



# Three-Year Strategic Plan 2010-2012

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nine Mile Run Watershed Association (NMRWA) was incorporated in 2001 to engage urban residents in their natural environment in the watershed communities. Since its inception, NMRWA has focused its efforts on the restoration and protection of the Nine Mile Run watershed through citizen engagement, demonstration projects, and advocacy. The organization has excelled in developing partnerships and engaging residents through grassroots efforts and innovative programs.

Our strategic planning efforts come at an opportune time. Many of the signature projects that NMRWA initiated are underway or wrapping up, and we, as board and staff, are poised to take a renewed look at our programs, operations, and outcomes. The overarching vision for our future is to achieve greater impact on all of our watershed communities, while also positioning the organization to be recognized on a national level as a model of environmental stewardship, urban renewal, public/private collaboration, and inter-municipal cooperation. NMRWA will build upon the successful programming we have developed, striving to achieve greater efficiency, effectiveness, and ultimately impact on our surroundings and our world. We look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NMRWA has developed a number of original programs and projects aimed at providing citizens with solutions to environmental issues that affect them at home. A few highlights include:

- ◆ **Rain Barrel Initiative:** NMRWA is continuing Phase II of the Rain Barrel Initiative, a major residential stormwater management demonstration project. We have now installed more than 1,320 rain barrels on homes throughout the watershed, and are gathering data to measure the impact on runoff;
- ◆ **GreenLinks:** In order to get to the root of our stormwater runoff problem, we must increase the amount of green space in our watershed communities. We have done this primarily by planting and caring for more than 240 street trees. Thus far, more than 425 individuals have participated in street tree inventories and planting and tree care projects. Moreover, NMRWA provides support for community garden initiatives in the watershed area.
- ◆ **Citizen Engagement:** Lasting change requires community buy-in. NMRWA raises awareness and promotes buy-in through a variety of approaches. We sponsor free activities in the park, such as bird and geology walks, restoration tours, and stream sweeps to clean up the litter that washes down from the upper watershed. We publish our newsletter three times per year, and reach approximately 4,000 households. Our monthly e-newsletter reaches more than 2,000 individuals. Besides a summary of our recent activities, our publications offer readers helpful information and resources. NMRWA is a partner with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, the Frick Environmental Center, the Allegheny Land Trust, and the Mt. Washington CDC in offering the Urban EcoSteward Program, which provides training to citizens interested in having a greater role in watershed restoration and maintenance.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Nine Mile Run Watershed Association wishes to thank the many people who provided guidance, insight, and hard work throughout our planning process. Plan development was led by our planning committee, which included NMRWA board members Zelda Curtiss, Chairperson Misty Parshall, Martha Riecks, Scott Rosenblum, and Margaret Zak; and NMRWA staff members Brenda Smith and Lisa Brown. The process was led by Kate Sphar, Senior Consultant at Dewey & Kaye.

In addition, we thank those who participated in our interviews: Joy Abbott, Department of City Planning; Dan Bain, University of Pittsburgh; Jeff Bergman, Western PA Conservancy; Warren Cecconi, Edgewood Borough Manager; Meg Cheever, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy; Erin Copeland, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy; Jon Danzak, former NMRWA board member; Dave Dzombak, Carnegie Mellon University; Tracey Evans, Wilkinsburg Borough Council & Assistant to Rep. Joe Preston; Caren Glotfelty, The Heinz Endowments; Phil Gruszka, Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy; Brian Hill, Richard King Mellon Foundation; Greg Holesh, PA Department of Environmental Protection; Kathy Knauer, The Allegheny Front; Mary Kostalos, former NMRWA Board President; Marla Marcinko, Borough of Wilkinsburg Manager; Amy Myers, Allegheny County Conservation District; Dan Sentz, Department of City Planning; Mary Beth Steisslinger, Urban Ecology Collaborative; and Dick Wilford, City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Works.

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