

## Susquehanna Riverlands Research & Education Center

### OVERVIEW

The Lancaster County Conservancy (Conservancy) completed an extensive environmental education needs assessment in Lancaster County. Its researcher – retired Principal of Martin Myelin Middle School, Mike Burcin – spoke with the public, other non-profits, and educators from every school district in the County. This effort uncovered a void in environmental education for all age groups.

In 2012, two adjoining tracts in Martic Township encompassing 82 acres came on the market. The larger tract, known as Camp Snyder, owned by the Boys and Girls Club of Lancaster was for sale; the smaller tract was eventually donated by the Schneider family and Mount Airy Lumber. These tracts host diverse habitats including a pond, wetland, forest, meadows, and native brook trout stream that support a healthy ecological landscape. The Conservancy felt it would also be the perfect place to showcase working models of stormwater Best Management Practices, which reduce the flow of polluted runoff into the Chesapeake Bay. The historic barn was in adequate shape to be converted into an environmental education center, and the stone farmhouse had the potential to provide security and some rental income to support property management. The tracts contain 2 miles of hiking trails and are located within walking distance of a middle school and less than 30 minutes from Lancaster City, offering numerous opportunities in nature for youth.



Children enjoying the SRREC at Climbers Run

### CHALLENGE

The tracts had exceptional potential. However, the Conservancy would not only need to acquire it, but also restore the barn inside and out, including replacing its plumbing, heating, air conditioning, spouting, electrical fixtures, bathrooms and kitchen. Furnishings to support education activities would have to be acquired. Flooding and erosion plaguing the barn needed to be managed. Three roofed camping platforms required remodeling; a bridge needed replacement; and parking needed improvements. The pond was in need of restoration and accessibility issues had to be addressed. A conservation and management plan would have to be completed to guide long term development of the property into an environmental education and research center to support our community needs.

### ACQUISITION:

**Lead Grant: DCNR**  
\$640,800

**Required Matching Gift:**  
40 Acres Appel Property

**National Trout Unlimited:**  
\$12,000

**Private Donations:**  
\$114,077

**Total Cost:**  
\$766,877

### Donation of Schneider 7 acres

### INITIAL SITE & EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:

Ann Barshinger Foundation  
Armstrong World Industries  
Becky Bumsted  
Chestnut Grove Foundation  
Hershey Company  
Joseph Bumsted Memorial Fund  
Ralph Goodno Memorial Fund  
Ressler Mill Foundation  
Shirley Garrett Stone Bequest  
Steinman Foundation  
Thomas & Georgina Russo Foundation  
William & Kit Gamber  
William Penn Foundation  
Willis & Elsie Shenk Foundation

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Churches  
City of Lancaster  
Community/Neighbors  
Donegal Trout Unlimited  
Environmental Organizations  
Garden Clubs  
Local Businesses  
Penn Manor School District  
PA Fish & Boat Commission  
PA Master Naturalist  
Scout Groups  
School District of Lancaster  
Solanco School District  
United States Fish & Wildlife Service  
Universities & Colleges  
Watershed Groups

### PLANNING 2016-2018:

DCNR Conservation & Management  
Planning C2P2 Grant  
Thomas & Georgina Russo Foundation



Additional thanks to the wonderful individuals, companies, and foundations that support the Conservancy's day-to-day operations, thus making this and all other projects possible!

## SOLUTION

Thanks to many wonderful partners, in 2012 the Lancaster County Conservancy acquired the Boys and Girls Club property, renaming it Climbers Run Nature Preserve. The Conservancy applied for and received a \$640,800 Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) grant; the required match was satisfied by a 40 acre land gift donated by Andy Appel, now designated Appel Preserve. A seven acre donation from the Schneider family brought the total acreage to 82. Trout Unlimited, William Penn Foundation, and private donors provided site development funding for an initial investment of \$800,000. DCNR supported educational programming on water and natural resource issues because Climbers Run is located within the Susquehanna Riverlands, a DCNR Conservation Landscape. The result was the founding of the Susquehanna Riverlands Research & Education Center (SRREC) located at Climbers Run Nature Preserve originated, which focuses on land and watershed research and education.



Donegal Trout Unlimited members teach youth about fly fishing at Climbers Run

## COMMUNITY RESULTS

Teachers, college professors, school administrators, parents, local residents, businesses, and neighbors have been on site and are excited by this property's potential. Since 2014, educational field trips and programs have been held at the Susquehanna Riverlands Research & Education Center for preschool through college-age students. Scout groups and community volunteers have donated their time working on service projects and enjoying the Center and Preserve. Environmental education programs such as the Water Quality Volunteer Coalition, volunteer activities, and community groups working with the Conservancy have been hosted onsite. In September 2014 and May 2015, the Conservancy organized two successful BioBlitz events with Millersville University and numerous partners to document Climbers Run plant and animal life. Learn more about a BioBlitz at [www.natureatlas.org/climbers/](http://www.natureatlas.org/climbers/). In 2017, the Conservancy received an \$84,540 grant from DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program, Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund and matching funds by the Thomas A. and Georgina T. Russo Foundation to create a Conservation and Management Plan for Climbers Run. Thanks to DCNR and the Russo Foundation, we are excited to share a long term plan to continue to improve and develop Climbers Run as a community hub within the Susquehanna Riverlands!

Learn more here: <http://lancasterconservancy.org/education/climbers-run-conservation-management-plan/>.

## Lancaster County Conservancy

SAVING NATURE

### Contact

**Lydia Martin, Director of Education  
Project Coordinator**

Lancaster County Conservancy  
117 South West End Avenue  
Lancaster, PA 17603  
717-392-7891 Ext 215

[lmartin@lancasterconservancy.org](mailto:lmartin@lancasterconservancy.org)

LAND • WATER • COMMUNITY



[www.lancasterconservancy.org](http://www.lancasterconservancy.org)



Before: stormwater issues



After: rain gardens & meadows filter runoff

### Exterior Work

- ✓ Doors
- ✓ Lighting
- ✓ New Entrance
- ✓ Siding
- ✓ Spouting
- ✓ Windows



Before: construction in lower level



After: new floor, walls, & donated furnishings

### Interior Work

- ✓ ADA Bathroom
- ✓ Electrical
- ✓ Flooring
- ✓ Framing
- ✓ Furnishings
- ✓ Heating/AC
- ✓ New Kitchen
- ✓ Plumbing



s



After: stream bank restoration

### Outdoor Work

- ✓ Dry Creek
- ✓ New Stage
- ✓ Parking Area
- ✓ Rain Garden
- ✓ Signage
- ✓ Stream Restoration

7/11/2018