

SPRING 2020

Annual Report Edition



# NEWS *in* NATURE

The Official Publication of Berks Nature

For the Love of Water: A  
Love Story

pg. 4



Celebrating the  
**5**  <sup>th</sup>  
*Anniversary*  
of Earth Day!

Did You Get Outside Today?

Learn how to get involved with our new Berks Nature Rx program!

pg. 7

# Letter from the President...



Dear Friends and Members:

I hope this newsletter finds you safe and well amidst this world-wide pandemic. We're all learning this new term "social distancing". People in my world share memes like "stay a turkey vulture wingspan apart (6 ft.)". We're all scrambling to figure out how we keep our staff and clients safe and continue with as close to business as usual with this new normal. I want to give you an idea about what we're doing.

As I write this from home, our offices have been closed for nearly 2 months. We closed the Nature Place and the Nature Preschool the weekend of March 13. Following the Governor's order to stay home, we only allow 1 staff person at a time in the office if they need to get something. We suspended our water monitoring programs with the local watershed associations and we have cancelled all events through May and will be making a decision regarding summer camp when that time comes. Further, we have applied and been approved for the federal Paycheck Protection Program loan which will be helpful. With a calculated lost revenue from three months of room rentals, field trips, preschool and paid programs of nearly \$75,000 we know tougher times may be ahead.

But this has not kept us down. I am so proud of our staff for stepping up and embracing this new form of work. In the past few months we have also:

- Produced a daily online preschool circle time and organized zoom video calls for our missing preschoolers and others who want to join in;
- Released our trout that we've raised since September into the Tulpehocken Creek, and produced a cool video showing the release including footage of the fish underwater;
- We planted nearly 150 trees sadly without any volunteers this year. Staff and their families came one at a time to assist Larry Lloyd with this important spring activity and the Shimp family made a great video on the proper way to plant a tree;
- We continue to create educational videos to help people interpret and engage with nature like identifying and pulling garlic mustard, cooking with garlic mustard, Berks Nature science corner with Mr. Dave and lessons with Mr. Michael;
- And we hold virtual staff meetings, exec meetings, partner meetings etc. Our work in land protection, watershed restoration, preserve management, trail creation, urban gardening and education goes on as best as possible.



*Kim Murphy, Berks Nature President*

We are looking forward. Preparations for our fall State of the Environment program are underway. We are rescheduling field trips and thinking about new programming and events for 2021. We hope you'll join us for NEXT year's Angelica Creek Regatta and our Tails, Trails and Ales events just to name a few.

Many are learning during this quarantine all the things we can do without; like in-person meetings, shopping trips, going to the gym, and going to lunch with friends just to name a few. We're also learning that we can't do without nature. Nature welcomes us when we're stressed, gives us promise of a new beginning as the trees and flowers bloom, and proof that life will go on evidenced by the many baby birds hatching their way into the world. Many are seeking the restorative power of nature in these tough times and I hope you are as well. Wishing you good health.

Sincerely,

Kimberly J Murphy, President

Contact our Team: [berksnature.org](http://berksnature.org) | 575 St. Bernardine Street Reading, PA 19607 | 610.372.4992

# Meet Our Team



The staff of Berks Nature is busy all over Berks County! But you can find us at our headquarters, The Nature Place at 575 St. Bernardine Street in Reading's Angelica Creek Park, between 8:30am and 4pm Monday through Friday.

For up to date information on Berks Nature including events and other calendar happenings, visit us at [berksnature.org](http://berksnature.org)!

## Berks Nature Staff

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### Questions?

Call us at 610.372.4992 x100, or shoot us an email at [info@berksnature.org](mailto:info@berksnature.org)!

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## Berks Nature 2020 Officers & Directors

### Officers

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# For the Love of Water



A series where we take a deeper dive into our 25 State of the Environment in Berks County indicators.

## Indicator: Miles of Impaired Streams

Our world is waterlogged; the wettest it's been in over a century. For the United States, May 2018 through May 2019 marked the 12 soggiest, consecutive months in 124 years. In Pennsylvania, torrential downpours, some dropping as much as 4 inches in just a few hours, elevated 2019 to the 7th wettest year on record.

With so much rain falling from the sky, it begs the question: where does all this water go?

Rain that is not absorbed by plants or can't soak into the soil will instead rush over the ground and pour into nearby streams as storm-water runoff. On this road trip from rain drop to river, runoff picks up hitch-hikers: fuel residue on parking lots, loose dirt, animal waste, and leftover fertilizers and pesticides, to name a few.

