



ANNUAL REPORT 2015

BOROUGH OF KUTZTOWN ENVIROMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION

2015 Membership

The Kutztown Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) members at the beginning of 2015 were Jeri Carroll, Tara Erney, Becky Weller, Todd Underwood, and Nathan Lewis. At the January EAC meeting, officers were elected as follows: Jeri Carroll – Chair, Todd Underwood – Vice Chair, and Tara Erney – Secretary. For 2015, the Borough Council Liaison was Kevin Snyder. Two seats on the commission were vacant at the start of 2015. Shireen Massoudi joined the EAC as the student member in March 2015 and Joseph Sebzda filled the remaining vacancy in September 2015. Shireen Massoudi resigned from the EAC following her graduation from Kutztown University in December 2015. Thus, six seats of the EAC were at the end of 2015, with the student seat remaining vacant.

Report on Progress Toward Goals

In January 2015, members of the EAC decided to set specific goals for the year. They are as follows:

- 1) Host a “Trail Day” to raise public awareness about the Sacony Creek Trail.
- 2) Complete the North Park management plan.
- 3) Conduct one trash clean-up per season along the Sacony Creek Trail.
- 4) Run at least two environmental workshops, such as a rain barrel workshop.
- 5) Develop an energy audit plan.
- 6) Facilitate the installation of the riparian buffer signs in areas surrounding the Sacony Creek.

Progress Toward Annual Goals

1) *Host a “Trail Day” to raise public awareness about the Sacony Creek Trail.* Sacony Creek Trail Day was held on June 13, 2015 next to the Kutztown Pool. Activities included guided walks along the trail with an introduction to local flora and fauna by Todd Underwood and Nathan Lewis; scavenger hunt; raffle; tree rubbings; fairy house building; and pelt, feather, shell, and skeleton display. Dogwood seedlings were given to all attendees. Approximately 20 people attended.

2) *Complete North Park management plan.* At the December 2015 meeting, the EAC unanimously approved the North Park management plan prepared by Larry Lloyd of Berks Nature. The document serves to incorporate green aspects to the management of this community asset so that it may provide safe and naturally interesting recreational and educational opportunities while minimizing maintenance costs and energy usage. Some of the most immediate issues to be addressed include posting of boundary lines, establishing a riparian

buffer, planting of native species in compromised areas, and signage. The management plan will be presented to the Public Works committee and borough council for approval in early 2016.

3) *Conduct one trash clean-up per season along the Sacony Creek Trail.* A trash clean-up was conducted in March with many students from the KU Environmental Philosophy class in attendance. The KU Geology Club organized a clean-up in November 2015.

4) *Run at least two environmental workshops, such as a rain barrel workshop.* The EAC had a table at the April 18, 2015 Kutztown Block Party. Grab bags made of upcycled t-shirts containing conservation information, recycled newspaper pencils, and toilet leak tabs were distributed. The group pursued a rain barrel workshop for 2015 but was unable to secure a facilitator. The EAC would like to coordinate a rain barrel workshop for 2016.

5) *Develop an energy audit plan.* With the permission of borough council, the EAC worked with the finance office to collect data on each borough facility's electricity and heating fuel consumption. Compiling the data into spreadsheets and graphs for a utility bill analysis, the EAC then consulted with Stacy Richards of SEDA-COG's Energy Resource Center. While all of the facilities could benefit from more efficient processes or equipment, no facilities presented as clear candidates in critical need of an energy audit. To proceed with an energy audit, the EAC would need to consult with an experienced and knowledgeable outside source. The group decided to table any further research and data collection until there is a consensus from council and borough management that an energy audit should be pursued.

6) *Facilitate the installation of the riparian buffer signs in areas surrounding the Sacony Creek.* The installation of the riparian buffer signs, purchased in November 2014, was not possible in 2015 due to the workload of the Public Works department.

Other Notable Work

The EAC continues to lead the work of maintaining the borough's natural spaces through direct efforts and coordinating of volunteers. In April 2015, the KU Environmental Biology class removed invasive shrubs along the Sacony Creek Trail and planted 150 native trees and shrubs in the same area. The EAC purchased seedling native trees and shrubs in spring and raised them over the summer for fall planting. In June, EAC members, KU students, and local residents removed seventeen bags of Canada thistle from the meadow at the south end of the Sacony Creek Trail. In spring and summer, trail volunteers removed invasive plants and planted native wildflowers. The Kutztown Garden Club and sixth grade students from Kutztown Middle School were particularly active in these efforts. In October, EAC members and volunteers (KU students, Kutztown Garden Club members, and trail volunteers) planted native trees and shrubs along the Sacony Creek Trail. In October and November, Larry Lloyd of Berks Nature, KU Students, and EAC members removed invasive trees and shrubs and replaced them with native trees and shrubs in North Park. The public works department chipped up the branches of woody plants removed to be used as mulch in smothering other invasive plants. In addition to planting, the EAC purchased and installed fencing around some trees and shrubs at the trail and North Park to prevent the deer and rabbits from destroying these plants. At North Park, the Blandon Boy Scout Troop 183 removed all the invasive trees and shrubs found within the walking loop in

December 2015. Public Works continues to consult the EAC on the health of trees in the Kutztown Park and recommendations for new plantings.

In 2015, the EAC pursued grants for several projects. A grant has been awarded to cover supplies for Trail Day 2016. A Keep America Beautiful grant for recycling in the park was applied for, but not awarded. A DEP grant for signage and additional plantings at North Park was applied for in December 2015.

Summary and Future Directions

In 2015, the Kutztown EAC completed its eighth year of meetings and activities. The commission worked diligently to make progress on many of the annual goals. Noteworthy accomplishments were: completing the draft of the North Park management plan, removal of invasive species and planting of native species along the Sacony Creek Trail and in North Park, advising on the health of trees in the park, and hosting Sacony Creek Trail Day and a table at the block party, and securing a grant for the 2016 Trail Day. Entering 2016 with six seats on the commission filled, the EAC looks forward to continuing to investigate environmental issues affecting the Borough of Kutztown, and coordinating efforts with Public Works and Borough Council to effect meaningful change. The EAC will continue to address and revise its annual goals based on progress and new business as it arises.

Respectfully submitted,

Tara Erney
January 4, 2016