

The theory of the problem: Often, communication efforts treat rivers as a single body that connects all communities along its course. This does not allow for highlighting the unique people, places, and things that make up different sub-sections of a river. This is especially important for a long river like the Susquehanna, with myriad tributaries and multiple states within its watershed. By dividing a river into smaller segments, people will more easily identify with the river and what makes it special. This will spur more stewardship activities and funding streams dedicated toward water quality and quantity protection.

The theory of change: Professor Justin Mando at Millersville University and his students will study Susquehanna River communities and concise segments of the river to aid in messaging efforts and build a stronger case for stewardship. The purpose of their endeavor will be to uncover and tell stories (both written and visual) that create community identity along the Susquehanna River. The stories created by professor Mando and his students will be used on the RiverStewards web blog, social media, and other venues. Students will also have the opportunity to present their stories to public audiences throughout the year.

The theory of action: The first step will be to identify the different stretches of the river and assign different students to focus their storytelling on that segment. Stories will include historical and current views on the people, places, businesses, events, and natural resources that depend on the river. Students will write short stories, social media posts, and/or make videos and photo blogs about their river segment. Professor Mando will select from those submissions some to be shared via RiverStewards as well as ones that warrant more exposure through public presentations. RiverStewards will assist the students in locating these venues. The next step is to take this concept to other institutes of higher education to get their students involved in storytelling for other segments of the watershed. It is our hope to have the entire stretch of the Susquehanna River within Pennsylvania covered by one or more student storytellers within a five-year period. The ultimately culmination of the storytelling effort will be the creation of a coffee table book highlighting the best of the stories and photos generated by the students, as well as some created by professors and other RiverStewards partners, to generate funds to support the RiverStewards Collaborative.

Budget and timeline to be determined.