



# STORIES OF PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING HEALTHY WATERS

## EPA Region 3 Water Protection Division

### Silver Creek Mine Treatment is Golden in Protecting Schuylkill River

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The Schuylkill River spans over 130 miles as it flows from its headwaters in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, through several counties on to Philadelphia where it joins with the Delaware River. It is the largest tributary to the Delaware River and serves as a valuable drinking water source for over 1.5 million people along its route. It is the subject of an amazing collaborative network called the [Schuylkill Action Network](#) (SAN) which has been working hard since 2003 to turn the tide of historic pollution along its banks.

A tour organized by the SAN members of the Upper Schuylkill River on September 7, 2016 showcased incredible partnership work to stem pollution to this valuable resource.

A standout project on the tour this day was the [Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Site](#) at the Silver Creek Mine near New Philadelphia in Schuylkill County. For several decades, the highly acidic waters draining naturally out of the abandoned coal mine flowed into the Schuylkill River coloring it bright orange and bringing iron deposits, heavy metals and other solids which pollute the river and interfere with public uses.

Now, a series of five passive treatment ponds produces roughly 1,200 gallons of treated water per minute and cleanses the metals and solids out before being discharged to the river. Passive treatment operates without electricity and pumping so that water naturally cleanses itself as it passes over the sequential ponds. Overhead photos taken early in its operation clearly captured the benefits of treatment – a stark contrast from bright orange to blue water as the flow continues through the process.

An EPA Section 319 Non-Point Source grant of \$858,402 was tapped by the lead organizer, the Schuylkill Headwaters Association and partners at Nettew Associates Inc. and the SAN to complete this project in July 2010. The tour underscored the improvement of the mine drainage waters from low pH to neutral pH conditions and the major deposits of iron. Most importantly, this project demonstrates the power of collaborative partnerships for source water protection to meet public health and clean water goals by taking action to address long-standing threats once thought unsolvable.



#### AT A GLANCE

- Treatment system at the abandoned Silver Creek Mine stems pollution and protect drinking water for Southeast Region of PA.
- Partners tap EPA Section 319 grant funding to cleanse waters near headwaters of the river.



Treated water exiting the system. Photo: Schuylkill Action Network

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