By Hugh M. Carola

First, the good news: we knew that Governor Philip Murphy had privately expressed his personal opposition to the North Bergen Liberty Generating proposal but was allowing the regulatory process to play out. We’d also received information that Diamond Generating Corporation, the erstwhile California-based developer, was having a hard time with their air pollution permit applications. Despite the intel, we and our Don’t Gas the Meadowlands coalition didn’t let up on the pressure against NBLG. We held anti-powerplant rallies and public information sessions, lobbied municipalities to pass resolutions opposing it, and strategized. Our efforts came to fruition on October 9, 2019.

That day, during his monthly call-in radio show on WBGO-FM (and on Twitter), Governor Murphy publicly announced, “I have deferred on this long enough. I have to say, definitively, this project simply doesn’t make sense for New Jersey. At a very personal level, at the end of the day, I’m opposed to it.” In their article in the October 10 issue of The Record, reporters Scott Fallon and Dustin Racioppi referred to the governor as having had “an epiphany” over the plan to pollute New Jersey’s air in order to supply New York City with power.

Protesters gather to rally in Jersey City.

By Michele Langa

Over the past four and half years, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), its 21 Combined Sewer Outfall (CSO) permittees, and advocacy groups taking part in CSO Supplemental Teams have all experienced the ups and downs of the CSO permit program that began in 2015. As we near the end of those five-year permits, we take a moment to look at the good, the bad, and the potential for improvement in the next round of permits.

Looking at the positive highlights of the CSO permit process, we can point to the simplest win first, and that is that permits exist at all. Step one towards fixing the CSO problem is acknowledging the problem and working towards its solution. The positive effects of the permits didn’t stop there, however. We saw permittees like the City of Elizabeth’s Joint Meeting work hard to embrace and educate the public in their community. There, CSO Supplemental Team Meetings have been some of the most open to group discussion.

CSO Permits: Lessons Learned

The work to eliminate CSOs continues with new permits in 2020.

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

Well, 2019 is coming to a close and thanks to you Hackensack Riverkeeper is going strong. We recently wrapped up our outdoor education and recreation programs, which once again provided on-water and near-water experiences to just about 10,000 participants. Whether they participated in Eco-Cruises, paddled with us, or joined us at a River Cleanup, everyone enjoyed quality, first hand experiences upon and about our beloved river.

As you’ve already seen on Page One, we scored a MAJOR victory with the defeat of the proposed North Bergen Liberty powerplant. After more than a year of rallies, marches, petitions and direct advocacy to Governor Murphy, he announced on his monthly WBGO-FM radio show and on Twitter that he opposed the project. His announcement effectively blocked the NYC-benefiting proposal from moving forward.

Speaking of next year, there are plenty of issues we’ll be getting into. The updated Meadowlands Master Plan – which includes NO wetlands protection rollbacks – is one thing we’re focused on. Another is the new Bergen County Parks Department master plan, which we are also involved with – especially as regards water access and habitat protections. And because evidently one anti-powerplant victory isn’t enough, we’re gearing up to lead another charge against yet another ill-conceived fossil-foolish idea: NJ Transit’s proposal to build a gas-fired plant on the river in Kearny. I tell you it never ends.

Still, I’m looking forward to 2020 and I promise you that Hackensack Riverkeeper will never stop fighting for your right to a fishable, swimmable and clean river. We’ll keep on providing informative and fun programs to help you exercise that right to access all the natural, living, and recreational resources throughout our watershed.

Please remember: we can only succeed with your support. I hope you’ll consider making an end-of-year donation to help keep us on the job and effective.

Have a great Holiday Season and we hope to see you at the river come springtime.

Captain Bill Sheehan
that Consolidated Edison, the New York utility company, maintains is not needed.

“We knew full well that the governor didn’t like the proposed project because it flew in the face of his energy policy,” said Captain Bill Sheehan. “Knowing his administration’s goal of 100% clean energy by 2050, I’m surprised it took so long for him to come right out and oppose it. But he did and so we – and the Meadowlands – are in a much better place for it.”

While Governor Murphy’s opposition – fully eighteen months in the making – doesn’t quite have the force of an Executive Order, state politics are such that it might as well be one. The aforementioned Record article quoted state Senator (and North Bergen mayor) Nicholas Sacco, the proposal’s most vocal and active supporter, as saying, “We will now move on to finding an alternate use for the property that will hopefully provide union construction jobs and significant financial benefits for North Bergen.” Another report quoted him as declaring the plan as “D.O.A.”

A quick scan of the ever-changing Manhattan and Jersey City skylines or a drive up Main Street, Hackensack is enough to show anyone that union construction jobs (and many others) literally abound in the metro area. No one doubts that a project more in keeping with the Meadowlands economic base – and one that will not pollute air, water, or endanger wetlands – will wind up being built on the site. But in the meantime…

While we were fighting the good fight up in North Bergen, New Jersey Transit was quietly and deliberately moving forward with NJ Transitgrid – yet another bloated, post-Sandy “resiliency” plan – proposed for the former Koppers Coke site down in Kearny. Early in 2019, the agency floated an idea to build a gas-fired plant atop the horrifically contaminated riverfront site to (according to them at the time) ensure power for its and Amtrak’s electric locomotives in the event of a major storm event. This, despite the fact that PSEG completed its resiliency upgrades years ago and is well positioned to supply all regional power needs. Oh, and the seemingly fast-tracked plan now states the plant would operate 24/7 and not just in an emergency, as originally “planned”. You can read all the gory details at https://njtransitresilienceprogram.com.

