

Living Downstream in Eastwick: A Grassroots Organizing Success in an Environmental Justice Community

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition

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Watershed Congress, March 12, 2016

Eastwick sees end to largest urban renewal deal in U.S. history

by Samantha Melamed, Philadelphia Inquirer Staff Writer Posted December 24, 2015



LIHEAP Home Heating Grants available
Applications at Southwest CDC Page 4

FINANTA Group Forms
Small business loans aid expansion of local stores Page 6

Community Pitches in For Children
Local leaders hold galas Pages 8,9

Eastwick Superfund Site Clean-up
Advisory Group meets Page 11

SOUTHWEST

January 15, 2016

GLOBE TIMES

Bringing Good News to the Community since 1945

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OPINION

• Free Tax Returns at Southwest CDC Page 2

COMMUNITY

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Rep. McClinton Holds Senior Luncheon Page 9

Health Insurance & Breast Cancer information Page 10

COMING UP

Check out this week's calendar and announcements.
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Eastwick Urban Renewal Agreement Ends

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition members with Brian Abernathy, executive director of Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (left), Amy Laura Cahn, staff attorney at Public Interest Law Center (fourth from left), and Steve Cobb, legal counsel for Councilman Kenyatta Johnson (right).

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC) members met with officials from the Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) on December 23 to celebrate the long-awaited termination of the 50-year old urban development agreement on 135 acres of vacant property next to the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge in Eastwick. The development rights had been held by Korman Residential Realty, who proposed some four years ago to construct 722 new apartments and 1034

paved parking spaces there.

To Eastwick residents and the management and friends of the Heinz Refuge, this Korman proposal represented major environmental, economic and social problems for the community and resulted in the formation of EFNC. Taking on the powerful Korman and its backers, EFNC had the strong legal assistance of the Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia and in the end, the backing of City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson who blocked the attempt by

Korman to rezone the area for their development.

For the leaders of the Eastwick coalition and their supporters, battling against the odds on what they felt was a clear cut social justice issue was nothing new. Many Coalition members had long memories of the high-handed condemnation and destruction of their homes on 2300 acres in "The Meadows", the old name for Eastwick. They had also been in the forefront of efforts

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LOWER SOUTHWEST DISTRICT PLAN PUBLIC MEETING
January 21
See Article on Page 11

Additional Accomplishments

- The promise by the Philadelphia City Planning Commission and PRA of a community planning process to address Eastwick's issues.
- The formation of a Community Advisory Group in the EPA's remediation of the Lower Darby Creeks Superfund site.
- Legislation introduced in the Federal budget to fund a study of chronic catastrophic flooding along Cobbs and Darby creeks by the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Philadelphia Water Department.
- Potential climate adaptation planning by the Mayor's Office of Sustainability and viewed by MOS and Franklin Institute as a valued and legitimate prospect to partner with to apply for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration grant.
- Attention focused on the rise of flood insurance rates for Eastwick residents.

Photo by Ryan Doyle

Community Assessment Report

Utilize Your Capacity to do Your Own Homework



Bread & Roses

2015 Community Empowerment Award



A Proud Moment For EFNC



View your photo @
cutandpastephoto booth.com
password: consciencefreedom

Eastwick Background



Photo of 88th Street and Eastwick, Year 1927.

1950's Eastwick:
Peaceful, Integrated,
Culturally -Diverse.

All backgrounds:
Black, White, Jewish,
Chinese, "gypsy."

Urban Renewal

The Philadelphia Redevelopment Authority (PRA) seized 2,500 acres in Eastwick, including the 128 acres, by condemnation and eminent domain. The largest urban renewal plan in the history of the U.S.



- 10,000 residents displaced.
- 50 churches relocated.
- Re-settlement city-wide.
- New homes built on swamps filled by dredge.
- Homes subsided, unstable foundations.

"Field of Weeds" documentary, You-Tube video.

Environmental Justice Community

Eastwick “Environmental Justice Community” enduring disproportionate environmental hardships.

