



Meeting Minutes
June 17, 2019
General Meeting

In attendance: Bill Schultz, Raritan Riverkeeper; Johnny Quispe, LRWP Board; Peter Lemish, Piscataway; Von Scully, Watershed Ambassadors; Alex Zakrewsky, Middlesex County; Nick Tufaro, Middlesex County; Howard Swerdloff, New Brunswick Environmental Commission; Dan Swern, coLAB Arts; Doriann Kerber, Milltown Council; Roma Patel, Middlesex County; Jessica Alvarez, Middlesex County; Heather Fenyk, LRWP

I. Project Updates

A. NJDEP Coastal Resiliency Grant (Nick Tufaro)

Grant will kick-off in January 2019. Waiting for NJDEP to choose the design planning teams. General overview of what the resiliency grant is about at the CRS workshop on Friday June 21 at the Middlesex County Fire Academy in Sayreville. NJDEP, Nature Conservancy, FEMA, Woodbridge Township will present.

B. NFWF South River Ecosystem Restoration & Flood Resiliency Enhancement Project (Johnny Quispe)

Rutgers University, Princeton Hydro, South River, Sayreville, LRWP submitted pre-proposal for project preliminary design and site assessment for South River and Washington Canal to look at ways to use traditional design approaches to create wetlands where there are mudflats, scouring and erosion of the shoreline, and open water. We were invited to put in a full proposal for wetlands restoration/living shoreline work. \$250,000 request. 18 month turn around for the project. September kick-off, will need design concept for 180 acres. Grant deadline July 27. Initial grant to get to 60% design. Idea is to go after \$ the following year for design completion.

Riverkeeper Bill Schultz also suggests looking at Natural Resource Damage (NRD) claims money to complete the project. NRD has open source for all claims.

C. Rutgers Studio Spring 2019 - South River: Flooding, Neighborhood Change, Resilience, and Health (Heather Fenyk)

Augmenting the Coastal Resiliency grant work and the proposed South River Ecosystem Restoration project, the LRWP will partner with the Bloustein School, South River Green Team and South River Community Garden to run a Spring 2019 studio

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This planning studio will consider Community Development in the context of riverine/coastal flooding and floodplain buyouts prompted by Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Special attention will be given to South River's Census Tract 68, home to a low socio-economic status immigrant community with a life expectancy well lower than the national average. Residents in Census Tract 68 have a four-year lower life expectancy than in neighboring tracts in South River, and the lowest in Middlesex County.

D. coLAB Arts Public Art opportunities (Dan Swern)

Mr. Swern provided a status update of the frames sculptural installations, informing us that the City of New Brunswick plans to pour the footing for our Boyd Park sculpture in late summer.

Another upcoming project is a new mural in Boyd Park on the wall that overlooks Route 18. The intent is for the artwork to focus on City's connection to the river, highlighting stories of subsistence and recreational fisherman, people with direct contact with the river. CoLAB is currently working on an archive of oral histories of the River. Looking for people to share their stories. Want 5-10 of these. Trying to complete the histories this Summer.

II. Presentation by New Jersey Americorps Watershed Ambassador Von Scully on "Visual Habitat and Macroinvertebrate Assessments for WMA9"

A. Mr. Scully provided background on the WA program, specifically its focus on environmental education and stewardship specific to the health of the local waterways. New Jersey's Watershed Ambassadors conduct two types of water quality assessments: visual and biological.

B. Von's assessment of WMA9 included several sites of concern

1. Raritan River Tributary running through Bound Brook Cemetery. Maintained lawn surrounds this tributary, also gas pipeline, unmarked pipes. Bedrock and sediment. Feeds under canal and into the river. Biological assessment - could not collect enough macros. Question: Does this go under the canal and dump out under the towpath? If conduit is blocked from sediment, the impact will be to the canal. Schultz may see a chance to get state funding if we can show the Canal is impacted.

2. Stony Brook at West End Avenue in Plainfield. Major issues: erosion, no riparian zone on either side. A lot of immediate need is for vegetation. Lots of sediment. Downstream there is no cobble, no habitat, flat, shallow, gravel and bedrock. A lot of dumping and tires. Water is clear - sediment probably comes from flash storm events.

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3. Cedar Brook, near South Plainfield High School. This runs through an enormous open park with mowed lawns on both sides. Lots of invasive grasses. Very heavy sediment. Heavily channelized. Ideas for high school student involvement: restore riparian area/tree planting. Comment: Downstream it is channelized in concrete until it opens up into Spring Lake, former Superfund site.

4. Cedar Brook, at Cedar Brook Park. This waterway is hannelized with old brick. No riparian area except mowed lawn and Japanese knotweed.

5. Milford Brook, this stream runs through private land. Sediment is the biggest issue. It is supposed to be rocky bottom, but sediment is too deep. There were riffles, but very few macros. Looked like new sediment.

Main considerations for all WMA9 sites: erosion and sediment dumping are two major trends. Streams are becoming low gradient.

III. "Set the Table" - providing input into the Middlesex County Comprehensive Master Plan. Series of questions, guided by Roma Patel and Jessica Alvarez.

IV. Next meeting: July 15, 10am-1pm. Green Infrastructure field trip led by Michele Bakacs (Middlesex County Extension) and Rutgers graduate student Kate Douthat. Jamesburg/Helmetta. We have secured two vans that can accommodate 9 people each. Space is limited!

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