



River Currents

April 2006

www.gehwa.org

Issue 38

Dear Members and Friends of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association:

Over 6 months have slipped away since our dear friend and associate Belinda Irizarry was taken from us by cancer. She was a very vibrant and special person, and her sudden departure at the young age of 42 has left many of us with a sense of profound loss and mourning that has been difficult to get beyond. Belinda offered so much to everyone she knew, and those of us with the good fortune to have known her will forever cherish the gift of her friendship.



THE BELINDA IRIZARRY MEMORIAL FUND

As a way to preserve Belinda's memory and her legacy of contributions, a separate fund in memory of Belinda Irizarry has been started by the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association (GEHWA). It is GEHWA's goal to build Belinda's Memorial Fund into a large permanent endowment of \$5,000 or more where the principal fund value will generate enough annual interest to fund special projects and awards that Belinda would have supported. To date, \$2,410 has already been contributed to the fund from the generosity of members, friends, and relatives. If you wish to contribute to this important project, please send your check payable to GEHWA and note on it that it's for the "Belinda Irizarry Fund." All contributors will join a special mailing list for Belinda's Memorial Fund and receive annual announcements and periodic updates about selected projects and events. This November will mark the first year for the annual presentation of the Belinda Irizarry Memorial Award.

Last September's Members Meeting was a memorial meeting where many people expressed their heartfelt sentiments for Belinda. GEHWA sincerely thanks all those who attended, and the outpouring of loving emotions was very comforting to all of us. We would also like to thank those friends who helped and supported Belinda, and sent in written expressions of their memories and sentiments.



Belinda. *From Mary Vavra*

What can you say about Belinda? I know that when I think of her, the words kind and gentle spirit come to mind. There were only a handful of people in my life who touched me the way Belinda did. I never met anyone Belinda's age who was not jaded by life's experiences. She viewed people in a positive way, and if they disappointed her, she was forgiving. I wish I were more like her.

No one can talk about Belinda without mentioning her love of all living things. Of course, I knew about her devotion to rabbits, dogs and cats; however, her need to protect all creatures was vividly shown one night when we were at a late meeting. I saw a huge roach at a doorway in the building we were visiting. My immediate disgust made me want to step on it. Belinda rushed in front of me, gently scooped the roach in her hands, said something sweet to it, and placed it in a nice grassy spot outside where it would be protected. I swallowed hard and tried to conceal my true feelings, but Belinda turned to me and said "It's a living thing and it needs to be protected – no matter how small. Every living thing is connected." Here I was leaving a meeting where I talked about protecting the environment, and there was Belinda taking it to a level I never thought of. That was Belinda - a champion of all things great and small!

Belinda loved her work at GEHWA. Oh, there were difficult times, but Belinda always rose to the occasion. Belinda's confidence level was never as high as it was when she was working with children. If anyone had a chance to watch Belinda interact with children, they would know that it was her calling. She was more comfortable with kids than with adults. When asked why she could relax with children, she would say that "young children are not critical or judgmental. They like you for who you are. If you can reach them at this age and teach them about the environment, then they will protect it when they are adults." Belinda had a vision – and GEHWA and the National Park Service benefited from it.

I could go on and on about Belinda and how she touched people's lives. I know that her passing created an emotional and physical void that cannot be filled. The world was a better place with Belinda in it. I don't pretend to understand God's plan or why Belinda was taken from us at such a young age. I only know that I was privileged to know her, learn from her, love her, and be included among her friends. I, along with so many others, will miss her.