- Two landfills operated from 1950-1970's, national priority superfund site.
- Toxic emissions from petroleum refineries.
- Traffic pollution, noise, interstate highway.
- Light pollution 24-7 from airport, hotels, highways.
- Jet fuel released into atmosphere during landings into Philadelphia Airport
- Flooding is consistent, significant.



Photo by Ryan Doyle

Eastwick Flooding

Darby Creek "is one of the country's most flood-prone streams, a significant drain on the National Flood Insurance Program [FEMA], and a national lesson in what can go wrong along a developed waterway." -*Philadelphia Inquirer* (May 2012)



Eastwick residential backyard, Clearview Landfill, Darby Creek behind Landfill. October 2012.

- Floodplain information is 50 years old.
- Change in climate, rise in sea level.
- Water transports toxins from Clearview Landfill Superfund site into Eastwick.
- Inadequate stormwater management systems, big concerns for future flooding.
- Inconsistent flood insurance costs, coverage and requirements.

Hurricane Impact

Hurricanes Floyd (1999) and Irene (2011)

- 1,000 houses evacuated in Hurricane Floyd.
- Ground-levels flooded, ruining homes.
- Cars floated away.
- Residents trapped as major roadways impassable with flooding.
- Homeowners labored to protect property.

During Hurricane Sandy (2012), Mayor Nutter stood on Saturn Place in Eastwick, adjacent to the rising Cobbs Creek, and publicly stated the need for a comprehensive solution to the flooding issues in Eastwick.



Heinz Refuge Flooding



Heinz Refuge, Pedestrian Boardwalk flooded.
Hurricane Irene, August 2011.

Heinz Refuge, Hurricane Sandy,
October 2012.

John Heinz Nat'l Wildlife Refuge downstream
from confluence of Darby and Cobb's Creeks.

The Darby Creek disperses flood waters
through hundreds of acres of Refuge wetlands.



A Potential New Threat in Eastwick

Proposed development of high-density apartment complex posed significant, detrimental impact on environmental, economic, social health of community.

- Exacerbates current flood risk for homes built in 100-year flood plain.
- Increases air, noise, and light pollution.
- Uncovers potentially hazardous ground contaminants in soil.
- Threatens wildlife, including 11 PA-state endangered species.
- Diminish experience of 140,000 annual visitors to Refuge, marring expanded tourism opportunities.
- Repeats historic injustices, excluding community input from planning process.



How Was This New Threat Averted?

Neighbors Talking to Neighbors

- In January 2012 ten concerned residents began meeting to address various community concerns including:
 - * illegal dumping
 - * lack of lighting in secluded areas
 - * a lack of police presence
 - * 2 home invasions that had recently occurred

- They also agreed to be more alert to any suspicious activity in the community.

Being Vigilant and Watchful



Photo by Joanne Graham

Taking Action

- We promptly met to discuss the potentially impact of the proposed development project and our next steps.
- We initiated contact with the Korman Company to confirm their plans and to arrange a meeting with them so that we could gather all the facts.
- We reached out to the John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge to inform them of the possibility of the proposed development adjacent to the refuge.

Gather All the Facts

- Upon meeting with Korman Company officials, it was confirmed that Korman planned to break ground the following year to build a massive, high-density apartment complex that would have taken up to five years to complete and would have taken place on 35 of a 128 acre parcel and include:

- 722 rental apartment units
- 51 two-story buildings
- 1,034 parking spaces

- It was also confirmed that the remaining acres would be designated for future airport expansion.

