Sustainable Raritan River Collaborative

RUTGERS THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

Sustainable Raritan River Initiative[1]
Action Plan ☑Checklist

1.0 Increase Awareness and Use of River Access Points and Trails

☐ 1.1 Produce a Raritan River Trail Guide to the Lower Raritan with map and information for boaters, hikers and bikers and include historic and other significant sites along river with information about sites.

☐ 1.2 Promote use through an interactive webpage showing access points and trails, with information about canoe and kayak rentals.

☐ 1.3 Arrange tours to familiarize residents and regional leaders with the benefits of the River

☑ 1.4 Plan and implement river-oriented events such as the Raritan River Fall Float, and promote the River via local festivals and contests

2.0 Upgrade Current River Access Points and Develop a Plan for Future Recreational Uses

☐ 2.1 Improve signage to/from access points and trails, and at access points. Install safety signage on or near water regarding obstructions, fishing, swimming advisories. Identify primary needs and plan for investment in access points.

☐ 2.2 Improve/upgrade accessibility to launch sites and walking trails and add amenities to current access points (parking, restrooms, tables, etc.). Identify logical and needed sites for new boat launches and canoe/kayak access.

☐ 2.3 Encourage commercial support and investment. Local businesses can promote entertainment and enjoyment along River and also invest in businesses that promote the river, such as riverfront restaurants or boat rentals.

[1]Presented by the Raritan River Collaborative: The American Littoral Society, Bayshore Recycling, The Conservation Foundation, The Conserve Wildlife Foundation, Edison Wetlands Association, Lawrence Brook Watershed Partnership, Middlesex County, Middlesex Water Company, National Center for Neighborhood and Brownfield Redevelopment, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, New Jersey Audubon Society, New Jersey Water Supply Authority, New York/New Jersey Baykeeper, NJ Association of Environmental Commissions, NJ Department of Environmental Protection, NJ Water Resources Research Institute, PNC Bank, PSEG, Raritan Riverkeeper, Regional Planning Association, Rutgers E. J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Rutgers Environmental Research Center, Rutgers Institute of Marine and Coastal Sciences, Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Somerset County, South Branch Watershed Association, Stony Brook - Millstone Watershed Association, The Mushett Family Foundation, The Trust for Public Land, United States Geological Survey, and the Upper Raritan Watershed Association.

- ☐ 2.4 Assess current land uses along the Raritan and determine future development and preservation goals. Develop a regional coordinated plan for the recreational use of the Raritan River Corridor. Identify logical and needed sites for new boat launches and canoe/kayak access. Identify areas for trail development and investigate acquisition or easement needs and alternatives.
- ☐ 2.5 Assemble local open space plans and proposals for expanded greenways or trails. Consider improving access from D and R Canal towpath. Investigate acquisition or easement needs and alternatives. Develop educational materials on benefits of greenways and river trails.

3.0 Protect and Preserve Habitat and Biodiversity in Our River Ecosystem

- ☐ 3.1 Assemble a team of municipal and county experts to coordinate development of a 'Regional' approach to Raritan River Basin Master Planning.
- ☐ 3.2 Involve municipal and county governments, Rutgers University, and watershed groups who support stewardship of Raritan River resources, as well as planners, and NGOs who are knowledgeable about the critical habitats in the Basin.
- ☐ 3.3 Raise Public Awareness of the Raritan Basin Natural Resources. Integrating public access opportunities with stewardship awareness and training benefits both initiatives.
- ☐ 3.4 A series of public access/stewardship events needs to be developed and implemented on a sustainable basis. Raising awareness of the importance of habitat ecological functions and values is crucial to obtaining support for stewardship, and multiple media that can reach municipal residents should be employed. Newsletters, web sites, and local access cable channels can 'showcase' species and habitats and provide residents with information to protect their natural resources.
- ☐ 3.5 Complete Municipal Environnemental Resource Inventories. Identify and 'ground-truth' critical habitat based on collected data. Each municipality in the basin needs to complete a thorough ERI. ANJEC is a potential source of partial funding for this task.
- ☐ 3.6 Engage in the Stakeholder Support Process. Partner with ANJEC to conduct workshops for municipal and county Environmental Commissioners could disseminate habitat information and BMPs to the local communities
- ☐ 3.7 Develop a Land Acquisition Funding Plan. Identify critical habitat parcels that remain unprotected and develop strategies to fund the permanent protection of these lands. Integrate this activity with existing NGO land preservation and stewardship activities that are currently ongoing in the Raritan River Basin.

4.0 Adopt the 3Rs: Restore, Rehabilitate & Regenerate

- ☐ 4.1 Securing volunteers to verify the status of critical habitats. Using the identified parcels in need of remediation/protection, organize volunteers to verify the accuracy of the data/assumptions based on actual site conditions.
- ☐ 4.1 Coordinate the efforts of the watershed NGOs and house the field data in an online database for use by local managers and planners.

