Another Meadowlands Scam

Gas-powered plant threatens Meadowlands, would only benefit NYC

By Michele Langa and Caitlin Doran

Hackensack Riverkeeper, in partnership with Food & Water Watch, Sierra Club NJ, and the Borough of Ridgefield, held its first community information meeting on Wednesday, June 27, to oppose, in the strongest possible terms, a proposal to build a gas fired powerplant in the Meadowlands.

A crowd of 143 people – with a strong showing from Hudson and Bergen residents alike – attended the meeting at the Ridgefield Community Center. While the proposed North Bergen Liberty Generating Project (NBLG) is proposed to be built in the Township of North Bergen, it would sit on the border with the Borough of Ridgefield, directly impacting Ridgefield residents. At the meeting, we learned that the Ridgefield Municipal Council had proactively passed the first of hopefully many resolutions opposing the power plant; and we urge residents in Hudson and East Bergen Counties to reach out to their elected officials to encourage them to do the same.

Such resolutions will come at a crucial time, as the North Bergen Liberty Generating Project – announced in April 2018 – has already been approved for key New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) permits. The project stands in direct opposition to Governor Murphy’s renewable energy goal of 100% renewable by 2050, and sentences the state to another thirty plus years of gas pipeline infrastructure, making it more difficult to divest from fossil fuel energy sources in the future. It would provide NO benefit to the residents of NJ, and yet it appears to be coasting through the DEP permitting process.

The NBLG project is proposed for a 17-acre parcel of land along Bellman’s and Wolf Creeks in North Bergen, NJ. If built, the site would house a 1,200 megawatt electric generating plant with two 312-foot tall exhaust stacks, two combustion turbine generator sets, a 3.5 million gallon underground

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A triple threat looms large over our watershed. It has been a long time since we have had to mobilize in the face of proposed threats to our beloved Hackensack River, but spurred on by anti-environmental policies being foisted upon the nation, polluters are attempting to move us back to the worst of the 20th Century.

First it was the Williams Corporation applying for permits to increase the capacity of compression facilities right next to the Oradell Reservoir; to also install a half-mile long loop at their facility in Carlstadt in the heart of the Meadowlands which would require a forty foot wide trench through protected wetlands just north of the Sports Complex. All this because the frackers in Pennsylvania and elsewhere are pulling so much gas out of the shale deposits, they are taxing Williams’ capacity to store the additional gas.

Next came the proposal by Diamond Generating to build a 1,200 Megawatt gas fired power plant in North Bergen along Bellman’s Creek the sole purpose of which is to provide electricity to the NY grid with zero energy benefit to New Jersey. New Jersey elected Phil Murphy in part because of his campaign promise to rejoin the Regional Green House Gas initiative and to switch New Jersey over to renewable energy. But just like in the early days of Hackensack Riverkeeper, the NJDEP Division of Land Use has already issued a half-dozen permits, blowing wind into the polluters sails and disregarding the Governor’s stated goals regarding renewables. Also, never forget that permits are currency! Every permit adds financial value to the land and polluters have always leveraged their permits in hand to market their ideas to other agencies, such as the Army Corps of Engineers, EPA, and FERC.

As if this wasn’t enough, the Army Corps recently unveiled the most potentially devastating proposal yet. They are recommending that we build tidal barriers across the mouth of the NY NJ Harbor Estuary with additional barriers at the mouths of the Hackensack and Passaic Rivers. Our rivers and the entire estuary have been recovering from centuries of abuse. The Hackensack is once again home

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NB Generating Project  
Continued from page 1

diesel tank, and a new connection to Williams-Transco’s natural gas pipeline.

The proposed plant site is about one mile southeast of the existing PSEG Bergen Generating Station. However, unlike the Bergen Generating Station, NBLG will be polluting NJ’s already compromised air in order to send electricity to power New York City alone. Also, NBLG could generate nearly 2.4 million metric tons of carbon dioxide a year in an area that already fails to meet national Clean Air Act quality standards. The pollutants emitted would include heavy metals and chemicals like ammonia and nitrogen oxide. In addition, steam released through cooling towers adds lead, algacides, fungicides, and volatile organic compounds to the atmosphere that eventually settle on the surrounding land and water.

The project would place our waterways at risk, especially the sensitive wetlands of the Meadowlands. The proposed project site ranges from three feet to just twenty feet above sea level and is adjacent to a wetland area at significant risk from sea level rise. The construction needed to build the plant adds unnecessary risks to the adjacent waterways from soil compaction, stormwater runoff, possible diesel tank failure, and increased impervious surface. It also requires two stormwater outfalls to the adjacent creeks and would require Bergen County Utilities Authority (BCUA) infrastructure, some of which has not yet been constructed. The project would add over eight million gallons of wastewater a day to the already taxed sewer system.

Additionally, the site is adjacent to a CSX railway, placing the facility within yards of potential disaster should a freight accident occur, particularly if the incident involves a train carrying Bakken Crude oil. Oil train derailments can ignite (and have ignited) massive explosions and fires, pollute waterways, and threaten lives, health, property, land, and entire ecosystems. Storing over three million gallons of diesel fuel adjacent to this railway exponentially increases this risk.

It would provide NO benefit to the residents of NJ, and yet it appears to be coasting through the DEP permitting process.”

NYC will be within 500 megawatts of full replacement energy through existing measures once Indian Point goes offline in 2021. Another claim by proponents of this project is that it will be economically beneficial to New Jersey. What many don’t realize, under an NJ law exempting energy utility facilities, the Liberty Generating Station would only pay about 10% in property tax. This means, instead of $500 million a year for the plant ($1.5 billion proposal), North Bergen would only see $5 million. And, New Jersey will be stuck with the entire environmental impact risk.

Help us fight this new threat to the Meadowlands and our communities. You can sign the petition to stop the Meadowlands Power Plant by texting “Meadowlands” to the number 69866, or by visiting http://bit.ly/DontGasTheMeadowlands. And, we urge you to attend your municipal council meeting and ask your council and mayor to pass a resolution opposing the NBLG Project. Also, write, call and visit your county, state and federal representatives. Finally, stay informed by signing up for email updates at www.HackensackRiverkeeper.org.

