



# RiverCurrents

August 2004

[www.gehwa.org](http://www.gehwa.org)

Issue 34

## Day at the Bay Festival a Resounding Success

They came from everywhere and they were at Kennedy Park at 8AM when the festival started and they stayed until 8PM when the last vestiges of the event were winding down. The first ever *Day at the Bay* festival held on June 13<sup>th</sup> at Kennedy Park in Somers Point amused participants and at least 5,000 visitors as crew races, lifeguard races, kayak races, air-show displays and live entertainment kept residents and visitors entertained. Fly fishing expositions,

kite and wind surfing, face painting, pony rides and, of course, we can't forget plenty of good food helped create the festive mood that permeated the event.

Donations from small businesses in Atlantic and Cape May Counties went to the high school teams who participated in the *Day at the Bay* regatta, each team receiving \$500 for their booster clubs. A successful event indeed!



## Dinner, Good Conversation, and a Long Walk

Where else could you go to enjoy a night out with good food, nice company, fun stories in an incredible setting, and a nice walk for no cost? Members met at the Fox Nature Center on July 27<sup>th</sup> for GEHWA's annual potluck dinner. While the weather was not the best again this year, people still ate heartily and then walked the length of the boardwalk down to the newly constructed section of the trail leading to the South River. Woodland songs and sounds could be heard along the trail as nature entertained us. It was a very nice time to get re-acquainted.



## Where are the Horseshoe Crabs and Red Knots?

It was a perfect setup by anyone's standards – a full moon and high tide - and we patiently waited on the jetty at Reeds Beach with cameras and bottled water in hand. The anticipation was there as someone began to spot horseshoe crabs here and there in the waves hitting the beach. While it was amazing to watch these creatures performing their annual ritual, it was disheartening to see so few numbers. Was it because it was late in the season? No one was really sure, but the local fishermen on the jetty – they knew. Acknowledging that they have been coming to this particular fishing spot since they were children, they remember seeing so many horseshoe crabs that it literally looked as though the sand was alive. They covered the beach from end to end. Are they going elsewhere? Whatever the reason for the change, it is having its affect.

The red knot is one of New Jersey's most threatened birds. This year the small migratory bird, that makes an unbelievable 10,000-mile spring migration from South America to nesting grounds in the Arctic tundra, did not make a significant appearance on the Delaware Bay. Some link the diminished numbers to the horseshoe crab decline; others think the birds are flying elsewhere. Even though there is a difference of opinion on exactly what the reason is, both sides agree that there is a significant decline in the population of red knots in the Delaware Bay region. Researchers are using a new Automated Radio Tracking Station, or ARTS, installing radio transmitters on 65 birds and using 18 antennas installed on both sides of the bay to track movements. Hopefully they will learn the answer to the questions being raised and determine the right course of action to bring back the horseshoe crab and red knot population.

In the meantime, there are restrictions on the harvesting of horseshoe crabs. Since a horseshoe crab must age nine years before it can breed, the restrictions need time to take affect. Perhaps when more horseshoe crab eggs are deposited on the beaches, the red knot population will once again thrive and visit the Delaware Bay shores.



## State Can Decide the Placement of Dredge Spoils

In an effort to direct the placement of dredge spoils within its borders, Lower Township adopted an ordinance last January over the objections of NJ Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) officials. Placing the controversy in the hands of the judicial system did not bode well for the Township when a judge threw out the new law regulating the spoils and supported state control of the gunk taken from tidal waterways. The NJDEP argued that the state has a management system in place for dredge spoils and that their authority preempts a local jurisdiction's ordinance.

The judge's ruling does not bode well for other municipalities that have enacted ordinances to direct dredging material to areas that would not contaminate groundwater, local waterways, or be too close to residential properties. The Township can appeal the ruling or re-examine its zoning to prohibit materials in certain areas. More to follow on this issue.



## River Council Places Signs in the Watershed

With funding from the National Park Service, the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River Council designed and produced watershed signs that will be placed at road and river crossings throughout Atlantic, Cape May, Camden, and Gloucester Counties. The signs, which will also include the names of various tributaries, are an attempt to educate residents and visitors about the boundaries of the watershed and make them aware of the importance of rivers and streams that drain into a common water body such as the Great Egg Harbor River.

