential tree plantings to inhibit the growth of invasive species, provide stabilization, and to provide habitat for wildlife. We need to continue to improve public access through trail work and evaluation for water access for paddlers on the river, as well as encouraging educational opportunities at the Preserve.

Morrisville Borough is currently seeking funding to build on our successes and continue our activities to protect and restore the ecosystem of the Delaware River watershed.

The Morrisville Environmental Advisory Council urges residents to become involved in activities surrounding the Preserve. Please contact Debby Colgan at 609-954-5360.

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