



**US Army Corps
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Philadelphia District

News Release

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— FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE —

Corps partners with Township on ecosystem restoration

PHILADELPHIA (June 25, 2010) – For decades, Southampton Creek has been cutting deeper and deeper into the streambed it follows through a residential area of Upper Southampton Township. Fueled by increased development and increased stormwater runoff upstream, the Creek has eroded its bed and banks, has displaced gabions (stone baskets installed in the 1970s to protect stream banks) and has become generally disconnected from the floodplain that is its natural ally in absorbing and temporarily storing water and thereby promoting a healthy ecosystem.

Now, Upper Southampton Township, in partnership with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, is planning to restore and rebuild the approximately one and a half-mile long stretch of the Southampton Creek.

Upper Southampton Township first approached the Army Corps in 2001, asking it to look into the possibility of restoring the stream's compromised ecosystem. The Corps conducted a preliminary study, concluded there was a need for ecosystem restoration and agreed to undertake the project. But, it was not until the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 - the stimulus bill - was passed that sufficient funding for the approximately \$1 million project became available. The Army Corps will fund approximately 65 percent of the cost, the Township the remaining 35 percent.

Working with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of New Hampshire, the Army Corps is devising a strategy to restore the stream's functions and ecosystem. The Corps and Township officials are actively seeking public input as the project moves beyond investigation and planning and into the selection of a final design.

A number of alternatives have been identified, including doing nothing, reworking the existing streambed, or the alternative that the experts have identified as preferable: shifting portions of the creek to a new streambed which will be closer to the elevation of the adjacent floodplain and thus easier to interact with it.

On June 14, the Army Corps, in conjunction with Township officials and the Township's Environmental Advisory Council, hosted an informal meeting on the project at the Township library with stream-side residents. Following presentations and a general question and answer session, residents had a chance to discuss specific aspects of the project with the experts stationed around the room.

Among the officials making presentations, and later fielding questions, were Heather Jensen, project manager for the Army Corps; Mark Eberle, a Corps biologist working on the project; Larry Brannaka of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; Tom Ballestero of the University of New Hampshire; and Sarah Apperson, an Army Corps real estate official.

At the June 14 meeting, residents raised questions about the project, expressing concerns about the impact on their properties, limits on planting or use of easement land, and the extent to which the old, abandoned sections of the stream will be filled. For the final project to be successful in the long term, planting and mowing in the project easement areas will be restricted, biologists confirmed, to promote growth of, and to protect plants that will stabilize banks and benefit the ecosystem. Township and agency officials assured residents that they will adjust the project design to accommodate individual concerns where possible.

The project is being funded under an ecosystem restoration authority designed to restore ecosystems. As Larry Brannaka of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service explained at the June 14 meeting, the project is "flood neutral," meaning that it will not increase the risk of flooding. Brannaka also noted, however, that if nothing is done and the stream is left in its present condition, the stream will continue to degrade; the banks will continue to erode, eventually caving in and leaving no place for the stream to go, which may lead to more flooding. However, the preferred design, restoring the ecosystem functions, will act like a sponge and a filter for runoff from nearby streets and yards, and provide habitat for various species.

Among the documents that describe the project and are available for public review are a public notice and a more detailed description contained in the draft Environmental Assessment. Both documents are available on the project website of the Philadelphia District of the Army Corps of Engineers: <http://www.nap.usace.army.mil/Projects/screek/index.html>

Hard copies of the documents may also be obtained at the Township building at 939 Street Road, Southampton, PA, 18966. or by contacting the Army Corps of Engineers by e-mail stephen.rochette@usace.army.mil. The official comment period extends from June 2 to July 5, but persons who feel they need more time to comment may contact the Corps of Engineers to request an extension.

Members of the public are invited to comment on the plan, either in writing or via email, to the Army Corps of Engineers or Upper Southampton Township. Public comments on the project should be mailed to Mr. Minas M. Arabatzis, ATTN: Environmental Resources Branch, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Wanamaker Building, 100 Penn Square East, Philadelphia, PA, 19107-3390. Comments may also be e-mailed to Stephen Rochette in the Public Affairs Office at stephen.rochette@usace.army.mil or dropped off in person to the Township Manager, Joe Golden, at the Township building.

