

# Engaging communities in Philly

## Home of America's First Urban Refuge

In an increasingly urban America, children and families are more disconnected than ever from nature and the outdoors. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wants to ensure that future generations carry on our nation's tradition of conserving our natural resources. There are many organizations and agencies already working towards this goal, and we want to work together to achieve it. Joining with partners already working toward this goal, the Service is making a long-term commitment to make nature more relevant to Philadelphians.

To help make Philadelphia one of the greenest cities in the U.S., we will:

- *Educate and engage youth* to nurture an appreciation of nature and develop an environmental ethic through playing, learning, serving and working outside.
- *Engage communities* to promote environmental, economic, and socially sustainable communities.
- *Connect residents to the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge* and other natural areas by working with partners to create corridors to nature and improving infrastructure to provide safe access and a welcoming atmosphere.
- *Bring nature into the city* by working with communities and partners to build neighborhood "pocket parks," developing exhibits and natural areas at sites throughout Philadelphia and contributing toward regional environmental and sustainability initiatives.



We have begun a formal environmental education program at local elementary and middle schools.

The Service's increased investments in partnerships and communities in Philadelphia build on more than four decades of conservation in and around the city.

### URBAN REFUGE PARTNERSHIP CITY

In 2014, Philadelphia became one of 14 urban refuge partnerships in the country. Urban partnership designations support and recognize collaborations in cities that work to broaden support for the work that we do and engage urban communities as partners in conservation.



### JOHN HEINZ NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE AT TINICUM

Established in 1972, John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge, the nation's first urban refuge, is located in southwest Philadelphia, adjacent to the Philadelphia International Airport, and hosts more than 150,000 visitors annually for environmental education programs, birdwatching, hiking, fishing, and other outdoor recreation activities. It protects the largest remaining freshwater tidal marsh in Pennsylvania, and is a unique place for urban dwellers to connect with nature. The refuge generates \$2.5 million\* in economic activity for Philadelphia and Delaware counties.

\*Figure from 2012 Banking on Nature report for Fiscal Year 2011



Youth engagement is one of our highest priorities

### POCKET PARKS AND GREEN SPACES

Refuge staff, Audubon Pennsylvania and City Lights are working with communities to develop green spaces in southwest Philadelphia to support pollinators, birds and provide interpretive programming.

### YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT

Since 2009, the Service and The Student Conservation Association have employed local youth and host conservation crews at the refuge. Each summer, about 60 students from various communities in Philadelphia work on conservation projects at the refuge and throughout the city; participants also learn about and explore conservation careers.

### PHILADELPHIA URBAN BIRD TREATY

In 2009, Philadelphia became the third American city to be designated as an Urban Bird Treaty City. The Service provided funds for the city to make Philadelphia more bird friendly.

### RESTORING THE DELAWARE RIVER

The Service works with the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, the Delaware River Basin Commission, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary and others to restore the Delaware River Watershed.



We are working to improve access to the refuge for city residents and the surrounding areas through public transit, bike trails and a new bike share program.