



December 13, 2023

Lower Delaware Wild & Scenic River Management Council  
c/o Delaware River Greenway Partnership  
Attn: Cindy Kunnas  
P.O. Box 15  
Stockton, NJ 08559

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Dear Cindy,

This letter contains the Project Closeout Report from the Friends of Washington Crossing Park for the 2023 Mini-Grant. We are pleased to say that the “Ecological Restoration at the Upper Park” project has progressed to completion pending the seeding of areas that will occur after December 15, 2023, which is detailed in this report. The goal of the project was the removal of invasive plant species and the replenishment of native species at the Upper Park, which consists of the Thompson-Neely Farmstead and Grist Mill. The results of this project in restoring and strengthening the natural fauna which will be seen in the coming spring and for years to come. Not to mention, the area can now be utilized better for educational programs and recreation as part of a larger initiative.

Work began in the fall of 2023 with the planting of trees and shrubs, which were ordered from a nearby grower. We purchased fifty-five plants of ten species, the largest was a Swamp White Oak which was planted near the base of a dead Ash tree to replace its shady canopy in one of our sheep pastures that borders the canal. A grove of eight Pawpaw and five American Plum trees was installed surrounding a small clearing by the creek bank. Along the path that leads from the Thompson-Neely House to our Grist Mill, we planted four Serviceberry, two Black Chokeberry, three Red Chokeberry, and three Elderberry shrubs.

Elderberry was also planted along the old raceway in a location where we had discovered it growing naturally. A few plants were there but were nearly choked out by invasive bittersweet vines. We were able to cut back the overgrowth to expose the existing elderberries, as well as add several more to create a sizable grove.

Six American Persimmon trees were established along another section of the trail closer to the Thompson-Neely House. We planted American Hazelnut shrubs both in a naturalistic arrangement down by the creek and in a straight-line hedge planting nearer to the house. An American

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for future generations*

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Washington Crossing, PA 18977  
215-493-4076  
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Plum was placed in our orchard area, to highlight some different ways that these species were used historically. Bayberry shrubs will be used in a hedge as well but will be planted later pending some other work needed to prepare that particular area.

Nylon tree wraps have been installed on all the plants with upright trunks as protection from Buck-Rub. Some of the shrubs that are more prone to Deer-Browse will also have temporary caging installed around them until they are sufficiently sized to survive on their own. To make the caging, we will be recycling some wire fencing that is no longer needed on a section of our pasture enclosure.

The project received additional support from various sources. Volunteers contributed significant efforts toward both the tree planting and the clearing away of invasive overgrowth. We had help from six individuals over five different days planting trees, working for about 30 hours. Several Friends staff members also assisted with various parts of the project. To ensure the longevity of the project, DCNR's Environmental Educator will be working with the Friends' staff to maintain the area. Matching funds from the Friends' 2023 Membership Drive also contributed to the project in addition to the Mini-Grant Award.

There had been a previous timeline change that was discussed with you regarding moving improvement to the trail surface to the summer of 2023 and all the planting of trees and shrubs to the fall of 2023. All other tasks had been completed on time.

With the change in the planting schedule, work on the project will continue after December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The most significant item is winter seeding, for which we have purchased seeds for a variety of native species. As we have planted the trees and shrubs, we have been clearing the ground beneath and around them, taking care not to disturb already existing native ground covers. One mix of seeds will be applied to this disturbed ground. We will also clean up the entire length of the creek bank inside the project area and apply a riparian seed mix along with a cover crop of annual ryegrass. A showy native wildflower mix will be used in meadows and embankments that will be in cooperation with DCNR's low-mow maintenance plan for the area. Winter is the ideal time to perform this work because the ground is naturally more exposed, and many native seeds need a period of cold before they will germinate. The monitoring and removal of invasive vines is another significant winter task, best done at this time of year to identify and access vines that may be climbing and strangling our trees. This job will be performed by staff and volunteers and annually done in the winter going forward.

