



## **ANNUAL REPORT 2025**

### **BOROUGH OF KUTZTOWN ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMISSION**

#### **2025 Membership**

The Kutztown Environmental Advisory Commission (EAC) members for 2025 included Kathy Kelly, Randall Wert, Todd Underwood, Lisa Foreback, Michael Downing, and Tommy Lazorik. Lisa Ladd-Kidder served as Borough Council Liaison for 2025. At the January EAC meeting, officers were elected as follows: Todd Underwood, Chair; Randall Wert, Vice Chair; Kathy Kelly, Secretary. Initially, two seats on the commission were vacant at the start of 2025. Downing joined in July and Lazorik filled the student position in October.

#### **EAC Goals for 2025**

In 2025, EAC members agreed to focus on broad goals related to progress in four main committees: 1. Community Education, 2. Air & Water Quality, 3. Refuse & Recycling, and 4. Parks & Trail.

#### **Progress Toward Annual Goals**

##### *Community Education Committee*

1. Community Education Committee. Goal - Communicate and/or educate borough residents and local media (when needed) on pertinent environmental issues.

Efforts related to community education include keeping the EAC webpage current and occasional posts to the EAC Facebook page. A white paper, written by committee member Kathy Kelly was posted for public educational purposes. The title is "A Guide to Addressing PFAS and Drinking Water." Lisa Ladd-Kidder provided a link to a PFAS pamphlet which has been posted on the EAC Facebook page.

Todd Underwood gave a presentation to the Girl Scouts on April 23 at the middle school. The topic was "The Importance of Native Trees" and helped guide the Girl Scouts to choose a tree to plant in the Main Street park. Todd supplied the tree and gave instructions on how and where to plant the tree. The Girl Scouts planted a Red Oak in the park in May and kept it watered through the summer.

In early May, Todd Underwood led a nature walk along the Sacony Trail for Mrs. Moyer's first grade students at Kutztown Elementary School.

Todd Underwood and Greg Setliff, KU Biology Professor, led a night insect study for the KU Entomology class at North park on September 5th.

In October, Michael Downing asked about additional public education efforts, including setting up tables at community events and the creation of brochures. These efforts are under consideration.

Cheyenne Friscia and another KU student put together a pamphlet on North Park, including its history and a map. The committee discussed laminating and posting at North Park and possibly developing a similar one of the Sacony Trail area in town. Another suggestion was to have these pamphlets printed and sold for a small fee as a fund raiser or even just to cover the costs so that the information is easily available. The committee will investigate the feasibility of printing maps and/or pamphlets in 2026.

### *Air and Water Quality Committee*

2. Air & Water Quality Committee. Goal - Examine and review air quality & water quality issues as they arise in the borough.

Lisa Ladd-Kidder continued her strong work on water quality by working with the EAC to draft a letter to PA DEP from the Kutztown Water/Waster Water (W/WW) Committee. Ladd-Kidder distributed a report to the EAC concerning land use and concerns over air and noise pollution and water requirements for the proposed data centers and warehouses in Maxatawny Township. She also met with Rob Reynolds (Maxatawny Planning Commission) in July to discuss EAC water-quality concerns.

The committee continues to pursue updates related to the activities of New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co., Inc., Kutztown Quarry and Asphalt Plant (NESL) as it relates to the local watershed. Todd Underwood provided a link to the Environmental Working Group's (EWG) report on Kutztown's Water Quality, which was found to be in compliance with federal health-based drinking water standards. The team discussed the quarry and Borough well water level. PCE levels were also discussed and is a continuing concern that deserves continued close monitoring via testing.

The final draft of the SS&M 2025 Watershed Evaluation report was received and approved by the Kutztown W/WW Committee. EAC also reviewed the document, which generated much discussion about water quality and quantity in the Borough. Andrew Fetterman, a professional geologist from Berks Nature, also met with the EAC to discuss our water issues and the SSM report. The committee considered the idea of a moratorium on any increased water usage from the Sacony Creek Watershed. Because of a limited ability to enforce a moratorium, the EAC recommended that we focus on water conservation instead and emphasize infrastructure items, such as low usage toilets, no drip shower heads, and water faucets as examples.