Meadowlands Rebuild by Design  
Summer Update

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Meadowlands Rebuild by Design project has been released. A DEIS is required by the National Environmental Policy Act for major federal actions that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment. The environmental review of the project includes evaluating its purpose and need, project alternatives, and the environmental consequences. Agencies are reviewing the comments received during the public comment period that ended in July 2018, and will publish responses along with the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).
Turning Carbon to Cash

Marshlands Can Be Protected and Generate Revenue

By Francisco Artigas

Riding the train across the Meadowlands I can see the extensive marshlands, fields of tall grasses and water in the midst of the highly developed metropolitan area surrounding the lower Hackensack River. It is truly a great sight to see these marshes, which were once landfills, reclaimed and revitalized, thanks in large part to the Clean Water Act of 1972.

However, we are not in the clear when it comes to wetlands preservation and cannot be complacent. The Meadowlands’ proximity to New York City continues to exert great pressure from the business community to develop these open lands. For example, not long ago a single acre of undeveloped marshland in the Meadowlands had a market value of $250,000. Historically, many projects looking to make the Meadowlands a revenue source, such as farming, diking, dumping and development, have failed.

But there is also good news. Ironically, the threat of global warming, with its excess greenhouse gases, has led to emerging carbon markets that may provide a unique opportunity for the marshlands to generate revenues just by growing wild.

There are basically five major carbon pools on earth: the atmosphere, oceans, forests, fossil fuels and soil. The greatest pool of carbon is found buried in the soil. Through deforestation and extraction, and burning of fossil fuels that power our economy, we have upset the natural balance of these carbon pools.

As a result, the concentration of CO2 in the atmosphere has now surpassed 400 ppm, which is more than a 30 percent increase from 310 ppm in 1961. We are basically taking carbon that used to be buried and putting it in the air, and unless we stop or do something to contain this increase we are headed for big trouble.

Before a young graduate student from Illinois developed an instrument to measure carbon dioxide from the atmosphere the prevailing belief was that CO2 concentrations in the atmosphere varied around the globe according to where air masses originated. This changed in the 1960s when Charles Keeling was able to demonstrate that CO2 concentration in the atmosphere have strong seasonal variation but are essentially the same everywhere in our atmosphere, around 310 ppm in 1956.

In 1957, Keeling witnessed nature withdrawing CO2 from the air during the summer and returning it to the atmosphere each year. This was the first time that we recorded our planet functioning as a super organism. Keeling established the first worldwide CO2 concentration baseline that we all use today to assess global warming and climate change. In 1961, in what became known as the “Keeling Curve,” he showed unequivocally that carbon dioxide levels were rising steadily.

Almost all (97-98 percent) actively publishing climate researchers support mainstream views that the excess CO2 in the atmosphere is manmade and driving climate change. A small minority (2-3 percent) do not believe climate change is happening. Common sense would say that if you ask 10 doctors for a second opinion and 9 out of 10 tell you that you are sick, then most likely you are sick.

As good inventive Americans we would like to find a magic bullet to solve the problem of excess greenhouse gas in the atmosphere. We are looking to develop drawdown technologies that pull greenhouse gases out of the atmosphere and put them back in the soil. We are also considering geo-engineering options to tackle climate change directly by limiting the amount of sunlight reaching the planet’s surface.

However, there is little doubt in my mind that in the long term we will need to involve financial markets to regulate carbon emissions. Emitting carbon has a cost. Through a carbon credit system people who emit carbon pay for this privilege and people who bury the carbon get paid for this service.

The key to a successful carbon credit system is the credit given for carbon removed from the atmosphere that is then buried for long periods of time (greater than 100 years). A planted forest will remove carbon dioxide as it builds its biomass. But if wood is burnt when the forest is harvested, most of the carbon returns to the atmosphere. In this case, the value of the carbon credit should be less, or not count at all, because of the short time period (less than 100 years) that carbon is actually removed from the atmosphere.

Up until 1997 we were not thinking about the ability of plants to remove and bury carbon from the atmosphere in the context of climate change. In fact, carbon sequestration was not even mentioned in the 1997 Kyoto protocols. We now know that tidal wetlands are some of the most effective plant communities in removing and burying carbon. Not only is the carbon sequestered by tidal wetlands buried, but...
in the absence of disturbances, carbon may remain buried for hundreds of years in the wetland peat.

With this new understanding, we know marshlands of the Meadowlands not only provide habitat that promotes biodiversity and protects against flooding but also provide the key ecological service of removing CO2 from the atmosphere and burying it for long periods of time in the sediments. These wetlands have been burying carbon for about 2,000 years, where it’s well stored in the 7-20 feet of peat under the marsh surface. It’s just a matter of time for a carbon market to mature and for marshlands to start generating carbon credits that can be sold in the open market.

Are we saying that wetlands are the magic bullet that will solve the problem of climate change? Not so fast. There may not be enough marshland acres on earth to cancel out our current manmade emissions. Before anything can be traded we need to know the actual sink strength of marshlands. In other words, how much carbon can 1 square meter of natural marshland bury in one year and for how long does the carbon remain buried? Having this information will be crucial for marshlands to be considered and play an effective role in the carbon credit market.

This is not a simple question to answer since not all the carbon from roots, stems and leaves that decay at the end of the growing season are buried in place in the marsh. Important amounts of carbon are lost to biological respiration in the form of carbon dioxide. There are also losses in the form of methane (CH4) and through lateral transport of stem and leaf fragments that float away with the tide.

We know that whatever carbon is buried in sediments represents the net carbon stored after all other forms of carbon have been subtracted by natural process. Measuring the remaining carbon in the soil (direct method) is the most reliable way to measure the rate of carbon burial in marshland sediments.

There are also indirect methods which use instrumentation to measure the amounts of carbon trapped by plants through photosynthesis and the carbon emissions from plants due to respiration. This alternative indirect method involves long term field measurements (multiple growing seasons) and instruments such as 3D anemometers, open path carbon dioxide sensors and data loggers that measure CO2 concentrations above the canopy up to 20 times per second (20Hz). In a perfect world the direct and indirect methods should give identical or very similar results.

