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PDE's 25th Anniversary!

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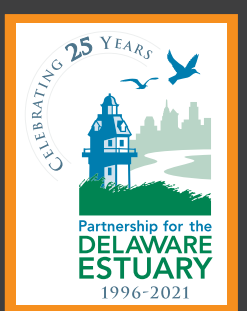
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Notes from a Schuylkill Sojourner

PDE Science Director Danielle Kreeger, Ph.D. and Restoration Programs Manager Joshua Moody, Ph.D. helped run the famous 90-minute oyster bar at the Oct. 7 Experience the Estuary and 25th Anniversary Celebration in Philadelphia.



NEWSLETTER OF THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE DELAWARE ESTUARY – HOST OF THE DELAWARE ESTUARY PROGRAM

ESTUARY NEWS

SHE SHAD SCULPTURE IS A SHEER DELIGHT

In 2018, Sharon Lo Pinto was feeling disheartened by some federal environmental policy changes taking place and wanted to make a statement. Environmentalism is in her blood. Her grandfather was one of the founders of the first watershed associations in the country in Solebury, Pennsylvania, and she served on her local Environmental Advisory Council to protect the local environment and the Delaware River.

"I wanted to speak out and help give voice to concerns about our environment," Lo Pinto said.

She thought that a large, shiny object could hold a camera's interest and spark conversation. She thought of the Delaware River and how her community heralded the return of spawning shad fish in the spring. She thought of puppet street theater.

"Chance would have it that at that same moment, I watched someone snacking from a chip bag," she said. The dots connected, and a She Shad was conceived.

Lo Pinto's She Shad is a large, colorful sculpture in the shape of a shad. It's made of cardboard, pipe cleaners, and other recycled materials. The design is modeled



after a Chinese fish charm and an illustration of a shad. Built in five connecting sections, the shad, when assembled, is about 11 feet long and 2 feet wide. So why a *she* shad, as opposed to a *he* shad? Lo Pinto said she always thought of the shad sculpture as female.

During its construction, friends and local schoolchildren "chipped in" with the project by donating and cutting foil snack bags for the sculpture's thousands of colorful scales.

A year later, the She Shad debuted at the Shad Festival in Lambertville, New Jersey. After that, She Shad spent a year on display at the Nurture Nature Center in Easton, Pennsylvania where she inspired students and was a springboard for school lessons about the Delaware River and the environment.

"People want to kiss her," Lo Pinto said, chuckling in bemusement of people who want their pictures taken kissing the fish.

Through a twist of fate, She Shad is making the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary her new home. While Lo Pinto was moving from Bucks County, Pennsylvania to the Poconos, she, didn't have any place to keep She Shad. She Shad has since found a home with PDE where she will make a colorful addition to the organization's small collection of environmental art.

"She's going to be a great addition to our office's collection and a standout at tabling events," said PDE Executive Director Kathy Klein. 💧

"I wanted to speak out and help give voice to concerns about our environment."

SHARON LO PINTO

C2.4 STRONG COMMUNITIES

- ◀ The She Shad is an 11-foot-long sculpture of a shad made out of foil snack bags and other recycled materials. Photo courtesy of Sharon Lo Pinto.

Schuylkill River Sojourn 2021



Riel Bilto is this year's Schuylkill Action Network Sojourn Steward. She traveled 80 miles in five days with other paddlers on the Schuylkill River. Photo courtesy of Riel Bilto.

By Riel Bilto, AKA Rock Climbin' Grandma

The website read "Paddle 80 miles down the Schuylkill River in five days."

No way, I thought. That's insurmountable. But then I applied and was chosen as the Schuylkill Action Network's 2021 Sojourn Steward. It was time to pull up my big girl pants and accept the opportunity.

When I told my friends that I was going to paddle the Schuylkill, their response was a resounding "Eww!" The Schuylkill River of my childhood in the 70's was a trash-filled cesspool – not something you paddle in a kayak for five days. However, I learned in the many presentations held during the Sojourn that the Schuylkill River is a marvel, an environmental bounce-back achievement.

This river has been through the ringer. For over a century, it has seen mine waste, farm fertilizers, and urban rainwater runoff.

However, a plethora of people and organizations have worked to clean up the river. They have worked with miners, farmers, and leaders to change the way people use the river. And the river is beautiful because of it.

