



RiverCurrents

February 2004

Issue 31

Somers Point Prepares for Festival

The finishing touches are being placed on the first ever “Day at the Bay” festival scheduled for Sunday, June 13th, in Somers Point. This all-day Atlantic County festival will involve 23 municipalities with a number of events taking place in the surrounding area and at Kennedy Park. Crew and kayak races, among many other activities, are planned. GEHWA will be participating in the day’s activities, along with many other organizations. Hold the date, and stay tuned as the planning progresses and the day’s agenda is finalized. We’ll keep you posted.



Watershed Ambassadors Program

Watershed Ambassadors are members of AmeriCorps, a national service organization also known as the “domestic Peace Corps”, serving in watersheds throughout New Jersey. The primary responsibilities of a Watershed Ambassador are to provide education and outreach as well as organizing volunteers for watershed protection. Our Ambassador, Andrew Anderson, is serving a one-year term and is supervised by the NJDEP Division of Watershed Management. Andrew can provide watershed presentations, special programs for teachers, school classes, scout troops and other organizations, environmental events such as river clean-ups, and training for river monitoring. To take advantage of this free opportunity, contact Andrew at (609) 272-6997.

Stormwater Management Is Getting Increased Attention

Anyone interested in the environment who listened to Governor McGreevey’s news conference announcing the new stormwater rules, had to raise their glass in recognition of a long-awaited – and needed – course of action. Stating that he “didn’t want a million new homes in New Jersey” probably didn’t win the Governor any friends in the building industry, but it certainly reinforced the support he has in the environmental community. The Governor’s commitment is a breath of fresh air as we witness the slow, steady reduction in available open space and the degradation of our water quality and supply.

Of particular interest to the Great Egg Harbor River is one portion of the new rules that bans new development within 300 feet of some 6,000 miles of the state’s most pristine lakes, rivers and streams. State officials estimate that 300,000 acres of streamside property will be protected from development under this new initiative. Municipalities will be able to reduce the buffer to 150 feet if they have developed stormwater management plans. Providing this type of buffer around waterways limits non-

point source pollution - the runoff that washes fertilizers, pesticides, road runoff, etc. – from developed areas into the closest water body. The new rules charge municipalities with the responsibility of controlling runoff and evaluating all new development applications in light of their impact on stormwater-related issues.

The new stormwater rules will most surely be challenged by the building industry, but hopefully the support from environmental groups, and residents of New Jersey who are concerned about the environment future generations will inherit, will loudly proclaim support for what are being called “the toughest stormwater rules in the nation.”

Water Supply Report Validates Supply Concerns

An 89-page report dated September 2003 called *The Status of the Water Supply of Southeastern New Jersey* was prepared in response to Executive Order 32 which attempted to restrict new construction in Atlantic County in 2002 due to drought conditions. The primary purpose of the study process is to ensure a safe and adequate supply of drinking water for the region without adversely impacting the environment. The report indicates that our water supply is already being over pumped with detrimental affects to our rivers and streams.

Of particular note is the NJDEP conclusion that the southeastern New Jersey area will experience both immediate and long-term problems associated with its water supply. Among the more immediate problems are streamflow depletion as a result of surface water withdrawals and ground water withdrawals from the water table aquifer. Several of the water resources in the southeastern NJ study area are threatened by current water withdrawals or are projected to be threatened based on anticipated water demand. The principal reason these resources are, or will be, threatened is the large amounts of water that are withdrawn and not “recycled” back into the ground. As a whole, the study area has a current water supply planning deficit of about 46MGD based on present water availability planning thresholds. This is projected to increase to 160MGD by year 2050. The Mullica River and Great Egg Harbor River watersheds are

experiencing substantial current planning deficits, while the southern Barnegat Bay and Cape May Coastal watersheds are projected to experience a deficit in the next few decades. Withdrawals from Egg Harbor, Galloway and Hamilton Townships are consuming almost all available water in the Great Egg Harbor watershed. If the threshold were apportioned on a county basis, these three towns are presently withdrawing more water than is available to Atlantic County from the Great Egg Harbor watershed.