☐ 4.2 Assemble a comprehensive habitat Rehabilitation Plan. Based on actual on-site conditions, develop a basin-wide plan to rehabilitate preserved and/or critical habitat parcels. Identify funds to conduct rehabilitation efforts.

☐ 4.3 Rehabilitation Evaluation Criteria. Develop measurable success criteria and long-term monitoring plans to ensure accurate evaluation of rehabilitation strategies through outreach to local and county governments throughout the watershed. Post outcomes of rehabilitation initiatives (both positive and negative) on the Sustainable Raritan web site and on local web sites.

☐ 4.4 Coordinate Stewardship Activities with the Hudson River Estuary Comprehensive Restoration Plan (HRE CRP). Access this data and information to identify viable restoration sites and potential restoration funding sources for the estuarine portion of the Raritan River watershed.

5.0 Maintain and Manage Preserved Open Spaces

☐ 5.1 Require a site management and maintenance funding plan for Green Acres and Open Space funding support.

☐ 5.2 Amend the state, county, and municipal requirements for obtaining open space funding to include an on-going Site Management and Maintenance Plan (SMMP), including a detailed description of funding sources to support these activities and maintenance of preserved properties.

☐ 5.3 Integrate BMPs in the SWAP with both protected and critical wildlife habitats. Require adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for maintaining the various types of habitat as detailed in the State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP).

☐ 5.4 Complete the system wide maps and link the habitats identified on the maps with the appropriate BMPs in the SWAP. Make the completed maps available to local managers through the Rutgers Sustainable Raritan website.

☐ 5.5 Identify opportunities for Public-Private partnerships. Create partnerships that couple private monies with public maintenance. Secure endowments to maintain preserved land through the land acquisition transaction. NGOs play a key role in securing this long-term funding.

☐ 5.6 Develop model management and funding plans. Providing models of site management plans appropriate for critical habitat types that include estimated costs. Provide these to local managers to aid with acquisition and/or site restoration project. Post model plans on the Sustainable Raritan web site.

6.0 Remediate Contaminated Sites

☐ 6.1 Provide Meaningful and Useful Data on the Full Extent of Contaminated Sites in the Raritan basin. Through the Sustainable Raritan River website, provide GIS maps and GIS data layers to regional agencies and develop data layers where needed.

- ☐ 6.2 Foster use of geographic information systems by regional government agencies. Encourage local links to maps at the Sustainable Raritan River website.
- ☐ 6.3 Encourage and promote the remediation and reuse of contaminated sites. Work with municipalities and NGOs in the region to expedite remediation and sustainable reuse plans for Superfund sites and other brownfield sites in the region. Encourage enhancements of ongoing regulatory programs.
- ☐ 6.4 Work with EPA and NJDEP to publicize data and to prioritize cleanups closest to the Raritan River and establish protocols for public assessment of agency data. Specifically assemble a comprehensive report on current sediment data on Raritan area sites. Identify partners to develop a review protocol for NJDEP groundwater data files to establish where information on contaminants is insufficient and to estimate the potential contribution from unremediated sites, including any information regarding contributions to sediments in the river.
- ☐ 6.5 Promote creation of contaminated site database through municipal websites. Master lists of contaminated site can foster remediation and reuse both for sustainable economic redevelopment and for open space greenfields.

7.0 Prevent Future Pollution

- ☐ 7.1 Track and address local sources of non-point pollution. Work with colleagues at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS), Rutgers Cooperative Extension, the NJ Water Supply Authority and other Collaborator organizations to promote stormwater reduction and to promote water stewardship projects. Develop training protocols on how to review agency files and develop reports on contributions of point sources – any permitted industrial and stormwater discharges; existing industries, landfills, sewerage authorities, etc.
- ☐ 7.2 Address on-going discharges from unremediated contaminated sites. Work with regulatory agencies to ensure any ongoing discharges are addressed and that cleanups are moving forward in a thorough and timely manner.
- ☐ 7.3 Strengthen overall water quality and contamination tracking data through additional sampling and monitoring. Work with local educational institutions to monitor the River through the science curriculum and post data online.
- ☐ 7.4 Develop Best Remediation and Reuse Planning Practices for Municipalities. Identify best practices to manage contaminated properties and establish strategies to prioritize reuse as open space or sustainable development.
- ☐ 7.5 Promote Sustainability with regulated Raritan businesses. Work with NJDEP Compliance and Enforcement on compliance and settlements; encourage pollution prevention practices by regulated industries and zero-discharge stormwater practices. Encourage regional businesses to promote sustainability and work with local NGOs to adopt “River Friendly” practices
- ☐ 7.6 Promote Sustainable State and Green Buildings. Work with the Rutgers Center for Green Building on promoting zero-net energy infrastructure improvements and water conservation practices. Engage the Rutgers Sustainable State Institute to foster

remediation and pollution prevention related practices in their 'Sustainable Jersey' initiative.

