

Wilkes-Barre Riverfront Parks

Project Manager: Coreen Weilminster

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Grant Award: \$73,000

The Riparian Forest Improvement project enabled the Wilkes-Barre Riverfront Parks Committee to implement a comprehensive forest restoration of the 91-acre Wilkes-Barre Riverfront Parks located along the Susquehanna River. Water quality, environmental education, user safety, revegetation, preservation, and increased public awareness and stewardship opportunities have been achieved through this multi-phased improvement project using extensive community involvement.

Phase I focused on improving user safety. This phase was planned as Phase III but a strong microburst (windstorm) shattered the crowns of many trees and uprooted others throughout the park. The large number of damaged trees resulted in extremely dangerous conditions that needed immediate correction. An ISA Certified Arborist removed 145 trees and hazard-pruned 270 trees.

Phase II consisted of controlling thickets of Japanese knotweed that filled the understory, preventing native understory plants from regenerating and causing safety problems for park users due to poor trail visibility. Low-volume backpack sprayers were used to selectively spray 15-acres of Japanese knotweed. This procedure resulted in an 85-90% kill, and was followed by a September 1998 spot treatment.

Phase III consisted of planting native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants throughout the floodplain. All planting was done by volunteers and was overseen by the project manager, a Wilkes-Barre City Parks Horticulturist, and Penn State Urban Forester, Vincent Cotrone.

The project included a major volunteer effort, trail renovation work, education programs, marketing, and a Geographical Information System (GIS) map of the park and its improvements.

Project Value and Match

Grant Award Expended	\$71,652
Cash Contributions	\$4,814
In-kind Contributions	\$78,175
Total Project Cost	\$154,641

Significant Revisions to Scope of Work

The June 1997 microburst (windstorm) required a change in work priorities.

The issue of paying Davis Bacon wage rates caused hardship in this project, leading in a payment increase to the contractor of approximately \$4,500. It was later acknowledged that Davis Bacon wage rules did not apply.

Project Accomplishments

- Planted 76 large trees, 15 understory trees, 50 shrubs, and 746 herbaceous plants in the park.
- Improved 65 lowland forest acres through cleanup, invasive control, hazard tree remediation, trail improvements, and plantings.
- Improved 4,224-l.ft. of Susquehanna River corridor.
- Removed 145 hazardous trees of which 41 were damaged by the microburst and 56 were larger than 18" in diameter.
- Restored 15-acres (653,400-sq.ft.) of floodplain community through the eradication of dense Japanese knotweed stands.
- Removed 1,500 tires from the banks of the Susquehanna River.
- Reused approximated 250 cubic yards of wood chips from tree work.

- Recovered 3 log trucks of usable lumber and 20 cords of wood.
- Implemented recommendations of the *Riverfront Parks Master Reuse Plan* (RIRA), 1992.
- Removed hazardous Norway maples and replanted with native floodplain-tolerant trees.
- Created a park base-map using ortho-rectified aerial photos and mapped trails using GPS units.
- Held an Arbor Day and Pennsylvania Stream ReLeaf celebration.
- Developed and printed an informative marketing brochure.
- Worked with 1,536 volunteers who committed 1,415 hours of service.
- Provided riparian educational programs to 1,750 local school students, day care visitors, church, and scout groups.
- Featured 140 naturalist-lead interpretive walks that highlighted the project, the benefits of riparian ecosystems, site history, and the significance of Heritage Rivers designation.
- Held 12 special events that allowed the park naturalist to reach approximately 5,000 additional visitors.
- Penn State Master Gardeners donated over 200 volunteer hours.
- Achieved a 1 to 1.16 cost share ratio for the grant.

Partners' Contributions

Blaur Associates – Technical assistance
 Boy Scout Troop #281 – Boy Scout Eagle projects
 Chamberlain Landscaping – Donated plants
 City of Wilkes-Barre – City horticulturist, arborist & bobcat
 Coughlin High School Key Club – Student volunteers
 Curbin County Environmental Center – Student volunteers
 Dana Street Elementary School – Planting

Dincher & Dincher – Hazard tree assessment
 Fleet Bank – Planting
 Kanters Fruit Basket – Food
 Lee Park Elementary School – Volunteers
 Lynnwood Elementary School – Volunteers
 Luzerne County – Engineering services, interns
 Luzerne County Community College – Technical assistance
 Medico Industries – Backhoe
 Meyers High School Key Club – Volunteers
 MLB Advertising – Consulting services
 Nabisco Foods – Food donations
 Pitchard Environmental Consulting – Permits for wetland areas
 Penn State Cooperative Extension – Technical assistance
 Penn State Masters Gardeners Program – Garden construction
 Perennial Point – Technical assistance with plant selection
 Pope John Paul II School – Volunteers
 Postupack Painting Co. – Bobcat for trail work
 Pringle Elementary School – Volunteers
 United Way Day of Caring – Volunteers
 Wilkes University – Planting recommendations
 Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce – Celebration assistance
 Wilkes-Barre Community Service Center – Volunteers
 Wilkes-Barre City Crime Watch – Park patrols
 Wilkes-Barre Tomorrow – Trail work and planting
 Wyoming Valley Audubon Society – Birding program
 Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority – Portable potty