Burdened with stowaway contaminants, the runoff flows into local streams. This is where the rain goes. This is the water we drink. This is the water we fish. This is the water that nourishes our forests and fields.

We can't stop the rain from falling, but we can secure a safe passage for rainwater on its journey from cloud to stream.

In Berks County, where agricultural runoff is the leading threat to stream health, farmers are coming to the rescue and changing the way they cultivate the land for the love of water.

### Love Farm of the Hay Creek Watershed

Doug Love has worked on his parent's farm for most of his life. At an age when most people have comfortably retired, Doug and his wife, Marcia Cook-Love, purchased the family farm to protect it under



STATE OF THE  
**ENVIRONMENT**  
• BERKS COUNTY, PA •

increasing pressure to develop the land.

Located 20 minutes south of Reading, Pennsylvania in Robeson Township, the Love's farm is a unique blend of wild and managed landscapes. Of the Love's 78 acres, an exceptional 70% is forested. Alongside this woodland, the Loves raise cattle and sheep and cultivate sorghum and hay.

As life-long members of the Hay Creek Watershed Association and active members of the Robeson community, the Loves understood the special position of the farm to contribute to the watershed's rich, ecological capital.

Two small streams originate on the Love's farm. These streams flow into the cool, clean waters of Beaver Run, a Class A Trout Stream supporting wild populations of brown trout. Continuing downstream, Beaver Run drains into Hay Creek, which supplies drinking water to the Birdsboro Water Authority. Hay Creek flows on, eventually joining the Schuylkill River which supplies drinking water to millions of people downstream, including the City of Philadelphia.

Portions of Hay Creek are so clean that they have received an Exceptional Value designation from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Any pollution from adjoining tributaries, including Beaver Run, threatens the eminent health of Hay Creek, with implications for wildlife and water-drinkers downstream.

The forested headwaters of Beaver Run are Hay Creek's first line of defense: the opportunity to protect and filter Hay Creek's water at its source. But for Love's farm to achieve its true potential as a guardian of Hay Creek, they needed to mitigate their agricultural runoff.

### The Solution to Pollution

Agricultural runoff is one of the leading sources of pollution for rivers – especially in Berks County where 36% of the land is managed for agriculture and 78% of impaired streams suffer from overexposure to soil, manure, fertilizers, and other chemicals swept up from fields and pastures.



*Before*

True, the nitrogen and phosphorus in fertilizer and manure are essential, naturally occurring nutrients, but moderation is best in all things, so the saying goes. Add too much of these nitrogen or phosphorus to streams and the bacteria and algae populations will boom.



# Best Management Practices (BMPs) = Improved Water Quality!



With nutrients abound, this population growth continues unfettered, rapidly consuming and depleting oxygen, and threatening life underwater for other plants and animals.

Erosion is another natural process, but too much dirt in the water can also spell disaster. Runoff can dislodge loose soil from tilled fields or bare stream banks, accelerating erosion and inundating streams with excess sediment, soil that has broken down into miniscule dirt particles. Muddy water threatens aquatic life by burying habitats, clogging gills, and shading plants from sunlight, preventing respiration and oxygen production.

Farmers like the Loves are increasingly trying to prevent these pollutants from entering streams, partnering with organizations like Berks Nature to tackle the task at hand.

When Berks Nature first joined forces with the Loves in 2017, they were taken by the farm's lush forests and trickling headwater tributaries. However, as with many farm operations with uncertain successional ownership, little had been invested in the farm's infrastructure over time.

Without proper management tools, the cattle and sheep roamed freely, wallowing in the stream and leaving manure scattered about the floodplain. Years of grazing and plodding through the water had stripped the barnyard bare and compromised the stream bank's integrity, leaving the stream vulnerable to erosion and runoff.

To address these environmental concerns, Berks Nature sought out grant funding from programs dedicated to improving water quality through agricultural remediation. These funds were used to implement new conservation actions, known as Best Management Practices (BMPs), on the Love Farm.

To mitigate the agricultural runoff on Love's Farm, Berks Nature, in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), selected a suite of BMPs to address the greatest threats to stream health without interfering with Love's ability to farm the land. The resulting Conservation Plan proposed solutions that targeted the Love's livestock and barren stream banks.