EAC discovered a typo on the Borough's Code for water usage for Heavy Industry (Borough Code: Chapter 225-21, B.1). The report indicated that the allowance was "15,000 Gallons Per Minute (GPM)" and it should be "15,000 Gallons Per Day (GPD)". Big difference. Todd Underwood alerted the Borough Manager and Borough Council President. The Borough took the proper legal actions to correct this error.

Lisa Ladd-Kidder arranged an additional meeting with Andrew Fetterman, Berks Nature, and Borough W/WW members to discuss the PCE “plume” and “cone of depression” related to Kutztown Quarry. The cone of depression is a result of the quarry digging for material deeper into the Earth and the plume is defined as a volume of polluted liquid that moves away from its original source. EAC is concerned about both of these practices, as the Borough is downstream of the quarry. Specifically, EAC is seeking to work with PA DEP to develop a long-term solution to the problem of this PCE contamination that appears to be migrating toward the Borough drinking water wells. In December, the EAC worked with Lisa-Ladd Kidder to draft a letter from the Borough to DEP with detailed questions about the PCE plume and past mitigation efforts. The letter was approved by Borough Council and sent to DEP.

Michael Downing has participated in a number of online seminars, conducted by The Penn State Cooperative Extension. He asked about the possibility of how best to go about sharing information related to water and air pollution. This summary would be posted on the EAC web page and Facebook page. All agreed that this would be a good idea.

Lisa Ladd-Kidder suggested a white paper be written as a means of getting the word out to residents on how to focus on water conservation emphasizing infrastructure items such as low usage toilets, no drip shower heads, and water faucets as examples (as mentioned above).

Finally, Local orthotics manufacturing company SOLO Labs was up for its DEP permit renewal review in 2025. EAC reviewed their application and emissions data to ensure compliance to [25 Pa. Code § 127.449]. A few questions were sent to DEP and SOLO Labs regarding the renewal and the EAC was satisfied with the responses received.

### *Refuse & Recycling Committee*

3. Refuse & Recycling Committee. Goal - Study borough refuse & recycling programs to suggest changes for improvement in the borough.

Borough electronic recycling was held May 31, 2025.

Todd Underwood received a link to the PA Recycling Technical Assistance Program. Randall Wert and Kathy Kelly reviewed the Program and presented it to the team. EAC agreed that the Borough should pursue this. Randall and Kathy wrote a brief summary of the PA Recycling Technical Assistance Program. Todd will propose working with this program to the Borough Public Works Committee in 2026.

### *Parks and Trail Committee*

4. Parks & Trail Committee. Goal – Oversee implementation of the North Park and Sacony Trail management plans, habitat restoration activities, and work of the borough’s environmental intern. Also, monitor the health of trees in the Main Street Park and assist with additional tree planting.

The Parks & Trail Committee continued its work on the implementation of the North Park and Sacony Trail management plans. This included oversight of habitat restoration, supervision of

the Borough's environmental intern, monitoring tree health in Main Street Park, and providing assistance with ongoing and future tree-planting efforts.

In summer, Public Works installed two signs at North Park: a "Pedestrian Traffic Only" sign and a "Horse and Buggy Parking only" sign at the hitching post that the EAC recommended. Also in summer, Todd Underwood installed new Sacony Trail marker stickers and "Stay on the Trail" reminder stickers on the posts delineating the south section of the trail from Normal Ave to the observation deck.

After a few planning meetings with Larry Lloyd, Berks Nature, and Richard Laubenstein, Facilities Director Kutztown Area School District (KASD), Todd Underwood drafted plans for southern extension of the Sacony Trail on KASD property and a wildflower meadow along the trail on both Borough and KASD property. Todd Underwood presented the proposed plan at a January KASD Facilities Committee meeting and a February Public Works Committee meeting. The School Board and Public Works Committee approved these two projects.