## Around the Region....

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### **PPA Has Moved**

The Pinelands Preservation Alliance (PPA) recently announced their move to a new home at the Bishop Farmstead on the edge of the Pinelands National Reserve in Vincentown Village in Southampton. This new home will not only preserve an historic property from ever being demolished, it will also enable PPA to expand and have a greater impact on the Pinelands. PPA is in the process of developing a series of membership and public events to mark the move, including speakers and workshops aimed at fostering an interest in the natural and cultural heritage of the Pinelands. If you are interested in attending an open house or in any of PPA's programs, please contact them at (609) 859-8860 or e-mail [traci@pinelandsalliance.org](mailto:traci@pinelandsalliance.org). Oh, by the way...PPA's new address is: 17 Pemberton Road, Southampton, NJ 08088.

### **Atlantic County Continues to be a Major Proponent in Protecting Open Space in Egg Harbor Twp.**

Atlantic County announces the acquisition of a 271-acre parcel to be permanently designated as open space in Egg Harbor Township, bringing the total to nearly 800 acres of open space acquired by the County in the Pinelands designated growth communities of Egg Harbor, Galloway and Hamilton Townships within the last three years and more than 6,000 acres to date countywide.

The land, known locally as the Polakoff property, was acquired using a combination of funding from Green Acres grants and the Atlantic County Open Space Trust. It is adjacent to the county's John F. Gaffney Green Tree Golf Course on Route 559 with a portion located on the Great Egg Harbor River. According to Atlantic County Executive Dennis Levinson, "This property is significant to our efforts to protect the Great Egg Harbor River and its tributaries. Under existing zoning, as many as 25

homes could have been built on the property's upland area. Instead, it will now be protected and preserved to enhance the quality of life of our residents and visitors, as well as for future generations."

### **A "Yes" Vote in November could help Galloway Township Protect Open Space**

Recognizing the success of Egg Harbor Township's open space preservation program, Galloway Township officials are supporting an open-space tax as a way to keep some green in their community. With all council members in agreement, a draft ordinance asking voters to approve a non-binding tax to acquire land in the township for recreation and open space will be on November's ballot. If passed, Galloway will be the third municipality in Atlantic County with an open space tax. Funds raised can be matched by the Green Acres Program, maximizing the potential to acquire much needed open space in the Township.

### **South Jersey has above average water levels – for now....**

NJDEP reports that southern New Jersey has recovered from the drought conditions of 2001 and 2002 with deep and shallow aquifer levels running mostly above average. Stating that the region is in good shape for the summer, the DEP's Water Supply Administration also issued a major caveat. The water supply is good for now, but recognizing that the amount of water available is dependent upon the weather, the above average levels could be quickly depleted if there is a significant dry spell. So what have we learned? Conservation is critical in planning for long-term water use. Conserving water should be a year-long activity. Developing these habits and teaching our children to conserve is a responsible way to address the growing concern over water supply.

Enforce Those Ordinances!



River Administrator's Report

## WHAT'S THE MASTER PLAN FOR THE RIVER IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY?

(By: Fred Akers)

One of the main missions of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association (GEHWA) is the protection of the Great Egg Harbor River, its tributaries, and its overall watershed from the negative impacts of over development and sprawl. These negative impacts can be seen in many ways. Massive amounts of paved over lands and other impervious cover prevents ground water recharge, produces stormwater runoff with nonpoint source contaminants, and can dry up source water streams. Also, a net decrease in open space and the degradation and removal of wetlands and wildlife habitat decreases recreational opportunities and the quality of life in the watershed.

GEHWA's founders worked hard to get the river designated into the federal Wild & Scenic Rivers program in 1992, with the goal that a Comprehensive Management Plan sponsored by the federal government and supported by all the river municipalities and the state, would provide adequate protection of the river for the long term. In order to get local support for the designation, no new rules were imposed, and local jurisdiction and municipal home rule would be the primary authority to protect the river for the future.

To facilitate this local protection and to integrate it into the federal Comprehensive Management Plan, each municipality was required to create a Local River Management Plan. Federal funds were made available to assist with the planning required to create these plans, and all 12 of the municipalities in the designated river corridor completed some form of a Local River Management Plan. Some municipalities even incorporated their Local River Management Plan into their Municipal Master Plan.

Now it is largely up to Home Rule to protect the Great Egg Harbor River and Watershed. Local Planning and Zoning Boards need to utilize proper planning and regulation to limit the environmental impact of land development by controlling and abating pollution and preserving resources for future generations. And it is the municipal master plan that creates the foundation for the local zoning and land ordinances that are vital to protect a community's public health, safety and general welfare.