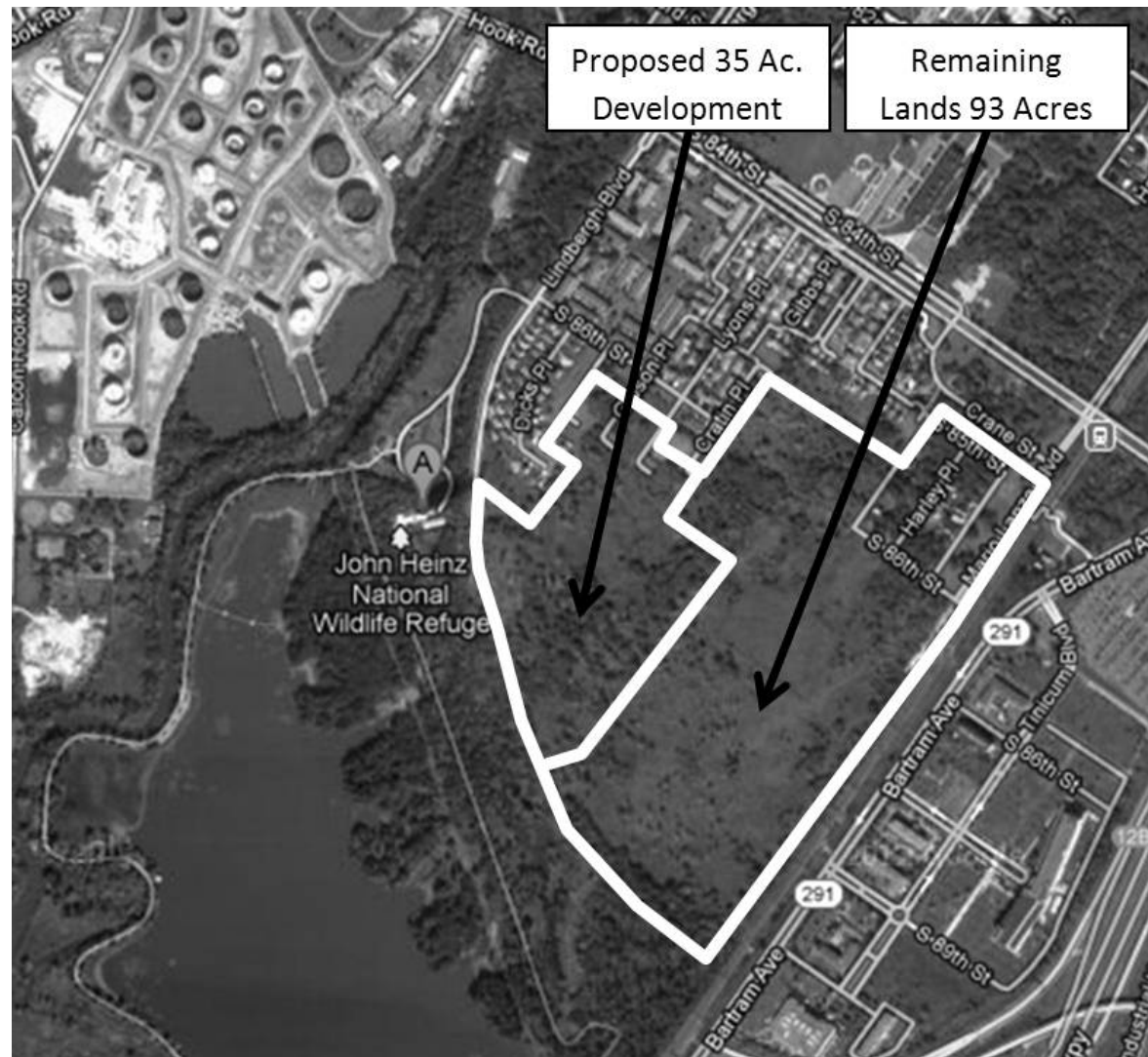
Location of Proposed Development

Development proposed location.

Large green space parcel in Philadelphia.

Bordered by:
John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge

Eastwick neighborhood



Know the Rules of Local Land Development

We Knew That:

- The location of the proposed development was currently zoned for single-family homes;
- To build an apartment complex in the proposed location required re-zoning the land for multi-unit dwellings;
- The community had a right to testify before City Council against re-zoning of the proposed location.

Know the Tools in Your Tool Chest!

Build Stakeholder Support

To Win This Battle We Knew That:

- We could not stop the Korman Company's \$100 million development project without strong stakeholder support
- Building support within the community would be critical;
- The community greatest allies in this fight would be John Heinz Natinal Refuge's board, the Friends of Heinz Refuge (FOHR).

Photo by Ryan Doyle

Community Organizing

- The committee of ten residents officially became the *Eastwick Action Committee (EAC)*
- *EAC* reached out to Friends of Heinz Refuge (FOHR) to inform them of the proposed development adjacent to the Refuge and gain support in stopping the project.
- Eastwick Action Committee and Friends of Heinz Refuge form grassroots organization, the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC), to **stop unwanted development** in Eastwick.

