



**Your water. Your environment. Your voice.**

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## NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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### **Central Jersey's Water in Trouble**

*Watershed Association Report Highlights Impact of "People" Pollution*

**February 22, 2010 (Hopewell, NJ)** – Today, polluted run-off – or “people” pollution from things like excess lawn fertilizers, trash and leaking septic and sewer lines – is a leading cause of water pollution in central New Jersey, according to the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association and its first-ever “State of the Watershed Report.”

A comprehensive look at the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed – a 265-square-mile region of central New Jersey spanning 26 towns and five counties – the report illustrates how increasing population and steady conversion of fields, forest and wetlands to asphalt and concrete have had a direct impact on the health and quality of our water and environment.

“Hundreds of thousands of people in central New Jersey rely on our lakes, rivers, streams and groundwater for water to drink and use,” said Jim Waltman, Watershed Association Executive Director. “As our region’s water watchdog we felt it was imperative to understand just what challenges our water is facing today. Using a combination of state resources and our own comprehensive scientific data and policy analysis we’ve uncovered the real issues threatening the health and quality of our water and environment and the actions needed to make a difference.”

Using data gathered in three categories: Water Quality, Environmental Policy and Land Use, the “State of the Watershed Report” reveals four key findings:

- **Excess levels of orthophosphate in our watershed are contributing to a decline in aquatic life.**

With a majority of soils in central New Jersey already laden with phosphate – an important nutrient for plant growth – additional fertilizers packed with phosphates are not needed to enhance gardens or lawns. Continued use of fertilizers and cleaning products with phosphates is harming aquatic life. Use a soil test kit to determine how much and what type of fertilizer you need. If you do need fertilizer choose a phosphate-free product.

- **With increasing development, septic and sewer system maintenance is critical to the health of our water.**

The majority of central New Jersey violates state standards for bacteria levels in our water, is not safe for swimming and fishing, and where applicable the majority of municipalities in our region have poor septic ordinances. Strengthening environmental policy – both stronger septic ordinances locally and stronger sewer rules at the state level – and educating homeowners is vital to ensuring we all have clean water to drink and use.

- **Continued protection of our forests and stream corridors is key to protecting the quality of our water.**

Our stream corridors and forests protect our streams by providing shade and reducing the amount of sediment and excess nutrients that reach our waterways. Around one third of the municipalities in the watershed have highly rated forest protection ordinances, and about a quarter have highly rated stream corridor protections in place. It's a good start, but further work to strengthen these measures will help keep dissolved oxygen, sediment and nitrate ratings at acceptable levels and ensure our water stays healthy.

- **Whether an area is urban or rural, strong environmental policies are needed to keep healthy areas in good condition and faltering areas from further degradation.**

To combat these issues, the "State of the Watershed Report" outlines concrete steps everyone in Central Jersey can take to live "River-Friendly" and protect clean water and the environment.

"Individual action is the key to stemming the tide of our water woes," said Mr. Waltman. "From picking up your pet's waste and testing your soil before using lawn fertilizer, to telling your municipal leaders you want to see septic management and stream corridor protection ordinances on the books in your hometown, together we can ensure we all have clean water and a healthy environment for years to come."

The Watershed Association's "River-Friendly" program works with residents, businesses, golf courses and schools to reduce water use and become better environmental stewards.

To view a copy of the full report and learn more about becoming River-Friendly visit [www.thewatershed.org](http://www.thewatershed.org).

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*Interviews, photographs and hard copies of the "State of the Watershed Report" available upon request. Contact Communications Manager Gwen McNamara at (609) 737-3735 x16 or [gmcnamara@thewatershed.org](mailto:gmcnamara@thewatershed.org).*

*The Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association is central New Jersey's first environmental group. Since 1949 we have been protecting clean water and the environment through conservation, advocacy, science and education. [www.thewatershed.org](http://www.thewatershed.org).*