☐ 7.7 Reduce Fertilizers and Pesticides. Work with municipalities to establish strategies to reduce contributions to the river from applications of fertilizers, local agriculture and general maintenance practices.

8.0 Significantly Reduce Stormwater Runoff

☐ 8.1 Educate local, county and State stakeholders on the need for Stormwater Utilities. Assemble a team of experts to deliver educational and outreach programming on stormwater utilities to stakeholders and the public in the pilot area. This will require assistance from individuals in local government, Rutgers University, and watershed groups who support the program and are knowledgeable about the pilot area, stormwater utilities, or both.

☐ 8.2 Develop a pilot program for the implementation of Stormwater Utilities. Identify a pilot area in the Raritan River Basin where a stormwater utility program could be formed and assess community stormwater needs. An ideal pilot area would be a municipality in which existing data related to their stormwater needs is easily gathered. Sources of this data include complaint records, stormwater and maintenance staff experience, previous studies, and field measurements. This information allows for the identification of problem areas for priority listing.

☐ 8.3 Engage in the Stakeholder Support Process. A stakeholder committee that includes public, commercial, governmental, and environmental groups or individuals affected by the program is vital to the implementation of the program. The stakeholder committee is facilitated to achieve consensus on the goals of the program, as well as each product of the community acceptance process. With the stakeholders, map out the rate structure for the pilot area, billing structures, economic analysis, credit assessments, collection methods, enforcement, and identifying sources of technical assistance.

☐ 8.4 Develop a Public Awareness and Acceptance Plan. Develop public educational materials that target specific groups which include elected officials, focus groups, and the news media. Develop a draft marketing plan and education outreach program including editorials for local papers, speaking at public events, and using the connections of University faculty and watershed groups to educate local officials and politicians on the benefits of stormwater utilities.

9.0 Promote restoration and protection plans to address local sub-watersheds (HUC-14)

☐ 9.1 Compile a list of completed and on-going restoration plans and implementation projects within the Raritan River Basin. Work with watershed NGOs and the Raritan Basin Alliance on educational and stewardship activities relating to the Raritan River Basin to attract resources and implement programs. A list of plans and projects can be found in the 2009 report "The State of the Raritan River: A Work in Progress."

- ☐ 9.2 Assemble a list of other identified watershed areas in need of a restoration or protection plan. The Raritan Basin Watershed Alliance has completed a Geographic Information System analysis and classified each HUC-14 as either healthy, under pressure, or in need of restoration based on a certain set of parameters. NJWSA has also previously identified HUC-14 areas in need of regional stormwater management plans. Compile and prioritize these identified areas.
- ☐ 9.3 Host technical workshops on the development of watershed restoration plans. Through Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, provide technical knowledge and skills to those interested in developing watershed restoration plans, through a series of workshops or presentations.
- ☐ 9.4 Identify priority implementation projects from all plans that can be implemented by stakeholder groups. Organize groups of community volunteers and stakeholders to complete necessary plans.

10.0 Balance Redevelopment to Sustain Ecological Values in the Raritan River Watershed

- ☐ 10.1 Establish an Organizational Structure. Establish an organizational structure to serve as a clearing house which will disseminate information to a diverse community of stakeholders, to guide and facilitate their collaboration and to coordinate various funding sources that will support the balancing effort.
- ☐ 10.2 Conduct Research on Costs and Benefits. Research costs and benefits of sustainable practices to identify and support successful sustainable practices and the incorporation of environmental amenities/restoration as part of development and business activity on the river.
- ☐ 10.3 Develop Successful Balanced/Sustainable Models. Identify local, state or national examples of projects to serve as models for the basin.
- ☐ 10.4 Focus on Education and Outreach. Throughout this action plan calls on the Collaborative to educate and conduct outreach. Develop a communications strategy to disseminate information on the research and model projects to government, NGO, business community stakeholders and the general public.
- ☐ 10.5 Initiate a Regional Approach with Local Project Area. Develop a regional vision and approach that accounts for differences in the upper and lower river areas, then step down the planning effort to fit with local objectives
- ☐ 10.6 Identify Opportunities for Policy and Regulatory Support. Seek opportunities to propose new or amended policy and regulatory provisions that support balanced redevelopment and restoration.

Full Reports:

Public Access: http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/Public_Access.pdf
Stewardship: http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/Raritan_Stewardship.pdf
Remediation: http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/Remediation.pdf
Water: http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/Water.pdf

Balance: http://www.blueraritan.org/agenda/Balance.pdf