The Loves installed new fencing to exclude livestock from most of the Farm's woodland, including the forest growing alongside their two streams. Streamside forests provide a critical service to local waterways by filtering runoff and stabilizing stream banks with their robust root systems.

This fencing also prevents the Love's livestock from entering the stream, removing the threat of manure falling directly into the water and the disturbance of hooved animals clambering up and down the stream's banks.

But pity not the Love's livestock for losing their waterfront leisure time. To replace stream access, the pastures are now equipped with water hydrants supplied by well water and internal paddock fencing

to encourage rotational grazing. When not out to pasture, the cattle and sheep can now retreat to two newly constructed, paved and roofed, open-air buildings. These structures stabilize the ground against the cattle and sheep's pounding hooves while also diverting fresh and clean rainwater away from their feces.

That manure does not go to waste. With the construction of two new, roofed storage facilities, the Loves can now collect manure from their livestock regularly and safely stash it away. The Conservation Plan instructs the Loves on the optimal timing and quantity of manure application for their fields to maximize plant growth and boost soil health. These new storage facilities can hold up to 6 months of manure – that's a lot of dung cached away instead of flowing downstream!



After

The construction and installation of these and other conservation measures were completed in January 2020, but the remediation effort continues. Moving forward, Berks Nature continues to partner with the Loves to replant trees along

their barnyard stream. With the livestock excluded, a new forest will flourish here, lending the stream shade with its leafy canopy above and support from its woody roots below.

## The Future for Farm Water

Doug Love and Marcia Cook-Love are not alone in their efforts to mediate agricultural runoff. Since 2006, Berks Nature has helped over 50 farmers take action by implementing BMPs to protect the region's streams.

It's still too soon to measure the impact of the Love's stewardship, but across the country scientists have endeavored to study and measure the effectiveness of BMPs. One review estimates that the livestock management practices adopted by the Loves can reduce pollution from nitrogen by 8-85%, phosphorus by 0-79%, and sediment by 0-90%.

Farmers can further ensure a reduction in pollutants by pairing livestock management with improved crop production practices. Back on the Love Farm, Doug Love grows all his crops without tilling the soil and has adopted a conservation crop rotation that cycles between sorghum, a cover crop, and hay.

This combination of practices will yield a greater benefit to stream health, giving the Love's headwater tributaries their cleanest start before joining the Hay Creek downstream.



# Berks Nature Eco-Camp

It is our intent to hold Eco-Camp as planned. However, we know that camp may look different during the course of this pandemic. Please refer to our website for any updates regarding any changes we may make to the schedule.

## Sign Up for Camp



Berks Nature believes that nature is essential to our quality of life. Eco-Camp is the perfect way to share that value with your child/children. This is our twelfth year of our camp at The Nature Place in Angelica Creek Park.

### PRICING:

Visit [berksnature.org/eco-camp](http://berksnature.org/eco-camp) for a complete listing of prices per week!

### LEVELS:

Ages 3-5

(must be potty trained)

Ages 6-7

Ages 8-10

Ages 11-12

### HALF DAY:

Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-noon

### FULL DAY:

Monday-Friday 9 a.m.-4 p.m.

### EXTENDED HOURS:

Before Camp Drop-off: 7:30-8:45 a.m.

After Camp Pick-up: 4:15-5:30 p.m.

**LOCATION:** The Nature Place in Angelica Creek Park (575 St. Bernardine Street Reading, PA 19607)

### 10% OFF MEMBER DISCOUNT

For Full Day Camp Week Registrations ONLY.

### Wacky Science Exploration June 8-12

Come learn the ways you can create with everyday household products! We will mix up interesting ingredients and experiment with all-natural elements of the earth at Berks Nature.

### Scales, Skin and Creepy Crawlers, Amphibians/Reptiles June 15-19

Be on the lookout for amphibians and reptiles that call this place home as you enter Berks Nature this week! We will dig deep into the soil and into Angelica creek with nets to discover the creepiest crawlers and macroinvertebrates. You will learn the benefits of these creatures, what they eat, best time of year to find them and much more!

Visitor: Critter Connection

Special Excursion: Lehigh Valley Zoo

### Creature Count - What Lives Where? June 22-26

This week we're keeping count of the different varieties of creatures we find at Berks Nature, Earl Poole Sanctuary, and on Neversink Mountain! Explore and use your imagination to write stories, take pictures, and even create videos about your experience.

Special Excursion: Earl Poole Sanctuary and Neversink Mountain (two preserves that Berks Nature owns and manages!)