Three years ago we set out to measure the carbon dioxide sink strength of New Jersey Meadowlands marshlands using both the direct and indirect methods. Our objective was to measure the carbon dioxide sink strength and carbon holding time by marshlands. In other words, to find out the amount of carbon that is sequestered by marsh plants and the amount of time this carbon remains buried after it is captured through photosynthesis.

We collected sediment samples using a Russian peat core that in some cases went down 22 feet into the peat. We dated the different depths of the cores using C14 and Cs 137 and measured carbon concentration at 5 centimeter intervals. Nearby, in a marshland near Secaucus High School, we set up an eddy covariance sampling station (indirect method) for an entire growing season that recorded the amount of carbon captured by the plants during the day and carbon respired (emitted) by the plants during the night. After three years of research we produced some solid numbers describing the amount of carbon captured and its residence time in the sediments.

Our study showed that when a marsh plant dies at the end of the growing season 78 percent of its carbon is lost to natural processes such as emissions of CO2 and CH4 or as fine plant particulates that float way with the tide. The remaining 22 percent of the carbon is buried in place. According to our study using the direct method, the extent of the burial was 191 grams of carbon per square meter of marsh per year.

The extent of the burial calculated by the indirect method was 213 grams of carbon per square meter of marsh per year. As expected, both methods arrived at similar values. Our study also showed that of the total carbon buried (i.e. ~200 grams per meter square/yr/), 78 percent remained buried after 130 years and more than 50 percent remained buried after 600 years.

One acre of marshland in the Meadowlands is able to bury about 800 kilos of carbon per acre per year and most of this carbon remains buried after 130 years. The price of a carbon credits today is not high (~ $15 a ton of CO2) but it will most likely only go up. There are 5,933 acres of marshlands in the Meadowlands that in today’s carbon market would earn $71, 200 a year. It may be that for the first time we may be able to extract revenue from the marshlands not by farming, developing or dumping in them, but by just letting the marshes grow wild.

Dr. Francisco Artigas is Director of the Meadowlands Environmental Research Institute (MERI).
Real Science for Real People

One Word – Are you Listening? PLASTICS!¹

By Dr. Beth Ravit

In the span of one human lifetime, plastic polymers - man-made substances - have become an indispensable component of human society, while at the same time, changing the planet’s environment. The benefits of plastic and its infinite uses appear to be growing exponentially, while the environmental ramifications of incorporating these relatively inert substances into all facets of daily life have now been called into question.

My students, working in collaboration with NYNJ Baykeeper, spent the last three summers collecting water samples from freshwater rivers in New Jersey and analyzing these samples to see if they contained microplastics – pieces of plastic 5 millimeters (size of a grain of rice) or smaller.

One of the systems we sampled was the Passaic River from Berkeley Heights upstream to Riverfront Park in Newark, a reach that includes sites above and below the Dundee Dam and the Great Falls.

Our working hypothesis predicted the densities of microplastics would increase the closer we got to Newark Bay, and we thought (based on scientific literature) that the predominant form of this microscopic plastic would be from microbeads added to personal care products, but we were wrong. It turns out that the suburban communities upriver were where the highest densities were found, especially under dry weather conditions when it had not rained for a number of days (Fig. 1).

However, after a rainstorm we saw microplastics collecting downriver in Lyndhurst, probably washing downstream, carried by stormwater runoff (Fig. 2).

Scientists have known about the detrimental effects of plastics in the oceans for almost three decades. Now we are finding that plastic pollution is actually much closer to home, potentially in fresh drinking water sources. The densities we observed upriver in the Passaic were actually higher than microplastic densities observed in the NY/NJ Harbor study conducted by Baykeeper in 2015.

We were also wrong about the types of microplastic we would find. The highest number of microplastics (84%) came from fragments broken from larger plastics, items, line, film, or Styrofoam particles – all the result of how we...
are currently disposing of plastic waste products, often after a single use (Fig. 3).

The plastic itself may be only part of the pollution story. We found over 300 organic compounds that were attached to the microplastic substrates. These compounds varied by location, but because they are attached to the plastic, they can be carried downstream with the plastic. However, in the Passaic River, it looks like the organic compounds may be collecting upstream behind the Dundee Dam because they appear to be lower in the samples downriver below Elmwood Park. The organic material associated with the plastic particles appears to be a combination of natural products, laboratory compounds used in manufacturing process, some pharmaceutical compounds and cosmetic additives.

It is critical that we begin to change our disposable lifestyles that use and toss plastic products into the garbage assuming they will eventually go away. Microbead additives to personal care products have now been banned by both Federal and State laws and the phase in of this prohibition is scheduled to be completed this year (2018). However, continued consumption of single use plastics (bags, straws, bottled water) is particularly damaging – a few minutes of use followed by an indeterminate lifespan in the environment!

The reason we utilize plastic so much is because it is indestructible. Unfortunately, this characteristic is what is causing plastic to accumulate in our environment – and it is not going away. If enough people adopt simple lifestyle changes (reusable bags for groceries, water bottles rather than bottled water, paper instead of plastic straws, support for bottle bills and laws that ban plastic bags) we can begin to diminish the unnecessary plastic waste. We also need to focus chemical engineering skills on developing uses for plastics so recycling makes economic sense. As landfills are filled up and closed, and other countries refuse to continue to accept our waste, we must transition plastic from an environmental problem to a reusable resource – because it is not going to go away in anyone’s lifetime.

I Mr. Robinson. The Graduate. 1967.
Engaging Youth as Environmental Stewards

Junior Stewards put the FUN into watershed awareness!

By Jodi Jamieson and Caitlin Doran

Engaging youth in outdoor education has so many benefits for both them and the community. In addition to being fun and improving school performance, outdoor learning helps students develop a sense of place and adopt positive civic attitudes and behaviors. Now more than ever, people are disconnected from the natural world and the resources needed to sustain life on our planet, especially in our urban areas. As populations grow and once wild areas become overdeveloped, we seem to become more removed from the natural world and see it as something to be controlled and manipulated. Before we can grow in a sustainable way, we must take the time to understand our ecosystems and our place in them. And as we realize how interconnected the natural world and our communities are, we become better stewards of our environment.

