



2009 | ANNUAL REPORT



Welcome to Nine Mile Run

Our story began in 1997, when a small group of artists from Carnegie Mellon University's STUDIO for Creative Inquiry saw the enormous potential for change in the Nine Mile Run Valley and the way we think about community involvement. Inspired by a belief in the interconnectedness of human beings and their environment, and the power of the individual to create positive change, the STUDIO fashioned a space for community discourse. *Ample Opportunity: A Community Dialog* was a year-long interdisciplinary effort that brought together local residents, artists, historians, scientists, engineers, and planners seeking a second chance for Nine Mile Run.

The Nine Mile Run Valley was once considered an ideal place for a park, but after decades of abuse and neglect the stream came to be known as "stink creek" to generations of local residents. Most of Nine Mile Run's tributaries were restricted in pipes throughout the watershed, and any remaining open channel looked more like a deep narrow ditch than a stream. *Ample Opportunity* focused on the challenges and opportunities presented by the open portion of the stream and created a democratic dialog that would reshape the future of Nine Mile Run.

The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association was born out of this unique democratic experience.

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**All photos courtesy
of John Moyer. This page
photo by Matt Kambic.*



Letter from the Executive Director & President of our Board

After the Storm

As it does every year, Nine Mile Run experienced ebbs and flows in 2009. But this year will be remembered most for flows – during one June storm, over four inches of rain fell in the watershed within just a few hours. The resulting stormwater and sewage runoff that came surging into the Nine Mile Run stream channel took out a number of the hydraulic features constructed during the 2006 stream restoration, swept away stream banks and created conditions that could lead to a perpetual cycle of erosion and disappearing habitat.

The US Army Corps of Engineers volunteered expertise to oversee repairs of the damage, and the City of Pittsburgh could offer labor and support of the work, but neither of these partners had funding available to cover the cost of equipment and materials.

Unwilling to watch the now-thriving ecosystem once again ebb away, The Nine Mile Run Watershed Association brought this situation to the attention of the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and was able to secure over \$60,000 from the Foundation and other sources to ensure that the damage created by the June storm was repaired by the end of 2009. The flood plain is now once again working as intended, and the repaired structures were built even stronger than before to better stand up to future massive storm flows.

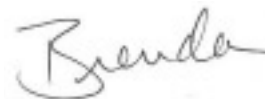
The unusual storm in June highlighted what the committed leadership of the NMRWA already knew – funding will always be needed to ensure the protection of the restored stream and its surrounds. With this motivation, the NMRWA advocated for the creation of a permanent Nine Mile Run Fund at The Pittsburgh Foundation to support these efforts.

The establishment of this small but enduring endowment fund is just one of the many steps that the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association took in 2009 to ensure that the restoration and protection of the Nine Mile Run Watershed will continue for generations to come. If you are interested *in learning more about or contributing to* this fund, please contact us.


We hope you enjoy having the opportunity to learn more about our efforts, as presented in this report, and continue to enjoy the ebbs and flows of this unique and magnificent urban stream.



Martha Riecks, *President*



Brenda Smith, *Executive Director*

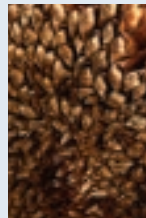
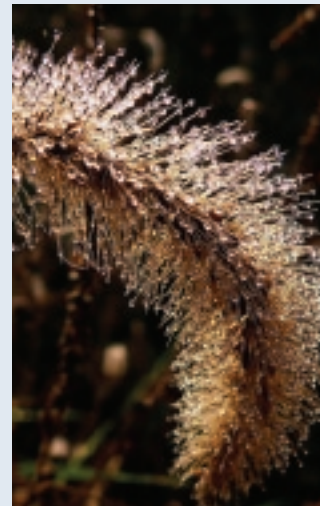
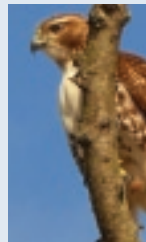


“Restoration practices which hold firm to ecological fidelity and embrace social and cultural goals are much more likely to prosper and endure.”

-A.D. Bradshaw, 1995.



In 2006 a new Nine Mile Run was unveiled. Sponsored by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Pittsburgh, this 3-year project restored 2.2 miles of open stream in Frick Park. Designed to ameliorate years of neglect and degradation the project reconfigured and rebuilt the stream channel. Wetlands and floodplains were created, and habitat was enhanced and expanded with thousands of newly planted native trees, perennials, and grasses.



At NMRWA we

Educate

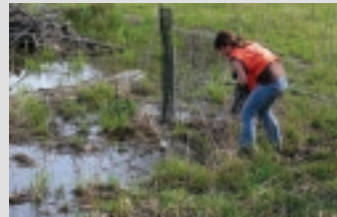
Since 2001, the Nine Mile Run Watershed Association has worked to increase awareness about the issues of stormwater runoff, nonpoint source pollution, and sewage overflows. In 2009, NMRWA continued to keep citizens informed about these and other important environmental issues through our regular email blasts and newsletters. Presentations to community groups, churches, temples, youth organizations and local schools engaged a wider audience in regional concerns about water quality. In addition, our programs created meaningful learning opportunities for citizens by connecting them to the issues and involving them in concrete hands-on experiences.