Coalition Building

Eastwick Action Committee (EAC) and Friends of Heinz Refuge (FOHR)
joined to form
Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC), May of 2012

Consultants -- Ross Pilling, Keystone Conservation Trust.

Secured William Penn Foundation grant. Funds used over next 6 months for services of hydro-geologist, 4Ward Planning, public relations.

Michael Nairn, Professor Urban Studies at Univ of Penn.

Experience in urban development, community organizing and planning.

Legal Counsel -- Amy Laura Cahn, staff attorney, Public Interest Law Center of Philadelphia (PILCOP), agrees to represent EFNC.

Strategic planning, broad-based thinking, consensus-building.

Contributors to Early Organizing Success

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC)
Collaborates with other organizations to assist in our efforts.

John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge
(US Fish & Wildlife Service)

Delaware Riverkeeper Network

4Ward Planning

Darby Creek Valley Association

Clean Air Council

PennFuture

Pepper Middle School

Sierra Club of Southeastern
Pennsylvania

Audubon Pennsylvania

Hydro-geologist

DelCo Citizens for a Clean Environment

Clean Water Action

Philadelphia Parks Alliance

Scores of residents who rallied, signed
petitions and completed surveys

*Support * Expertise * Outreach * Advice*

Implementing Effective Strategies

How did the community effectively respond to this threat?

Met **weekly** to discuss, strategize, plan action steps.

Appointed **officers** – President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer.

Distributed **meeting agendas** and **minutes**.

Established **committees**.

Compiled **documents** – Resettlement Agreement, Zoning Regulations, Natural Resources information, Flooding and Topography maps.

Identified **key players** – community and church leaders, elected officials, politicians.

Set-up **website**, collected **emails** and contact information from everyone.

Door-to-door Community Engagement



Photo by Joanne Graham

Community Outreach

EFNC organized a Public Meeting on May 22, 2012, to inform community and get feedback. 150+ people expressed near-unanimous opposition.

EASTWICK FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS
invites everyone to attend
PUBLIC MEETING
Listen, Learn, Discuss

Korman proposes to develop 722 rental apartments, in 51 two-story u parking for 1034 cars, on 35 acres of green space at 86th Street, L Blvd and Mario Lanza Blvd, near Heinz Refuge. Korman needs cc approval to secure City Council vote, to legislatively rezone the 35-ac of land, from R9A single-family dwellings to R12 multi-family d Development impacts storm water runoff, truck and vehicle traffi stability, property values, wildlife habitat, and neighborhood character.

**What do YOU want your community to look l
Get involved! Make your voice heard!**

Tuesday, May 22, 2012
7:30 p.m.
Wellness Center of Eastwick, Suite 2
2821 Island Avenue, Philadelphia

*All are welcome and urged to attend the meeting
Inform and forward this information to your neighb*

Call your local City Councilman, Kenyatta Johnson,
express your views on this proposal: 215-686-341
He needs to hear from YOU!

EASTWICK FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS COALITION
invites everyone to attend a
PUBLIC MEETING
Be Informed, Get Involved

Eastwick residents & Refuge supporters have joined forces to oppose the Korman Company development of 722 rental units, 1034 parking spaces at 86th Street and Lindbergh Blvc adjacent to the Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. This development proposal will compromise residents' welfare, significantly increase flooding and traffic, and cause grave consequences for the environment and more than 300 bird species, rare wildlife, and threatened plant life.

The Eastwick neighborhood has already endured a painful history, when the city of Philadelphia condemned and seized property in the 1950's, forcing out 10,000 residents of this historically integrated community. This new development will not reverse that injustice. It will permanently change the neighborhood character, cause economic hardship, and threaten the Refuge.

The community found out about this proposal recently, and moved quickly to form the Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition (EFNC), united in opposition to the development. EFNC has been working tirelessly to organize plans and mobilize resources to combat the proposal. We want to ensure the community voice is heard, and plans proceed with consensus and conviction.