Here at Riverkeeper, we believe that creating opportunities where kids get outside and explore hands-on learning leads to better stewardship of our resources. This was the inspiration for our brand new Junior Stewardship program; and we were delighted to host seventh grade students from Hackensack Middle School. We created a program that offered plenty of outdoor learning opportunities and hands on activities that would build on students’ classroom knowledge and allow them to explore their own community. EarthFest Overpeck was just one of those opportunities.

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EarthFest Overpeck:
Engaging Families and Community

Despite an ominous weather forecast, May 20th turned out to be a stellar day for our 5th annual EarthFest Overpeck. And this was a special year for Hackensack Riverkeeper because our Junior Stewards helped run the festival. Festival attendance continues to grow, and this year was no exception, with approximately 4,000 children and adults in attendance. Especially noticeable was the increase in children’s activities. We couldn’t have done it without the Junior Stewards. They shared their watershed knowledge with festival goers and assisted children with the various activities. Children learned about our planet’s water cycle at the Amazing Journey course; created a piece of Gyotaku (the Japanese art of cap-
uring marine animal images); performed water quality tests using water from Overpeck Creek and real chemistry equipment; and participated in a fishing derby, run by Trout Unlimited and Ramsey Outdoor. Throughout the day the Junior Stewards kept the games area rocking! In addition to the children’s activity area, there were performances by the Mad Scientist, Blue Plate Special, Jamie the Dinosaur Troubadour, and Center for Modern Dance.

We want to thank to all the performers, presenters, vendors, and a special thanks to our fishing derby partners. EarthFest Overpeck is brought to you in partnership with Bergen County Parks and supported by our sponsors: SUEZ, PSEG, Hackensack Meridian Health, Inserra Supermarkets, XChange at Secaucus Junction, Rockland Electric, Investors Bank, Samsung, Haftek Concrete Washout Systems, Westy Self Storage and Ramsey Outdoor Stores.

Recycled Regatta: Merging Stewardship, STEM, and FUN!

This year we kicked off EarthFest with some upcycled fun. The Recycled Regatta is a race where teams of all ages build boats out of recycled materials. This year’s regatta was a proud moment for the staff at HRI because our Junior Stewards had two entries make it to the finish line. Some entries, creative as they are, don’t even make it off the starting line!

The race is a hoot and engaging for the spectators as well. For the boat builders, the competition is a chance to flex math and science skills, as well as a positive team building experience. In addition to students, we’ve had engineers, literal rocket scientists, families, and scouts build boats.

This year proved to be a close competition between the Englewood Recreation Center and the Jr. Stewards. Nyheim Jones of Team NKGJ came in first, beating team HMS River Comets by mere seconds.

Nyheim Jones and Merle Simons of the Englewood Recreation are seasoned veterans of the Recycled Regatta. Their entries were both beautiful and showed an advance understanding of boat building. Also in attendance was Team Maker Bar, and we want to thank Jason Biegel for coming all the way from Hoboken to try and “float his boat.”

If you’re interested in entering next years Recycled Regatta, but feel a little intimidated, don’t be. Just keep an eye out for our fall workshop on how to get started.

Recycled Regatta Teams

1st Place & “Floating Van Gogh” Award
Team NKGJ piloted by Nyheim Jones, Englewood Recreation

2nd Place & “Engineering Marvel” Award
Team HMS River Comets piloted by Junior Stewards

3rd Place
Team HMS River Raft piloted by Junior Stewards

4th Place & “Prestigious Boating Award”
Team ERD3 aka “phat lady” piloted by Merle Simons, Englewood Recreation

“Leaky Bucket” Award
Team Maker Bar piloted by Jason Biegel, Maker Bar

Junior Stewards would like to thank all our partners, supporters and funders for making our first year with the program such a success.

Landsberger Foundation

Photo © Jonathan Green

Team HMS River Comets and their boat made from a 55 gallon pickle barrel and outriggers made of liter bottles.

Nyheim Jones taking the lead.

HRI mgr. Russ giving HMS team capt. D. Gallo last minute instructions.
Reservoir Paddle Series is Racing By
Reservoir Challenge and Lake DeForest in the books. Lake Tappan up next!

By Caitlin Doran

Each year, Hackensack Riverkeeper partners with SUEZ Water to bring recreation and enjoyment of our natural resources, specifically our drinking-water reservoirs, to the public. Days like Reservoir Challenge, Lake DeForest Day, and Lake Tappan Paddle Day are family-friendly, community-driven events, where we cheer on our friends and neighbors in spirited races and explore the upper reaches of our river system. They are truly mission-fulfilling days, whereby Hackensack Riverkeeper provides public access to this critical part of the watershed and reminds us that these bodies of water, while managed (expertly) by SUEZ Water, belong to the public. And, we all have a vested interest in keeping them pristine!

A combined two hundred and fifty people joined us at Reservoir Challenge and Lake DeForest Day in June. They were 5 and 10k racers, Corporate Cup competitors, mayors, town supervisors, longtime paddlers and first time paddlers! Inserra Supermarkets and SUEZ Water New York provided lunch, respectively, to feed the hungry crowds, and we had the support of several annual community partners to make these events great. Thank you, Hackensack Meridian Health, PSEG, Inserra Supermarkets, Orange and Rockland Electric, XChange at Secaucus Junction, Investors Bank, Samsung, Haftek Concrete Washout Systems, Westy’s Self Storage, and Ramsey Outdoor Stores.

Lake Tappan Paddle, our third event in the Reservoir Paddle Series, is set for Satur-
day, August 11, and is shaping up to be another great day for our communities to access their natural resources. Keep it tuned to www.respaddleseries.com, our dedicated website for all things Paddle Series, and we hope to see you at the lake! Let’s keep the momentum going!