At NMRWA, we recognize the important role that education plays in creating a new generation of environmental stewards. Thus, it was only natural that connecting local students to the problems associated with stormwater runoff became a larger focus of our programming in 2009. We expanded our school programming by partnering with local environmental education organizations, designing and implementing project-oriented learning programs. Using the Nine Mile Run Aquatic Ecosystem Restoration as the perfect outdoor learning laboratory, NMRWA taught students from schools across the region about water quality, invasive species and native plants, ecology and ecosystems.

2009 also marked our Second State of the Watershed. This all-day public event took place at the Environmental Charter School in Regent Square; over 50 attendees participated in presentations, panel discussions, and workshops. Our keynote speaker, Tom Biebighauser, Wildlife Biologist for the US Forest Service Center for Wetlands, spoke about the importance of wetlands in our environment. Tom then led participants in outdoor workshops highlighting volunteer constructed wetlands and rain gardens.



More than 7000 households received the Nine Mile Run News, NMRWA's email blast and newsletter.



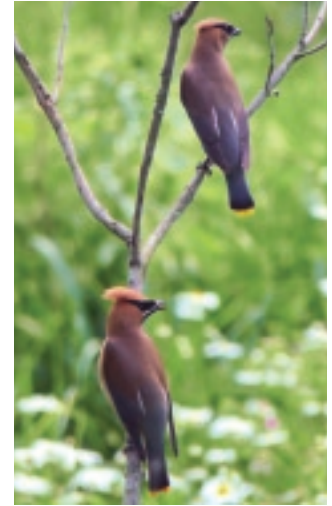
In 2009, over 3000 students and residents engaged in educational programming through NMRWA

At NMRWA we

Inspire

NMRWA creates a space for citizens to reestablish their relationship to the urban environment. Each year we explore new ways for people to witness the healing processes of nature. Seasonal walks through the restoration area provide opportunities for folks to engage with an abundance not usually seen in an urban park. Tours that focus on the history of the valley and the flora and fauna in the park excite and inspire citizens to create change, not only within the Nine Mile Run watershed but in the communities beyond its boundaries. People begin to see themselves in the context of a larger more diverse community rooted in the natural world.

Each day joggers, hikers, bikers, birders and dog walkers enjoy the natural beauty of the Nine Mile Run restoration, experiencing the profound recovery of the stream. More than an extension of Frick Park, it is a place for inspiration. Artists and photographers interpret and record the remarkable transformation, sharing their vision of beauty and peace. Each day, visitors experience a spiritual connection with this metaphor for rebirth and renewal, finding solace and hope in the dramatic transformation.

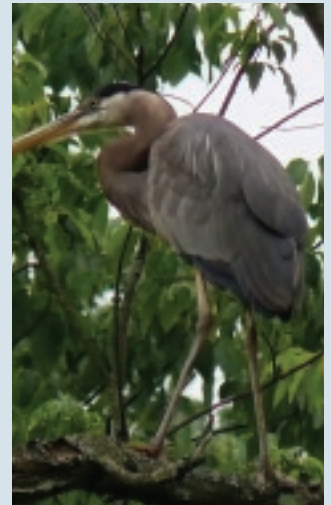
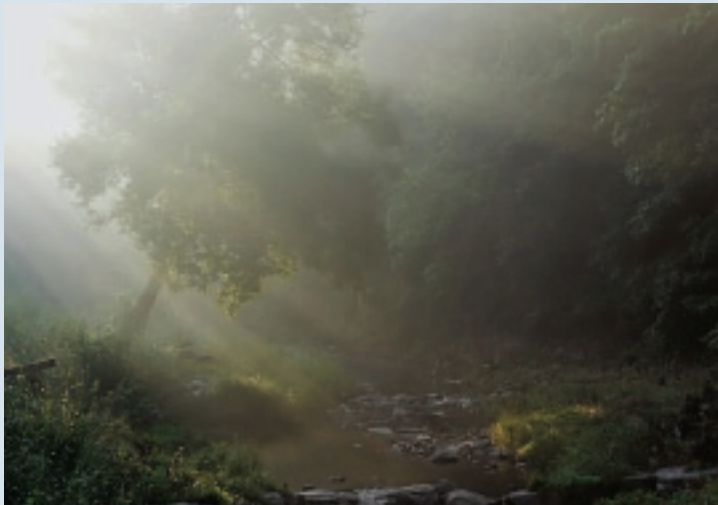
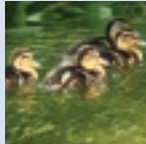


“The restoration area is a metaphor for what is happening, and what can happen, for our City. Sure, we have problems. But if we roll up our sleeves, pool our efforts, and maybe call in some heavy equipment, the problems need not be insurmountable.”