Her spirit sure lives on with me, and her passing only strengthens her message. She lived life with purpose, commitment and love. We can all only try to do the same. *From Steve Eisenhower*

Belinda, a gentle person with strong convictions whose sensitivity to all living things touched all who came into contact with her. *From Hank Bird*

We will miss your presence at Earth Day, Waterfest, Back Yard Habitat, etc. You were always willing to help! I'm sure the schools will miss your puppet shows. You had a great impact on many lives, and we will not forget you. *From Janet Webekind*

Belinda – All that we should be. Our loving, warm example of a dedicated, caring, giving, committed defender of the earth and its inhabitants. *From Suzanne McCarthy*

Belinda, to the sister I can never replace and never ever forget. *From Beverly Orlando*

I will miss you, and so will the animals and wild creatures you cared for so much. *From Carole Brodtkin*

Belinda, you are special to all who knew you. I will forever remember your calm, friendly help, even those newsletter deadlines. Peace to you. *From Rick Dovey*

While we will miss you, we will strive to carry on your good work. *From Raven Ahmed*

Your love of wildlife is an inspiration to us all. *From Helen Weber*

To all: Thank you for all your caring and support. It made a great difference to Belinda. She leaves a strong legacy of kindness and advocacy for nature and animals, and memories of the spirited and sincere person she was to all of us. One of her many dreams was to run her own Nature Center. Although very sad to lose Belinda, I promised her that one day we will have a center as she envisioned, and it'll bear her name (and spirit!). *Julie Akers*



From Sarah Summerville, Director Unexpected Wildlife Refuge and GEHWA trustee:

This issue of The Beaver Defenders is dedicated to my dear friend Belinda Irizarry, who lost a very short, but courageous battle with cancer in August.

Some of you may have known Belinda through her years working as coordinator of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association.

From a very young age, Belinda devoted her life to saving the natural habitat and caring for neglected and abandoned animals. She belonged to many animal and wildlife organizations, including the Beaver Defenders, and dedicated her time to these causes. Belinda spent countless hours passing on her values and beliefs to the little children she met, and she lived her life as an example to others.

This photo was taken last March when Belinda helped me capture Buck, the abandoned Rooster here at Unexpected.

Belinda Irizarry, Beaver Defender – Rooster Rustler



In Memoriam from the Federation of Gloucester County Watersheds

It is with profound sadness and a deep sense of loss that we announce the passing of our friend and colleague, Belinda Irizarry, on August 30, 2005. Those of us who knew Belinda were keenly aware of how special she was. Her boundless energy, enthusiasm, kindness, sincerity and knowledge helped us overcome many challenges as we endeavored to "find ourselves" as an organization.

Belinda served on the Board of the Federation of Gloucester County Watersheds and as Secretary of the Board for many years. This was one of several volunteer roles she undertook and to which she gave her limitless imagination and many hours of time. By profession, she was the Education and Outreach Coordinator for the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association. Her intense love of nature and children made her ideally suited for this position. She always had a smile, even during the most trying of times and somehow managed to find unique and innovative ways to help youngsters understand our precious and fragile environment and to be good stewards of our natural legacy.

Seldom do people like Belinda pass our way and it is hard to imagine how we will continue without her. We will forever be saddened by her absence, yet strengthened by reflecting on her commitment to nature. Rest well, dear friend. You will always be with us.

Note: On April 11 at the 1st Annual Celebration of the South Jersey Land & Water Trust (formally the Federation of Gloucester County Watersheds), Julie and Fred were presented with a check to the Belinda Irizarry Memorial Fund for \$500.



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

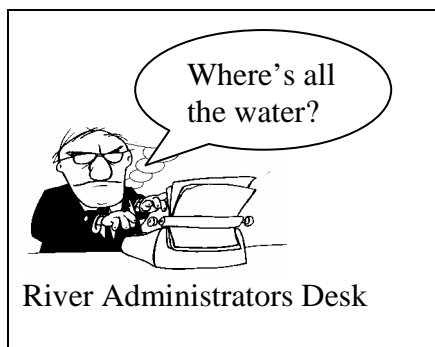
It has taken a while for us to try to catch up after losing Belinda. Besides being a wonderful friend, she also did an essential job with the newsletter, kids' activities, outreach events, and membership support. Thank you for your understanding during this last year as we move forward:

Welcome new Coordinator, Lynn Maun

In mid-November, we hired Lynn Maun to fill the position of GEHWA Coordinator. Since December, Lynn has been getting acquainted with the watershed and the multitude of opportunities and responsibilities that Belinda established. One of the first goals for Lynn was to update membership, and we'd like to thank all our members for a very successful renewal response. Before Belinda became sick, she had won a grant to fund public presentations about stormwater runoff pollution, using the DEP-promoted EnviroScape model. Lynn has continued this grant project by reaching out to Belinda's school and community contacts, as well as adding many of her own. By May 1st, the end of the grant period, Lynn will have satisfactorily completed this important component of GEHWA's outreach education mission. Lynn is also making plans to continue other education/awareness activities for schools and civic groups. Please contact her at 856-629-4771 or lynnkmaun@snip.net for more information about scheduling presentations in your area.