Attend to hear updates and express your thoughts.

Monday, June 11, 2012
6:00 p.m.
Wellness Center of Eastwick, Suite 202
2821 Island Avenue, Philadelphia

*All are welcome and urged to attend the meeting.
Inform and forward this information to your neighbors.*

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition
website: www.eastwickfriends.wordpress.com Email: eastwickfnc@gmail.com

Local Councilman Kenyatta Johnson introduced a re-zoning bill needed by Korman to develop.

EFNC was determined to stop it. Circulated a Petition with 400+ signatures.

Pre-hearing meeting June 11, calculate supporters, finalize testimony, compile Petition.

Public Meetings



Mobilize Action to Attend Hearings

EASTWICK FRIENDS & NEIGHBORS COALITION
urges everyone to attend
City Council Hearing
June 12, 2012
BE INVOLVED, BE PRESENT

The Korman Company is set to purchase 35 acres of green space at 86th Street and Lindbergh Blvd -- at 1960s prices -- to build 722 rental units and 1034 parking spaces adjacent to the Heinz National Wildlife Refuge. Eastwick residents & Refuge supporters join to oppose the development.

The City condemned and seized this land in the 1950's, forcing out 10,000 residents of this historically integrated community. This new development will **compromise residents' health, safety, and welfare, significantly increasing flooding and traffic in an already overburdened area.** There will be grave consequences for the environment and more than 300 bird species, rare wildlife, and threatened plant life. The development will permanently change the neighborhood character, cause economic hardship, and threaten the Refuge.

The community only just found out about the proposal-- woefully insufficient time for meaningful participation. Yet, Councilman Kenyatta Johnson has introduced bills to fast-track the re-zoning.

Attendance and testimony at this Public Hearing is critically-important!

- **Attend the hearing.** Invite everyone you know to attend. It is important that a large number of people be present.
- **Testify.** Tell City Council why you oppose the development. To get on the list to testify call Councilman Johnson's office at 215-686-3412. *Your testimony may be limited to 3 minutes.*

EFN Coalition is organizing speakers. Email us if you have questions or suggestions.

JOIN US at PHILADELPHIA CITY HALL!

Tuesday, June 12, 2012
10:00 a.m. Room 400

Inform and forward this information to friends and neighbors.

Contact City Councilman Kenyatta Johnson at 215-686-3413 or Kenyatta.Johnson@phila.gov

Eastwick Friends & Neighbors Coalition
website: www.eastwickfriends.wordpress.com Email: eastwickfnc@gmail.com

Distributing flyers door-to-door, sending emails, and website updates were key to this success.

EFNC mobilized 100 supporters to attend City Council hearing on June 12, 2012.

Organized testimony to ensure key points spoken. 3 hours of testimony - lack of community input, flooding and environmental concerns, political linkages - Councilman Johnson pulled rezoning bill.



Community Education & Engagement

Eastwick Coalition hosted a **Community Public Meeting September 8**. Disseminated Fact Sheets, Flood Surveys, EPA info about Landfill, Grid Philly magazines, and general survey.

4Ward Planning facilitated **comprehensive presentation** of historic injustices, current economic facts, Korman proposal details and omissions. Committee work was summarized. Survey distributed to get community feedback, encourage civil participation, sign-up volunteers.

Meeting well-attended

Engage, inform,
inspire, connect with
community and
supporters.



Political Motion

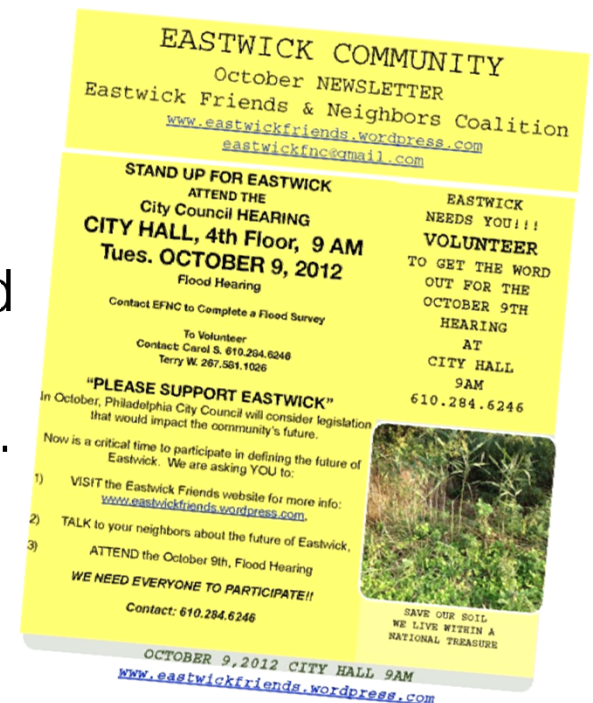
Councilman Johnson called flooding hearing for October 9, 2012.

