



Pennsylvania  
**Department of Environmental Protection**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**Shapiro Administration and Local Partners in Lancaster County  
Celebrate Stream Restoration Investments to Little Conestoga Creek**

*Blue Green Connector trail will provide recreation and environmental education to an  
environmental justice community*

*Project was funded in part by Growing Greener Plus Grant Program*

**Harrisburg, PA** – Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley and members of the Lancaster Clean Water Partners gathered at the Blue Green Connector Project today to celebrate stream and floodplain restoration investments on Little Conestoga Creek, including more than \$4 million in state funds, through the ongoing work of an innovative partnership led by the Little Conestoga Creek Foundation and Steinman Foundation.

The Blue Green Connector in Lancaster County is a prime example of how sustained investments through programs like Growing Greener are restoring watersheds, reducing pollution, and increasing outdoor recreational opportunities across Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley and project partners offered remarks and toured a stream restoration site as part of DEP's Earth Week events.

"DEP is proud to be part of the ongoing effort to restore Little Conestoga Creek, reduce pollution, improve flood resiliency, and create the Blue Green Connector. This project will provide environmental education in a recreational setting, strengthening the community's connection to nature," said **Acting DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley**. "Children who have meaningful environmental experiences become better stewards of our natural resources as adults, so it was fitting to visit this project serving an Environmental Justice area as we celebrate Earth Week."

The Shapiro Administration invested more than \$4 million in the ongoing environmental restoration work in the Little Conestoga watershed, including more than \$3 million in Growing Greener grants, which helped secure matching federal funds, and a Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Block Grant of \$440,000. DEP has also provided technical assistance and streamlined permitting oversight for the project. With this essential funding, the project has completed 50% of the restoration planned for the Little Conestoga Creek along the Blue Green Connector to date.

Little Conestoga Creek is a priority watershed under Lancaster County's CAP. The ongoing Blue Green Connector project includes the restoration of 25 acres of floodplain and wetland along 1.3 stream miles; the removal of 112,000 cubic yards of legacy sediment, which are soils that eroded from upstream areas; the planting of native vegetation and habitat creation for wildlife; and the annual reduction of 4 million pounds of sediment, 1,541 pounds of phosphorus, and 7,752 pounds of nitrogen from the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

"Lancaster's shared vision of clean and clear water by 2040 needs projects like the Blue Green Connector," said **Allyson Gibson, Executive Director of Lancaster Clean Water Partners**. "This project is at a scale that helps us achieve not only local water quality improvements as outlined in our CAP, but also inspires innovative thinking and requires reaching out to neighbors, inviting them to learn about and live in this system together."

The Blue Green Connector will include 3.44 miles of multi-modal, accessible trail, linked to the fifteen-mile Greater Lancaster Heritage Pathway and five miles of existing trails, serving 225,000 residents in the Lancaster metropolitan area. A trailside environmental learning lab with interpretive stations, demonstration areas, outdoor learning spaces, and public art is planned.

"We hope that this project catalyzes others to address water quality and ecosystem health throughout Lancaster County, and recognize that recreational and educational opportunities improve the quality of life in our community," said **Shane Zimmerman, CEO of the Steinman Foundation**.

Growing Greener is the largest single investment of state funds in Pennsylvania's history to address critical environmental concerns. Growing Greener grants can be awarded to watershed groups, local or county government, municipal authorities, county planning commissions, county conservation districts, council of governments, educational institutions, or non-profit organizations. Grantees have up to three years to implement their projects.

For more information on the Growing Greener Plus Grant Program, application guidance, and to apply, visit DEP's website, [Growing Greener Plus Grants Program](#).

For more information, visit the [Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's website](#), or follow DEP on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [Instagram](#), or [LinkedIn](#).

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