And I got to paddle it. Yep, 80 miles in five days. The paddle was indeed a challenge, but what I learned on the journey changed how I will see the Schuylkill for the rest of my life.

Riel Bilto is a teacher from Philadelphia. She also creates outdoor adventure videos for her YouTube channel, "Rock Climbin' Grandma." ♦

Watch Bilto's video diary from her trip down the Schuylkill: [here](#)

CCMP STRATEGY: STRONG COMMUNITIES, C2.4

COMMITTEES CONTACT LIST

Meetings conducted by the Delaware Estuary Program's implementation and advisory committees occur on a regular basis and are open to the public. For meeting dates and times, please contact the individuals listed below:

Estuary Implementation Committee

Kathy Klein

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary Executive Director (Chair)

- ▶ (800) 445-4935, ext. 102
- ▶ kklein@DelawareEstuary.org

Monitoring Advisory & Coordination Committee

Elaine Panuccio

Water Restoration Scientist, Water Quality Assessment Delaware River Basin Commission

- ▶ (609) 883-9500, ext. 307
- ▶ elaine.panuccio@drbc.gov

Toxics Advisory Committee

Ron MacGillivray, Ph.D.

Senior Environmental Toxicologist Delaware River Basin Commission

- ▶ (609) 883-9500, ext. 257
- ▶ ron.macgillivray@drbc.gov

Science and Technical Advisory Committee

Danielle Kreeger, Ph.D.

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary Senior Science Director

- ▶ (800) 445-4935, ext. 104
- ▶ dkreeger@DelawareEstuary.org

Water Quality Advisory Committee

John Yagecic, P.E.

Manager, Water Quality Assessment Delaware River Basin Commission

- ▶ (609) 883-9500, ext. 271
- ▶ john.yagecic@drbc.nj.gov

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LET'S CELEBRATE THE DELAWARE ESTUARY AND PDE'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY!

Nearly 300 guests, supporters, and friends of PDE attended the Experience the Estuary and 25th Anniversary Celebration on Oct. 7 at Vie by Cescaphe in Philadelphia.

GREAT WEATHER, FOOD, AND COMPANY – WHAT AN INCREDIBLE 25TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION.

On Oct. 7, nearly 300 sponsors, friends, and supporters of Partnership for the Delaware Estuary celebrated the organization's 25th anniversary at Vie by Cescaphe in Philadelphia. This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the Delaware Estuary Program's first Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan.

The Experience the Estuary Celebration is an important annual event, not only because it is PDE's biggest fundraiser of the year, but also because it provides a great opportunity for watershed stakeholders from business, government, academia, and non-profits to get together and network. Last year, PDE hosted a virtual celebration due to COVID-19. This year guests were able to gather in-person for dinner and cocktails, the event's famous 90-minute raw oyster bar, and silent and basket auctions. PDE raised more than \$100,000 from the event, with proceeds being used towards the organization's work for clean waters, healthy habitats, and strong communities.



Graphic Illustrator Frank McShane, left, PDE Executive Director Kathy Klein, and PDE Board President Joe Tarsavage, stand together after PDE presented McShane with the Jonathan Sharp Lifetime Achievement Award.

The celebration included a video featuring staff, past and present board members, and other PDE supporters. They shared their favorite memories about PDE and what the Delaware Estuary means to them. The video included images from the last 25 years and partners holding signs wishing PDE a happy anniversary. Click [here](#) to watch the video.

Another highlight of the evening was PDE's presentation of the Jonathan Sharp Lifetime Achievement Award to Frank McShane for his contributions for advancing the understanding of science and management of the Delaware Estuary. Through the numerous publications that McShane has designed for PDE over the past 25 years, his illustrations have helped the public understand complex scientific and resource management concepts. Examples of this work include [Freshwater Mussels of the Delaware Estuary guidebook](#), [State of the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer Report](#), [Weathering Change: Working With Nature to Protect Communities and Clean Waters](#) and many others that can be seen at <https://delawareestuary.org/publications-2/booklets-and-brochures/>.

Click [here](#) for more photos of the 2021 Experience the Estuary Celebration

Right from top to bottom: Allison Stalker, Board Member Ron Heun, Laura Lynch and Jordan Rajan all from Exelon Corporation; Lynne Hammond of Bartram's Garden, left, and James Cromartie; William Parry of CSX, Lance Rasnake of Wood, and past PDE board member Juni Alam; Sarah Borsetti & Jenn Gius, of the Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory at Rutgers University, help shuck oysters with PDE staff at the famous 90-minute oyster bar; Past Board Member Pamela Tudor, left, and PDE Board Member Katie Eberhart.



