



The Basin Bulletin

A Newsletter of the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project

The Planning Phase of the Raritan Project Has Begun!

By Susan Endres - Upper Raritan Watershed Association

On Wednesday October 25, 2000 a public meeting was held to kick off the planning phase of the Raritan Basin Project. Since this first meeting, the Project has been swiftly moving ahead and three additional public meetings have been held that were attended by stakeholders from many different interest groups. The group helped form an organizational structure and defined a method by which issues of concern will be categorized and prioritized.

As the Project moves towards plan development, we will rely on the knowledge gained in the characterization and assessment process (1999 to present) to address several needs including:

- **Management Plan Development** - a management plan for the Basin will be constructed to address the Basin, Watershed and subwatershed levels.
- **"TMDL" Development** - a model of water quality impacts will be created so that surface water quality standards may be met as required by the Clean Water Act.
- **Stakeholder Involvement** - this phase of the project relies heavily on public participation. Stakeholders from all interests in the Basin are being encouraged to participate, and have their concerns addressed in the Watershed Management Plan.
- **Public Education and Training** - educating municipalities and citizens about watershed management. They will also be introduced to key watershed concepts to better aid understanding of relevant issues.
- **Protection and Restoration Action Projects** - short-term field projects that will provide benefits to water quality in the Basin will be identified and implemented.

The Raritan Basin Council was created to coordinate planning for the 1,100 square mile Basin. In addition, three Committees have been formed to represent the unique interests of the three Watershed Management Areas that the Raritan Project encompasses. Public participation in these Committees will ensure that a diverse group of interests help develop the finalized Raritan Basin Management Plan. A Technical Advisory Committee will be formed to advise the Raritan Basin Council and the Management Area Committees on technical issues and concerns within the Basin.

All of the meeting minutes, technical reports, fact sheets, and maps that have been produced as part of this project are available to the public at the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project's website www.raritanbasin.org.

BREAKING NEWS

- NJDEP Commissioner Robert Shinn has appointed Mary T. Sheil as the Director of the Division of Watershed Management and Debra Hammond to the new position of Assistant Director.
- Jennifer DiLorenzo has resigned as Bureau Chief of the Raritan Region. Kerry Kirk-Phlugh, formerly of DEP's Division of Science, Research & Technology has been named to replace her.

Basin History

Contributed by Tom Stanuikynas
Three of the five NJ signers of the Declaration of Independence resided in the Raritan Basin: John Hart (Hopewell), Richard Stockton and John Witherspoon (both Princeton)

What's Inside?

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EDUCATION FORUM

Healthy Lawns, Healthy Waterways

By Noelle MacKay - Stony-Brook Millstone Watershed Association

Did you know that collectively the average one-third of an acre of lawn adds to over 20 million acres or 32,000 square miles of lawn in the United States? This is an area roughly equal to the size of New England. Lawns cover more land in America than any single farm crop and are comprised of non-native species that require more water than provided by rain, plus fertilizers and pesticides in order to remain "healthy."

When rain falls on and moves across our lawns, it picks up the excess fertilizer, pesticides, and sediment and deposits them into our waterways. This is a form of nonpoint source pollution (NPS) and has been cited by the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) as the current leading cause of pollution in our waterways. That is the bad news; the good news is that we can have a healthy lawn and reduce NPS pollution to our waterways. It's easy!

With these ten steps, you can have a healthy lawn, save time and money, and contribute to the protection of our waterways!

1. Choose drought-tolerant grass seeds and spread them on your lawn every fall (overseed). A thick lawn will crowd out weeds.
2. Develop a healthy soil. Be sure to do an inexpensive (\$8) soil test that will let you know what, if any fertilizer, is needed. Call your local County Extension Office for a test kit!
3. To discourage weeds, keep your lawn mower blade at a height of 3 inches. Never cut off more than one-third of the grass blade at a time.
4. Be sure to let your lawn breathe! Once a year, aerate your lawn by removing small plugs of earth to allow air and water to get to the roots and encourage earthworms.
5. Leave your grass clippings on the lawn to return nutrients to the soil. This will reduce your need for fertilizer by 30 percent.
6. In the early morning, water less frequently, but for longer periods of time. This helps your lawn grow deep roots that are less vulnerable to drought conditions.
7. Thatch, a thick compacted layer of dead plants and grass, attracts harmful insects. Remove thatch by gently raking your lawn in late spring or early summer. To prevent thatch, don't over-water or over-fertilize.
8. Develop a tolerance for a few dandelions, weeds and insects. Diversity produces a healthy lawn and produces less work for you!
9. Try and control weeds and insects without chemicals. Dig out weeds by hand, use a stick to knock insects off plants into a dish of soapy water instead of using costly pesticides.
10. Consider growing trees, shrubs, perennials, ground cover, wild flowers, and other alternatives to grass. Native species work best and require less maintenance.