“It is a truth long acknowledged by Hackensack Riverkeeper that the site should and would be redeveloped” said Captain Bill. “One option would be a massive solar array that could add 100% clean, renewable energy to the grid and/or to modern storage batteries that could provide short-term emergency power. But I’d go for just about anything that’s not another carbon-spewing monstrosity.”

Needless to say, we’re as much opposed to Transitgrid as we were to NBLG, if not more so. Simply put, our position is that there’s no need whatsoever for a government-owned powerplant on the banks of the Hackensack River period, full stop (as Governor Murphy is fond of saying). The problem is that it’s later in the game than we thought. This entirely intra-state proposal was moving swiftly underneath our radar, and because it’s a government project, had fewer hurdles to deal with. The project manager, Nick Marton, is already on the job at NJ Transit HQ in Newark. We definitely have our work cut out for us.

But unlike NBLG, which had a lot of moving parts and required multiprunged opposition tactics, this new fight should be simpler to win, even though it’s later in the game than we’d like. You see, Governor Murphy sits on NJ Transit’s Board of Directors along with Lieutenant Governor Sheila Oliver, Treasurer Elizabeth Maher Mucio and Transportation Commissioner Diane Gutierrez Scaccetti. He can literally kill the Koppers plan with a phone call to NJ Transit CEO Kevin Corbett.

Simply put, we’re asking Governor Murphy to just pick up the phone and make the call. He probably doesn’t even need an outside line to do it.

Call Governor Murphy today, 866-586-4069, and demand we not use public funds on projects that will exacerbate the climate crisis.
**Hooray for Paddle Day!**

*Lake Tappan Paddle Day returns in a big way*

After a two-year hiatus, Lake Tappan Paddle Day returned to our schedule – and there was much rejoicing from staff and paddlers alike! Exactly 128 paddlers took to the lake over the course of three kayak and canoe sessions. Landside, lunch was provided by our friends at Inserra ShopRite. We also promoted our plastic free pledge, which many paddlers signed before (or after) enjoying their time on the water. The pledge was put together in partnership with the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program and is one of several teaching tools that Riverkeeper has incorporated into our outreach, to teach people how they can help keep our shared natural resources – like Lake Tappan – clean and healthy. We would like to thank our partner, SUEZ, and all of our annual sponsors who make great days like Lake Tappan Paddle Day possible. We’ll see you at next year’s “LaTaPaDa!”

A kayaker gives Lake Tappan Paddle Day “two thumbs up!”

Volunteer Al Lohrenz assists Paddling Center staff getting kayakers safely onto and off the water.

▲ Staff Attorney Michele Langa and Board President Rob Gillies staff our outreach table and encourage people to sign our plastic-free pledge.

Excited to get in their kayaks, two paddlers pose for a quick lakeside shot.

A young paddler recovers a mylar balloon from the lake. Thanks for helping us keep it clean!

A couple of paddlers sport this year’s giveaway, waterproof phone necklaces, as they get ready to take to the lake.
Riverfest 2019: Yo, ho, ho and a whole lotta fish!

By Lisa Vandenberg

Hackensack Riverkeeper held its fifth annual fishing derby at the Laurel Hill Park Promenade in Secaucus, NJ on Saturday, September 21. As in past years, the pirate-themed day was a catch and release event that brought families from all over Bergen and Hudson Counties to the river in their best pirate fashions.

It was a warm and sunny day, but the fish just were not going after the worms the anglers started using for bait. After a while however, they switched to bunker and the fish responded better and many more were caught. One young fisherman came armed with his own secret weapon – shrimp. Nine-year old Daniel Seo from Fort Lee outsmarted us - and eighteen fish – by using his own bait. Congrats on a new Most Fish record, Danny! And thanks for the tip.

After a fun morning of fishing, our anglers were treated to temporary pirate tattoos, a kid-friendly lunch of hot dogs, chips and sodas, as well as prizes in the categories of Best Pirate Costume, First Fish, Biggest Fish, and the aforementioned Most Fish. After lunch we offered mini Eco-Cruises aboard the Robert H. Boyle II, courtesy of Captain Hugh and our Paddling Center staff, who handled the lines and lifejackets.

The day would not have been possible without the help of the Hudson River Fishermen’s Association (HRFA). They not only lent us tackle and assisted our anglers with baiting hooks and teaching proper casting/fishing techniques, they also cut the bait.

Thanks are also in order to our sponsors, without whose continued support events like this would not be possible. And, saving the best for last, thank you to our volunteers who helped set up, cook, clean up and made the day a success!

Wayne Geida of the HRFA rigging the tackle.  
Oliver and mom showing their spirit.  
Daniel Seo demonstrating catch and release fishing.  
Daniel with the first of his 18 fish that day.  
Landing another perch. Unfortunately, these fish are unsafe to eat due to the legacy of pollution in the lower river.
This year’s Clean Water Celebration on October 17 was all about the kids. Kids are the heart of everything we do at Hackensack Riverkeeper as we strive to teach, encourage, and inspire the next generation of environmental advocates. Many times, these young advocates wind up inspiring us. One such person is Righteous Allah-McCarroll, who participated in our 2019 Junior Stewardship program, and who joined us at the Gala podium. In everything she did with us – from biological assessments to litter surveys to fishing trips – Righteous approached everything with an enthusiasm and passion that inspired and reenergized us.

Likewise, we saw and celebrated that very same passion in the work of this year’s honorees: Senator Loretta Weinberg and the Hugo Neu Corporation at Kearny Point. Whether it’s environmental protection, serving the public, making sustainability a top priority – or all three, the senator and Neu CEO Wendy Kelman Neu are two strong, forward-thinking women. As such, they greatly deserve our recognition and we were honored to honor them.

