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### **SUSTAINABLE RARITAN RIVER COLLABORATIVE RECOGNIZES NINE STEWARDS OF THE RARITAN RIVER AND BAY**

(New Brunswick, N.J.) Nine individuals and organizations received Sustainable Raritan River Awards at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Sustainable Raritan Conference and Awards Ceremony at Rutgers' Douglass Student Center on Friday, June 12, 2015.

“The Sustainable Raritan Awards inspire residents, organizations, businesses and governments to extend their reach and to accomplish great acts of restoration and protection in their communities and in their sections of the Raritan River and Bay. Each year we see new faces and new communities stepping up to receive recognition for their fine work. Overall, we are making a difference as we build capacity, pride and joy for our very special natural resources,” said Dr. Judy Shaw, Director of the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative.

Each year at its Annual Conference, the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative gives awards to recognize outstanding achievement in efforts to revitalize, restore and protect the Raritan resources and promote the area as a premiere place to live, work and raise a family.

The Collaborative established the Sustainable Raritan Awards in 2010 to promote innovation and energize local efforts to restore and protect the rivers, streams and habitat of the Raritan River and Bay. There were originally six categories of awards: Government Innovation, Leadership, Public Access, Public Education, Remediation and Redevelopment, and Stewardship. Due to the breadth of nominees, additional awards have been added over the years. This year, efforts in Non-profit Innovation and Sustainable Business were also recognized. The awards have highlighted extraordinary accomplishments and inspired other groups across the watershed to achieve comparable levels of excellence; 2015 was no exception.

“This year’s honorees really showcase how individuals, organizations and businesses can all help protect and improve the health of the Raritan River and Raritan Bay,” said Debbie Mans,

Baykeeper and Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper. “So many people use these local waterways to swim, fish and kayak, it is important to make sure that they are clean and accessible to all.”

This year’s recipients and a description of their achievements are as follows:

**Government Innovation Award: SCAPE/Landscape Architecture PLLC, Rebuild by Design “Living Breakwater” Project.** The “Living Breakwaters” concept design was developed by the SCAPE/Landscape Architecture team for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Rebuild by Design Initiative, and was one of the six winning designs in the global competition. The Living Breakwaters project, sited off the south shore of Staten Island, reduces risk, revives ecologies, and connects education to the shoreline, inspiring a new generation of harbor stewards and a more resilient region over time. The full team included Parsons Brinkerhoff, Dr. Philip Orton/Stevens Institute of Technology, Ocean & Coastal Consultants, SeArc Ecological Consulting, LOT-EK, MTWTF, The Harbor School and Paul Greenberg.

**Leadership Award - Clyde MacKenzie, NOAA Fisheries Science Center.** Clyde MacKenzie’s professional career is exemplified by his alliance between fisheries science and industry. He has devoted 57 years to studying factors regulating shellfish abundance and distribution and the transfer of that knowledge to benefit industry and the citizenry.

**Leadership Award - Amy Soli, Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association.** As science director of the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association, Amy successfully led its water quality monitoring program, stream restoration projects, and Geographic Information Systems center. She has been an invaluable partner on a wide-range of critical clean water issues, including efforts to reduce stormwater pollution and to improve surface water quality by removing obsolete dams. Amy’s career is an outstanding example of someone who has dedicated her life and career to advance the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative’s primary goal “to revitalize our region, restore

and protect our resources and promote our area as a premiere place to live, work and raise a family.”

**Non-Profit Innovation Award - Heather Fenyk, Lower Raritan Watershed**

**Partnership.** Dr. Heather Fenyk has been the driving force behind the creation of the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, a new non-profit organization that will help coordinate and expand restoration, training and other efforts to enhance and restore the lower portion of the Raritan Watershed. Heather has spent many evenings and weekends over the course of the last two years organizing both working and training sessions, recruiting numerous individuals to play a role in this fledgling group, and visiting municipalities, counties and other government agencies in order to obtain resolutions of support. She has tirelessly devoted her time and energy to insuring that the Partnership has a visible presence at civic events and other key meetings and workshops throughout the lower watershed.

In this short time, Dr. Fenyk has established a Citizen’s Science program to monitor water quality; recruited numerous volunteers and interns to staff this program; hosted “visual habitat” training sessions; and organized several cleanups of tributaries of the lower Raritan.

**Public Access Award - New Jersey Conservation Foundation.** The Ken Lockwood Gorge is more than one of the crown jewels of the Raritan River; the South Branch is a major drinking water supply source for more than 1.5 million New Jersey residents. Through a partnership led by the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, the Gorge's water supply and recreational amenities recently received additional protection, thanks to the permanent preservation of 50 acres of wooded hillside sloping down to the river. NJCF purchased a portion of the former Four Seasons Outdoor Center property, adjacent to the state-owned Ken Lockwood Gorge Wildlife Management Area and the Columbia Trail. The purchase was made possible by a partnership including New Jersey Conservation Foundation, the state Green Acres Program, Hunterdon County, Raritan Headwaters

Association, Hunterdon Land Trust, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority, and the Leavens Foundation.

