

Summary of 2012 Sustainable Raritan Awards

Public Education Award

Wild New Jersey and its founder, David Wheeler

Wild New Jersey is a wonderful source of information on wildlife and conservation in the Garden State. As the only nature blog in New Jersey, it reaches over 1,000 readers each day. Managed by the nonprofit Edison Wetlands Association, it offers both mainstream media and original content and videos about New Jersey's wildlife, conservation and nature events. Most importantly, Wild New Jersey has run a scores of stories and event previews in support of Raritan River organizations, from NY/NJ Baykeeper to Schiff Nature Preserve to Duke Farms Live Eagle Camera, enabling Raritan groups to reach thousands of blog readers and thousands more through Wild New Jersey's active social media network. These educational stories are helping to change public perception of the Raritan River.

Stewardship Award

East Brunswick Environmental Commission and Friends of East Brunswick Environmental Commission

The two groups have conducted a variety of stewardship and related public education activities on nocturnal moths, butterflies, and birds for a number of years, including counts, habitat development, lectures, and website education. For eight years, they have also worked to assist salamanders crossing Beekman Road on their annual early spring migrations to reach their breeding grounds in local vernal pools. They have also worked with the Township to assure annual road closures and informed the public of the reason for these closures, as well as the unique opportunity to witness this interesting natural event. In 2011, they also encouraged the Township to pass a resolution to indicate their support of activities to protect the natural phenomenon of this impressive salamander migration.

Leadership Award

(Honorable Mention)

Perth Amboy Sailing Team and Bruce Bertucci

Devoting much of his own time and funds, Coach Bruce Bertucci led the Perth Amboy High School Sailing Team for the past two summers. This program serves low-income urban students aged 14-17, both male and female, and is now entering its third successful year. As a result, teenagers who otherwise would have little interaction with the Raritan Bay and River are now proficient in the sport of competitive sailing. The program had to be established from scratch by first obtaining a fleet of training sailboats, and then creating a storage facility for boats and gear. The team practices four days a week and participates in regular meets and interscholastic regattas. With the help of Coach Bertucci, these students are now restoring Perth Amboy's strong maritime heritage.

Non-Profit Innovation Award

New York/New Jersey Baykeeper Oyster Restoration Program

Oysters are widely regarded as indicator species which actually help clean and filter coastal waters. For this reason, public goals for the Raritan Estuary include the creation or restoration of some 5,000 acres of oyster reefs. Baykeeper staff and trustees have created an impressive and innovative new oyster restoration program which has succeeded in bringing this species back to Raritan Bay. By working and creatively tirelessly to address the multiple issues which have complicated this important effort, Baykeeper has found a way to engage federal and state regulators, schoolchildren, volunteers, baymen, and even the US Navy in what has to be one of the most innovative restoration programs found anywhere that has become a model for citizen action in the Raritan Estuary and elsewhere.

Partnership Award

Raritan Piedmont Wildlife Habitat Partnership

RPHWP is a unique partnership consisting of representatives of non-profit organizations, municipalities and counties which share a common interest in implementing the State Wildlife Action Plan for the Raritan-Piedmont region of New Jersey. RPWHP's accomplishments include the adoption of a Comprehensive Conservation Plan to identify both key sites as well as strategic actions needed to address preserve and enhance the region's forests, grasslands, wetlands and riparian areas. In the last 5 years, RPWHP has successfully completed a wide variety of preservation and restoration projects, ranging from the acquisition of key parcels of habitat, to the removal of dams, the restoration of critical habitats, and the management of invasive or overabundant plant and animal species.