The value of the Great Egg Harbor River has been interwoven into the fabric of the river communities since their beginning, and GEHWA urges all local Planning and Zoning Boards to apply their ordinances wisely and firmly for all development applications, and especially for those developments along the river. Please ensure that all environmental and other applicable ordinances are not summarily waived, and recognize that to deny waivers and variances is a legal method to enforce existing ordinances and implement the vision of the Master Plan in your town. For additional information on Master Plans, GEHWA recommends ANJEC's Smart Growth Survival Kit which can be found at: [http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/SG\\_MasterPlan.pdf](http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/SG_MasterPlan.pdf)

GEHWA would like to thank the following municipalities for their continuing efforts to work with the River Council for the long term protection of the natural resources of the Great Egg Harbor River: Borough of Folsom; Town of Hammonton; Monroe Township; Winslow Township; Weymouth Township; City of Estell Manor; Buena Vista Township, Hamilton Township, Upper Township; Egg Harbor Township; Corbin City and Somers Point.

## **Wharf Road Development**

GEHWA was called on by residents of Wharf Road near English Creek in Egg Harbor Township this June to help them oppose a six lot major subdivision in a very low-lying area adjacent to the designated river corridor. The 59-acre block in question, which has a major portion of the acreage under water at high tide and a major portion of the acreage in wetlands, does appear to be a very poor site for intensive residential development.

Our preliminary review determined that the entire parcel is located within the federally designated floodplain for the river (FEMA Q3), and that the freshwater wetlands plus the tidal wetlands leave little space to accommodate development. In addition to this, there are 4 critical habitats identified in the state's Landscape Project mapping on the parcel, as well as Bald Eagle foraging habitat.

Administrator Fred Akers attended the EHT Planning Board Preliminary Major Subdivision presentation for the proposal and was surprised to find out that the applicant was requesting 27 waivers from the board to allow the subdivision. Given the amount of wetlands on the parcel with wetlands soils which are often continuously saturated and have low load-bearing capacities, the applicant's requests for waivers for a soil borings report, sewer/water report, stormwater management plan, areas to be disturbed by grading or construction report, natural resource inventory, and soil erosion and sediment control plan, seemed to be quite limiting to the board's ability to determine the real feasibility of the proposal.

Local residents were also concerned about the waivers requested, scale of the project map, site characteristics map, first floor elevations, and the traffic report. During the public comment portion of the application, a number of residents expressed their concerns. Fred Akers reminded the Board about EHT's Local River Management Plan and the provisions in the plan that address development in wetlands, Flood Hazard Areas, and other detailed criteria in the plan that was intended to protect both the public welfare and the river. Fred also submitted 10 GIS maps of the parcel to the Board which showed the Atlantic County layers for wetlands and floodplains, and the state layers for the 4 Landscape Project critical habitats.

The Planning Board then moved to table the application, pending review by the EHT Environmental Commission and their new environmental specialist consultant. Fred submitted a copy of the 10 GIS maps to this specialist, and the National Park Service sent a copy of the new bird survey with documentation of actual Bald Eagle sightings as well as a letter of concern to the Commission about all the waivers to existing ordinances. This application proposal was still pending at press time.

### **HELP FLOOD VICTIMS**

Monetary donations can be mailed to the Burlington County Flood Relief Fund, c/o Burlington County Times, 4284 Route 130 N., Willingboro, NJ 08046, or to the Medford Office at 18 N. Main St., Medford, NJ 08055. Checks should be written to the American Red Cross of Burlington County. Other forms of donations, such as material, clothing or food are not needed.

## MMSC Holds Training Seminar for Volunteers

On June 5<sup>th</sup>, over 30 volunteers attended a two-hour training seminar hosted by the Marine Mammal Stranding Center (MMSC) held at the Atlantic County Utilities Authority Recycling Center. The seminar was to train volunteers to assist with the rescue of stranded, injured or otherwise stressed marine mammals and sea turtles. Bob Schoelkopf, Director of the MMSC, headed the training session, and volunteers gathered an array of information, ranging from species identification to crowd control. With over 1,500 miles of coastal waterways in New Jersey, any of these waterways have the possibility of a marine mammal or sea turtle stranding. Some of these areas are very remote and it often takes the staff of the MMSC several hours to reach an animal that has beached. Volunteers came from various areas of New Jersey to participate and to sign on as an emergency volunteer who could be available at a variety of locations and times. Local cable television station Channel 40 was present, filming the entire training session for a news segment. Volunteers also received an up-close view of the MMSC's ambulance that is fully equipped for smaller marine mammal rescue and transportation.