WATCH THE VIDEO: See the 25th Anniversary Video that played at the dinner. [Click Here](#)

FIGHTING POLLUTION, ONE STREET STICKER AT A TIME



Jana Savini, PDE Coastal Collaboration Assistant Coordinator, smooths a sticker on the sidewalk in Wilmington. The stickers are based on winning student art in the Clean Waterways Wilmington Student Art Contest and serve as reminders for people to avoid littering and keep our waterways clean.

By Sarah Morales, PDE Outreach Coordinator

PDE CELEBRATES FOUR YEARS OF COMBINING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION AND ART WITH THE CITY OF WILMINGTON



Another sticker made from student artwork reminds people to keep Wilmington's waterways clean.

How can something stuck to the street remind you not to litter?

It's becoming difficult to imagine a time in our lives when we can easily recall places being completely trash free. Trash pops up everywhere – on our roads, on our streets, and in our neighborhoods. From a cigarette butt to an abandoned washing-machine-turned-frog-habitat, trash is everywhere and it's a problem. What's worse is when people throw trash down public storm drains or dump appliances and tires into rivers. During the 2019 annual Christina River Watershed Cleanup alone, volunteers collected a whopping 14.9 tons of trash and tires from sites throughout the Christina River Watershed. That's roughly twice the size of an adult elephant.

At Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE), we're doing our part to reduce and prevent stormwater pollution through a partnership with the City of Wilmington and the Clean Waterways Wilmington Student Art Contest. For the past four years, winners from this art contest have their drawings turned into sidewalk and street stickers that are public reminders to avoid littering and fouling our waterways.

What makes this year special is this is the first time in the contest's history where PDE installed 11 street stickers in one season. These stickers are on sidewalks throughout the city and represent contest winners from 2019-2020. You can find out where the stickers are located at <https://bit.ly/3oULkFn>. See if you can spot them while you're walking around town. Make a game of it. While you're at it, imagine how our world could be if there wasn't any litter. 💧

CCMP STRATEGY: STRONG COMMUNITIES, C2.3, C2.4

SPARTINA: WETLANDS GLADIATORS

By Maura Mergenthaler, PDE Wetlands Intern

Spartina – sounds like the name of a gladiator, right? That’s not too far off the mark. This tall, course, marsh grass is a real wetlands warrior. The two types of this vegetation found in the Delaware Estuary are both tough enough to have real power when it comes to protecting wetlands and shorelines. These grasses have underground stems called rhizomes that allow them to control erosion, stabilize dunes, and build tidal marshes. They also provide aquatic and terrestrial wildlife food and shelter.



Spartina alterniflora (also known as smooth cordgrass) helps control erosion of the coastal shoreline. It has an interconnected root system that helps it to bind to the banks of waterways. It has flat, blade-like leaves and round, hollow stems. These features make it an important habitat for a lot of small animals that benefit from tidal flooding like marsh periwinkles (a kind of snail), ribbed mussels, and fiddler crabs.

Spartina patens, more commonly known as saltmeadow cordgrass or salt hay, has long, slender blades. Unlike smooth cordgrass, salt hay typically grows farther away from shorelines, where elevations are higher. Salt hay can grow in salty and brackish freshwater marshes, as well as along dunes. 💧

HEALTHY HABITATS, H1.1, STRONG COMMUNITIES, C2.5

Tidal Marshes in New Jersey are in Peril

By Judith Weis, Ph.D., professor of Biological Sciences at Rutgers University, Newark

A review of studies recently published in *Anthropocene Coasts* found that New Jersey's tidal marshes are not keeping up with sea level rise and may disappear by the next century. As systems that are partially submerged during high tides, tidal marshes are vulnerable to sea level rise.

“Faced with sea level rise, a marsh has two options: it can either increase its elevation at a rate equal to that of sea level rise, or migrate inland, otherwise, it will be submerged and drown,” the paper says. The review was led by Dr. Judith Weis a professor of biological sciences at Rutgers University, Newark, in collaboration with Drs. Elizabeth Watson of Drexel University, Elizabeth Ravit of Rutgers University, Charles Harman of Wood Environmental, and Metthea Yepsen of NJDEP. The review includes data from long-term monitoring conducted in the Delaware Estuary by Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, along with other data from partners across New Jersey. It is available for reading at <https://cdnsiencepub.com/doi/10.1139/anc-2020-0020>.