We are also most grateful to the sponsors, attendees, and volunteers who helped us create such a remarkable and enjoyable evening. Thank you all for supporting the future of clean water!
Freedom Bank proudly supports the Hackensack Riverkeeper as it works to provide environmental advocacy, education and conservative programs to the local community.

Captain Bill with longtime friends of Hackensack Riverkeeper Erika Muller (L) and Ro Sorce (R).

Program Manager Jodi Jamieson with super-star Junior Steward Righteous Allah-McCarroll and her grandmother, Jackie.

Volunteer Jenny Schneider keeps up with the raffle ticket demand.

Our friends from United Eventures enjoying the celebration.

Volunteer Jeff Raskin riding the auctioned BMW Cruise bike.

Longtime River Cleanup Volunteers Bill Meier (L) and Greg Buccino (R) flank Cleanup “Captain” Caitlin Doran.

Ro Sorce and friend John Birkner have fun trying to outbid each other in the live auction.
2019 Hack Race Report

Racers from the eastern seaboard converge on the Hackensack for the annual race.

By Lisa Vandenberg

Saturday, October 19 marked the 4th Annual Hack Race, hosted by Wanda Canoe Club and sponsored locally by Hackensack Riverkeeper, Inserra Shop Rite, Goodboy Paddlesports, and Netta Radice Design. It was a chilly morning but that didn’t stop some 80 paddlers, from across the US and Canada, from gathering at Ridgefield Park’s Waterside Park (Wanda’s homeport) for a nine-mile Elite race or 4.5-mile Novice race.

The day kicked off with welcome speeches from Ridgefield Park Mayor George Fosdick and our own Captain Bill Sheehan. The Elite course took paddlers from the Wanda Canoe Club north to Historic New Bridge Landing/Steuben House and back to Waterside. Meanwhile, the Novice race sent paddlers south to the Route 46 Bridge, then back north to the J.L. Dillard Bridge between Hackensack and Bogota, then back to Wanda. The Novice race consisted of just ten boats, including three Girl Scouts from Toms River, NJ who competed in the Junior Division for paddlers aged 13-17.

The men’s Elite race winner was Robert Jehn, with a time of 1:13:48 and the women’s winner was Megan Roberts, with a time of 1:30:47. Coming in 3rd place overall was Ian Ross, an American canoe sprinter, who competes for Team USA and is a 2020 Olympic hopeful. Ian hails from Washington DC and will be competing in Tokyo (site of the 2020 Summer Games) in November. He’ll also compete in the US Olympic Trials in May and if successful, will join Team USA at the Tokyo Olympics in August.

In a somewhat unexpected result, the women’s novice winner, Jennie Vongsoasup edged out the men’s winner José Mediavilla by a time of 0:57:28 versus 0:59:33.

Racers were awarded their coveted Hack Race socks and enjoyed lunch courtesy of Inserra ShopRite of Hackensack. Proceeds from the event benefit Hackensack Riverkeeper; with Captain Bill being presented a check by Wanda Canoe Club Commodore Wardell Lee.

Thank you who came out to paddled or volunteered their time to make this year’s race yet another successful event. See you next October!
2019 Eco-Program Recap:
Boats and Paddles and Trash – Ohh, My!
And 9,762 of you did it all despite some of the nastiest weather ever

By Capt. Hugh Carola, Caitlin Doran and Russell Wilke

Well, Tidelines readers, for a while it looked like it was never going to end but like the opening of American Dream, the closing of our 2019 Eco-Program season took place in stages. First was the final weekend of rentals at our Paddling Center at Laurel Hill Park and Overpeck Park Kayak Center (and the final Laurel Hill Moonlight Paddles) on October 13 & 14. Next were our last two Eco-Cruises – one private, one public – on Saturday, October 19. And, as has been a tradition for a long time, our final scheduled River Cleanup took place at Van Saun Mill Brook on Sunday, November 3 in partnership with the Ben Porat Yosef Yeshiva. Here’s how the whole season shook out:

River Cleanups

With eight cleanups in just seven days back in April, Earth Week really set the tone for the rest of the River Cleanup season. As of this writing, Hackensack Riverkeeper has organized a record 39 cleanups and mobilized a staggering 1,352 volunteers to successfully remove more than 27,000 lbs. of trash from in and around our watershed. And we’re still not done! We have one more cleanup scheduled to round out 2019, bringing our total to 40. You can see all the highlights from our River Cleanup Program under the “volunteer” section of www.hackensackriverkeeper.org!

We also wish to acknowledge the following Community Partners who organized/sponsored a River Cleanup in 2019. They are (in order): Bergen Clean Communities, Bergen Academies, Ralph Lauren, J. Crew, Apple, FDU, JP Morgan Chase, EarthShare NJ, PSEG, SUEZ, Hackensack Clean Communities, Park Ridge Green Team, Takasago, Panasonic, Friends of the Hackensack River Greenway, River Edge Environmental Commission, Ocean Tribe, Hudson County School of Technology, PVH, Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation, Prudential, Hackensack Meridian Health, Becton Dickinson, Gattefosse, Bayonne Nature Club, Monticello Consulting, TIAA, Valley Health Systems, ING, McCann Health Echo, Ernst & Young, Samsung, Regeneron, Ben Porat Yosef Yeshiva, and Bergen SWAN.

One special highlight from 2019 was a grant-funded litter survey dubbed “Stopping Trash Where It Starts,” completed in partnership with the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program. The project harnesses the power of citizen science to create high-quality data to determine the types of litter entering our river, and the conditions that convert litter into marine debris. Volunteers completed 40 surveys from Park Ridge, NJ down to Jersey City and sorted thousands of pieces of litter. The data is being analyzed at Montclair State University, our academic partner. We’ll share the results as soon as we have them!