Results on the following page.
## Reservoir Challenge Race Results

### FEMALE 5K

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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Holy Name Hospital (2)</td>
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### Mayors Race

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<tr>
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<td>Closter</td>
<td>Mayor John C. Glidden</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Westwood</td>
<td>Mayor John Birkner</td>
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### Supervisors Race

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Stony Point</td>
<td>Jim Monaghan &amp; Brendan Sullivan</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Ramapo</td>
<td>Luke Shedler &amp; Stephen Rodriguez</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Haverstraw</td>
<td>Howard Phillips &amp; Bob Masiello</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Orangetown</td>
<td>Chris Day &amp; Bob Hudson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Clarkstown</td>
<td>George Hoehmann &amp; Thomas Hoehmann</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you to our Reservoir Paddle Series sponsors.
World Series of Birding 2018: An Unexpected and Welcome Success

And in many ways, the finest example of partnership

By Hugh M. Carola

We didn’t exactly “get the band back together” but the three of us – Ray Duffy, Kerul Kassel and Yours Truly – did much better than we expected based on the wet, painfully slow start of our 2018 World Series of Birding. Fortunately, the worst of the rain and heavy weather hit central and south Jersey, leaving us with some pretty decent birding on May 12, in between the bands of rain.

Once again – and as has become customary – the first bird we listed was American Robin (in Cresskill at 4AM). Almost seventeen hours later at 8:45PM we called it quits after hearing nothing but raindrops on the shores of Kearny Marsh. For the record, the last species we listed was Common Nighthawk – flying over the trash transfer station in North Arlington.

All totaled, we listed 121 species. We finished eight short of our WSB team record, but after worrying we wouldn’t break one hundred, ending up with a “century plus a blackjack” was pretty darn good IMO. We got Cedar Waxwing & Black-crowned Night-heron back on the tally after missing them last year but missed Scarlet Tanager for the second year in a row. Other disappointing no-shows (no finds?) were Turkey Vulture and all three common owls.

In order of magnitude, the locations that provided our best results were: Lake Tappan and Oradell Reservoir in the upper watershed, where we listed the most warblers; DeKorte Park and Harrier Meadow in the Meadowlands, where we listed the most shorebirds; and Liberty State Park, where we got a solid list of species seen nowhere else that day.

As always, super kudos are in order to Ray and Kerul for their solid commitment and the stellar job they did to make our 2018 WSB a success. Each has near-encyclopedic knowledge of birds, their songs and calls; I, for one, am in awe of their talents and very thankful that they’ve chosen to put them in the service of Hackensack Riverkeeper’s mission. Big thanks are also in order to our longtime WSB sponsor ShopRite Supermarkets and our corporate partner Toyota of Hackensack, who loaned us a brand-new Highlander (with just eight miles on the odometer when I picked it up!). We also appreciate the assistance of SUEZ Water NJ and the NJ Sports & Exposition Authority for providing us access to some of the most productive bird habitats in our watershed region. And all of us greatly appreciate the hard work done by the NJ Audubon’s WSB team led by René Buccinna and Lillian Armstrong to make the day a success.

If you were wondering, we haven’t yet closed the financial book on the 2018 WSB so you can still help us reach the coveted $10,000 mark. Send a check for any amount ($121 has a nice ring to it) with “WSB” in the memo line or go to the Donate page on our website – where you can STILL make a WSB-earmarked donation w/ just a credit card and a click.
### Hackensack RiverCreepers • Tally: 121 species

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterfowl</th>
<th>Shorebirds</th>
<th>Birds of Prey</th>
<th>Songbirds</th>
<th>&quot;Big Three&quot; results:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Brant</td>
<td>Laughing Gull</td>
<td>House Wren</td>
<td>Marsh Wren</td>
<td>17 Warblers (+4 from 2017)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Canada Goose</td>
<td>Ring-billed Gull</td>
<td>Marsh Wren</td>
<td>Carolina Wren</td>
<td>11 Waterfowl (+1 from 2017)</td>
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<td>Mute Swan</td>
<td>Herring Gull</td>
<td>Blue-gray Gnatcatcher</td>
<td>Veery</td>
<td>11 Shorebirds (same as 2017)</td>
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<td>Gadwall</td>
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<td>American Robin</td>
<td>Gray Catbird</td>
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<td>American Black Duck</td>
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<td>Red-breasted Merganser</td>
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<td>Ruddy Duck</td>
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<td>House Sparrow</td>
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**Welcome back to the list:**
- Ring-necked Pheasant
- Little Blue Heron
- Least Tern
- Brown Thrasher

**Your 2018 Hackensack RiverCreepers are:**
- Ray Duffy
- Kerul Kassel
- Hugh Carola, captain

**Our Corporate Sponsor:**
- Shop Rite Supermarkets
- Suzanne Forbes, Environmental Affairs Manager

**Our Corporate Partner:**
- Toyota of Hackensack
- Mario Puentes, Sales Manager

**Next WSB: May 11, 2019**
Hackensack Watershed Field Notes

By Hugh M. Carola

Back in September and October 2018 we assisted colleagues from New Jersey Audubon with a survey of foraging herons within the NJ Meadowlands District. Captain Bill and I hosted NJAS biologist Meaghan Lyons on six survey trips aboard our boats. We surveyed the river from the Route 46 bridge in the north to the Route 7 bridge in the south; plus special focus on Berry’s Creek/Oritani Marsh in Lyndhurst/Rutherford, Sawmill Creek WMA in Lyndhurst/Kearny and the area adjacent Riverbend Marsh in Secaucus, NJ.

Check the chart below for Great Egret (GREG), Snowy Egret (SNEG), Great Blue Heron (GBHE), Yellow-crowned Night-heron (YCNH) and Black-crowned Night-heron (BCNH).

Unexpectedly, Great Blue Heron made up over 50% of our total observations, while Great and Snowy Egret made up about 25% each. We expected our YCNH numbers would be low but the equally low tally of BCNH was a cause for concern.

However, based on the nesting colonies surveyed last year, by the Harbor Herons and Colonial Waterbirds (HHCW) working group, it appears that the drastic drop in the BCNH population has stopped as the species posted a slight (3%) but welcome increase in nesting pairs over 2016. At the same time, Great Egret numbers fell by 15% while Snowy Egret numbers increased by 23%. The most successful colonies continue to be those in the southern and eastern regions of the Harbor Estuary: Hoffman, South Brother, Subway, and Elders Point East Islands; the last two located within Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Together the four sites hosted 1,300 nesting pairs. With six others – 4 island and 2 mainland sites (incl. Harmon Cove in Secaucus) – a grant total of 1,444 nests of eight different species were counted. Also, 1,871 Double-crested Cormorant nests were noted; up 2% from 2016.

The populations of most colonial waterbirds in the metro region appear to be stable, with some increasing.

