

Wissahickon, PA – On October 25, 2008, twelve volunteers from the Philadelphia Chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers Young Member Forum (ASCE YMF) joined with volunteers from the Philadelphia Mountain Biking Association (PMBA) and Friends of the Wissahickon (FOW) to help preserve hiking, horseback riding, & mountain biking trails in the Wissahickon Valley. The day was part of the Sustainable Trails Initiative (STI), which is a three-phased, multi-year project to make the 57 miles of National Recreation Trails in the Wissahickon Valley a physically and socially sustainable system for all park users.



Each year, the beautiful trails found in the heart of the Wissahickon Valley are damaged by heavy rainwater which erodes the sediment that forms the park's trails. As sediment is eroded from trails, the result is a path of large openly spaced rocks that become dangerous hazards for pedestrians, equestrians, and mountain bikers.



In order to mitigate the erosion of sediment, volunteers were tasked with re-grading the trails while creating a 'rock anchor' at the top of the trail to minimize the flow of rainwater down the trail. The rock anchor helps to create a barrier that prevents the majority of rainwater from flowing through which would otherwise erode the trail below. Instead, water is redirected around the rock anchor, and the trail below, to flow into an existing stream or gully.



The purpose of this outing was to help protect and promote the natural beauty of the trails, by spreading native foliage and leaves from nearby trees on either side of the newly re-graded trail. This helps to preserve and enhance the atmosphere of the trail as well as helps to create a defined path for the trail's users.

For the volunteers, this was not just a community service event, but an opportunity to meet and socialize with members of other organizations, hike in the Wissahickon Valley, and to enjoy food and refreshments during the event.

The Friends of the Wissahickon is a non-profit, ecologically-based organization helping to preserve the Wissahickon Valley section of Fairmount Park, aiming to preserve the natural beauty and wildness of the Wissahickon Valley and stimulate public interest therein.



The Philadelphia Mountain Biking Association is an organized group of mountain biking enthusiasts who actively promote responsible mountain biking, offer scheduled rides, lead volunteer trail work projects, and work to improve relations among trail user groups.

The American Society of Civil Engineers is an organization of civil engineers committed to involvement in the local community. The group's Young Members Forum includes college students, recent graduates, and young engineers.