

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Ending 2025 Strong: Delaware County Conservation District plants 700+ trees and shrubs with Watershed Protection Groups (DCVA) for Little to NO Cost in (2) in dense suburban area municipalities (Borough of Prospect Park & Ridley Township)**

RIDLEY TOWNSHIP, Pennsylvania (October 18, 2025) – 50 volunteers arrived across a morning and afternoon tree planting session at Frederick L. Mann Memorial Park in Ridley Township on Saturday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. The concerted effort from resident volunteers, municipal officials, county staff, and many other local environmental groups yielded a total planting of 530 trees and shrubs along Stoney Creek! In addition to the clear shade benefits that these trees will provide in years to come, these plants will help mitigate flood damage for downstream properties, enhance wildlife habitat, and improve stream water quality. This project compliments the since expanded, 2024 riparian buffer project that occurred a little over ¼ mile downstream in Prospect Park, which planted 175 native trees and shrubs to enhance the degraded Stoney Creek riparian zone, before its waters eventually drain to the Darby Creek. The Pennsylvania State Department of Environmental Protection lists this stream as impaired, meaning that the stream health is poor. The Delaware County Conservation District (DCCD) understands intentionally compounded project efforts like this, which range along multiple sections of the same stream, can have a significant positive impact on stream health and water quality.

In preparation for this project, Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Chris Cook met with Ridley Township Officials, Municipal Engineer, and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) USA Herbert W Best POST 928 leaders to request landowner permission and address any areas of concerns. Working closely with these watershed stakeholders, the planting plan for this project was developed in a way that could support existing multiple uses, while maximizing riparian buffer enhancement opportunities across the property. Ridley Township Public Works Department played a critical role in the management of dense stands of invasive Japanese Knotweed, *Reynoutria japonica* that previously crowded the streambanks prior to this planting effort, as well as donating and placing modified stone mulch for each of the plants! Overall, there were so many groups that were eager to get involved once the project got momentum. The DCCD wants to thank Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA), Penn State Master Watershed Stewards, County Office of Sustainability, Ridley Township Board of Commissioners, and Eastern Delaware County Stormwater Collaborative to name a few, for all the support on the day of planting. For what was scheduled to be a two-day event, the tremendous show out of local groups, municipal and county staff, and residents pushed the project to completion in one day!

PROSPECT PARK, Pennsylvania (November 8, 2025) – Over 20 volunteers gathered at Morton Homestead (State Historic Property) in Prospect Park on Saturday, November 8<sup>th</sup> for a planting of 180 shrubs and trees as part of a restoration effort to enhance the degraded tidal sections of the Darby Creek riparian zones.

This project was brought to life when Chris Cook, a Prospect Park resident and DCCD's Watershed Specialist, met with Paul K. Johnson, Prospect Park Councilman about invasive

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species, accelerated erosion, and flood concerns in the park. The site was also reported as problematic for flooding, based on the County's ongoing Act 167 Plan updates that have been actively soliciting input from local stormwater officials across the county. With these considerations and state historic property land use limitation, a riparian buffer restoration appeared to be an excellent choice for softening ongoing flood impacts at the site.

In preparation for the project, DCCD's Watershed Specialist worked closely with the Municipal Engineer to coordinate Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office approvals. Once approvals were in place, the Borough Highways Department were fantastic in their efforts to manage invasive species along the streambanks prior to planting. Coordinating with the Borough Parks & Facilities Officials, they were also able to purchase and help spreading woodchip mulch for each of the plants! In addition, given the sites neighboring proximity to the US FWS John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, the plant selection and placement of the riparian buffer was planned in a way to emulate the refuge wetland habitat and flood resiliency that would have historically existed on this property long ago. On the day of planting, DCVA, PA Sea Grant, Chester Ridley Crum Watersheds Association, Penn State Master Watershed Stewards, and County staff supported resident volunteers in completing the project!