Mobilized 80+ folks to attend – “Stand up for Eastwick” flyers, emails, phone..

Organized compelling testimony from a dozen Eastwick residents, expert hydrology and flood engineers. 1 statement from 11 environmental groups.

At hearing, PWD Commissioner Howard Neukrug testified flooding unrelated to city’s piping system, existing infrastructure is sufficient. Neukrug’s boss, Deputy Mayor Rina Cutler, blamed Mother Nature and residents themselves, saying flooding was localized, and exacerbated by un-permitted home modifications.

Councilman Johnson attentive. Other council members supportive, recalling long-time neglect of Eastwick.





Media and Public Relations

EFNC engaged public relations firm, 8 weeks targeted media outreach.

Press Releases issued. Interviews and Articles: Philadelphia City Paper, PlanPhilly, WHYY Newsworks, CBS News, Philadelphia Daily News.

Grid Philly magazine profiled Eastwick and proposed Korman development in cover-story. (October 2012).

“Water Always Wins” Opinion Letter in *Philadelphia Inquirer*, by Michael Nairn. (October 30, 2012).

“So why are we considering another high-density residential development in this floodplain? Have we not learned that filling in wetlands, which provide natural flood protection, is not a good idea? Have we not figured out that these areas are meant to flood, and do flood, despite our best intentions? Have we learned nothing from New Orleans, the Gulf Coast....and flooding on the Delaware River?”



Political Connections

Throughout summer-fall, EFNC met with elected officials to state our position, solicit support, cultivate connections.

Political meetings scheduled carefully and strategically.

Our PILCOP attorney handled scheduling, which required flexibility and patience, as officials often cancelled, or changed times.

Preparation in meetings and conference calls:

- * Specific Talking Points
- * List of Questions
- * Follow-up
- * Primary Spokesperson
- * Attendees

Met with several Council members who implied support.

Important connection with local district Councilman Kenyatta Johnson. Local official started out against us, but switched to ally with the Coalition. Recognition of Coalition resources and influences.

Political Success!!!

Moved by the **flooding hearing** and a **timely meeting** with EFNC members, State Senator Anthony Williams sent Letter urging Council not to proceed until “the city can assess the consequences for the community.”

EFNC worked with Johnson office to organize **public community meeting** in November. More than 100 people applauded when Councilman announced he would withdraw the rezoning bill that would have permitted Korman to proceed with constructing 722 rental apartments on 35 acres of green space adjacent to John Heinz NWR.



Photo by Ned Connelly

EFNC got commitments from representatives from Phila Water Dept, Office of Emergency Management, and the Department of Licenses & Inspections to attend. All pledge **commitment to working with long-ignored community** of Eastwick to identify and implement solutions to flooding and other issues.

Not Just A NIMBY Organization

Members of EFNC lend time and support to several initiatives including:



A day of volunteering at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

- Multiple membership on Darby Creek Valley Association board including VP.
- Filing Comments to Pennsylvania Energy Solutions
- Heinz National Wildlife Refuge
- Leadership on EPA Community Advisory Committee.
- Giving Tincum Twp airport advocates a forum to address Eastwick community.



©Debbie Beezer

A day of volunteering at John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.

Meetings with EPA to Address Cleaning up Landfills



N.Y. Climate Change March – Sierra Club



Support Elected Officials Who Support Community Interests



Discussing Repurposing of School Sites Closed in 2013

