Removing nature at Riverfront Park

In Tuesday’s column, we noted that half the trees on earth have been removed since the beginning of civilization. Most of the deforestation has occurred in the last 200 years.

Here in Pottstown, we have our own deforestation project going on at Riverfront Park.

When Riverfront Park was created in 1992, it featured a pathway through the woodlands that lined the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek.

West of Pottstown, the path continues through the woods as the Thun Trail, crossing the Schuylkill River at Douglassville and continuing to Birdsboro and beyond.

But increasingly in recent years, the woods at Riverfront Park have systematically been removed at a cost of thousands of taxpayer dollars to be replaced with a wide grass buffer which must then be regularly mowed with heavy equipment.

The 2016 parks budget tops $1.1 million, more than the Streets Division of the Pottstown Public Works Department.

Little wonder there is no money to remove and replace dead street trees, or fix broken sidewalks, or resurface washboard streets.

RIPPIN OUT THE RIPERIAN BUFFER has accelerated erosion along the Manatawny Creek, above.

Commentary by Tom Hylton

The natural wooded area along the river serves as a riparian buffer to protect our waterways from pollution and stormwater runoff. It enhances the health of our town and costs almost nothing to maintain.

But we’re removing it.

REMOVING THE WOODS—When Pottstown’s Riverfront Park was created in 1992, it was a trail through the woods, above, along the Schuylkill River and Manatawny Creek.

But in recent years, the Pottstown Parks Department has spent tens of thousands of dollars to remove the natural habitat, put down new topsoil, left, and plant grass.