Leadership Award

Kerry Miller

ANJEC's Assistant Director Kerry Miller has made an immense positive impact on the quality of life and the quality of the environment in the Lower Raritan watershed. She took charge of a program funded by the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program, going well beyond the requirements of the grant and investing much of her own time and resources to create a unique and valuable program to foster appreciation and stewardship of the lower Raritan River. In less than a year, using her leadership skills and her devotion to cleaning up the Raritan, she was able to achieve significant gains in public awareness of the River and increased access. She engaged municipal officials, developed resources for their use, organized an information session, and worked tirelessly to encourage them to promote river stewardship. She spent countless unpaid hours creating a webpage with an interactive map for use by environmental commissions. She enlisted the help of many individuals and organizations to improve public access to the Raritan River and public awareness of the River's challenges and treasures. Kerry's leadership in the Lower Raritan reflects great credit on ANJEC and on herself and is continuing to make a significant impact on our River.

Public Access Award

West King Estates Partnership

The West King Estates partnership tripled the size of the South Branch Preserve in Mt. Olive Township in 2011. Under the leadership of the Land Conservancy of New Jersey, and working with the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, Mount Olive Township, Morris County Municipal Utilities Authority, the Raritan Headwaters Association, and the State of New Jersey, the South Branch Preserve is now 372 acres of land in the headwaters of the South Branch of the Raritan River. The South Branch Preserve is a great example of efforts to bring together public and private organizations with different interests and resources to preserve lands of regional and statewide significance. The long term vision is to increase the South Branch Preserve to over 1,000 acres to serve as a showcase for watershed restoration; community based organic farming; and passive recreation including fishing and hiking.

Government Innovation Award

Raritan Borough

With funding assistance from the Regional Center Partnership, the Borough of Raritan partnered with Rutgers University's Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy to host a Raritan River Brownfield Studio of graduate students to develop a regenerative, urban design plan for a portion of the Raritan Borough riverfront. The class gathered and analyzed background information and prepared a matrix identifying specific actions, responsibilities, and milestones for a detailed plan for the revitalization of the waterfront along the Raritan River. The Borough is in the process of implementing components of the plan. The Borough Economic Development Committee is complementing this work by improving public awareness and use of the Nevius Street Bridge.

This year we are proud to add two new awards in recognition of the growing impact of the Raritan River Initiative through the work of its many partners:

Restoration Award

Raritan River Dam Removal & Fish Passage Team

The Raritan River Dam Removal & Fish Passage Initiative team of Carl Alderson of NOAA, David Bean of NJDEP and John W. Jengo of MWH Americas represents a unique example of a cooperative public-private partnership that has successfully accomplished the demolition of the Calco Dam in July-August 2011, which was the lowermost obstruction to migratory fish passage on the main stem of the Raritan River. The Calco Dam demolition project constitutes the most significant dam removal thus far in the Raritan River watershed and

has advanced several of the river restoration goals set forth by the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative. The Calco Dam work is the first of three planned dam removals that will ultimately reopen over nine miles of the Raritan River and the lower 1.5 miles of the Millstone River (in addition to numerous tributaries) that contain sandy and pebbly gravel river bed substrates, ideal spawning habitat for anadromous fish species such as American shad that formerly numbered in the millions. These three dam removals are expected to have a major “domino” effect that will provide the impetus for the removal of dams farther upstream on the Millstone River and the two branches of the Raritan River.

Sustainability Award

Raritan Valley Community College

Raritan Valley Community College (RVCC) received River-Friendly Certification for completing dozens of river-friendly actions like adopting IPM, installing a raingarden, installing a pond aerator and a 500 gallon rain barrel, doing stream assessments, and planting stakes and creating no-mow areas along streambanks. RVCC is the first community college in the nation to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the EPA. As part of this program, RVCC adopted a GreenScapes policy to guide construction and maintenance projects on campus. RVCC students actively participate in beach clean-ups and campus clean-ups twice annually. One of RVCC’s most noteworthy recent accomplishments is in water conservation. They found and fixed leaks in water mains and on campus, replaced equipment, replaced inefficient toilets, and installed low flow aerators. As a result, their water usage was reduced by a factor of ten compared to the prior year. RVCC is helping set the standard for sustainability in higher education.