### Pedaling the Trails, Bike Week July 6-10

Hop on your bike and head to Berks Nature for this fun week of bike riding and learning about bike maintenance from the experts themselves! A popular week for bikers of all ages, everyone will be pros by the end of the week and ready for our big ride to Scoupe DeVille Ice Cream Shop in Birdsboro.

Visitor: Berks Area Mountain Biking Association visit (John Pacharis)

### The New "R" - Repurpose, things to do with our junk and trash July 13-17

This week, campers will learn all about the new "R" - repurpose! Thinking about questions like where does our trash go and how can we reuse it will be the theme, ending the week with our very own "Shark Tank" contest of who can create and repurpose a product that could be sold to use! Campers will even get to take their new creations home. The week also includes our Regatta on Angelica Creek and infamous egg drop!

Special Excursion: (landfill / recycle center visit)Pioneer Landfill

### Angelica and Beyond Outdoor Adventures, Let's Take a Hike July 20-24

From easy walks to more vigorous hikes, campers will get out in the woods this week - here and at Hawk Mountain! Push your limits and see how far you can dive into the woods, all while exploring the creatures and habitat around us and how humans and animals use them!

Visitor: Evan Corondi from Berks County Conservation District

Special Excursion: Hawk Mountain

### Finding and Making Tracks, fishing, archery and tracking July 27-31

Fishing, archery and tracking are the theme for this week! Campers will learn how to fish, shoot a bow and arrow, as well as track animals through tracks and scat to learn where and what kinds of animals live in Berks County!Visitor: Andrew Desko; PA Fish and Boat Commission

Visitor: Dan Lynch; PA Game Commission

Special Excursion: Fishing and fun at Blue Marsh Lake

### Camping but Leaving No Trace (and a sleepover!) August 3-7

Leave No Trace! Campers will venture out into the woods to pitch a tent, set up camp, and eat what they pack - all while making sure we take out what we brought in. The Leave No Trace Program will teach campers everything they need to know about how to survive in the woods without leaving a mark.

Special Excursion: Nolde Forest (simulation of where and how to set up a camp in Nolde Forest)

Special Event: Sleepover at Berks Nature (Thursday August, 6th - Friday, August 7th)

### All About Raptors and Bats August 10-14

Real life Raptors? Yes, please! In this very popular week, campers will get to see and learn about raptors as Red Creek brings in a real live raptor. Dr. Campbell will come and teach us about bats and their habits as well. Come learn about all different birds of prey and how they live here!

Visitor: Karen Campbell Albright College professor

Visitor: Red Creek Wildlife Center (Peggy Hentz)

# Did You Get Outside Today?

## Join our Berks Nature Rx Program today!



**All you need is 120 minutes per week to improve your health through nature!**

Spending time in nature isn't a cure for everything that ails us, but it sure does offer some preventative and therapeutic benefits and it is a medical fact that spending time outdoors, especially in green spaces, is good for you.

All you need is 120 minutes per week! According to a paper in the journal Scientific Reports and as covered in the New York Times, the data shows that about 120 minutes a week is all you need to spend outdoors to reap its natural benefits. The study further shows that only spending 60-90 minutes outdoors per week did not have as significant effect and spending more time outside does not render additional benefits.

Berks Nature Rx is an easy way to introduce (or reintroduce) nature into your routine weekly life. The Berks County Medical Society and Berks Nature encourage doctors, patients, and the community in general to commit to spending 120 minutes (2 hours) in the great outdoors to help prevent disease, and as a therapy for physical and mental challenges.

What is Berks Nature Rx?

Use our website, [www.berksnaturerx.com](http://www.berksnaturerx.com), to gather the resources you need to spend at least 120 minutes outdoors every week. If you are a parent, you can use these tools to help your children spend at least 120 minutes outdoors every week. Let's face it 120 minutes, or two hours each week, is an achievable goal even during our busiest times. Your 120 minutes could consist of visiting a park, walking your dog, hiking a trail, riding a bike, or simply taking a break in nature.

New to spending time outside?

Don't want to take an adventure alone? That is OK! Go to [www.berksnaturerx.com](http://www.berksnaturerx.com) to find local groups that gather outdoors. And, look for local Nature Rx events such as guided hikes, a walk with a doctor, and mental health meet-ups outdoors.

