

## ACTION PLAN TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

### EXPANDING EXISTING EFFORTS

#### Educate Riparian Landowners

*Increase programs that educate landowners, particularly those who live along waterways, about the value of riparian buffer restoration projects, proper land care, natural turf management, native species, and other topics that enable them to use their properties to improve water quality. The education campaign could be customized to the landowners' communities and include site tours.*

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#### Background

Over large landscapes, compromised water quality is a daunting problem that often requires complex and expensive projects to remedy. While average streamside homeowners cannot individually solve water quality problems at the regional level, they can participate in a solution that is visible, enduring, and effective: incorporating native plants into their landscaping to restore their riparian buffer habitat.

Streamside plantings along barren buffer zones are a proven method of improving water quality. The aggregate outcomes of individual property owners managing their land to return it to a predevelopment ecology can have a similar impact. This is landscaping with a purpose: intentional practices that not only beautify a property, but also make it a functional contributor to the watershed ecosystem.

Birds can be a hook to engage a wider audience in conservation action, and this program will use people's love of birds and birding to demonstrate the value of healthy riparian habitat to bird life. Homeowners who sign up for a property management and monitoring program will be provided with a list of target species to monitor on their properties, giving them visible and measurable outcomes of their work, as birds will readily move to sites that can support them.

#### Anticipated Outcomes

Demonstrate best landscape practices and educate local homeowners in activities that can be conducted on their properties to drive watershed protection, including planting native species that contribute to a predevelopment stream ecology, removing invasive species,

#### Organizations that Could Move the Recommendation Forward

Organizations with experience in a variety of fields, including education; natural and physical sciences (particularly ecology, plant biology, ornithology, and hydrology); and landscape design, construction, and maintenance, can help implement this recommendation.

Organizations that map land cover or other factors that allow project partners to identify "hot spots" of water quality degradation in the Delaware River watershed can help identify communities to prioritize.

eliminating the use of synthetic pesticides, and reducing the use of fertilizers. Bird species will be used as barometers of ecological health and recruitment tools to engage new participants.

### Focus Areas

Focus areas will be determined based on map assessments of land cover. Two to three areas will be identified as project pilot sites in consultation with other partners.

### Program Components

All riparian homeowners will have access to educational materials, native plant resources, storytelling that demonstrates the practical application of streamside habitat improvement, and citizen science opportunities to track and report the presence of birds utilizing riparian corridors.

#### Anticipated Outcomes

Based on the metrics tracked:

Two short-term outcomes will be (1) a high homeowner use of the resources that are available to all riparian homeowners, and (2) the recruitment of a smaller group of highly engaged homeowners to participate in the more intensive property management and monitoring program.

A long-term outcome will be miles of consecutive or semi-consecutive riparian property returned to predevelopment conditions and maintained as such.

Landowners who agree to participate in a more intensive property management and monitoring program will be provided with a special registration that includes additional advanced members-only resources, as well as equipment and training to monitor the ecological health of their property.

#### Metrics Tracked

The program managers will evaluate the success of the program through several metrics, including the number of landowners reached and participating in the program, the number of miles of streams restored, and the changes in condition of participating streamside properties.