Be part of the movement that stops trash at the source. Sign our plastic free pledge at: www.plasticfreewaters.com/plastic-freepledge. Or, stop by our office, take the pledge, and we’ll give you a reusable straw!

Paddling Centers, Guided Paddles & Special Paddle Events

The start of our season could be described in two words: rained out. A wet, cool May didn’t make for a strong start to our canoe, kayak and (new this year) stand-up paddleboard rentals but somehow we filled up and conducted all our Moonlight Paddles save for 7/17. We expanded our Laurel Employees from Ralph Lauren participate in a river cleanup.
Eco-Recap
continued from page 9

Hill-based “Mooners” into October and brought back daytime Guided Paddles – all of which proved popular thanks in part to our shifting registration to an online EventBrite platform. Special kudos go out to LHP center staffer Greg Buccino for suggesting we bring back – and taking the lead – handling the daytime trips.

All told, our Laurel Hill staff sent 521 paddlers out onto the river and into the marshes of the Meadowlands while our busy Overpeck staff served a total of 4,888 paddlers who sought to enjoy the calm waters of Overpeck Lake. In addition to early season bad weather, Overpeck was also plagued with a late season bloom of Hydrilla – an invasive aquatic plant which made for a very difficult, unpleasant paddling experience – like paddling a kayak over a very wet lawn. At press time the Bergen County Parks Department was arranging to treat the lake with copper sulfate, so it should be healthier – and more inviting next year.

Offsite events included the Reservoir Paddle Series with SUEZ, two Passaic River paddles (out of three scheduled) and free paddling during EarthFest Overpeck. These events attracted another 617 people, which put our 2019 total at 6,026 who kayaked, canoed and SUP-ed with us. With better weather and the weeds under control, we expect to see even more paddles flashing in 2020.

Eco-Cruises

Like the paddling centers, our main boating season also didn’t start well. In fact, of the first twelve scheduled Open Eco-Cruises for the general public, eight had to be cancelled for either rain or high winds. It wasn’t until late June and early July that we finally batted .500; which was about when the Nation Weather Service declared a two-day Heat Emergency, forcing us to cancel an entire weekend of both Hackensack and Passaic River Eco-Cruises. Nevertheless we persisted; and with the Geraldine Theresa and Robert H. Boyle II we did what boats are meant to do.

Though our public Open Boat Eco-Cruises were the ones most impacted by bad weather, we were still able to bring 544 people out on thirty-one (out of forty-five scheduled) Meadowlands Discovery, Boating Thru Bergen and Excursion Around the Bay trips.

Next best was the number of students, teachers and chaperones we were able to accommodate on our Youth group and Combination programs for schools, summer camps and the like. In total, we brought out nearly one thousand young people – 963 to be exact – ranging in age from Kindergarten through college and those who participated in our Urban Watershed Education Program (UWEP) and Junior Stewardship program. Many of our student groups were from underserved communities.

As usual, adult group trips were the most popular, with 976 participants. Adult trips on the Hackensack River served 638 people, eleven two-boat Passaic River Eco-Cruises served 254 more through our partnership with Newark Riverfront Revival, and eighty-four persons joined us for trips during Ridgefield Park Earth Day, the Secaucus Green Fair, the Meadowlands Festival of Birding & our RiverFest. Overall, 2,513 people – of all ages – cruised the river(s) and bay with us in 2019.

Postscript

Despite the bad weather, invasive lake weed, and late-season breakdown of the Geraldine Theresa’s engine, we were still able to give 9,792 people up-close, personal and unique experiences on and about the water. Over the years we’ve always spoken about “Watershed Citizenship” when it comes to our innate connection to the water. If you haven’t experienced that connection in a while, join us for a paddle, Eco-Cruise or pitch in at a cleanup next season. Bring your family, class, or club too. The pontoon boats will be in tip-top shape, we’ll have new kayaks for you to help break in, and remember that the watch Caitlin wears at cleanups is always set for pizza o’clock. See you at the river in 2020!
“Stopping Trash Where it Starts”

Our survey has ended; time for the tough love to begin!

By Caitlin Doran

Smokers, sit down. Not to be crude, but we need to talk about your butts. After completing forty surveys of twenty sites within the watershed, and excluding plastic fragments, cigarette butts were consistently the number one item picked up during our “Stopping Trash Where It Starts” litter survey project.

Tidelines readers will recall that this project was a collaboration between the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program and Hackensack Riverkeeper, which began in April and wrapped in August 2019. The goal of the project was to use citizen science to generate high quality data to help determine the types and sources of litter that become marine debris, and possible actions we might take to prevent them. Over the summer, twenty volunteers helped us complete these surveys, including our WMA5 Watershed Ambassador, students from Ramapo College of New Jersey, New Jersey City University (NJCU), and Montclair State University, as well as veteran (and new) River Cleanup volunteers.

Volunteers had to follow strict criteria and quality controls when completing the surveys, including when and where they could pick up trash. Sites were chosen based on their proximity to the river and represented variable uses. Sites in suburban Montvale, for example, were very different from sites in urban Jersey City.

Some sites had more foot traffic, some sites had more car traffic, some sites had many storm drains, some had fewer. Some sites were near shops that produce a lot of single-use plastic and seemed to be more likely to generate the same. Others were surprisingly clean. But there was one offender that all sites had in common: cigarette butts.