The wildflower meadow is located along the Sacony Trail about midway between the elementary school and the high school. The area, estimated at ~0.75 acres, was maintained as mowed grass but is a wet area and was not used for any athletic activities. Richard Laubenstein herbicided the area (using EAC recommended chemicals approved for wetland areas) three times between April and September. In addition, he tilled the area with a tractor a few times. This approach is expected to eliminate the grass and reduce invasive plants to prepare the ground for the meadow seed mix, including a winter cover crop. The EAC purchased the seed mix from Ernst Conservation Seeds (~\$1,000). The KU Ornithology Club sowed the cover crop and half of the meadow seed mix in November. The remaining half of the seed mix will be sown in early 2026 when weather conditions allow. In November, KASD workers installed wildflower meadow signs on all four sides of the meadow to identify what the project will become. The meadow will be mowed regularly in 2026 to keep the new growth at about 8 inches high. This is recommended as a best practice to allow native wildflowers and grasses to establish and outcompete invasive weeds. The meadow will be allowed to grow and should be in full bloom in 2027.

The Sacony Trail extension plan includes a southward expansion over 3,000 feet from the observation deck past the football stadium, around a tree-planted hillside, and out to Koffee Lane. This addition will bring the total length of the Sacony Trail to just over one mile. Most of the extension falls on school district land, with a possible exception of a ~100-foot section that may include Harlan Burkholder's property. At present, visitors already walk this unofficial extension, and designating it as an official portion of the trail will help keep pedestrians off restricted school property. Todd Underwood and Larry Lloyd met with Harlan Burkholder in September. Mr. Burkholder does not believe the area for the trail extension is actually on his property, but he approved of the project nevertheless. The total cost of materials, signage, trail marker posts, maps, and stickers is estimated at approximately \$2,850. The EAC has committed \$1,000 to the project for marker posts and trail stickers and will produce maps free of charge with the assistance of Dr. Richard Courtney, KU Professor Emeritus of Geography. The Borough approved an additional \$1,850 to pay for the remaining marker posts and signage for the trail extension. All that remains to be done before the extension can be started is the updating of the Sacony Trail Easement Agreement between the Borough and KASD. The EAC will work

on updating the Easement Agreement in early 2026 and looks forward to implementing the trail extension in summer 2026.

Several foot bridges along North Park and Sacony Creek trails require rebuilding, and these have been identified as suitable Eagle Scout projects. Lisa Foreback is serving as the liaison between the Scout Master and Brian Bailey to coordinate these efforts. The EAC hopes progress on bridge replacement can be made in 2026.

Tree-planting activities continued. In April 2025, approximately eighty native trees and shrubs were planted at North Park by Kutztown University students, with trees tubed and shrubs protected by fencing. The KU Ornithology Club also planted ~250 acorns in difficult-to-reach areas of North Park, with ~25 protected by cages. In May, the Borough's environmental intern planted an additional 100+ acorns. In October, the KU Ornithology Club planted ~50 small native trees and shrubs along Sacony Creek at North Park. Tree monitoring remains ongoing, especially on the Sacony Trail near the auction house, where some trees appear unhealthy.

The EAC also addressed the future need for a dependable water source for tree care at North Park on a hillside site far from the creek or a hose connection. A source for a gently used 275-gallon food-grade tank was located at no cost. The tank can be fitted with a lock and hose connection and placed with assistance from Public Works. The Fire Department likely can refill the tank as needed, possibly two to three times per year. Acquisition and installation of the tank is on hold for now until tree planting and habitat restoration efforts begin in areas further uphill at North Park.

In response to the loss of about sixty trees in Main Street Park over recent years, the Borough purchased twenty native oaks and maples from Foliage Farms during its going-out-of-business sale. The tree species and planting locations were chosen in consultation with the EAC. These trees, costing ~\$250 each including delivery and installation, have been planted in the park.

