

Rutgers Raritan River Consortium

Rutgers Raritan River Consortium is a collaborative effort of the schools and departments on the university's New Brunswick-Piscataway campus. The Consortium recognizes the critical value of the Raritan and its environs to the social, economic and ecological integrity of the region that Rutgers calls home. The Consortium is comprised of multiple schools, programs and departments of Rutgers University that have joined together to advance two primary goals:

- To utilize Rutgers' proximity to the Raritan and its environs to inform university-based education, research and scholarship; and
- To apply Rutgers' research, programming and resources through its stewardship, educational programs, technical assistance, research and assimilation of data, and collaboration with other Raritan partners to advance improvements in regional planning, policy and decision-making that positively affects the Raritan region and resources

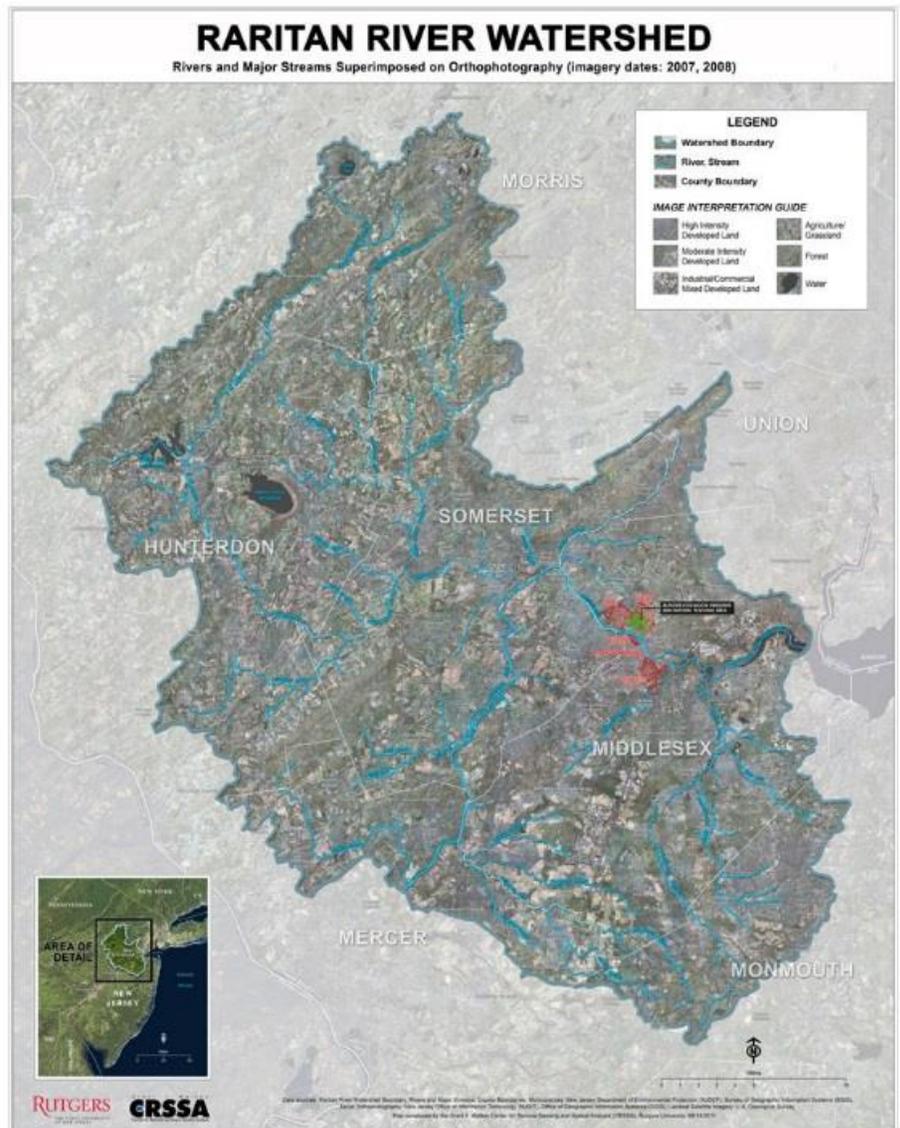
The Consortium is organized as a "virtual" network throughout the university and is guided by a university-based steering committee and further advised by external partners and Raritan stakeholders.

