



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

July 13, 2026

Oil Creek Restoration Project Earns State Honors *York County project among 26 statewide to earn the 2026 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence*

YORK, Pa. – The York County Rail Trail Authority's project to restore the Oil Creek floodplain along the Hanover Trolley Trail in Heidelberg Township has earned a 2026 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence.

The awards are announced annually by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection and the governor's administration to honor innovative efforts that are improving air and water quality, reducing pollution, restoring ecosystems and building healthier, more sustainable communities throughout Pennsylvania.

The Oil Creek project was completed in coordination with the York County Conservation District and York County Planning Commission, as part of work to construct a new section of the rail trail. As a result of the project, approximately 3,800 linear feet of stream channel in the Oil Creek was restored, creating 11 acres of wetlands.

The restoration of the stream required more than 80,000 cubic yards of nutrient-rich sediment to be removed from the bottom of the creek. That sediment was spread throughout adjacent farmlands, helping to improve crop productivity through environmentally sustainable practices.

York County President Commissioner Julie Wheeler noted that the Oil Creek restoration project is part of the county's ongoing commitment to protecting and maintaining the county's natural resources.

"Whether it's expanding our rail trail system, preserving farmlands for future generations or protecting our waterways, we are committed to making smart investments that will ensure our precious natural resources are protected for the benefit of all who live, work and visit York County. "We are pleased that the DEP and Gov. Shapiro recognize that commitment with this award."

York County Vice President Commissioner Scott Burford noted that the county's private-sector partners were key to the project's success, including York-based engineering firm C.S. Davidson and general contractor, Kinsley Construction.

"This award is emblematic of all the hard work that the Rail Trail Authority and our partners have put into this project to improve our trail and enhance the quality of life for York County residents and visitors," Burford said. "Without their partnership, we could not have advanced this project."

"The completion of this trail section not only provides additional miles of trail but also invites

visitors to view nearly 11 acres of wetlands,” said York County Rail Trail Authority Chairman Frank Kempf. “The Environmental Excellence Award is echoing what the trail visitors have been saying – that the new wetlands are truly beautiful.”

Authority Executive Director Gwen Loose added, “The authority is honored to have its project recognized for its environmental benefits, and we invite York County residents so come and enjoy.”

The York County project was among 26 honorees for this year’s Environmental Excellence Awards, presented in Harrisburg, PA, on June 25, 2026.

“The Environmental Excellence honorees embody the innovation, collaboration, and commitment that are helping protect Pennsylvania’s air, land, and water while shaping a more sustainable future for the Commonwealth,” said Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Jessica Shirley. “These projects show what’s possible when local organizations, schools, businesses, and volunteers come together to solve environmental challenges and inspire the next generation of environmental stewards.”

###

MEDIA CONTACT

Gwenyth Loose, Executive Director
York County Rail Trail Authority
info@yorkcountyrails.org
(717) 428-0999

About the York County Rail Trail Authority (YCRTA)

YCRTA was formed in September of 1990 by the York County Board of Commissioners. Its mission is “Building multi-use trails to connect our communities.” The Authority is comprised of eleven volunteers and two staff.

About YCRTA’s work

YCRTA developed the Heritage Rail Trail County Park, a 21.5-mile, multi-use trail extending from York City to the Mason-Dixon Line just south of New Freedom, PA, and its northern extension that extends an additional 6.5 miles to John Rudy County Park. The Authority’s current project is to develop the Hanover Trolley Trail following portions of the MetEd electric corridor between Hanover and York and a recently acquired 8.5-mile dormant rail line.