The Borough's environmental intern program progressed significantly during this period. Public Works approved the intern position, and the intern, Tommy Lazorik, began work by the end of May. His tasks included invasive species control, mowing, cleanup of the White Oak garden, and updating the Borough's tree inventory. His performance was noted as exceptional, and Public Works invited him to return next year.

The Borough continued to support wildlife-related projects. Visitors reported positive feedback regarding bird feeders maintained by the EAC at North Park. Todd Underwood wrote a chapter on bird watching at North Park and the Sacony Trail for a forthcoming book "Birds of the Lehigh Valley and Vicinity" produced by the Lehigh Valley Audubon Society.

Todd Underwood also reported that the Red Oak tree planted in the Main St Park by the Girl Scouts is doing well and that the North Park hitching post is being used appropriately.

A recurring issue discussed by EAC involved unauthorized objects placed at North Park. Such displays likely violate the Maxatawny and Kutztown Codes, and should not occur without prior approval by the Borough. Additionally, unauthorized ATV use has begun to occur in December at North Park. Todd Underwood reported this to Brian Bailey who said he would alert the Kutztown Police Department about this.

Throughout the month of April, a few groups engaged in trash pickups and general cleanup activities along the Sacony Creek.

Cumulatively, the Borough has made substantial progress on ecological restoration, trail improvements, tree-planting operations, and community engagement. Several initiatives—including the Sacony Trail extension, bridge reconstruction, and meadow development remain in progress.

### *Public Comment Overview*

Borough Councilman Fred Englehardt attended several EAC meetings in 2025, discussing concerns related to air quality and increased particulate matter in the Borough, as well as increased noise from the racetrack at the Fairgrounds. EAC verified that Kutztown does have a Dust Ordinance (Part II of General Legislation, Chapter 168 Public Health, Nuisances, Article II Air Pollution. Race Tracks are included in Section 168-17 Roads and Streets). This Borough Code is enforceable.

EAC discussed how to evaluate the health concerns from particulate matter in the Borough. Campbell Scientific was suggested as a starting point for air quality and noise testing. EAC consensus is that a study needs to be performed so as to accurately measure and quantify pollutants and dust in the air.

Kathy Kelly had been investigating top chemical particulate categories so that samples can be submitted for specific tests and identification. As it relates to local air quality, Kathy reported on the top chemical categories for air quality testing, Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), Carbon Oxides (CO<sub>x</sub>), Sulfur Oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>), and Particulate Matter (PM), aka “Soot.” Since the first three are gases and dissipate quickly with time, distance, and wind, it was decided to focus on particulate matter since this is a more tangible substance and can be collected manually. Questions emerged as to who can perform the testing with the idea being that actual testing will not occur until the 2026 racing season. Fred Englehardt also suggested that it may be helpful to collect samples from vehicles and porches after race night and submit them to a certified test lab.

Fred Englehardt reported that \$3,800 was approved by Council for a noise ordinance consultant.

### *Summary and Future Directions*

In 2025, the Kutztown EAC completed its eighteenth year of meetings and activities. The commission worked diligently to make progress on our annual goals.

Noteworthy accomplishments were planting over 100 native trees and shrubs at North Park, planting a wildflower meadow on the Sacony Trail, developing a plan to extend the Sacony and gaining its approval by all involved parties, on-going monitoring of continuing threats to our water supply from the quarry and planned warehouse developments, and facilitating several trash cleanups. In the future, the commission will continue to address and revise its annual goals based on progress and new business as it arises.

For 2026, we look forward to continuing to monitor the quality of the air and water for Kutztown residents, educating the public about environmental concerns and solutions, extending the Sacony Trail ~ ½ mile south to Koffee Lane, installing bluebird nest boxes around the new meadow, and further restoration of the habitat at North Park and the Sacony Trail.

Respectfully submitted,

Todd J. Underwood, EAC Chair  
January 9, 2026

Prepared by Michael Downing  
EAC Member