Nationally, smoking among adults is on the decline, according to the CDC (14% in 2017 down from 20.9% in 2005). That should mean less butts on the ground, and perhaps it does. Butt (ha) for the purpose of our litter round-up, except for nondescript plastic fragments, it was the number one item we took out of the environment: 2,568 butts to be precise. Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States, accounting for more than 480,000 deaths every year, or about 1 in 5 deaths. Similarly, we believe it could also be the leading cause of preventable upstream marine debris!

While municipalities are doing their part enacting single-use plastic and polystyrene bans and organizing clean-ups, we have not seen a local education campaign directly targeting smokers and cigarette butts. Non-smokers and smokers alike may not realize, for example, that cigarette filters are actually made up of plastic fibers called cellulose acetate, which can take 10 years to break up – but never truly decompose. They only photodegrade into tinier and tinier plastic pieces, called microplastics that are around in effect forever.

Currently, stats and percentages about cigarette butts and all the litter-turned-data that we produced is being crunched by our academic partners at Montclair State University. We anticipate the results will be similar to the “Stopping Trash Where it Starts” survey done in 2017 on the Passaic River Watershed, which is also being duplicated in the Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds. The more tributaries we study, the clearer the picture we’ll get of the issues faced by the entire Hudson-Raritan Estuary.

While we wait for the official results of the Hackensack River study, you can review the results of the Passaic River litter survey on the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary website, as well as a toolkit to help you reduce your plastic use: www.hudsonriver.org/article/stopping-trash-where-it-starts. And we are encouraging all of our followers to take our plastic free pledge, which we developed in cooperation with HEP and the Plastic Free Waters Partnership: https://plasticfreewaters.org/plastic-free-pledge/

All small actions add up to a movement. And we’re very grateful to our project partners, volunteers, and those pledging to use less of the things that negatively impact our river. It really does make a difference!
Volunteer Corner

By Caitlin Doran

To quote “Seasons of Love” from Rent, “How do you measure a year?” Here at Hackensack Riverkeeper’s Cleanup Program, we measure it in cleanups! And tonnage! And new friends! In 2019, we had a record amount of cleanups (40), a record amount of volunteers (1,352) and – as much cause for celebration – picked up LESS trash (13 tons). We would need to take over at least one more “corner” of Tidelines for a roll call of all of our Corporate Cleanup partners, so instead, enjoy these group photos from a spring, summer, and fall of cleanups with Community and Corporate partners alike. A big thank you also goes out to the City of Hackensack and Bergen County Clean Communities Program for supporting our program, as well as other cleanup efforts in the watershed.

Woodcliff Lake Reservoir with Becton Dickinson (BD) – July 10, 2019

It’s amazing what a small but determined group of volunteers can accomplish! Seven BD volunteers successfully scooped twenty-one bags worth of trash from Woodcliff Lake Reservoir in July, as well as lots of sports balls, milk crates, and other plastic brickabrack. We are so grateful to count BD as one of our longstanding partners!

Overpeck Park with Gattefosse

July 26, 2019

Local company Gattefosse had a most memorable inaugural cleanup, paddling the Overpeck Creek like pros, sweeping the shoreline as they went. This team was just too busy working for a group photo, but this quick action shot will give you an idea of all their hard work. Welcome to the River Cleanup Team, Gattefosse!

Kenneth B. George Park with BD

August 14, 2019

Not content with one cleanup, BD joined us again in August for a sweep of the river near KBG Park in River Edge. We are happy to report that there was much less trash than usual – only about seven bags worth. But the trash we did find was pretty interesting, like pieces of a kiddie pool that we were almost able to reassemble back at the boat ramp! You just never know what you’ll find at a river cleanup, or how it got there!
Rutkowski Park Cleanup
August, 17, 2019
Another great cleanup in partnership with the Bayonne Nature Club took place at Rutkowski Park in August. This otherwise beautiful park, with its sandy beach, rocky shoreline, butterfly garden, and a boardwalk over restored wetlands is often bombarded with trash that washes in/out with the tide or is simply dumped. We are so grateful for the help of the nature club and all the volunteers who show up each year to beautify this special spot!

International Coastal Cleanup
September 7, 2019
This was our best International Coastal Cleanup in recent memory! An annual event held in partnership with SUEZ, the ICC took place at Oradell Reservoir, where 120 volunteers took out 2,312 lbs. of garbage! Local scout Ben Zelasco helped us track/log the trash with the Ocean Conservancy, who aggregates data from coastal cleanups all over the world. Our most unusual (and heaviest) find? A tackle dummy!

16th Street Park with TIAA
September 11, 2019
This was our first cleanup with TIAA employees, and it was coordinated by our friends at Earth-Share New Jersey. Twenty volunteers took out 41 bags of trash and some heavy tires with rusty rims from around 16th Street Park in Bayonne and Newark Bay. We look forward to working with TIAA again in the near future, and we’re super grateful to ESNJ for connecting us!

Woodcliff Lake with Valley Health Systems
September 14, 2019
It was a long-time in the making, but it was so worth the wait! Thanks to the leadership of volunteer Georgina Pinsley and the Valley Health Systems Green Team, we had an excellent cleanup of Woodcliff Lake Reservoir in September with Valley volunteers, and took out 600lbs of trash. Conditions at Woodcliff Lake continue to improve with regular cleanups coordinated by Riverkeeper, SUEZ Water, and concerned corporate citizens/community members.
Rutkowski Park with ING – September 20, 2019
Every year we look forward to our partnered cleanup of the Newark Bay with ING volunteers. Some volunteers have been cleaning up with us for over a decade now, and we leave it to them to show new recruits how it’s done! This year’s ING team was another gung-ho group that took out its collective weight in trash and debris!