Welcome new Trustees

The Trustee Board for March 2006 – March 2008 adds two new members; Jamie Cromartie and Sarah Summerville now join the slate that includes Julie Akers, Dick Colby, Ed Curry, Steve Eisenhauer, and Elmer Ripley. Neither Jamie nor Sarah is new to the Great Egg Harbor watershed and environment. Jamie is a professor of Environmental Studies at Stockton College, and has been very active in partnering with GEHWA to research stream quality and involve college students in our ongoing intern projects. Sarah manages the Unexpected Wildlife Refuge on the border of Buena Vista and Monroe Townships. She has been instrumental in preserving and managing land in the watershed and educating people about beavers and natural wildlife ecology.



Which comes first, development or water supply?

“Water rules threaten development throughout county” was a recent headline in the press. After I read the article, I wondered why the headline didn’t instead read, “Development threatens water supply throughout county”?

While there may be a public perception that the drinking water supply in Southern New Jersey is infinite, no one has offered any scientific proof yet to support that conclusion.

On the contrary, the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) and the US Geological Survey (USGS) continue to produce science that questions the long term sustainability of our drinking water supply. And it is clearly NJDEP’s job to protect the long term sustainability of drinking water supplies statewide by obtaining more exact science and regulating excessive consumption.

Since most of our drinking water comes from rainwater that goes into the ground (aquifer recharge), developers in South Jersey have historically been “double dippers”. While increased development increases the need for water consumption, the increased pavement and roofs from development reduces the quantity of rainfall that can seep into the ground and feed underground aquifers. So development can both increase demand and decrease drinking water supply at the same time.

In addition to all the increased impervious cover from development, which causes rainwater to be lost downstream into the salty ocean, we often use most of our drinking water only one time and then discharge our waste water into rivers and the ocean, never to be used again for human consumption. This is called a “depletive use”, and it causes our water supply to be directly depleted by these discharges with no hope for reuse.

With less water going into the ground, our ground water tables drop, and streams and shallow wells start to dry up. At the same time this is happening, rainwater is washing contamination off of larger impervious surfaces, causing more pollution with less filtering and dilution. This is not only bad for overall water quality and recreation like swimming and fishing, but can also cause long term negative impacts on shellfisheries, lakes, and other aquatic resources.

So instead of the perception that “protecting our water supply for tomorrow is a threat to new development today”, municipal and county planners and the media should take the lead from NJDEP and

place a higher value on the public importance of local long term water supply sustainability when they plan to push for all the new “rateables” they can jam into their towns and counties. Water conservation and aquifer recharge should be a larger part of the planning.

For example, Atlantic County has recognized the increasing value of drinking water, and is taking many initiatives to protect and conserve water quantity and quality to balance development. The Atlantic County Utilities Authority (ACUA), managers of a regional waste water treatment plant that discharges about 31 million gallons per day into the ocean, has progressive wastewater reuse projects underway costing \$11 million to reuse 130,000,000 (million) gallons per year.

The ACUA has secured state funding to deliver a county wide water conservation education program, and their extensive web resources about water conservation are available to the public at <http://www.wateruseitwisely.com/>. Atlantic County has a Groundwater Advisory Committee appointed to review and advise the county on technical and regulatory groundwater issues, and Atlantic County Planning is an active participant in the implementation of the Phase II stormwater rules that require aquifer recharge for new development.

Progressive measures like these by counties and municipalities are necessary now to make sure that the demand for drinking water never exceeds our available supply. Water is not an infinite resource, and it is up to all of us to “use it wisely”.