**Public Education Award - James Rokosny.** Raritan River Week began as a big idea, but quickly became a reality thanks to the hours of planning and networking by the creator, James Rokosny. Just as the Raritan River connects towns and communities, Raritan River Week was established to show a unity in the efforts of organizations and towns “From the Headwaters to the Ocean.” The success of the event is evident in the formidable list of organizations involved which included Clean Ocean Action, Central Jersey Stream Team, NY/NJ Baykeeper, Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative, Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership, the Raritan Headwaters Association, Clean Water Action, Sustainable Jersey, Raritan Valley Community College and Duke Farms. The project helped the public participate in coordinated clean-ups throughout the Raritan Basin, from the headwaters to the beaches.

**Remediation and Redevelopment Award - Duke Farms.** The mission of Duke Farms is to serve as a model of environmental stewardship and sustainability. Among many other initiatives, Duke Farms is remediating historic arsenic soil contamination in its community garden area through an innovative phytoremediation program, where species of plants including sunflowers are used to significantly lower the concentrations of arsenic in soils. This approach could have widespread practical application in many areas where historic use of arsenicals for pest control have resulted in concentrations of arsenic in soil well above natural background as well as state cleanup standards.

In addition, Duke Farms has redeveloped several large buildings on its campus, converting an early 1900 stone barn into a LEED-platinum Visitors Center which is heated and cooled by geothermal energy, powered by a solar array, and where sewage is treated by a constructed wetlands wastewater treatment system, as well as renovating an early 1900s conservatory in a way which also meets LEED-platinum standards.

**Stewardship Award - Bayshore Regional Watershed Council.** Since 2009, the volunteer-based Bayshore Regional Watershed Council has been studying the population of horseshoe crabs in the Raritan Bay/Sandy Hook Bay area. A management plan is needed to ensure the livelihood of this ancient species, but long-term population data was nonexistent for horseshoe crabs residing in this area. BRWC coordinates and trains the dozens of volunteers who then count and tag the crabs at multiple Raritan Bayshore locations at predetermined dates and times.

**Sustainable Business Award - Somerset County Business Partnership: Sustainable Somerset Committee.** The mission of the Sustainable Somerset Committee, which was created by the Business Partnership in 2005, is to promote sustainable business practices that will help to keep Somerset County a great place to live, work and play for generations to come. The members of this committee seek to: (1) educate businesses on the benefits of adopting sustainable practices; (2) advocate for energy and environmental policies that give sustainable businesses a competitive edge; (3) promote and reward businesses which implement green business practices; and (4) mentor tomorrow's business leaders to help meet workforce development needs in emerging green industries.

Thus far, the Committee has worked to integrate sustainability as a key component of the Somerset County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; developed a "Green Challenge" to reward, promote and showcase the creative ways in which Somerset County businesses are making their operations more sustainable; and hosted events to showcase LEED-certified facilities to highlight the advantages of green design and construction and create forums for discussion of sustainable business practices.

The Awards Committee for this year's awards included, Michael Catania, Executive Director of the Duke Farms Foundation, William Kibler, Director of Policy for the Raritan Headwaters Association, and Debbie Mans, Baykeeper and Executive Director of the NY/NJ Baykeeper. All three of the organizations that they represent are members of the Collaborative. Michael and Debbie also serve on the Steering Committee for the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative.

Bill Kibler, Director of Policy for the Raritan Headwaters Association and a member of the Awards Committee noted, "We had an incredibly impressive group of nominations to consider this year. The accomplishments of the award winners and the nominees reflect great credit on all the members of the Sustainable Raritan Collaborative."

The Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative is a growing network of over 130 organizations, governmental entities and businesses in the Raritan River region working together to balance social, economic and environmental objectives towards the common goal of restoring the Raritan River, its tributaries and its estuary for current and future generations. Each member organization in the Collaborative contributes to the overall restoration and preservation of the River.

The Sustainable Raritan River Initiative, a joint initiative of Rutgers University's Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy and the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, supports the Collaborative by conducting conferences and topical workshops, providing technical assistance, developing anchor projects that raise the profile of the Raritan River and Raritan Bay and also publishes the Collaborative's monthly e-newsletter and maintains the Sustainable Raritan Website and Facebook Page.

To learn more about the Sustainable Raritan Awards, the Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative, or the Sustainable Raritan River Initiative, visit [www.raritan.rutgers.edu](http://www.raritan.rutgers.edu).

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