Every local trail (that we are aware of!) is linked to [berksnaturerx.com](http://berksnaturerx.com) as well. Now that you have the resources you need you can begin logging your minutes! Once you reach 500 minutes you can visit The Nature Place for your FREE gift, and learn about incentives to continue participating in the Nature Rx program.



Learn more at [berksnaturerx.com](http://berksnaturerx.com)!





# Berks Nature Preschool

At our Nature Preschool at The Nature Place, our kiddos are outside 75% of their day, rain or shine!

Surrounded by 100-acres in Reading's Angelica Park, our Monday - Friday Nature Preschool infuses nature into all aspects of your child's early learning, while preparing them for school through inquiry-based learning and hands-on discovery in our natural world.

We are proud to be the first of its kind in Berks County and would love for your child to be apart of our journey at our Nature Preschool at The Nature Place!

We are now enrolling for FALL 2020! If you are interested in registering your child or learning more about our program please contact Anne Muvdi, Berks Nature Preschool Director at 610.372.4992 x115 or [anne.mudvi@berksnature.org](mailto:anne.mudvi@berksnature.org)



*Berks Nature Preschoolers on a recent virtual check-in and lesson with our awesome Berks Nature Preschool Teachers!*

## Save The Date!

# State of the Environment Breakfast

**Wednesday, November 4th, 2020**  
**The Crowne Plaza in Wyomissing**

Join Berks Nature, local school districts, and our partners for a morning breakfast at The Crowne Plaze in Wyomissing for our 12th Annual State of the Environment Breakfast. We're still planning our SOTE breakfast as usual but as with anything during this pandemic, watch for future communications about our events. Until then, be sure to be on the lookout for our new series, The Understory: A series where we take a deeper dive into our 25 State of the Environment in Berks County indicators. Email [kaitlyn.to-thero@berksnature.org](mailto:kaitlyn.to-thero@berksnature.org) to be added to our Enews mailing list and 'LIKE' our Facebook page to receive these biweekly stories!

Visit [berksnature.org/state-of-the-environment](http://berksnature.org/state-of-the-environment) to read our 10 year report and get inspired about changes you can make this year to help the State of the Environment in Berks County!

We look forward to seeing you there!

## STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

• BERKS COUNTY, PA •

The State of the Environment evaluates specific data and trends in five environmental categories: Air, Energy, Land, Waste, and Water. Within each category, several specific quantitative indicators are evaluated using available data, trends in the data are assessed, and specific action items that residents can practice to make each specific indicator more "positive" are identified. The five general environmental categories, as well as the specific environmental indicators evaluated, were selected by an interactive process. Berks Nature established subcommittees for each category, with each subcommittee headed by a professional with substantial experience in the specific field. These subcommittees discussed candidate indicators, and narrowed down the list of indicators to be used to 4-5 specific indicators where quantitative data were available.



# Annual Report

We believe nature is essential to our quality of life. Your interest and support enables us to protect, educate and demonstrate many conservation programs in Berks County. Thank you for your support!

## Where are we headed throughout 2020?



- Plant over 300 large native trees and shrubs to help improve wildlife habitat, water quality and air quality.
- Visit and partner with at least 150 landowners to continue relationships to protect open space and install best management practices to protect drinking water supplies.
- Manage and enhance 27 miles of Greater Reading Trails, and work with many partners to promote trails all across Berks County.
- Train and certify our 2020 class of Berks Nature Ambassadors as

part of our volunteer engagement strategy.

- Improve and re-open a special nature preserve – Bob’s Woods at the Earl Poole Sanctuary.
- Host at least 12 field trips when schools re-open, offer 8 weeks of Eco-Camp, visit at least 20 classrooms, and help connect at least 5,000 people to nature through our education programs.
- Manage 9 community gardens in the City of Reading. This will expose urban youth and families to agriculture, and help provide them with fresh, healthy, local produce.

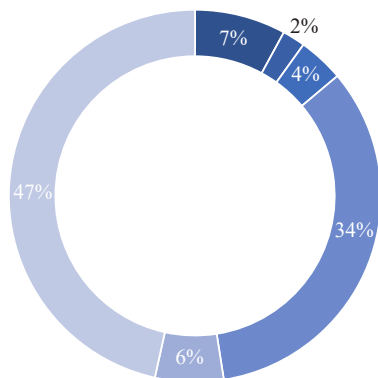
# 2019 Financial Report

## Berks Nature Revenues vs. Expenditures

Year Ending December 31, 2019

Total Revenues: \$3,551,182.41

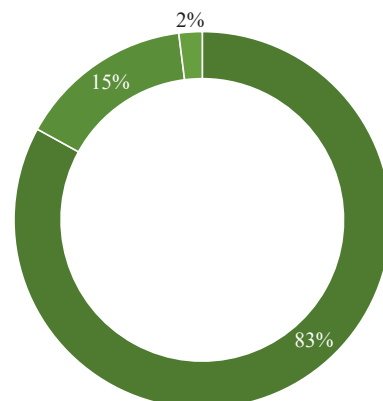
\*includes capital campaign contributions