Through a partnership with the Keystone10 Million Program backed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, DCCD was able to provide municipalities with technical assistance to obtain free trees and shrub saplings with plant protection tubes for environmental enhancement projects. Using the Conservation Planting Trailer through DCCD's involvement in the Southeastern PA Resource Conservation and Development Council, volunteers were the provided tools and safety equipment necessary to complete the projects. In addition, through partnering with local watershed protection nonprofit group, DCVA, who contributed to these projects in a major way, DCCD was also able to lead the project installations. For these projects, DCVA Operations Manager, Kyle Gaumann coordinated volunteer signups, augured holes for plants, and supported DCCD on implementing the planting plans. By combining these diversified partnerships, generous donations, and voluntary actions these projects were completed successfully at little to no cost!

Given the dense resident population, commercial spaces, and heavily trafficked roads surrounding these planting sites, DCCD is excited to see the community response overtime as these plants grow and reshape the look of the parks. All are welcome to contact DCCD for technical assistance, and municipalities like these, operating in the absence of an Environmental Advisory Council or Shade Tree Commission, are especially encouraged to coordinate with DCCD. DCCD acknowledges, to achieve these projects in areas with limited resources or conservation expertise, partnering with others is essential. Beyond these projects, with consideration to the land areas and streams that also drain to Darby Creek, these focused restoration efforts are a key component to rebalancing stormwater management in historically overdeveloped landscapes and concrete lined streams that currently promote intense flooding throughout the communities in the Darby Creek Watershed. With the long-term success of these

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projects planned for, DCCD hopes to replicate efforts like this across the county, including other parts of the Darby Creek Watershed.

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About Delaware County Conservation District – The mission of the Conservation District is to ensure the wise use of Delaware County’s natural resources and to protect and restore the natural environment through the conservation of its soil, water, and related resources. The Conservation District is a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of PA, with direction and participation from its Board of Directors, and operates under both state and county guidelines/requirements. The District works with land owners and land users, providing technical assistance and tools that support the management and protection of land and water resources. For more information, please visit [delcocc.org](http://delcocc.org).

About Darby Creek Valley Association – Darby Creek Valley Association is a nonprofit watershed organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the Darby Creek watershed and its resources, including water, wildlife, historical sites, floodplains, wetlands, and riparian zones. DCVA works to prevent all forms of pollution in Darby Creek and its tributaries. The conservation approach is achieved by protection, stewardship, restoration, education, and monitoring. For more information, please visit [dcva.org](http://dcva.org).

### Ridley Township Project Photos:



*Figure 1 County Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Chris Cook (Center) stands between Ridley Township Board Commissioner, Michael D. Capozzoli (left of Cook) among Public Work Leaders and the Darby Creek Valley Associations Operations Manager, Kyle Gaumann (far right).*



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*Figure 2 existing site conditions with thick stands of Japanese Knot weed and lesser celandine.*



*Figure 3 Pre planting site conditions with invasive plants managed by Township Public works department.*



*Figure 4 Post planting site conditions with enhanced site conditions that can promote the growth of native trees and shrubs.*



*Figure 5 Resident volunteers, neighboring community members, and mix of partners planting the site.*



*Figure 6 Ridley Township mowed lawn areas formerly inundated by invasive species has been managed in a way that promotes the success of native trees and shrubs. View looking across the stream to figure 5 area of planting.*

**-PHOTOS CONTINUED-**



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### Borough of Prospect Park Project Photos:



*Figure 7 County Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Chris Cook (in safety vest on left) stands between watershed protection group leaders Kyle Gaumann of DCVA, Danni Scott of CRC Watersheds Association, and Zach Nemec of PA Sea Grant. Also included is Borough Highways Department, DCCD staff members Stuart O'Riordan and Michelle Wheeler, and county resident volunteers.*



*Figure 8 Left to right, DCCD staff members Stuart O'Riordan, Kyle Gaumann of DCVA, and DCCD Watershed Specialist, Chris Cook unload Conservation Planting Trailer.*



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*Figure 9 Site has been prepared for planting.*



*Figure 10 Site planting completed.*

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