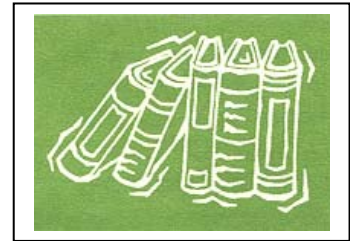
Afterward, the volunteers were treated to a catered lunch and were able to visit display and information tables set up by the MMSC, the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, and the Atlantic County Utilities Authority. This event was co-sponsored by GEHWA and ACUA. For future MMSC volunteer training sessions or for more information, please call (609) 266-0538.



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## What are Transfer of Development Rights (TDRs)?

There is a statewide program in New Jersey that allows development rights to be transferred, allowing the state's 566 municipalities to steer new developments into designated growth areas while protecting farmland and open space. Under the program, cities or groups of cities can designate preservation and growth areas. Landowners in the preservation areas may sell their rights to develop their land to developers or to a state TDR bank. The developers then can use the credits to build extra houses in the designated growth areas. The measure, signed March 29<sup>th</sup> by Governor McGreevey, is based on successful pilot programs in Burlington County and the state's Pinelands area. The County protected 1,200 acres and the Pinelands TDR program preserved 38,000 acres, while boosting development in 36 municipalities designated for higher growth. Susan Burrows of New Jersey Future ([njfuture.org](http://njfuture.org)), the state's oldest smart growth group and a key supporter of the new law, cited this as a "managed growth program." Other supporters included the Farm Bureau, League of Municipalities and local homebuilder associations. (Excerpted from the April-June 2004 issue of Common Ground, the newsletter of The Conservation Fund.)



## Information:

### ***Need Help in Understanding Stormwater Management Rules?***

The New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association (NJAPA), with assistance from GEHWA, will be sponsoring a stormwater management conference on August 10<sup>th</sup> at the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey in Pomona. Recognizing that the new rules will change how municipalities' zone, plan, design, review and construct developments that require stormwater management systems, the NJAPA decided that the best way to help is to educate and provide information. This one-day seminar (8:30AM to 3:30PM) will focus on the planning, implementation and regulation of these new standards. Staff from the NJDEP and planning and engineering professionals will be on hand for presentations and discussions, and will have answers to most New Jersey Planner's questions about the new Stormwater Management Rules. Cost is \$65 per person for registration. All registrants receive a copy of the Complete Guide to Planning in New Jersey, second edition. Call (732) 262-4783 for additional details.

### ***Garden State EnviroNet Offers Vital Environmental Info***

Garden State EnviroNet (GSE) is your one-stop source for environmental news and information about New Jersey. GSE offers EnviroNews, a free electronic compendium-type newsletter that is forwarded five days per week (Monday-Friday) right to subscribers' e-mail boxes. This newsletter provides NJ's environmental community with up-to-date information about significant issues affecting New Jersey's natural world. Articles are culled from numerous local, state, regional and national publications. GSE's website ([www.gsenet.org](http://www.gsenet.org)) provides numerous services such as action alerts, job postings, a legislative report detailing what is happening in our state house as it affects New Jersey's environment, a calendar of environmentally related events, and a searchable database of over 25,000 articles archived from prior issues. So to find out more about NJ's environment, take a moment to check out [www.gsenet.org](http://www.gsenet.org). (excerpted from the June/July 2004 issue of Inside the Pinelands)

### ***ANJEC Offers Help***

The Association of NJ Environmental Commissions (ANJEC) offers some great information online. Check out the information on the benefits of open space preservation at: <http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/OpenSpaceGoodInvestment2004.pdf> and how to prepare an Open Space Plan at <http://www.anjec.org/pdfs/OpenSpacePlan.pdf>.

### ***More on Open Space Planning....***

Check out <http://www.nrdc.org/onearth/04sum/salamander1.asp>

### ***NJDEP Requires 300'-wide buffers***

New Jersey became the first state in the country to require 300-foot wide buffers along 6,093 miles of its high-quality waters. Protection of the "category one" water bodies includes the prevention of any measurable deterioration in existing water quality. The rule ([NJ.gov/dep/rules/adoptions/2004\\_0202\\_watershed.pdf](http://NJ.gov/dep/rules/adoptions/2004_0202_watershed.pdf)) provides flexibility in buffer size in areas where stormwater management plans have been approved and for minor disturbances around existing development within the buffer, which extends 300 feet on each side of the affected water body. The rule also applies to tributaries of high-quality waters that are not themselves designated as category one water bodies. (Excerpted from the April-June 2004 issue of Common Ground, the newsletter of The Conservation Fund.)

