

6th Annual Sustainable Raritan River Conference and Awards Ceremony



Valuing Natural Capital and Ecosystem Services

Rutgers Cook Campus Center
59 Biel Road, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Friday, June 13, 2014

2014 Sustainable Raritan River Award Recipients

Government Innovation Award

Raritan Valley Ray Bateman Center for Student Life and Leadership

This recently opened \$5.8 million structure includes some 24,000 square feet of flexible learning space which was funded by a unique public/private partnership. RVCC is in the process of applying for LEED Gold certification for the building. Key innovations include: a rainwater harvesting system that provides water for 18 toilets in six bathrooms, as well as for “living wall” of vegetation which improves the indoor environment by absorbing noise, filtering air, and creating a natural setting for students. The building is also a model of energy efficiency and the use of recycled building materials.

Public Education Award

Denise Birmingham

Denise Birmingham’s students learn about sustainability, healthy living, and environmental awareness as participants in the Readington Middle School Garden Club. For the past eight years Ms. Birmingham, the club’s advisor, has helped the students plan and grow fruits and vegetables, flowers, and berries. In addition to building school pride and empowering the students to take ownership of the school, the Garden Club donates food from their efforts to the Flemington Food Pantry. Ms. Birmingham’s leadership is a wonderful example for her students, her fellow educators, and her community.

Stewardship Award

Central Jersey Stream Team

In the year since their grassroots efforts began, the Central Jersey Stream Team motivated more than 150 volunteers to remove at least 614 tires and 70 cubic feet of other trash from the Raritan River and its tributaries. As one of their supporters proudly noted, “Seeing their progress in mobilizing the local community and cleaning up this beautiful resource is truly inspirational.” The Central Jersey Stream Team’s stream clean-up work has introduced many new stewards to the Raritan River. Their success reflects great credit on the leadership of the Central Jersey Stream team and should be a source of pride for all who work to improve our River.

Public Access Award

Riverside Park, Piscataway Township

After suffering serious damage from Hurricane Sandy, this waterfront park in the western Middlesex County was completely transformed from an unsafe “attractive nuisance” to a welcome water-based recreational facility. Under the guidance of Mayor Brian Wahler and Architect Henry Hinterstein, and through active participation in several Sustainable Raritan events and studies, the park now features water trail signage, an ADA-compliant dock which can easily be disconnected and relocated to higher ground in storms, and serves as a safe and valuable recreational asset for fishermen, canoeists and kayakers.

Non-Profit Innovation Award

Lawrence Brook Watershed Association/Alan S. Godber

Alan Godber founded the Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership in 1997. The Partnership has established water quality monitoring programs, organized hundreds of volunteers for lakeside clean-ups, fought invasive plants, educated the public, preserved open space, and worked with governmental, business, academic, and non-profit partners to improve water quality in Milltown, East Brunswick, South Brunswick, New Brunswick, and North Brunswick. Alan’s leadership has contributed significantly to improved sustainability and the quality of life throughout the watershed and within the Raritan Basin.

Sustainable Business Award

Shiseido America, Inc.

Shiseido America is implementing an ecopolicy to encourage environmentally conscious practices across all aspects of its business including manufacturing processes, recycling materials, energy efficient buildings, and eco-friendly packaging. Shiseido constructed the largest single-roof solar system in New Jersey at its facility in East Windsor, New Jersey, reducing its energy demand by 35%. Plant lighting and boiler upgrades helped improve the facility's natural gas efficiency by 34%. The combination of Shiseido's sustainability efforts eliminate 1,500 tons of carbon emissions per year and set an example for other companies to follow.

Leadership Award

Robert Bzik, Somerset County Planning Director

Bob Bzik has had a long and distinguished career serving as Director of Planning for the County of Somerset. Under Bob's leadership, the Somerset County Planning Board has earned the reputation as one of the premier planning organizations in the State by addressing emerging trends and issues, and applying smart growth, sustainability and resiliency concepts. All of these efforts are grounded in partnership-building and collaboration with many stakeholders, including the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative. Bob has demonstrated a life-long commitment to sound, balanced regional and local planning, and we wish him well on his planned retirement from County Planning on July 1, 2014.

Photo of Somerset Mitigation Bank by Mark Gallagher, Princeton Hydro, LLC

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