Raritan project education & Outreach Committee:

Susan Endres
Jennifer Gurdak
Noelle MacKay
Joe Mattie
Debbie Newcomb
Michael Pollock
Tom Stanuikynas
Denise Zambrowski

Millstone River Watershed PL-566 Project

By Greg Westfall - USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

The 184,320-acre Millstone River Watershed (Watershed Management Area 10) was the scene of severe flooding resulting in major property losses during the September 16, 1999 Hurricane Floyd event. As a result, in late 1999, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) received requests from several representatives of Congress to assist local entities in developing a watershed plan for the Millstone River watershed. The project is occurring under the PL83-566 (Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act) Program. The Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth and Somerset County Freeholders, the Freehold, Mercer, and Somerset-Union Soil Conservation Districts, and the New Jersey Water Supply Authority have passed resolutions of support for the project. A Steering Committee of representatives of the above entities and others, has identified major goals of the committee as flood damage reduction, open space preservation, water quality improvement/turbidity reduction, recreation and aquifer recharge protection. The project is being coordinated with the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project, the US Army Corps of Engineers reconnaissance study and the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association Beden Brook and Rock Brook watershed assessments.

NRCS will be developing a hydrologic model of the watershed to help predict the impact of future development on surface water volumes and peaks and a hydraulic model to predict water elevations and depths. Flood damages will be identified and summarized. NRCS will also, with the assistance of the Steering Committee, develop alternatives to solve problems. All alternatives must meet federal government requirements that total benefits must exceed the costs. The flood damage reduction alternatives will include measures that are structural, nonstructural and/or land treatment measures. Multi-purpose facilities can be developed for floodwater/stormwater detention as well as for recreational uses and fish and wildlife enhancement. The various alternatives developed will be evaluated from engineering, environmental, and economic perspectives. The local Steering Committee will make the final decision as to which alternative is recommended for implementation.

The watershed plan is scheduled for completion in early 2002. Once the plan is developed, it is expected that the local entities or sponsors represented on the Steering Committee will implement the plan.

WHO'S WHO???

By Jenn Gurdak - NJDEP

Just a friendly introduction to the staff so that you can become familiar with us as the Raritan Project swings into full gear. In future newsletters, this column will highlight Project stakeholders.

Dan Van Abs is the Manager of the Watershed Protection Unit of the New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA). He is leading the facilitation process that will result in a basin-wide watershed management plan. During vacations, Dan takes a roll of slides for each day he is away. You can see some of his work in the staff picture to the lower right (not the Ansel Adams!).

Tom Stanuikynas is the GIS Specialist for the Raritan Basin Project. He is not only the creator of many of the maps that have appeared in the technical reports and meetings, he is also the webmaster for the project. While not at work, he enjoys exploring all of New Jersey's 21 counties, especially those within the Pine Barrens.

Debbie Newcomb is a Watershed Protection Specialist with the NJWSA. She has been the primary author of several technical reports and works on outreach for the Project. She is also an environmental commissioner for the Township of Clinton.

Denise Zambrowski is also a watershed protection specialist with the Authority. She focuses on water quality issues in the Basin and participates in several technical committees on behalf of the authority. In her spare time she likes to cook and experiment with different recipes.

Jennifer Gurdak is the Education & Outreach Coordinator for the Raritan Bureau in the NJDEP's Division of Watershed Management. She works with the Raritan Basin staff on meeting planning and project outreach as well as with the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program and the Arthur Kill Watershed Management Area. In her spare time, she spends time caring for, walking, and playing with her 2 large puppies, Dharma and Magnolia.

Sally Kean is the administrative assistant for the Watershed Protection Unit. She keeps the mailing lists and helps to organize the logistics of Project meetings. Her not-so-secret childhood fantasy was to have been a race car driver and to have her own "Lassie", the latter came true in a Collie named Sunny.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!

