



LWRP Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2018

- I. Attendees: Daniel Cohen, LRWP intern; Michele Bakacs, Middlesex County Extension; Mark Lesko, Highland Park Ecology and Environmental Group; Joe Casais, Bob Hugin for Senate Campaign; Rich Walling, Preserve East Brunswick Pine Barrens Coalition; Jessica Alvarez, Middlesex County Office of Planning; Sanja Martic, Rutgers Landscape Architecture ; Alex Zakrewksy, Middlesex County Office of Planning; Nicolas Tufaro, Middlesex County Office of Planning; Tony Gambilonghi, Middlesex County Office of Planning; Tobiah Horton, Rutgers Cooperative Extension; Doriann Kerber, Borough of Milltown; Heather Fenyk, LRWP

Minutes submitted by LRWP Raritan Scholar intern Daniel Cohen

- II. LRWP Updates, Heather Fenyk
 - a. Watershed Summer Camp / Summer Institute Offerings:
 - i. Lazos America Unida worked with the LRWP to develop a weeklong curriculum for ages 8-18 focused on watersheds and watershed health. This included instruction regarding green infrastructure, hydrology, and stormwater management. It included multiple “field trips” through New Brunswick to conduct water quality assessments and to observe stormwater flows. Working with Rutgers University graduate student Kate Douthat, Lazos campers used handheld devices to map storm drains in New Brunswick.
 - ii. coLAB Arts worked with LRWP to develop a weeklong “Watershed Institute” on “socially engaged art” for ages 12-21. This included a field trip to Duke Farms for water quality monitoring and to learn about watershed restoration, stormwater infrastructure mapping, and a #lookfortheriver “scavenger hunt” to identify obligate and facultative wetland plants that indicate the presence of buried streams/ water. The students developed final performance and sculptural projects to communicate the environmental issues in the watershed.
 - b. Middlesex County Arts Commission Grant. The LRWP is wrapping up work on a 2018 grant to create an engineering footing for installation of sculptural works at

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the Boyd Park waterfront as part of our #lookfortheriver project. The footing has not yet been installed, however we have secured permissions from the City of the New Brunswick, and the City will install at their expense. The LRWP is now applying for a 2019 grant to commission development of the sculpture.

- c. #lookfortheriver habitat connectivity painting. With assistance from Rutgers Collaborative (special thanks to Johnny Malpica) and the New Brunswick Environmental Commission, and with funding from an Americorps Foodcorps Alumni grant, the LRWP completed the first installment of the “habitat connectivity” painting at Lord Stirling School on Redmond Street. The sidewalk painting highlights native plants and pollinators (in stylized form) and works to make a “virtual” pollinator habitat link and story about stormwater flows in an area dominated by hardscape. The New Brunswick Superintendent of Schools is interested in expanding this project to other schools in the area, starting with the new Paul Robeson School for the Arts.
- d. Watershed Sculpture Project 2018-2019. Working with coLAB Arts the LRWP continues to visit schools, community groups and street festivals to create sculptures of participant’s hands “demonstrating” watershed stewardship. We are seeking funding to expand this effort, and to install the final piece in a gallery setting.
- e. Watershed Institute Grant: the LRWP continues to work on the “State of the Lower Raritan” report, supported with funding from The Watershed Institute. We plan to have materials ready for presentation at the November meeting, and at the December potluck.
- f. Project WADES (Watershed Action Dialogue Education and Stewardship): The LRWP has a set of posters about the watershed ready for distribution to high school educators. A video guide to using the poster in classroom instruction is on the LRWP website. The LRWP will develop a letter for Michele Bakacs and Middlesex County Extension to send to all schools in the watershed, letting them know of the availability of the poster, and giving them a heads-up that posters will be delivered to high schools. Nick, Michele and Doriann have volunteered to assist with poster delivery.
- g. October 20-21 “Stream School” at Green Brook (Middlesex High School): The LRWP is co-sponsoring, along with The Watershed Institute and NJDEP, a

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macroinvertebrates training to be held over two days in October. This training will help prepare our volunteer monitors to expand their monitoring activities beyond Visual Habitat Assessments.

- h. Civic Science / Visual Habitat Assessments: The LRWP is working with Rutgers Raritan Scholar TaeHo Lee and former WMA9 Watershed Ambassador Jon Dugan to finish formalizing the outreach and organizing materials for the LRWP's water quality monitoring program. We expect to have this ready for roll-out in April 2019 for a re-launch of the civic science program.
- i. "How the LRW was made: An Ecological and Social History." For the last four semesters the LRWP has worked with Rutgers Prof. Karen O'Neill's environmental history class in an applied environmental history exercise to guide development of a report about the historical conditions of the Lower Raritan Watershed and change over time. We expect to continue for another several years, developing chapter summaries for each sub-watershed.
- j. New Brunswick's Municipal Public Access Plan: We are awaiting approvals from NJDEP on the DRAFT document. Once approved the MPAP will be submitted to New Brunswick City Council to do the following:
 - i. Preserve public access locations identified in the plan through the ROSI or a conservation easement/restriction.
 - ii. Establish an ordinance (or modify an existing ordinance) that requires public access signage at each public access location, and to ensure that signage is maintained as needed.
 - iii. Adopt the MPAP as part of the City of New Brunswick Municipal Master Plan.

Rutgers Landscape Architecture graduate student Sanja Martic presented an update on her research and findings into the issue of pedestrian access to the Delaware Raritan Canal. Sanja's work is the next step in Municipal Public Access planning and visioning. She will present on her findings to the LRWP either in November or December.