For more info check out www.harborestuary.org/harborherons.htm or e-mail me and I’ll send you a link to the complete 2017 Nesting Survey Report. And do plan to join Captain Bill and me on an Eco-Cruise to see them up close. Until then, here’s what our naturalists have seen:

American Avocet – One of these striking shorebirds was observed on the riverbank just north of the NJ Turnpike Vince Lombardi Service Area on 7/2 in Ridgefield, NJ.

American Woodcock – The BEST harbinger of spring IMO, a single bird was observed foraging through leaf litter in a Rutherford, NJ backyard on 3/29.

Bald Eagle – It was a tough breeding season for our local eagles. Once again, the Ridgefield Park pair didn’t breed, nor did the pair at Kearny Point, nor the pairs at Woodcliff Lake and Lake Tappan. The Oradell Reservoir pair successfully fledged only one chick, as did the Palisades Interstate Park pair in Alpine, NJ.

However, many people were treated to some up-close views of Bald Eagles during Eco-Cruises in June and July, including and multiple views of “AI and/or “Alice2” in Ridgefield, and one over the Passaic River during a 6/24 Newark Riverfront Revival trip.

Black-crowned Night Heron – We’ve been seeing more of these birds during spring and summer, including multiple adults in breeding plumage.

Black Skimmer – We saw as many as thirty-eight skimmers roosting on the mudflats at Anderson Creek Marsh in Secaucus throughout most of May and June. We were still seeing pairs in our region through mid-July.

Forster’s Tern – The “common” tern of the Meadowlands was in great abundance during the spring and many were often observed on pilings at Snipe Boat Club in Carlstadt and at Mill Creek Point Park in Secaucus, NJ.

Great Egret – The first sighting in our area was at a small detention pond in Secaucus, NJ on 3/16.

Green-winged Teal – A male/female pair was observed in the

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AREA</th>
<th>GREG</th>
<th>SNEG</th>
<th>GBHE</th>
<th>YCNH</th>
<th>BCNH</th>
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<td>Main stem of river</td>
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<td>66</td>
<td>144</td>
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<td>Berry’s Creek</td>
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<td>Sawmill WMA</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>Totals</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>


Sawmill WMA on 7/2, leading some of us to wonder if there were breeding Teal in the Meadowlands. Stay tuned...

**Harbor Seal** – In late March, several observers got excellent views of a seal hauled out on the Xchange at Secaucus dock located on the river just north of Laurel Hill Park. In late April as many as four seals were seen hauled out on the fishing dock at River Barge Park in Carlstadt, NJ.

**Least Bittern** – An adult was seen on 6/16 – smack in the middle of breeding season – amid a stand of *Phragmites* reeds in the Sawmill Creek WMA in Lyndhurst.

**Osprey** – Thirteen pairs settled in our watershed region, but by late June the breeding results were mixed. Here’s the tally from south to north: Kill Van Kull, Bayonne – one fledgling; Shooter’s Island, Elizabeth – nest failed; Lehigh Valley RR Bridge, Bayonne – nest failed; Point-No Point freight rail bridge, Newark – 1 fledgling; PSEG site, Kearny – “housekeeping”; PSEG site, Jersey City – 2 fledglings; Abandoned transmission tower, Secaucus – nest failed; NJT Boonton Line RR Bridge, Kearny – 3 fledglings; NJT Upper Hack RR Bridge, Lyndhurst – 2 fledglings (first time); Berry’s Creek, Lyndhurst – nest failed; TOMU property, East Rutherford – nest removed (see Postscript); WBBR Radio tower, Carlstadt – nest failed; Relay tower, Overpeck Park, Teaneck – 2 fledglings.

**Peregrine Falcon** – “Big Mama” and “Mister-Mister” fledged a record four chicks (three males and one female) from their nesting box under the Route 3 westbound bridge. Other Peregrines were observed during spring and early summer on the NJ Turnpike Western Spur Bridge and at the Pulaski Skyway.

**Red-tailed Hawk** – On 6/30 a pair was discovered nesting underneath the NJ Turnpike Exit 16W bridge over Berry’s Creek in East Rutherford. This was the second time since 2014 that Red-tails have nested there.

**Snow Goose** – Though not often seen in our watershed, nonetheless a small flock of eighteen was observed on April 1 in the vicinity of the Secaucus High School marsh.

**Snowy Owl** – A late, lingering individual was seen over several days in late March at the old ball fields located along Valley Brook Avenue in Lyndhurst, NJ.

Thanks to our contributors and a tip o’ the naturalist’s hat to: Anonymous, Joe Augeri, Daniel Carola, Taleen Dimerdjian, Ray Duffy, Terry Glover, Mike Gonnelli, Patricia Hilliard, Lynn Kramer, Joe Labriola, Jimmy Macaluso, Mike Ruscigno, Bill Sheehan, Bernie Sobieleski, Chris Szeglin, Don Torino, Nellie Tsioura, and Mary Ellen Woods.

**Postscript:** It isn’t often that *Field Notes* and advocacy intersect but that’s exactly what happened this past spring when Texas-based Williams Transco – operator of the Transcontinental Gas Pipeline – leased a portion of the former Meadowlands Golf Center and Marina in East Rutherford. The site, owned by Tomu Development Company of Elmwood Park, NJ – was chosen to stage supplies and equipment for Williams’ proposed “Carlstadt Loop” upgrade at its adjacent plant and storage facility. You can read all about the proposal and our opposition to it in the 2017 Fall/Winter issue of *Tidelines* but here’s the thing:

Two years ago, NJSEA installed Osprey nest platforms on two poles at the old driving range. Last year a pair successfully nested on one of them and raised two fledglings. They returned this spring but Williams secured a NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife permit to “haze” the birds (i.e.: place a physical barrier on the platform) to prevent nesting. After we protested the permit and NJSEA provided photos showing the Ospreys nearly breaking their wings on the hazing structure, Williams took both platforms down. We have no idea why the company went that harsh route in the first place or why DFW went along.