Elmwood Park Marina with McCann Health Echo – September 30, 2019
This September, we welcomed McCann Health Echo to the River Cleanup family. Their tiny but mighty team showed up ready to work at the Elmwood Park Marina on the Passaic River and accumulated a pile of some interesting items, like a sled, Samsonite suitcase, a car bumper, and a Ganesh statue, to name a few!

Laurel Hill Park with Ernst & Young – October 4, 2019
EY pulled 5 tires and 42 bags of trash from in and around Laurel Hill County Park in October, as part of their Connect Day. Not satisfied after cleaning up the riverbank and the park, EY volunteers regrouped on Castle Rd. to tackle lots of litter that would have ended up in storm drains and eventually in the river. We are really grateful for our longstanding partnership with EY and their willingness to go above and beyond!
Let the record show that employees at Samsung respond well to a little friendly competition (before even knowing the prize)! We had another great turnout for Samsung’s Day of Service in October, with seventy-five volunteers sweeping Overpeck Park and the area behind Samsung in Ridgefield Park. We split the mighty group into two teams to see which could come up with the biggest pile of trash. The day ended in a tie, and all volunteers were given a certificate for kayaking at Overpeck Park Kayak Center.

Woodcliff Lake Reservoir with Regeneron – October 25, 2019

It was months in the making, but we finally organized a cleanup with our new friends at Regeneron. Their volunteers cleaned-up Woodcliff Lake Reservoir, one of sixty sites chosen for their “Day of Doing Good”. Regeneron makes live-saving medicines, which is appropriate since this tenacious group was the cure to lots of floatable debris in the reservoir.

Slam Dunk the Junk in Hackensack – October 26, 2019

Slam Dunk the Junk is an annual city-wide cleanup organized by the City of Hackensack, and each year, Hackensack Riverkeeper boasts the largest cleanup team. This year, our group was so large, we actually had to split the group up and reroute some of the volunteers to the Teaneck side of the River to clean-up part of the Greenway.
By Hugh M. Carola

Trigger Warning/Spoiler Alert/whatever – there’s no way to sugarcoat this month’s preface.

If you’ve been reading this column for a while you know I usually try to put a positive spin on the topics I choose for my “above the list” rant. For a while I thought I’d push back against some of the more egregious anti-environmental actions festering in Washington but then I read the front page of The New York Times on September 19: “Birds Are Vanishing From North America” by Carl Zimmer. The subhead was even worse: “The number of birds in the United States and Canada has declined by 3 billion, or 29 percent, over the past half-century, scientists find” (Emphasis mine). Oh well, so much for positivity.

Zimmer’s article focused on an exhaustive report in the journal Science. In it, habitat loss, climate change, pesticide use and modern farming practices were among the culprits cited. Reading the article, it was clear much of the initial report was based on Christmas Bird Count (CBC) data. Begun over a century ago by the then-brand new National Audubon Society as a way to transition from shooting birds over the Holidays to counting them, the CBC is the world’s longest-running citizen science program. As such, its data is unassailable because the numbers don’t lie. Neotropical migrants like warblers, thrushes and flycatchers have taken massive hits in their respective populations, as have multiple sparrow and finch species. Even the ubiquitous, nonnative House Sparrow is down all across North America. It’s just not good, folks.

Fortunately the news isn’t completely bad. For example, vireos – which share much of the same habitats and insect prey as warblers – are increasing and no one knows why. Although American Kestrel, Northern Harrier and Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers are down, Bald Eagle, Osprey and Peregrine Falcon numbers are up. And waterfowl (ducks, geese and swans) are showing good numbers due in large measure to the long-term effects of the 1917 Migratory Bird Treaty. Since then, state, provincial and federal wildlife agencies in Mexico, Canada and the U.S. have worked together to ensure healthy waterfowl populations for hunters and birders alike. So yes, it can be better. I invite you to read the full NY Times article online here: www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/science/bird-populations-america-canada.html

So while they still can, here’s what some of our naturalists have recently reported:

American Avocet – Eight of these large, striking sandpipers were observed flying over the Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area in Kearny, NJ on 9/21. Earlier in the day the same flock (one can only assume) was noted in Bayonne, NJ.

American Golden Plover – A single member of this shorebird species was observed at Richard W. DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst, NJ on 9/28.

American White Pelican – From midsummer through mid-October a single bird – way outside its typical range – was observed in the vicinity of Richard DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst and the Sawmill Wildlife Management Area in Kearny, NJ.

Bald Eagle – Our watershed region finally had a solidly good year for eagles! Six pairs produced two fledglings each (Kearny, Ridgefield Park, Woodcliff Lake, Palisades Interstate Park (Alpine, NJ), and Lake DeForrest (Clarkstown, NY). There were no successful eagle nests at Oradell Reservoir or Lake Tappan. Migrating eagles – both adult and immature - were also reported and observed throughout our watershed region during September and October.

Barn Owl (not) – For the past three years we’ve neither seen nor received reports of this once common Meadowlands bird. They no longer nest under the Route 3 Eastbound Bridge, nor in the old control building at the HX Jackknife Bridge in Rutherford, nor at the trash transfer station in North Arlington. We’ve been told by sources in the know that poison rat baits are to blame. Many Meadowlands-area companies use this cheap, non-discriminating method to control rats; the downside of which is that when owls catch and eat poison-addled rats, they die.

Brown Pelican – They’re quite common down the Jersey Shore around Long Beach Island and Barnegat Bay but rarely, if ever, seen in the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary region. Nonetheless, a fellow boater observed & photo-
graphed a pair of them at Shooters Island in Newark Bay on 9/21.