Sensitive in-stream and estuarine aquatic resources in the southeastern NJ study area are presently being impaired to some degree. Increased water withdrawal will worsen these conditions. Increases in withdrawals from the deep Atlantic City 800-foot sand confined aquifer throughout the region are resulting in a “mining” effect on the water resource. In essence, the dependable (or sustainable) yield of the aquifer has already been exceeded. Ground water pressure levels throughout the aquifer have continuously declined as a result of increased pumpage over the decades. There are many important findings in this report. To view an Executive Summary or the full report go to the following web sites:

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watershedmgt/DOCS/pdfs/SEWSEXecsum.pdf>.

<http://www.nj.gov/dep/watershedmgt/DOCS/pdfs/SEWaterSupplyReport.pdf>

GEHWA Receives Support from the National Park Service

The National Park Service (NPS) continues to support the education and outreach initiatives of GEHWA which serves as the primary local, non-profit organization dedicated to the long-term protection of the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River.

The NPS has provided more than \$300,000 to GEHWA since 1995 to undertake many projects and assist municipalities throughout the 129-mile river corridor and watershed. Increased funding for the Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers Program in the Northeast Region in 2004, will provide GEHWA with additional assistance once that money becomes available. Many thanks to Congressman LoBiondo and Senators Corzine and Lautenberg for their support of the Wild and Scenic Partnership Rivers Program. These funds will be used to pay the salaries of GEHWA's Administrator and Watershed Coordinator and also to undertake special resource studies and projects in the river corridor.

PPA Offers New Slide Show on T&E Species

In addition to the Pinelands Preservation Alliance's (PPA) general slide presentation about the Pinelands and the strategies to protect this unique region, a new slide presentation entitled *The Threatened and Endangered Species of Pinelands* is now available.

All the legally protected animals and plants likely to occur in the Pinelands National Reserve are featured, including 21 birds, three snakes, two frogs, two turtles, two salamanders, and the 54 plant species. This

presentation includes outstanding color slides of all the animals, with their respective range maps. All of the 54 plant species protected under the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan are shown as well, many of them in color. The presentation includes an introduction to the legal protections that are in effect for these plants and animals and their habitats, tips on identifying them, and suggestions on the many ways we can help protect and restore their habitats and populations. Call PPA at (609) 894-8000 to schedule a presentation.

A Plastic Bridge?

Absolutely! The 56-foot long plastic bridge made from recycled products has been carrying traffic over the Mullica River for over a year. The material has exceeded the expectations of Rutgers University scientists who had a difficult time attracting attention to the product since they discovered it in 1988. Except for zinc-coated steel fasteners

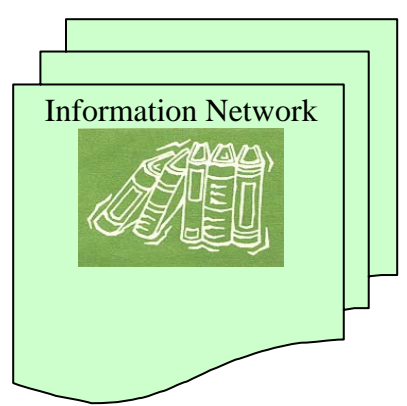
and wooden piles, the Mullica River bridge is made entirely of plastic which requires less maintenance than wood and other products and is also supposed to be better for the environment. Time will tell how long the bridge will last but you can be sure that it will be closely monitored.

Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer Study

A three-year, \$5.5-million study of the underground water in the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer, including how human activities affect plant and animal communities, has finally received all the approvals necessary to move forward. The report, once completed by the Pinelands Commission in cooperation with Rutgers University and other state and federal agencies, will hopefully provide information on how to achieve a sustainable water supply for today and future generations without adversely affecting the environment.

What's New?