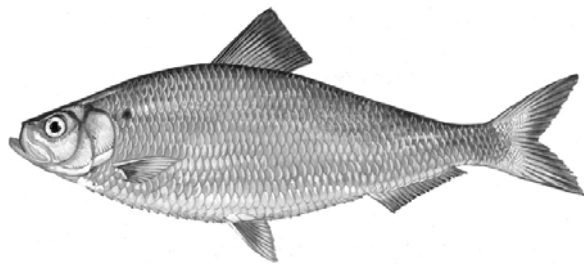


New Fish Ladder at Lake Lenape



The Great Egg Harbor River is now open for increased fish traffic! Construction of a fish ladder (or more accurately, a “passage”) was completed last month at the base of the dam on Lake Lenape in Mays Landing. On March 27th, water began gushing through an opened gate at the lake level and down a chute once used to transport ice. The ice chute has been refurbished with baffles to both slow the water and create turbulence that attracts fish. A trough-like extension of wood and stainless steel has been added to the chute to help channel fish at the base of the dam into the passageway, which will hopefully lead them again to many miles of historic spawning grounds upriver. The picture at left shows the trough and hair-pin turn at the end, simulating the inviting whitewater for fish species that instinctively migrate from the oceans upstream to fresh water to lay their eggs.

It is hoped that populations of such anadromous species that were previously abundant in the river will increase. A key species is the Alewife herring, shown at right, which provides food for many other fish (such as striped bass) and animals (like eagles and the otters that frequent our river). Other species that may use the fish ladder are American eels and White perch. An underwater video camera provided by GEHWA and the National Park Service will hopefully be in service soon, so we can see the fish during their journey. Meanwhile, stay tuned for an update after this first spring migration!



Calendar of Events

Saturday, April 22nd

Hike at the Blue Hole

10:00am to Noon. Meet at the Archery Range
off of Piney Hollow Road
Call Fred-856-697-6114

Sunday, April 23rd

ACUA Earthday 2006

10:00am to 4:00pm
Haneman Environmental Park
6700 Delilah Rd, EHT
Call Casey-609-272-6950

Sunday, May 7th

Patcong Creek Canoe & Kayak Cleanup & BBQ

Starts at 10:30am
Call Fred-856-697-6114

Wednesday, May 10th

Hamilton Environmental Commission Road Show. 7:00pm Hamilton Town Hall
Call Fred-856-697-6114

Tuesday, May 23rd

Egg Harbor Twp. Schools Miry Run Jamboree
Call Fred-856-697-6114

Tuesday, May 23rd

GEHWA Members Meeting
Watch for Meeting Notice.

Telephone Numbers to Remember

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association

Julie Akers, President (856) 697-6114
Lynn Maun, Coordinator (856) 629-4771
Fred Akers, Administrator (609) 697-6114

P. O. Box 109; Newtonville, NJ 08346
e-mail address: akers@gowebway.com
Web Site: www.gehwa.org

National Park Service

Paul Kenney (215) 597-5823
Paul_Kenney@nps.gov

NJDEP Watershed Management Office

Robert Mancini (609) 777-0580

Atlantic County Department of Planning

Bob Lindaw (609) 645-5898

US Army Corps of Engineers

(215) 656-6725

NJDEP Regulatory Office for Atlantic County

(609) 292-8262

NJDEP Enforcement Officer

Kevin Brown (732) 255-0787

Pinelands Commission

Main Number (609) 894-7300

NJDEP Hotline: 1-877 WARN DEP

Membership Information

Your membership assures our survival as a non-profit advocate for the Great Egg Harbor River and Watershed. Without you, we could not exist. Thanks for your support!

Name/Organization: _____

Street Address: _____

City, State, and Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

e-mail address: _____

Yes, I would like to receive notices by email.

Annual Membership: Individual: \$10; Family: \$15; Supporting: \$35; Patron: \$50

Please mail this form along with your check to:

Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, P.O. Box 109, Newtonville, NJ 08346

The new fish ladder at Lake Lenape has opened over 15 miles of upstream habitat for migratory fish species like the Alewife herring and American eel. (See story page 6.)



Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
P.O. Box 109
Newtonville, NJ 08346