- Investment Income
- Unrestricted Contributions/Grants
- Berks Nature Educational Program LLC
- Membership
- Easements
- Restricted Income (Grants/Contributions)

Preliminary pre-audited figures taken from Berks Nature December 31, 2019 financial statements

Total Expenditures: \$1,624,598.04



- Program Services
- Management & General
- Fund Raising

# Berks Nature List of 2019 Gifts & Grants

*Berks Nature thanks you, its generous supporters, for your continued support and commitment. This listing was compiled from those gifts and grants received between January 1, 2019 and December 31, 2019. Every effort has been made to ensure that this list is complete and accurate.*

*We apologize for any errors or omissions and would appreciate your comments or corrections at 610.372.4992 ext. 100 or [info@berksnature.org](mailto:info@berksnature.org).*

**President's Nature Circle Members** - Berks Nature's President's Nature Circle represents a group of dedicated donors that provide an annual gift \$1,000 or more to our organization. Members of the President's Nature Circle enjoy all of the benefits of Berks Nature membership, and are invited to exclusive President's Nature Circle events. Most importantly, all donations enable us to remain dedicated to protecting open space, clean water, hiking & biking trails, and wildlife habitats, to ensure a balanced quality of life in Berks County. Interested in learning more? Contact Tami Shimp at [tami.shimp@berksnature.org](mailto:tami.shimp@berksnature.org) today!



Charles Durkin | Jeffrey & Kristel Euclide | Bonnie Finch & Cynthia M. Schultz | John & Lisa Gallen | Elizabeth Gonzalez | Joanne & Arthur Haberberger | Terry & Ginny Hand | Carolyn & Jerome Holleran | Eric Jenkins & Julia Klein | Christine & Robert Keeler | Elissa & Timothy Keeler | Robin & Bill Koch | Mary Ellen & David Lord | William L. & Janet N. Luyben | Elizabeth Magovern | Risa & Nick Marmontello | Shelly & James Middleton | Ginger & Marlin Miller | Kimberly & Kevin Murphy | Joni & David Naugle | Carole Neag | Laurie & Alan Peer | Chiara & Ryan Renninger | Mr. Milton Ripple | Elaine and Jay Rosenson | James Savage | Margaret & Patrick J. Shields | Michelle & Christopher Smith | Laura Wozniski | Karen Wright

## Individuals & Families

Frances Aitken | Carl Altenderfer | Tom Andrews | Alexa Antanavage | Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Antosy | Ms. Kim Artz | Lisa Ashcroft | Bethany Ayers Fisher | Dr. Martha Aynardi | (Ret.) LTC Richard D. & Carol Barnett | Pat & Paula Barrett | Todd Bartley | Jean Bauer | David Bean | Mark Beard | Melissa Becht | Allison Beck | Jon Becker | Daniel Becker | Norma & Marty Beckerman | Bellman Fund for Berks Nature of Berks County Community Foundation | Andrea Bensusan | Val Bertoia | Catherine Best | Cindi Bickta | Nicholas Bieber | Megan Binasiewicz | Chris & Kait Biolchini | Melissa Biolchini | Jonathan & Linda Bloom | David & Marianna Bluestone | Harvey Bomberger | Susan Borelli & Scott Hoh | Alice Bowers | Dan & Ute Boyer | David Breitegam | Dave & Sandy Bright | John H. & D. 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## Berks Nature Ambassadors

Each year, Berks Nature trains a group of volunteers to be trained as "Berks Nature Ambassadors". What does this mean? It means that you will receive basic training related to all of the good conservation work that we do. Upon completion of your training, you will officially become a volunteer Berks Nature Ambassador. Our Ambassadors are trained volunteers that can help train others, lead projects, answer questions, and simply help enhance and protect the environment! Learn more by contacting Michael Griffith at [michael.griffith@berksnature.org](mailto:michael.griffith@berksnature.org).



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