III. Upcoming and 2019 Activities

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- a. December 18 Annual Potluck: At our December potluck we will overview 40 years of watershed planning in the Lower Raritan Watershed, and provide a summary of the “State of the Lower Raritan Watershed Report.”
- b. LRWP Streamkeepers Program: The LRWP is working to rollout a new stream keeper program. We are currently working with streamkeepers at two locations, Mile Run Brook (New Brunswick) and Mill Brook (Highland Park), and plan to expand.
- c. #lookfortheriver hidden stream map creation: Using historic Vermeule maps from the 1800s and current day LIDAR imaging the LRWP and Middlesex County planning are preparing “before” and “after” maps of the stream/waterway network in the Lower Raritan Watershed.
- d. “Windows of Understanding”: The LRWP will again participate in this Martin Luther King Day / Black History Day program sponsored by the New Brunswick Arts Commission. We have been paired with Perth Amboy artist Olga Mercedes Bautista of Perth Amboy on a public arts project / installation.
- e. South River clean-up, March 16: The LRWP is working with the South River Shade Tree Commission to plan for a clean-up of the South River floodplain.
- f. #lookfortheriver frames project: See 11c above.
- g. Highland Park Mill Brook multi-site cleanup, May 19: The LRWP is working with A multi-site cleanup in the Mill Brook of Highland Park will take place during May. The exact date (either May 12 or May 19) will be announced.
- h. NOAA Resilience / Green Infrastructure Workshop, Part II: The LRWP and Middlesex County Planning are working with NOAA to shape a spring/summer 2019 workshop to include site visits and in-depth work on GI projects with expert assistance.
- i. Bioblitz 2019: The LRWP, New Brunswick and North Brunswick Environmental Commissions, Middlesex County Extension and Elmwood Cemetery are planning a pilot Bioblitz for 2019. Our first planning meeting is September 18.

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- j. Ganesh Chaturthi Festival: The LRWP and the Raritan Valley Sierra Club are planning to develop a strategy to address the issue of religious icon abandonment in the Raritan River. This is an illegal practice, and is harmful to our waterways. The LRWP has developed a blog post on the issue, and has initiated conversation with members of the Hindu community.
 - k. Arbor Day Planting / Pollinator Garden Build: The LRWP, New Brunswick Environmental Commission, New Jersey Association of Landscape Architects and Rutgers Landscape Architecture Club are developing a plan for a revamped pollinator garden in Buccleuch Park. We have identified funding streams to assist with plant purchases and installation.
 - l. “Day Without Water” 2019: We wish to partner with other watershed groups and organizations to advance environmental agendas. For further discussion.
 - m. theTABLE 2019: the LRWP, coLAB Arts, Elijah’s Promise, New Brunswick Community Food Alliance and New Brunswick Tomorrow are planning two community events for 2019 to include a shared meal and discussion of soils and soil health in New Brunswick and the larger watershed. This will include discussion of impervious cover concerns and soil remediation.
- IV. Partner Updates and Community Discussion
- a. Proposed development at Hidden Oak Woods in East Brunswick. Rich Walling with Preserve East Brunswick Pine Barrens Coalition provides information on the proposals to develop Hidden Oak Woods at Tices Lane and Harts Lane in East Brunswick. The proposed project consists of 275 apartments, as well as parking for 591 cars. Opponents of this proposal want to save this open land for habitat conservation and wetland preservation. There are concerns that the development would increase automobile congestion and consequently fossil fuel pollution. Upcoming meetings to discuss are scheduled for September 26, 8pm and October 17, 8PM at East Brunswick Municipal Building.
- V. Special Presentation by Tobiah Horton, Rutgers Cooperative Extension: “Lyell’s Brook Recreated: A Green Infrastructure Corridor to the Raritan River”

Professor Horton distributed a detailed overview of the concept proposal, developed in partnership coLAB, Rutgers and LRWP, which outlines ways to connect the neighborhoods of downtown New Brunswick (including the Roosevelt School and New Brunswick Free Public

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Library) to the Raritan River. The goal is to create a new pathway and restore green space between our downtown core and the Raritan River following the original course of Lyell's Brook.

After 200 years of environmentally destructive practices including copper mining and tanning, green infrastructure corridors will be created in order to provide stormwater management, and safe public access to the Raritan. The proposal envisions a green pathway that addresses the needs and interests of the members of the local community.

Sub-projects would include crossings at the Roosevelt school, Neilson Street, and George Street. At the Willow Grove Cemetery there would be historic restoration, as well as provisions for green infrastructure and pathways. The proposal includes a gateway to the New Street Overpass to Boyd Park, and suggests that playgrounds based on water themes be constructed.

If the concept plan were to be implemented, the LRWP would use the space to expand on-going enrichment programs for local youths to provide them with opportunities for natural history and nature exploration, as well as a chance to learn about the environmental significance of watersheds. The LRWP and Partners have created for public school students and their staff a curriculum in the arts and sciences about the Raritan River Corridor. In addition, educators and instructors will be able to engage members of all age groups about the environmental benefits of the Lyell's Brook Corridor with a multi-discipline approach using civics, culture, history, and urban design.

Project partners have met with many local entities who are supportive of this project, including Mayor Cahill's office, the New Brunswick City Center, the New Brunswick Cultural Center, DeVCo, the City of New Brunswick, the City of New Brunswick Environmental Commission, the City of New Brunswick Parks & Gardens Commission, DevCo and Middlesex County Planning.

A DRAFT copy of the concept proposal will be posted on the LRWP website.

VI. Adjourn

NO MEETING IN OCTOBER

NEXT MEETING: November 19, 10-noon Middlesex County Office of Planning. 75 Bayard Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901.

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