What's New is a section of the Local Government Environmental Assistance Network website (www.lgean.org/html/whatsnew.cfm) that keeps local government officials abreast of current environmental funding opportunities, federal policy updates, important legislative activities, new reports and publications, and other available tools and resources. Information on topics from air to water and wastewater is available. LGEAN's free Local Government Environmental Toolkit CD-ROM continues to be a useful resource. The toolkit, released by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), contains 21 publications, fact sheets and other resources that ICMA has produced to help local government officials meet their environmental and economic development challenges. To request a free copy, call 877-865-4326 or e-mail lgean@icma.org.



Smart Growth Planning Grants for Municipalities

Through the generosity of the Geraldine Dodge Foundation, matching grants for NJ communities in the Pinelands, Delaware Bayshore regions and other northern counties are being made available through the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commissions (ANJEC). ANJEC will award 1 to 1 matching grants of up to \$25,000 to municipalities for local or regional plans, ordinances, studies or document reviews that meet the objective of the grant program, including but not limited to: State Plan Endorsement Preparation; critical area protection ordinances (well head, stream buffer, etc.); open space plans with supporting protection for preserved lands; build-out analysis; zoning or site plan ordinances; intermunicipal/regional plans; redevelopment; affordable housing plans consistent with Smart Growth principles; and other innovative planning activities. The grant and matching funds may be used to hire a consultant or firm to carry out project tasks, and may be combined with other grants, if that is permitted under the term of such grants. In-kind services can be used for up to 40% of a municipality's match. Application deadline is Thursday, April 1st, 2004. Contact ANJEC at (609) 278-5088.

NEETF Launches Web Site for Educators

The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation (NEETF) announced the launch of www.ClassroomEarth.org. It is a free web site with key information on how educators can obtain usable environmental education programs. ClassroomEarth.org is a veritable "best of the best" collection of environmental education programs and resources for K-12 teachers, parents, and students. This new site will help interested people to get started or improve their skills in environmental education. It provides up-to-date information on the most successful, well-tested and effective national environmental education programs. NEETF is a private, non-profit organization dedicated to advancing environmental education in its many forms.

Calendar of Events

Remember Earth Week in April

Schedule your events now.
Contact Belinda at (609) 567-4762

Sunday, June 13th

Day At The Bay; Somers Point
More information coming as event is planned

- ** **Gloucester Co. Federation of Watersheds** – 4th Thurs. of every month; 7PM; Scotland Run Nature Cntr.
 - ** **Great Egg Harbor NS&R River Council** – 3rd Wednesday of every month; 7PM; Fox Nature Center
 - ** **Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association** – 4th Tuesday every other month; 7PM; Fox Nature Center; Estell Manor Park; Jan/Mar/May/July/Sep/Nov 2004
- For more information on events and programs: Call (609) 567-4762; www.greategg.org or e-mail gehwa.gehwa@verizon.net.



Status of Trends of Watershed Avian Resources

By: Fred Akers

This year GEHWA has embarked upon an important long-term research project to survey and study the status and trends of raptors, waterfowl, and shorebirds in the lower Great Egg Harbor Watershed. Clay Sutton, one of South Jersey's foremost naturalists and bird biologists, who resides in Cape May, will conduct a series of winter field surveys from mid-December through March.

The key objective of the survey effort will be to discover and provide cornerstone avian resource data to be used in river management and protection. The establishment of an avian database for the Great Egg Harbor Watershed could be used to identify the wintering habitats that the birds use and enable these habitats to be ranked for resource protection and acquisition priority.

Mr. Sutton plans to document the sighting of any threatened and endangered species by submitting the survey records to the Endangered and Nongame Species Landscape Project of the NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife. This study will bring recognition and publicity to the considerable avian resources of the Great Egg Harbor Watershed, as the lack of Great Egg data on winter raptors, a hallmark feature of South Jersey river systems, is noteworthy in its absence.

Please look for periodic updates to the progress of this survey, and we have scheduled Mr. Sutton to make a presentation on the final results at the membership meeting in May. We look forward to utilizing the baseline data gathered by this survey and future studies to help us with the planning and protection of the Scenic and Recreational Great Egg Harbor River.