Some challenges we encountered included difficulty digging in certain areas, faster-than-expected regrowth of some invasive species, and high deer-pressure. We have had to adjust to these conditions, but they have not impacted the overall project plan.

An unexpected benefit has been the discovery of numerous desirable native tree and shrub species that were already present but were hidden within tangled masses of vines. A significant number of hickory and maple saplings have been saved from strangulation and will be able to regenerate the forest canopy in the long term.

This week, we shared the project on social media and in January we will share in our next e-newsletter, reaching our 40,000+ followers and 13,600 subscribers. *(See Attachment 1)*

The project will impact both educational and recreational activities at the park. The trees will allow us to conduct programs on foraging, native plants, and historic landscapes. Their fruit will be used in programming demonstrating historic recipes and food preservation methods. The wildlife they support will benefit the ecosystem, and offer increased interest to park visitors through activities like birdwatching. The trail itself has already increased visitation to the farmstead, and with continued improvement to the surrounding area, we hope it will become even more popular.

Thank you so much for your support of this project! Together we have taken a positive step in restoring native plant species along Pidcock Creek to support a healthy ecosystem along this historic Delaware River tributary. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Martin  
*Executive Director*

**Attachment 1**  
**Facebook Post - December 11, 2023**

“The Friends have been the recipient of grant funding from the LDWSR for Ecological Restoration along Pidcock Creek. The funds allowed us to plant 55 native trees and shrubs, and sow a blend of native wildflower and grass seeds throughout this ecologically sensitive area. The species planted, including Pawpaw, Persimmon, Serviceberry, and Elderberry, represent plants that would have been foraged by early colonists to supplement what they could grow on their farmsteads. The planting is part of our ongoing improvement of the farmstead property, which has included management of invasive plants and improvement of the “Old Raceway Trail.” This trail follows the course of an abandoned raceway that once provided water to one of the Mills on the Thompson-Neely property.”

Along with the LDWSR logo, the following images were included in the post on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram:



**Attachment 2  
Project Images**



Historic Horticulturalist, Anna Davis (left) and Farmstead Manager, Ross Huetmaker (right), with the new Persimmon Trees.



Volunteers clearing invasive vines off of trees along Pidcock Creek.



Trees and shrubs purchased with grant funding.



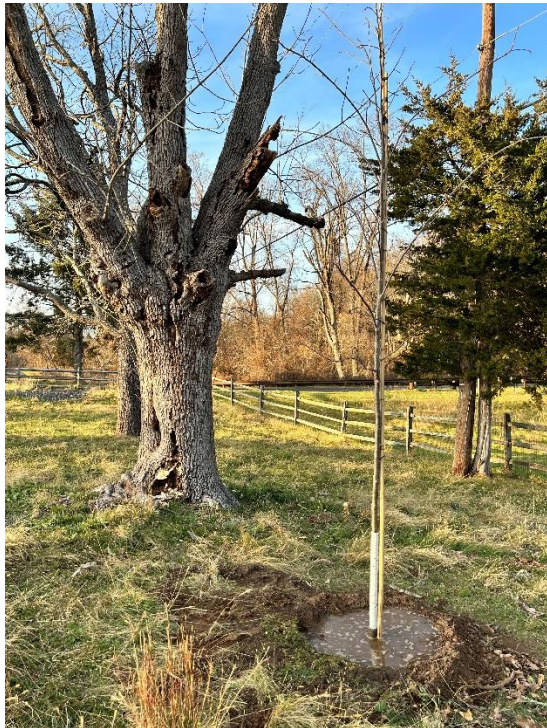
Scythe mowing of a field along the canal, one of the traditional methods demonstrated at the Farmstead.



Brush Huts used for the Park's military encampment program in front of the recently cleared creek bank



Volunteers planting a Serviceberry (left) and a Pawpaw (right).



The Oak Tree planted in the pasture, next to the dead ash tree it replaces