

# Shamokin Creek group gets \$500K environmental grant

- [By Rick Dandes rdandes@dailyitem.com](mailto:rdandes@dailyitem.com)
- Nov 24, 2023 Updated 20 hrs ago

SHAMOKIN — The Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance will be able to establish a brick-and-mortar presence in the community staffed by a full-time coordinator, thanks to a federal grant announced Wednesday.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is providing \$500,000 through the Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving Program, which targets small, nonprofit organizations that historically struggle to receive funding.

“Our persistence has paid off,” said alliance Vice President Steve Motyka.

The alliance formed in 1996, targeting remediation of acid mine drainage in the Shamokin Creek Watershed, he said.

“We’ve been targeting this forever, it seems like,” Motyka said.

The alliance program manager and advisory board, consisting of partner representatives, will coordinate to vet project proposals and expenditures to promote the goals of the community. The alliance project partners are: FAR Better Together, Shamokin Community Gardens and Pocket Parks, Sustainability Coalition, Central Susquehanna Opportunities, City of Shamokin, Coal Township, Borough of Kulpmont, Shamokin Area High and Middle School, Northumberland Career and Technology Center and Luzerne Community College.

A first priority was announced on Friday — the hiring of Phil Dunn as alliance executive director. Dunn was a one-time staffer for former state Sen. John Gordner.

The alliance will also address environmental issues such as acid mine drainage, blight, pollution, brownfield development, and sustainable job creation.

In February 2020, it became clear a collaboration of several Shamokin area organizations would have more leverage in applying for a grant, Motyka said. The common goal among the groups is to improve life in the greater Shamokin area, he said.

A few years later at a workshop in February 2023, groups, such as the FAR Better Together and Shamokin Community Gardens formally partnered with SRCA to pool resources, skills and volunteers as a means of reaching this goal.

The current grant money derives from the billion-plus federal government infrastructure bill that targeted rural communities, Motyka said.

“Our immediate focus now is on restoring Shamokin Creek,” Motyka said. “Doing so will also affect communities like Sunbury. It will enhance the environment throughout the region.”

Motyka also thanked U.S. Sen. Bob Casey, R-Pa., for helping move the process along.

“This EPA grant,” Casey said, “allows the Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance and its partners to coordinate efforts on acid mine drainage cleanup and other projects from a new storefront where they can also build stronger relationships between community members and organizations that will work together to improve the quality of life in the region.”