- *Khryst Myrddin, 2009*



"To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival."
--Wendell Berry



At NMRWA we

Act

In 2006, residents and community members witnessed the renewal of Nine Mile Run and nature continues to heal this once degraded stream. But natural processes are slow, and in many respects constructing the restoration was the easy part; the hard part is nurturing and maintaining this wonderful environmental asset for future generations.

The urban nature of the watershed means that Nine Mile Run suffers each time it rains. The storms our region

experienced in 2009 were particularly challenging. Nothing could have prepared us for the devastation the stream experienced on June 17th. The streambanks were filled with debris; whole trash bags of garbage and recyclables, heavy logs, shopping carts, bicycles, skateboards, tarps, toys, street signs, tires and other automobile parts, all washed into the stream. Swaths of sediment were deposited on the banks, boulders displaced, culverts exposed, and young plantings damaged.

NMRWA scheduled additional stream sweeps and sent out a call for volunteers. Our many dedicated volunteers rallied, not only joining us to clean up the debris, but also helping to remove sediment, rebuilding retaining walls, and planting barren areas with native plants.

Stream Sweeps are just one way NMRWA actively engages citizens in stewardship. We also encourage folks to take action in their communities by participating in litter cleanups,

tree plantings, and installing rain barrels to reduce their stormwater footprint. In addition, NMRWA's Urban EcoStewards maintain over 30 sites along the stream corridor. They regularly remove invasive species, clean up litter and trash and tackle problems caused by erosion.

Citizens engaged in stewardship are inspired to not only change their own behaviors, but to actively advocate for the stream. Each individual becomes a means for creating lasting change.

Partners in Stewardship

The Student Conservation Association, Bayer Climate Fellows, AmeriCorps, Phipps Summer Interns, Community Youth Network, Temple Sinai, GLENDA, Big Brothers and Sisters of Greater Pittsburgh, Wilksburg High School, the Pittsburgh Urban Christian School, Wilksburg Community Development Corporation, and The Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy.

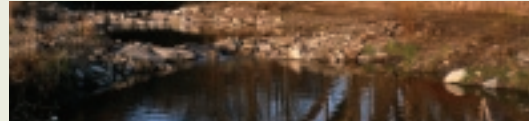
277 trees planted

More than 300 bags of trash collected

Over 1500 citizens actively working for change

Over 1200 rain barrels installed

NMR storm damage



NMR
restored



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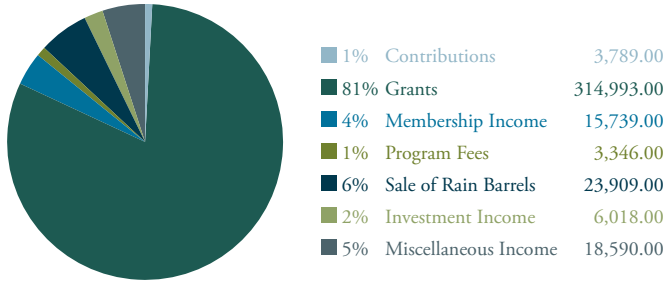
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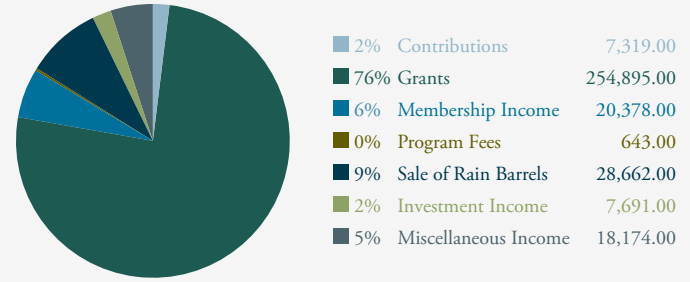
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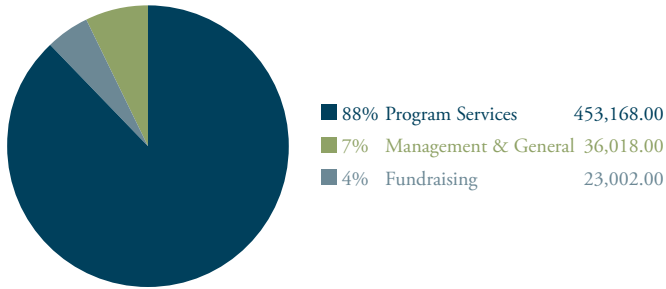
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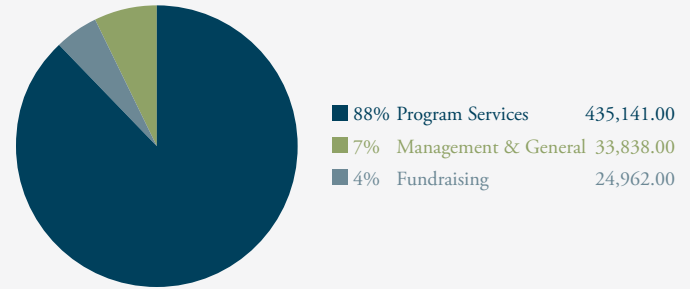
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2009 Expenditures



2008 Expenditures



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