

# Roxborough Reservoir

*new life for an industrial relic*



## Park Master Plan

Philadelphia, PA

Shortly after the Civil War, construction began on the Upper Roxborough Reservoir to meet the growing demand for drinking water in the Manayunk and Roxborough sections of Philadelphia. When it was completed, water was pumped up from the Schuylkill River, passed through sand filters, and stored in the new reservoir from which it was gravity fed out to the surrounding communities. The then state-of-the-art reservoir featured an asphalt lining on the floors of its two basins, brick-lined berms, and cut-stone aerators over which water flowed on its way into the basins.

But by the 1960s, this technology was obsolete so the pumping station and filter plants were closed down and the reservoir was drained of its 147 million gallons. For the next five decades, the 36-acre site was slowly reclaimed by nature—including thousands of American toads that use the reservoir as their spring breeding grounds.

In 2011, PP&R engaged Natural Lands to prepare a master plan for the property. We conducted site visits, convened neighbors and stakeholders, analyzed existing data, and interviewed city department representatives. The resulting Roxborough Reservoir Master Plan balances the needs of the City, PP&R, the surrounding community, and the flora and fauna of the site.

The Plan addresses several critical issues, including downhill flooding of the nearby Shawmont neighborhood by incorporating infiltration of stormwater on the site, and by managing the continued transformation of an abandoned industrial relic into a nature preserve that provides both wildlife habitat and passive recreation opportunities. And, perhaps most importantly, the Master Plan allows visitors to appreciate Roxborough Reservoir's past... ensuring it will be a special place well into the future.



## PROJECT SNAPSHOT

**services:** grant writing and administration, facilitation of public meetings, development of park Master Plan and landscape plan

**client:** Philadelphia Parks and Recreation (PP&R)

**key partners:** PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, PP&R, Philadelphia Water Department, Upper Roxborough Civic Association

