

2013 Sustainable Raritan River Awards

Each year at its Annual Conference, the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative give awards to recognize *outstanding achievement* in efforts to revitalize our region, restore and protect our resources and promote our area as a premiere place to live, work and raise a family. The categories for these awards are:

1. Public Education Award
2. Government Innovation Award
3. Stewardship Award
4. Public Access Award
5. Remediation and Redevelopment Award
6. Sustainable Business Award
7. Leadership Award

On June 11, 2013, at the 5th Annual Sustainable Raritan River Conference held at the Edward J. Bloustein School for Planning and Public Policy in New Brunswick, NJ, the following awards were presented.

Public Education Award: North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council

The River-Friendly Farm Program recognizes farmers who take leadership roles as environmental stewards. Today, progressive farmers recognize that environmental excellence is part of a sustainable operation; management practices of today impact the viability of their business in the future. Whether located on five or 500 acres, farms that manage their land while protecting the soil and water around them are an asset to the larger community. Once the applicant farm meets the criteria for this certification, the producer may use the River-Friendly label as a marketing tool to reach environmentally conscientious customers and raise awareness of local water quality issues. Currently, farms in the Raritan River Basin are eligible to apply for the voluntary certification. North Jersey RC&D works with each individual applicant to plan, find funding, and implement practices that help protect and enhance water quality in the Raritan River Basin.

Government Innovation Award: Somerset County Planning Board

The recently completed Somerset County Investment Framework identifies both “Priority Investment Areas” to encourage investments that support the enhancement of economic competitiveness and redevelopment of existing developed communities and “Priority Preservation areas” to encourage investments to support open space and farmland preservation, historic preservation, environmental protection and stewardship. Fully half of the County’s land area has been designated as Priority Preservation Investment Areas, and the Raritan River and its tributaries are prominently shown on the County Investment Map as greenway linkages where the protection and restoration of riparian areas and increasing public access to greenway amenities are top priorities regardless of the underlying growth designation.

Stewardship Award: Rutgers Cooperative Extension

Rutgers Cooperative Extension has recently developed an Organic Land Care Certification program that offers Landscape Professionals with the tools to transition away from synthetic pesticides and fertilizers to a natural

approach that focusses on soil health, native planting and preserves water resources. The Initial Organic Land Care certification course completed in January of 2013 graduated 27 professionals, many of whom provide services within the Raritan River Basin. The establishment of these certified professionals provides residents and businesses that are looking to manage their properties sustainably with easy access to credentialed professionals. As the program matures, it has the potential to significantly improve the sustainability of the Land Care Industry. As such, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension is very deserving of this Stewardship Award.

Non-Profit Innovation Award: Raritan Headwaters Association

For 30 years, the Community Well Test program has been one of the Raritan Headwaters Association's most successful and popular programs. Since 1983, RHA has helped over 22,500 families test their private wells and take steps to ensure they are drinking safe, clean water. RHA's unique Community Well Test Program is innovative, cost-effective, and self-sustaining. It is convenient and affordable for the homeowner; it is an excellent outreach opportunity for RHA; and it provides a critical service to the residents of the watershed, the vast majority of who rely on wells for their drinking water. Thanks to their new well testing database, created with help from Rutgers Cooperative Extension and Raritan Valley Community College, RHA can now track groundwater quality in their watershed and provide sound, science-based analysis to educate residents and help protect clean water.

Sustainability Award: Ethicon

Ethicon was recently certified as a River-Friendly Business for their excellent efforts to protect water quality in the Raritan Basin. Ethicon is engaged in a variety of additional sustainability initiatives including waterless urinals, improved packaging material for surgical needles and other medical supplies, desk-drop elimination, and recycling of batteries, writing implements, and packaging materials. Ethicon works hard to keep their employees involved in their sustainability initiatives. Ethicon employees commit themselves to volunteer work days with organizations like the Raritan Headwaters Association. Ethicon has held workshops for their employees on building screech owl houses, bluebird boxes, and rain barrels. Ethicon and their employees are partners in sustainability.

Restoration and Redevelopment Award: Princeton HealthCare System

Princeton HealthCare System has demonstrated impressive leadership and commitment to a better watershed through the remediation and redevelopment of a 30.5 acre area of industrial land at Route One and the Millstone River into the new Millstone River Park. This new open space resource serves multiple constituencies, including area residents and workers who can visit the park to hike its extensive trails and experience firsthand its beauty and amenities, commuters who can enjoy its scenic views, and visitors and patients at the University Medical Center of Princeton who can walk to this park directly from patient rooms in a genuine demonstration of the critical link between a healthy environment and physical well-being.

Leadership Award: New Jersey Water Supply Authority

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority, a unique state agency, created a Watershed Protection Programs Division in 1999 to administer a systematic source water protection program for the watersheds where the Authority is active. The Division has developed and is implementing an innovative Raritan Watershed Management Plan, and offers cost-share funding to farmers in four target watersheds for the installation of agricultural practices that improve soil and water resources and help protect and enhance water quality. The four watersheds -- Mulhockaway Creek, Spruce Run, Neshanic River, and South Branch of the Raritan -- provide drinking water to more than 1.5 million customers in central New Jersey.