MARCH

- 24th Making A Difference, An Environmental Commissioners Course -ANJEC East Amwell Municipal Bldg. East Amwell, NJ 973/539-7547
- 24th Pollution & Politics, Building Power to Win- NJ Environmental Federation Princeton, NJ 732/280-8988
- 24th Restoring Our Streams: A Practical Workshop on Stream Restoration- RC&D, TU, URWA, SBWA, NJ Div. Of Fish & Wildlife, Soil & Water Cons. Society Peapack, NJ 908/735-0733
- 24th BATs Training - Stony-Brook Millstone Watershed Association Pennington, NJ 609/737-3735
- 27th Raritan Basin Council 3-5 PM Elizabeth Water Company, Franklin Township, NJ 732/356-9344
- 29th Upper Raritan (North & South Branch) WMA Committee Kick-off Meeting 7-9 PM, NJWSA Annex Clinton, NJ 732/356-9344

APRIL

- 4th Lower Raritan WMA Committee Meeting 7-9 PM Middlesex County Vo/Tech School, East Brunswick 732/356-9344
- 21st South Branch Watershed Clean-up, Flemington, NJ 908/782-0422
- 24th Raritan Basin Council 3-5 PM Elizabeth Water Company, Franklin Township, NJ 732/356-9344

Please call 732/356-9344 For the dates of the April WMA Committee meetings.

MAY (watershed awareness month)

- 1-3rd Stormwater Management for Engineers - Cook College 732/932-9271
- 2-3rd Getting Your Arms Around Watershed Management (part of NJWEA Annual Conference) Atlantic City, NJ 856/582-2370
- 7th Storm Drain Stenciling with the NJDEP Division of Watershed Management in celebration of Watershed Awareness Month. 11 AM 609/292-2051
- 12th Warm Season Grasses Workshop - NJRC&D Council, NJ Div. Fish & Wildlife, Morris Cty. Soil Conservation Dist. TBA 908/735-0733
- 16&23rd On-site Wastewater Disposal Systems-Regulation, Design, Inspection, O&M- Cook College 732/932-9271
- 17th Improving our Watersheds Through Action Now: The Raritan Nonpoint Source Forum - NJDEP TBA 609/292-2051
- 22nd Raritan Basin Council 3-5 PM Elizabeth Water Company, Franklin Township, NJ 732/356-9344

Please call 732/356-9344 For the dates of the May WMA Committee meetings.



Standing L-R: Sally Kean, Dan Van Abs, Tom Stanuikynas, Sitting L-R: Denise Zambrowski, Jennifer Gurdak, Debbie Newcomb

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES, PLEASE VISIT THE WEBSITE @ WWW.RARITAN-BASIN.ORG/MINUTES.HTM

AMERICORPS & THE BASIN

By Kevin Burke

Since September of 2000, the Raritan Basin education and outreach team has had help from the New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors Program (NJ WAP). The NJ WAP is a cooperative effort between AmeriCorps, a national service organization, and the NJ Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Watershed Management. Kevin Burke, Kathleen Bigelow, and Jessica Milose have been placed with host agencies in Watershed Management Areas eight (North & South Branch Raritan), nine (Lower Raritan), and ten (Millstone) respectively. Their goal is to spark community interest in watershed management issues through both education and involvement. As educators, they are available as a free resource to schools and community organizations for informative and interactive watershed presentations. Community volunteers are also encouraged to participate in the stream monitoring programs they are coordinating across the basin. This includes the RATs (River Assessment Teams), who visually assess the condition of a stream, and BATs (Biological Assessment Teams), who will examine stream macroinvertebrate populations to determine overall water quality. For any questions or comments regarding these community stream monitoring programs or to request information on watershed presentations, please contact any of the NJ WAP members at their host agencies.

Kevin Burke - Upper Raritan
Upper Raritan Watershed Association
908.234.1852 kevin@urwa.org

Kathleen Bigelow - Lower Raritan
NRCS Somerset
732.246.1171 ext. 135 kbigelow@nj.nrcs.usda.gov

Jessica Milose - Millstone
Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association
609.737.3735 jmilose@thewatershed.org



From Left to Right: Upper Raritan Kevin Burke, Millstone Jessica Milose, Lower Raritan Kathleen Bigelow

The Raritan Project
NJWSA
PO Box 287
South Bound Brook, NJ 08880


 **GOT NEWS???** 
 If you have a newsletter contribution, please contact Jennifer Gurdak @ 609/292-2051 or jgurdak@dep.state.nj.us 
 


To receive copies of this newsletter, please contact Sally Kean at skean@raritanbasin.org or call 732/356-9344 ext. 23.