But we do know this: by mid-July when all our region’s Osprey chicks had fledged and left their respective nests, no equipment, or any supplies whatsoever had been staged on the site. There was no reason at all to prevent the birds from nesting. Good call, Williams (NOT!). ☹
Volunteer Corner

By Caitlin Doran

Hackensack Riverkeeper Volunteers and Friends have been busy, busy, busy! Starting in January (yes, January!), we’ve partnered with 17 groups to collect over 9,200 lbs of litter and debris. Thank you to QuadCares teachers, Fairleigh Dickinson University, Bio-Reference, Apple, EarthShare NJ, PSEG, SUEZ Water New Jersey and New York Division, City of Hackensack, Panasonic, Tenafly Middle School, River Edge Environmental Commission, Prologis, Ralph Lauren, Becton Dickinson, PVH Corporation, and Hackensack Meridian Health for helping us undo environmental damage to our watershed!

QuadCares educators from multiple school districts joined us on MLK Day of Service in January for a very successful cleanup of Skeetkill Marsh in Ridgefield. Hot cocoa got us through! Thanks, team!

Students from Fairleigh Dickinson University’s Leading Teams class did an excellent job recruiting their fellow classmates to spend a few hours cleaning up along the river and throughout the campus. Great job, guys!

This April marked our first time working with Bio-Reference in Elmwood Park, and it certainly won’t be the last! While it was too cold for canoeing this intrepid group was able to pull out a huge haul that included industrial-sizes polystyrene blocks. Thank you, Bio-Reference!

We welcomed back volunteers from Apple for an Earth Day Cleanup of the Overpeck Creek through Overpeck Golf Course. Thank you, Apple!

Our Junior Stewardship Program students organized a cleanup of Staib Park in conjunction with the City of Hackensack’s annual Slam Dunk the Junk event. We are so proud of our Junior Stewards and all they’ve accomplished!
This year’s Lake DeForest cleanup was part of the Bi-State Watershed cleanup and we were proud to partner, once again, with SUEZ Water NY, Keep Rockland Beautiful, and the Boy Scouts of America Hudson Valley Council.

We partnered with Earth Share New Jersey for their Corporate Green Day Challenge. ESNJ coordinated a group from PSEG that worked in the rain to remove lots of junk from Laurel hill! Job well done, PSEG!

While some of our volunteers were cleaning up Lake DeForest, others were helping SUEZ Water New Jersey clean up Woodcliff Lake, as part of the annual Bi-State Watershed cleanup. Riverkeeper volunteers are truly awesome!

Longtime partner Panasonic lead the charge at Riverfront Park in Newark in early May. Our clean up was timed perfectly with the arrival of the PVSC trash skimmer, which we “fed” floating garbage. Great job, Panasonic!

All Super Volunteer Michele Gillies wanted for her birthday was to clean up Wolf Creek, so we were happy to oblige! Stay young, Michele!

Students from Tenafly Middle School gathered along the Tenakill Brook in May and took out litter and debris, like this shopping cart. Hats off to Tenafly Middle School!
Nearly 50 volunteers showed up on a rainy day to remove trash from the Hackensack River and Kenneth B. George Park in River Edge on the morning of May 12. We look forward to this annual partnered cleanup with the River Edge Environmental Commission, and we’ll be returning to KBG park on October 7 for the River Sweep!

We had an amazing cleanup with first-time partner Prologis on May 18, which resulted in the removal of 24 bags of trash, a tire, and odd items like a light-up disco ball from Laurel Hill County Park. We look forward to working with this great group again next year!

Ralph Lauren completed the first of two clean-ups at 16th Street Park in Bayonne, where their team pulled huge tires from the banks of the Newark Bay. Thanks, Ralph Lauren!

Need a milkcrate? Becton Dickinson volunteers pulled seven of them out of Woodcliff Lake Reservoir on June 20, along with a pile of other trash. Thanks for your commitment to improving our watershed, BD!

PVH Corporation came back into the fold this year, thanks to our friends at EarthShare New Jersey, and held a massive cleanup of Overpeck Park from our Overpeck Park Kayak Center. We really enjoyed working with these two groups!
What a team! Hackensack Meridian Health interns came from all over the state to “finish the job” at Overpeck County Park/Overpeck Creek. Over thirty volunteers braved the heat wave and took to the creek in canoes. Here is the team from Hackensack Meridian Health’s “before” photo.

And here is Hackensack Meridian Health’s “after” photo. Still smiling, the interns posed with their trash haul: approximately 500lbs of trash, 3 tires, and – filed under most unusual – two model airplanes. As chance would have it, the owner of one of these planes had come to the park with a kayak in an attempt to retrieve it himself, only to find that the Hackensack Meridian Health Volunteers had done the hard work for him!

It’s a dirty job (but somebody’s gotta do it)! Hackensack Riverkeeper relies on volunteers for all sorts of dirty jobs, including scraping and painting our pontoon boats ahead of our busy program season. We cannot conduct our Eco-Cruises until we’ve given our boats the barnacle-resistant treatment, and we are very much indebted to the crew that helped us with this tough task, including Brendan Reskakis and Anton Getz, pictured here.
Sunday, September 16, 2018

The Fishing Promenade
@ Laurel Hill County Park, Secaucus, NJ

Prizes for the:
Biggest Fish, Most Fish, Best Pirate, and more!

Dress like a Pirate
and march in the Pirate’s Parade!

Adult activities also include
FREE mini kayak and Eco-Cruise tours

FISHING DERBY
Register at: www.PiratesoftheHackesack.com

Local Presenters:

Catch and Release Fishing only.
All bait and tackle provided courtesy of our event partner:
Hudson River Fishermen’s Association
Fishing Participants must also register at:
jg.gov/dep/saltwaterregistry

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Before They Become Big Problems

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Meet our new Riverkeeper Staff

Lisa Vandenberg is our new Office Manager. She comes to us with over 25 years of Executive Assistant experience, supporting senior management in various industries, most notably JPMorgan Chase and AT&T. Lisa grew up “down the shore” in Neptune and spent her childhood on the beaches and fishing with her dad off the jetties in Asbury Park. Lisa lived in Florida for about five years before returning to NJ and settling down in Bergen County. Lisa has two children, Michael Jr, who lives in North Carolina, and Schuyler, who is currently enrolled in Fairleigh Dickinson University. In her spare time Lisa enjoys either live music (preferably at a Rick Springfield concert!) or just hanging out with her boyfriend Jimmy and their two Shih-Tsu companions, Lola and Sawyer.

