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Profile of a Conservationist

Julie Ulrich
Director of Urban Conservation

For more than eight years, Julie Ulrich has been working not only to establish an urban conservation program at the Pennsylvania/Delaware chapter, but also to help create a network of urban conservation programs across TNC where knowledge and best practices are shared. Thanks to these efforts, the chapter has recently reached a major milestone with the completion of the first of many green stormwater infrastructure projects in the city of Philadelphia—a project that has national implications thanks to Julie's commitment to scale.

"We can rebuild our cities with equitable access to nature's benefits," says Julie. "The knowledge we gain from our stormwater work here will be shared with our TNC colleagues around the world, helping to ensure cleaner waters for people and nature from Seattle to Beijing."

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A drone captures construction activities at the Holmesburg Baptist Church and Christian Academy in Northeast Philadelphia, where TNC is working with the landowner on a series of new green stormwater infrastructure projects. © Oak Leaf Media

Soak It Up, Philly!

By partnering with private, community-based landowners, The Nature Conservancy supports the Philadelphia Water Department's *Green City, Clean Waters* Program

TNC has partnered with the Holmesburg Baptist Church and Christian Academy in Northeast Philadelphia to implement a series of green stormwater retrofit projects that will capture stormwater runoff and improve water quality in Pennypack Creek and the Delaware River, helping to make our local waterways more fishable, swimmable and drinkable. Holmesburg is one of the city's oldest neighborhoods, with a rich history, and the Holmesburg Baptist Church has been serving the community since 1829.

Completed in September 2021, the projects will capture and clean an estimated 3.5 million gallons of stormwater annually by replacing impervious surface with green stormwater infrastructure that filters and slows runoff, allowing for better infiltration into the earth before it reaches Pennypack Creek and the Delaware River.

These projects were funded by the Philadelphia Water Department through a stormwater management incentive program grant, as well as contributions from the William Penn Foundation and other private donors.

Philadelphia can have healthy creeks and rivers again, but it will require innovative partnerships and investments at the community level—particularly in communities and neighborhoods that have historically been underrepresented and under resourced. TNC's collaboration with the Holmesburg Baptist Church and Christian Academy is a great example of how a global conservation NGO can help bridge gaps at the community level between private landowners and local municipalities.

To learn more, visit: nature.org/PAurban



Scott Wilson and Joseph Salva from Individual Abilities in Motion access the trailhead of TNC's Dick and Nancy Eales Preserve through a new wheelchair-accessible gate that was installed last summer. © Joseph Salva

Improving Preserve Accessibility

New partnership aims to improve access to TNC preserves for people with disabilities

Earlier this year, avid outdoorsman Scott Wilson set out to visit The Nature Conservancy's iconic Eales Preserve in Jessup, Pennsylvania—a place he has enjoyed many times over the years—but came up against an obstacle right at the start. An entrance gate that had been previously installed to deter ATV use on the preserve was making it impassable for people who use wheelchairs or similar mobility equipment. So, Scott—who now uses a wheelchair and is a member of the organization Individual Abilities in Motion (I AM)—reached out to TNC's Pennsylvania team to see if changes could be made.

That first contact kicked off a working relationship between the two groups to look at how accessibility could be improved at local TNC preserves, with Scott and others from I AM providing firsthand feedback. The first of those changes is a new gate at the Eales preserve that will allow wheelchairs, recumbent hand bikes, and other mobility equipment to access the trailhead.

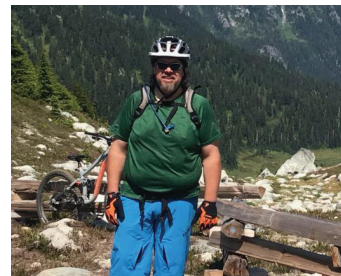
“Making places like nature preserves accessible opens up a lot of opportunities for people. It's important to improve accessibility wherever we can to allow the broadest range of individuals to experience what nature has to offer,” says I AM president Joe Salva, who is planning to join Scott for a trip to the preserve. “Just because an individual has a mobility impairment does not mean that they have less desire to enjoy the same places as everyone else does and experience all the beauty this area has to offer.”

I AM focuses on helping people with mobility impairments celebrate and develop their personal abilities so they can more fully engage with the world, making them a perfect partner in making TNC preserves in Pennsylvania and Delaware more accessible for all.

Learn more about other activities, events and assistance offered by I AM at: www.individualabilities.org

NATURE

PENNSYLVANIA/DELAWARE



TNC volunteer Rob Gregory while on a mountain biking trip in Whistler, British Columbia. © Rob Gregory

Volunteers Help Keep Our Preserves Open

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, most of our preserves have seen an uptick in visitors. People are seeking solace in the natural world. As we explore new ways to ensure better access to our preserves, like we are doing at the Dick and Nancy Eales Preserve, we'd like to take a moment to thank our incredible volunteers who dedicate their time to keeping our preserves open to all—volunteers like Rob Gregory, who found us through a connection to the local bike club that was helping maintain singletrack mountain biking trails at the Eales Preserve. Since then, Rob and other volunteers have spent more than 1,500 hours keeping the 20-plus miles of trails open and enjoyable for bikers and hikers alike.

“I got involved with TNC when Hubbard Bike Club was contacted about building trails for mountain biking/hiking on TNC's property,” says Rob. “I loved designing the trails from the beginning to end and seeing the end result—mountain bikers working with land managers to build trails for all users to enjoy. The hardest thing about trail building is the layout. You want highlights and views to be part of the experience. But you also need to do it in a sustainable manner that will be safe to the land. That's the hard part. Twelve years later and the trails are still strong.”