BALD EAGLE UPDATE

The NJDEP Division of Fish and Wildlife has completed their New Jersey Bald Eagle Management Project Report for 2003. The Division's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) has had biologist and volunteers working for over 20 years to help the Bald Eagle recover from near extinction. Here are some excerpts from this report:

Historically, New Jersey hosted more than 20 pairs of nesting bald eagles, mostly in the southern half of the state. As a result of the use of the pesticide commonly known as DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane), the number of nesting pairs of bald eagles in the state declined to only one by 1970 and remained at one into the early 1980's. Use of DDT was banned in the United States in 1972. That ban, combined with restoration efforts by biologists within the Division of fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP), resulted in a population increase to 23 active pairs by 2000. ENSP recovery efforts – implemented since the

early 1980's – have resulted in an exceptional recovery as New Jersey's eagle population has rebounded from the edge of extirpation.

Bald eagles nesting in NJ face many threats. Disturbance is the greatest of these, as people are naturally attracted to the sight of them (Niles et al. 1991). Habitat destruction is also a common problem. Further, in the long term, there is evidence that accumulation of contaminants may threaten the eagle population in NJ, especially in the Delaware Bay region.

ENSP biologists continually work to manage and reduce disturbance in eagle habitats, especially around nest sites. A corps of experienced volunteers, as well as public education and established viewing areas, are crucial to this effort. Biologists also work to protect habitat in a variety of ways, including working with landowners, land acquisition and management, and applying the state's land use regulations. ENSP is also continuing to investigate the impacts of

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organochlorines and heavy metals in eagles and other raptors nesting in the Delaware Bay region. Bald eagles, ospreys, and peregrine falcons nesting in the region exhibit some reproductive impairment relative to other areas (Steidl et al. 1991, Clark et al. 1998, 2001). ENSP monitors these species during the nesting season to evaluate nest success and assess any problems that occur.

The ENSP, with the Division's Bureau of Law Enforcement and volunteer assistance, works intensively to protect bald eagle nest sites. However, with increasing competition for space in the most densely populated state in the nation, it is becoming clear that critical habitat needs to be identified and, where possible, protected. Critical

habitat for eagles includes areas used for foraging, roosting and nesting.

The population of wintering bald eagles has grown along with the nesting population, especially in the last ten years. This growth reflects increasing nesting populations in NJ and the northeast, as each state's recovery effort pays off. In recognition of this success, the federal government upgraded the status of the bald eagle from endangered to threatened in July of 1995, and in 2003 proposed federal de-listing of the species. The federal status remains threatened; however, the eagle remains endangered in New Jersey, and regulatory protection remains the same.

The following is a summary of the status of NJ's Bald Eagles in 2003

1. There were 40 "Territorial Pairs", defined by "the presence of two potentially breeding birds within suitable nesting habitat during the breeding season where some sign of pair bonding or nesting is evident."
2. There were 35 "Active Pairs", defined as "one that lays eggs or shows incubating behavior."
3. There were 25 "Successful Pairs", defined "as one which produces one or more young that reach fledgling age."
4. There were 41 young Bald Eagles fledged in the wild here in NJ in 2003, which the state gives a production rate of 1.17.

Included in this report was a table of Wintering Bald Eagle counts in NJ from 1978 to 2004. Both immature birds and adults are counted in these winter counts, and the following is a table for the last 3 years:

Year	2002	2003	2004
Immature:	66	73	60
Adults:	99	76	110
Total	165	149	170

Note: 2004 had the second highest count for the study period, exceeded only in 1997.

Based on the high counts of wintering birds, especially immature birds that may be starting to pair up and look for a territory, it could be likely that new pairs will find their way to new areas in the state. Areas with open water in winter that support large waterfowl populations may be particularly attractive. Look up every now and then, you just might see a bald eagle.

Remember:

If you become aware of an environmental incident, call the NJDEP's 24-hour, toll-free hotline which is 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.greategg.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: _____

Street Address: _____

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