**Common Raven** – A single raven was observed flying “with” (playing with? harassing?) an adult **Red-tailed Hawk** over South Kearny on 8/25. Earlier in the season we received reports of nesting Ravens at Laurel Hill in Secaucus. Unfortunately, the chicks were all taken by **Peregrine Falcons**.

**Forster’s Tern** – **Over one hundred** – both adults and newly-fledged young – were seen daily during late July/early August in the vicinity of River Barge and Mill Creek Point parks. Most observers agreed it was the most anyone had ever seen.

**Least Bittern** – A single adult of North America’s smallest heron was observed in the Sawmill WMA on 8/15.

**Menhaden** – Large schools of this important forage fish (also know as **Bunker**) were observed in near-shore ocean waters and throughout the harbor estuary – including the lower Hackensack River – during late summer. To the benefit of many scavenging gulls, Bunker are often unable to survive in the lower-oxygen waters of the river and so provide the birds an unexpected bonanza.

**Osprey** – The final tally from our region was a record-setting **seventeen nesting pairs**: ten in the Meadowlands District and seven more “in the neighborhood”. Here’s the nest/fledgling tally from south to north: Shooters Island – 1; Newark Bay barge, Bayonne – 2; Newark Bay barge, Bayonne II – 1; Lehigh Valley freight rail bridge, Bayonne – 1; Draw of the Hack freight rail bridge, Jersey City – 2; former PSEG site, Jersey City – 3; old transmission tower by Amtrak Portal Bridge, Secaucus – fail; Point-No Point Bridge, Kearny/Newark – 2; Kearny Marsh East dike – **two housekeeping nests**; decommissioned Boonton Line bridge, Kearny – 3; PSEG transmission tower in Sawmill WMA, Kearny – 1; Berry’s Creek at Valley Brook Ave., Lyndhurst – fail; PSEG transmission tower in Sawmill WMA II – 1; trees north of River Barge Park, Carlstadt – housekeeping nest; Bloomberg Radio tower, Carlstadt – fail; Vince Lombardi Service Area, Ridgefield – fail; and Overpeck County Park, Teaneck – fail. Of the nine non-fail and non-housekeeping nests, we averaged 1.8 fledglings per nest.

**Peregrine Falcon** – Both Big Mama and her offspring (two females and one male) were seen on and around the Route 3 Bridges between East Rutherford & Secaucus well into the fall; the young often practicing their hunting techniques on unsuspecting and annoyed gulls. A single female was observed often in late summer perched on the NJ Turnpike Western Spur bridge over the river between Carlstadt and Ridgefield, NJ. Another was noted on the Route 46 bridge on 10/5 and numerous migrants passed through in September and October.

**Red Fox** – A pair denned not far from River Barge Park in Carlstadt this year. Reports came in (and personal sightings were made) throughout late summer and early fall of both adults and kits. Our vulpine neighbors seemed to be taking advantage of food left for feral cats (more on THAT issue very soon!). A single fox was also seen near the Hilco site (former PSE&G Hudson Generating Station) in Jersey City on 8/25.

**Semi-palmated Sandpiper** – Large migratory flocks were observed up and down the river during late summer from Teaneck to Jersey City, with one group of roughly **one thousand birds** noted in East Rutherford on 8/16.

**Sora** – One of these very secretive rails was spotted by one of our naturalists on 10/6 foraging near the Hackensack River pathway at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Hackensack.

**White-tailed deer** – In the still ongoing saga of “You saw deer WHERE?” on 7/17 a six-point buck was seen in Carlstadt

*Continued on page 18*
just a short distance from Redd’s Restaurant (AKA the OFFICIAL Sports Bar of Hackensack Riverkeeper – stop in and tell ‘em Riverkeeper sent you!).

**Wilson’s Phalarope** – A real Meadowlands rarity, one of these sandpipers was noted at DeKorte Park on 9/30.

**Yellow-crowned Night Heron** – The updated nest count from Harmon Cove in Secaucus went from twelve to a near-record fifteen pairs. Late August Eco-Cruise participants enjoyed numerous sightings of both adults and young throughout the southern Meadowlands.

Thanks to our contributors and a tip o’ the naturalist’s hat to: Anonymous, Daniel Carola, Dorothy Carola, Judy Cinquina, Terry Doss, Ray Duffy, Gil Hawkins, Ivan Kossak, Lynn Kramer, Joe Labriola, Drew McQuade, Fred Nealon, Bill Schultz, Bill Sheehan, Don Torino and Chris Takacs.

**Postscript:** Our colleague Don Torino from the Bergen County Audubon Society had a Letter to the Editor published in *The Record* soon after the *Times* story broke. In it, he made a very good case for doing things to make life easier for birds of all species. Don offered several great suggestions that homeowners and others could take to heart. They include:

1. Keeping cats indoors. While there are differing data sets as regards the number of birds and other small animals estimated to be killed each year by free-roaming house cats, all agree that the death toll is in the hundreds of millions. And that doesn’t take into account feral cat “colonies”.

2. Preventing bird strikes on windows. There are many inexpensive techniques one can use to prevent, or at least lower the incidence of birds hitting windows. Window strikes are a major cause of mortality among migrating birds; it doesn’t take much to help prevent them.

3. Making your property bird-friendly. By planting native trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants – and by providing vegetative cover and a clean water source – we can all make life just a little bit easier for birds and for wildlife in general. You don’t have to feed; just be a good neighbor.

If more homeowners, landscapers and physical plant managers took just those three suggestions to heart, I’m sure our resident and migrant birds would benefit greatly. And as a result, we would benefit as well. After all, they’re literally the “canaries in the coal mine”. Thanks, Don!
WMA 5 Ambassador Update
I’m Here, I’m Near, and I’m on the Job.