When she finds the time, she also enjoys crocheting projects for her family and friends. During the summer months, you will usually find Lisa either lounging on Jimmy’s boat or zipping around on her Waverunner on Greenwood Lake.

Lisa admits she has a lot to learn about nonprofits and environmental advocacy but is up to the challenge and looks forward to her future with Hackensack Riverkeeper. She has already had her eyes opened and is more keenly aware of her surroundings and making personal changes to protect the environment.

Our 2018 Vellekamp Scholar: Amir Mustafa

High Tech HS grad is only the second Hudson County resident to receive our award

The 2018 Ron Vellekamp Environmental Scholarship was awarded to Amir Mustafa of West New York, NJ on June 25. Amir is only the second applicant from Hudson County to win, and coincidentally also from the High Tech High School in North Bergen, NJ. Nominated by Faculty Advisors Ms. Samantha Doria and Ms. Shelly Witham, and his Guidance Counselor Ms. Nermeen Hanna-Avegno.

Each year we receive an impressive set of applications. The transcript first determines whether the application is a potential winner. Next comes the student’s list of environmental extracurricular and volunteer activities – some of which, like Amir’s, are incredibly wide-ranging and indicative of both a sharp, inquisitive mind and a kind, caring heart. Last is the 150-word essay.

There is one tree planted on my concrete neighborhood block. I have seen the stars in a remote suburb 40 miles away at most six times. I wrote littering tickets on napkins to my righthanded parents who have since learned from their mistakes, thankfully.....

We do not have forests to care about or sprawling streams to protect. However, against all odds, I do care. My future classes as an environmental engineer will allow me to build a better world, starting in my hometown.

That’s a winner.

Accepted at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, Amir will join the Class of 2022 this September and begin his studies in Environmental Engineering.

“As a proud Hudson County boy myself, I’m overjoyed that we’re honoring Amir with the scholarship named for our late Trustee,” said Captain Bill. “He’s also the second honoree in as many years who’s chosen to enter a field that’s growing and has the potential to solve many of the environmental crises we humans have created.”

Ron Vellekamp, our scholarship’s namesake was a resident of Tenafly, NJ, taught science courses at Ridgefield Junior/Senior High School, was a Palisades Interstate Park ranger, Boy Scout leader and Tenafly Nature Center volunteer as well as a founding trustee of Hackensack Riverkeeper.
Growing Circle of Supporters Keeps Us On The Job

And there’s plenty of room for YOU to join the crew that keeps us keeping the river

On June 20th a group of our closest friends joined us at the Hiram Blauvelt Art Museum in Oradell, NJ for our 2018 Captain’s Circle Reception. The annual event is our way of thanking the people who support us financially at the highest levels. We welcomed individuals and families, as well as foundation and corporate representatives who’ve stepped up in a big way to help us pay the costs of protecting, preserving and restoring the Hackensack River. Like Captain Bill, all of us have the drive, determination and passion but unfortunately those things don’t put gas in the boats or keep our office up and running. For that, and much more, we need – to put it as plainly as possible – money. But of course money doesn’t grow on trees (or in the marsh). It comes to us from people who care, and care enough to stand with us financially – at all levels. People just like YOU.

And we do give you LOTS of opportunities to do so: from buying Keeperwear to renting kayaks, to the World Series of Birding, to making Eco-Cruise support donations, to celebrating at our October Gala, to the return coupon at the bottom of this page. Every donation we receive – of whatever amount – is appreciated, 100% tax-deductible and goes 100% towards keeping Hackensack Riverkeeper advocating, educating, active and effective every day of the year fighting for your Hackensack River.

At the Captain’s Circle each senior staff member took a turn sharing stories and updates with the attendees; but also explained the challenges of doing what we do in today’s hyper-competitive nonprofit environment. Just consider your email Inbox and the number of requests you get each day from advocacy groups seeking support. One thing that sets Hackensack Riverkeeper apart from so many others is that...
Continued from page 22

we’re local and accountable to the people of our watershed region. In other words, we work for YOU.

In his remarks, Capt. Hugh said, “This Circle must grow and strengthen and be the support crew that empowers us to oppose every dumb development scheme, every feckless political idea and anything or anyone that stands in the way of a truly fishable, swimmable and livable Hackensack River.” He’s right. Join the crew today.

At the helm
continued from page 2

to over 70 species of marine life. The Raritan Bay is flourishing also and is regularly visited by whales, seals, and dolphins. In recent years, the proliferation of marine, avian, and terrestrial life has been amazing. Our waterways are truly recovering. But with these pending proposals and their cheerleaders in Trenton, Albany and Washington DC supporting them, our region is in danger of being hurled back in time to the days before the first Earth Day.

In the past, with your help, we beat back the developers who wanted to continue filling in the Meadowlands. And now we have to call on all of you to stand with Hackensack Riverkeeper once again as we face these new challenges. We really need all the support we can muster. Please do whatever you can to help. Attend the local hearings and meetings, write to your representatives, and stay informed by signing up for emails. Keep it tuned to www.hackensackriverkeeper.org.

WHERE YOUR DOLLARS GO

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<tr>
<th>Management &amp; General Expenses</th>
<th>Fund Raising</th>
<th>Programs, Services, Outreach</th>
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<td>9.4%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>80.3%</td>
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Here at Hackensack Riverkeeper we provide award winning Education Programs, interesting Eco-Cruises, community enhancing Cleanup Programs and recreational paddling opportunities that bring 10,000+ people to our river and watershed every year. Our dedicated staff and volunteers are proud of the positive changes we see as a result of years of hard work. Come see the results for yourself. Be part of this evolution.

Clean Water Celebration

Thursday, October 18, 2018
Cocktail Reception starts at 6:30 PM

we will be honoring
Norman Guerra
Hudson County Improvement Authority
Excellence in Public Service Award

Sam Pesin
Friends of Liberty State Park
Lifetime Achievement Award

Samsung Electronic America
Corporate Environmental Stewardship Award

Florentine Gardens — 97 Rivervale Road — River Vale, NJ
For more information: Gala@HackensackRiverkeeper.org or call 201-968-0808

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