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Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance, partners to receive \$500,000 grant

Nov 22, 2023

SHAMOKIN — Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance (SCRA) will receive a \$500,000 grant to establish a brick-and-mortar office in the community, pool available resources and provide a full-time community coordinator position, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and SCRA confirmed on Wednesday.

According to an SCRA announcement, the grant is through an EPA program designed to address environmental justice projects across Pennsylvania as part of the Investing in America Agenda.

The Environmental Justice Collaborative Problem-Solving (EJCPS) program intentionally targeted small, nonprofit organizations that historically struggle to receive federal funding.

SCRA served as the grant applicant and is working with partners FAR Better Together and Shamokin Community Gardens and Pocket Parks. The \$500,000 was the maximum amount for the grant.

According to SCRA, organizers at a pre-pandemic town hall meeting in February 2020 recognized the need for grassroots revitalization efforts in the community. As a result, several groups were formed with the goal of improving life in the greater Shamokin area.

Currently, each of the partners is working independently without the benefit of paid staff. All engage in fundraising efforts, but in a small economically depressed area, organizations often find themselves in competition for scarce resources, an SCRA release states. Another problem with “working in silos” is that projects are sometimes duplicated. By joining forces, groups will have access to more volunteers, ideas, skill sets and funding opportunities. In addition to dedicated staff, the funds will provide for a local office that is visible and accessible.

SCRA Vice President Steve Motyka credits the group approach in the successful application.

“With this award, we are exploring a path forward which we haven’t explored yet,” Motyka stated. “We will be combining the efforts of multiple community-based organizations while we work as a larger team to face our community’s challenges. We will engage other nonprofits, business leaders, faith groups, academia and government as we move into the future.”

“This EPA grant will allow 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,” said U.S. Sen. Bob Casey.

An EPA adviser will be assigned to the group in the near future. Further developments will be made public through local media outlets and social media.

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