## Calendar of Events

**Saturday, October 2<sup>nd</sup>**

***Wine & Cheese Tasting Fund Raiser***

6PM – 8PM; Heritage Winery  
Rte 322; Richwood (Harrison Twp, NJ)  
Tickets are \$12; [www.sjwatersheds.org](http://www.sjwatersheds.org)  
Proceeds to benefit the Federation of  
Gloucester County Watersheds  
Contact: Belinda Irizarry (609) 567-4762 or  
Suzanne McCarthy (856) 694-3681

**Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>**

***9<sup>th</sup> Annual Pinelands Month Celebration***

***Opening Day***

10AM – 4PM; Historic Whitesbog Village;  
Rte 530; Browns Mill, NJ  
Call (609) 859-8860 for more information.

**Sunday, October 17<sup>th</sup>**

***20<sup>th</sup> Annual Batsto Country Living Fair***

10AM – 4PM; Historic Batsto Village  
Rte 542; Hammonton, NJ  
Call (609) 561-0209

**Saturday October 23<sup>rd</sup>**

***Celebrate Wildlife Refuge Day***

10AM – 3PM; Edwin B. Forsythe NWR  
Great Creek Road; Oceanville, NJ  
Call (609) 748-1535

**Wednesday, October 27<sup>th</sup>**

***Creepy Critters Moonlight Nature Walk***

7PM; Scotland Run Park  
Clayton Road; Clayton, NJ  
Learn about all those “creepy critters” that are  
so important to our environment. A family  
event – come in costume! Hosted by  
Gloucester County Parks and GEHWA. Call  
(609) 567-4762 for more information.



### Frog Log

By: Sara Summerville  
Unexpected Wildlife Refuge

I mentioned in the last issue of *Beaver Defenders*, the quarterly publication prepared by Unexpected Wildlife Refuge, Inc., that I attended a class given by NJDEP on vernal pool assessment. Unfortunately, the field trip to a local vernal pool was cancelled due to ice. The rescheduled field trip conflicted with my schedule, but that turned out to be a bonus, not a bummer. Fred Akers, from the Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, volunteered to lead a vernal pool field trip right at Unexpected. On April Fools Day, five willing participants pulled on waders, applied bug repellent and hiked off into the evening mist with flashlights, nets and field guides. Fred proved to be a most competent field guide, and as we visited bog after bog, we observed and identified the following residents: spring peeper, leopard frog, northern gray tree frog, Pine Barrens tree frog, wood frog, fowlers toad, green frog, carpenter frog and bull frog. At 11PM, we had gathered at the bumper of Fred’s van, stowed our equipment and compared notes. Moments later, we heard a frog calling from the cove, 20 feet away. We grabbed our boots, lights and books and waded out into the shallows to discover cricket frogs, making the total inventory for the night ten different amphibians.

**Remember:**  
 If you become aware of an environmental incident, call the NJDEP's 24-hour, toll-free hotline at 1-877-WARN-DEP

**Telephone Numbers to Remember**

**Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association**  
 P. O. Box 900; Hammonton, NJ 08037  
 e-mail address: gehwa.gehwa@verizon.net  
 Internet address: www.gehwa.org

Julie Akers, President (856) 697-6114  
 Belinda Irizarry, Coordinator (609) 567-4762

**Great Egg Harbor River Administrator**  
 Fred Akers, (856)-697-6114  
 Akers@gowebway.com

**National Park Service**  
 Mary Vavra (215) 597-9175  
 mary\_vavra@nps.gov

**NJDEP Watershed Management Office**  
 Adriana Calle (609) 777-0586

**Atlantic County Department of Planning**  
 Bob Lindaw (609) 645-5898

**NJDEP Hotline - 1- 877-WARN DEP**

**US Army Corps of Engineers**  
 (215) 656-6725

**NJDEP Regulatory Office for Atlantic Co.**  
 (609) 292-8262

**NJDEP Enforcement Officer**  
 Kevin Brown (732) 255-0787

**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: \_\_\_\_\_  
 StreetAddress: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City, State, and Zip: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Membership: Individual: \$7; Family: \$15; Supporting: \$20; Patron: \$50; Corporate \$100  
 \_\_\_\_\_ Check here if non-profit organization.

Please mail this form along with your check to: Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association, P.O. Box 900; Hammonton, NJ 08037