The Raritan River is the largest river system entirely within the State of New Jersey. It covers over 1,100 square miles, crosses seven county boundaries and encompasses parts of 98 municipalities. The region surrounding the Raritan Basin is the state's largest contiguous wildlife corridor offering refuge to numerous threatened and endangered species.

Approximately 1.2 million people live in the Basin and more than 600,000 people work here. The integrity of the Raritan complex is central to quality of life in the region. The Raritan is a valuable source of drinking water and recreation for residents and visitors alike. It supports biological diversity, and its role as an historic

trade route contributes to regional culture.

There are many challenges facing the Raritan. Impacts from historical industrial contamination include over 1700 contaminated sites and 60 Superfund sites within one mile of the Raritan. Changing land use patterns and urbanization have exacerbated the effects from storm



water runoff and flooding that can impact our homes and businesses and are a source of non-point pollutants that degrade water quality. Almost thirty-seven percent of Raritan environs have been identified as critical habitat but less than half of this habitat has some level of protection.

Protecting the quality of the region's natural resources is a cornerstone of a vital, healthy and prosperous future for the communities of the Raritan Basin.

By facilitating collaboration among Rutgers faculty, staff and students and engaging the greater Raritan community of businesses, municipalities, NGOs and other Raritan stakeholders, the Rutgers Raritan River Consortium will bring the university's resources to bear to address these and other concerns for the Raritan.

Inspired by Rutgers New Brunswick Strategic Plan, and the Chancellors' vision for Rutgers to become a better steward of the Raritan, the purpose of the Consortium is to:

- Foster internal university collaborative efforts related to multidisciplinary research opportunities;
- Enhance the student experience by providing students with new and expanded academic and applied experiences through coursework, service projects, community technical support and real-world application of science and research to solving today's challenges;
- Maximize the extent to which Rutgers research, science, and expertise are applied in planning, policy and decision-making by partners outside the university throughout the Raritan Basin;
- Conversely, to allow Rutgers multidisciplinary research to be informed by the needs of planners and decision-makers throughout the Basin;
- Enhance opportunities for faculty, staff, students and the public to have physical access to the river for purposes related to research, education and recreation; and
- Facilitate opportunities for faculty, staff and researchers to collaborate on significant multidisciplinary grant projects focused on Raritan River, basin and bay issues.

The Consortium is guided by a small steering committee of faculty and staff from different departments and schools on the New Brunswick-Piscataway campus. The steering committee is also guided by external stakeholders that will help the Consortium address issues of sustainability for the Raritan while advancing the goals of the university's Strategic Plan through the following efforts:

- Provide support to Raritan communities through internships and studios that address real world

concerns for Raritan basin stakeholders as well as help shape our students to be job-ready and good stewards;

- Develop an integrated field laboratory that links science, engineering, cultural, historical, and humanities programs through interdisciplinary classes as well as research projects and activities;
- Develop a physical, cyber, and social infrastructure that puts students and faculty on the river to collect and analyze data about the river basin using open access instruments, and share this information with others to help inform planning and research throughout the Raritan environs;
- Leverage partnerships between Rutgers Athletics, Rutgers Recreation, forestry, ecology and marine sciences, among many other academic disciplines and student initiatives to raise awareness and stewardship for the Raritan such as through the enriched programming of the Ecological Preserve;
- Re-think the way students move around campus, as well as foster a new relationship between Rutgers-New Brunswick and the Raritan River to ensure future capital developments enhance and reinforce the health and beauty of that ecosystem.

Internally, the Consortium will facilitate an interactive Raritan-based field laboratory and a faculty learning community to enhance Rutgers faculty, staff and students' exposure to the Raritan across multiple academic disciplines. Externally, the Consortium will coordinate and expand the university's engagement with external partners including watershed organizations, federal, state and local governments, other non-profit community based organizations, businesses and others. External efforts will include education and outreach to better integrate Rutgers' science and research into planning and decision-making, establishment of partnerships to help inform Rutgers' science and research to ensure maximum impact, and coalition building regarding overall regional planning for the Raritan.

For more information about Rutgers Raritan River Consortium or to join our efforts, contact Sara Malone, Facilitator, Sustainable Raritan River Initiative, sjmalone@ejb.rutgers.edu, (848) 932-2720, website under development.