HEALTHY HABITATS, H1.1, STRONG COMMUNITIES, C2.5

DIGGING DEEPER

GETTING TO THE ROOT OF YOUR GARDENING QUESTIONS

Native Edible Plants in the Delaware Estuary

By Sarah Bouboulis, PDE Habitat Projects Coordinator

There are entire books, websites, and more on the edibility of plants. Native Americans use native plants for all sorts of things. A website called Native American Ethnobotany has a database of foods, drugs, dyes, and fibers of Native American peoples, derived from plants. [Visit the website](#) for a really deep dive into the Ethnobotany – the scientific study of traditional knowledge and customs of a people concerning plants – and other uses of our regionally native plants. The uses and edibility of plants seems limitless, however, you **must** be able to identify the plant you wish to consume prior to digging in because many native plants can also be poisonous.

There are many culinary delights that you wouldn't know were native to the Delaware Estuary. Here are some favorites you might want to grow in your own backyard, and that you can often find for sale in retail nurseries.

HAPPY GROWING!

For more native plant information from Sarah Bouboulis, subscribe to PDE's quarterly online publication, Perennial Pages. View previous issues [here](#). Have a gardening question for Sarah? Contact her at sbouboulis@delawareestuary.org. ♦

High-Bush Blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*). Get two varieties for best fruiting (cross-pollination). High bush blueberries like acidic soil.

Black (*Aronia melanocarpa*) or **Red** (*Aronia arbutifolia*) Chokeberry. The berries are a "superfood," but they are very sour!

Paw-Paw (*Asimina triloba*). America's largest edible native fruit! You need more than one plant for good fruiting.

Beach Plum (*Prunus maritima*). These trees are at home on the coastal plain. The fruit is small — about the size of a plump blueberry, and has a large stone. Beach plums are sour, but make great jelly and jam.

American Persimmon (*Diospyros virginiana*). If you want fruit, you need a female tree.

Elderberry (*Sambucus canadensis*). The fruit on these plants have a ton of vitamin C!

Hazelnut (*Corylus americana*). These trees could take several years to produce nuts, and need cross-pollination, but the results are worth it.

Black Walnut (*Juglans nigra*). Black walnut trees tend to create "dead zones" around them due to chemicals they release that kills other plants to prevent competition.

Cranberry (*Vaccinium macrocarpon*). Can also work as ground cover!

THE PARTNERSHIP FOR THE DELAWARE ESTUARY

CONNECTING PEOPLE, SCIENCE, AND NATURE FOR A HEALTHY DELAWARE RIVER AND BAY

The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Inc. (PDE), is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1996. PDE is the host of the Delaware Estuary Program and leads science-based and collaborative efforts to improve the tidal Delaware River and Bay, which spans Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. To find out how you can become one of our partners, call PDE at (800) 445-4935 or visit our website at www.DelawareEstuary.org. Delaware Estuary Program contact people include:

Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Inc.

Kathy Klein
▶ (800) 445-4935
▶ kklein@DelawareEstuary.org

Environmental Protection Agency

Irene Purdy, EPA Region III
▶ (212) 637-3794
▶ purdy.irene@epa.gov

Megan Mackey, EPA Region III
▶ (215) 814-5534
▶ mackey.megan@epa.gov

Pennsylvania

Kristina Peakcock-Jones, P.E.
Department of Environmental Protection
▶ (717) 772-5671
▶ kpeakcockjo@pa.gov

Delaware

Kimberly Cole
Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control
▶ (302) 739-9283
▶ kimberly.cole@delaware.gov

New Jersey

Lynette Lurig
Department of Environmental Protection
▶ (609) 633-1314
▶ Lynette.Lurig@dep.nj.gov

Delaware River Basin Commission

Chad Pindar
▶ (609) 883-9500 ext 268
▶ chad.pindar@drbc.gov

Philadelphia Water Department

Kelly Anderson
▶ (215) 685-6245
▶ kelly.anderson@phila.gov

Editor

Kate Layton
▶ (800) 445-4935
▶ klayton@DelawareEstuary.org