By Jennifer Schneider

Hi! I’m Jenny Schneider, your 2019-2020 AmeriCorps NJ Watershed Ambassador. I’m happy to be here at Hackensack Riverkeeper and looking forward to my term of service in my home watershed. I’d like to start with a quick review of the program and how it works:

Each year, twenty Watershed Ambassadors are hired by the NJ Department of Environmental Protection for a year-long (1,700 hour) AmeriCorps service term run through DEP’s Division of Water Monitoring & Standards. Each Ambassador is assigned to one of the state’s twenty watershed management areas (WMAs). Our area, WMA-5, includes the Hackensack and Hudson River Watersheds. It should come as no surprise that WMA-5 is the most densely populated WMA in New Jersey, with most of Bergen and Hudson counties falling inside its boundaries. All those people mean increased impacts and stresses on all of our waterways. That’s where we Ambassadors come in – our mission is to promote watershed stewardship through education and direct community involvement, and monitor the health of New Jersey’s waterways.

For the past two decades my WMA-5 predecessors have helped improve the Hackensack River Watershed through countless educational presentations, stream assessments, green infrastructure projects, restoration projects, and environmental stewardship trainings. I’m excited to be the latest in a long line of Watershed Ambassadors hosted at Hackensack Riverkeeper – WMA-5’s host agency since the program started in 2000. In fact, 2020 is the NJ Watershed Ambassador Program’s 20th Anniversary!

Here’s a little about me: I graduated in May 2019 with BAs in History and in Political Science from Rutgers University. While I was studying and living in New Brunswick, I developed a deeper passion for public service and environmental issues. Through volunteering with local environmental organizations and interning for groups like the Rutgers Raritan River Consortium, I knew that the Watershed Ambassador program was a perfect fit for my immediate post-graduation plans. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to serve the Bergen County community that I’ve lived with my entire life. I am looking forward to doing my part to improve water quality in our watershed!

Please feel free to contact me to schedule a presentation, project, environmental stewardship training, or to discuss any other watershed-related ideas you have at: ambassador@hackensack-riverkeeper.org. You can also stay up-to-date with AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassador events statewide by liking their Facebook page at: www.facebook.com/NJWAP.
Environmental Education – The Future
Real Science for Real People

By Dr. Beth Ravit

I met Captain Bill at the first public meeting I ever attended twenty-one years ago. After three decades in corporate retailing I had retired and formed a consulting company. The public meeting was a presentation for the Meadowlands Mills mall, now known as “American Dream”. When the meeting was mysteriously cancelled before it began, I asked the man wearing a Hackensack River cap what was happening. This encounter marked the beginning of a journey into New Jersey environmental education that culminated this year with my retirement from Rutgers’ Department of Environmental Sciences; a second career I owe to meeting Captain Bill.

Retirement causes a mental shift. You are forced to acknowledge that although important work still needs to be done, you are no longer the person “out in the trenches”, and so the importance of nurturing the next generation becomes very much a concern. As I considered my environmental research in the Meadowlands and pondered this existential question, I decided to reach out to Jodi Jamieson to talk about the environmental education programs Riverkeeper leads. The conversation gave me tremendous confidence in our organization’s ability to capture the imagination of future environmental champions that I would like to share with Tidelines readers.

Jodi has been leading Riverkeeper’s Urban Watershed Education Program (UWEP) for the past decade. This partnership with NJDEP and middle schools within the watershed region is funded by the state through a DEP grant. Jodi, Captain Bill, and Captain Hugh have taken 2,000 students from Bayonne, Carteret, Elizabeth, Jersey City, Secaucus, North Bergen, Hackensack, and South Hackensack out onto waters of the estuary. Many of those children see their home waters for the first time. The classes address the topics of climate change, pollution, and water quality through hands-on water testing out in the field. The students get a chance to try their hand at fishing.

Junior Stewards spend time after school with Watershed Ambassadors learning how to do visual and biological assessments at Coles Brook. Later in the spring they travel to the School of Conservation and compare the Coles Brook results with the most pristine water in New Jersey.
If any agree to sacrifice their fish to science, they dissect their catch under the direction of an NJDEP biologist. Jodi says this “real world” biology lesson is the overwhelmingly favorite activity in this program. 

The Urban Watershed Education Program is a three-day event for each participating school. Two years ago Riverkeeper obtained funding to expand this tremendously successful program into a six month Junior Stewardship Program. The Junior Stewardship education initiative supports New Jersey Science, Technology, Engineering, & Math (STEM) standards – Jodi calls it “UWEP on steroids”. This after school program was introduced in Hackensack Middle School and since its inception forty students have participated.

Partnering with Hooked on Fishing Not on Drugs (HOFNOD) the Junior Stewardship Program runs from January through June, giving students time for classroom experiences, fishing in local waters, trips on Riverkeeper’s pontoon boats, and field trips to places like the Adventure Aquarium in Camden, NJ to spend the night at Sharks in the Dark. Other field experiences include visiting the SUEZ water treatment plant, walking their neighborhoods to check for storm drains and learn about Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs), doing biological and physical assessments at Coles Brook, as well as, charter boat fishing and tagging fish with the American Littoral Society. If Jodi’s vision of expanding Riverkeeper’s environmental education programs is realized, she will add new schools and additional grades to the Junior Stewardship Program. A long-term goal is to establish a similar after school program open to all students in every Hackensack River Watershed town. In addition to the organized classes Jodi leads, Capt. Hugh will soon contact over 60 high schools to inform them that the nomination period for the Utzinger-Vellekamp Scholarship is now open. Now in its twentieth year, the $1000 award is open to all graduating seniors who reside and/or attend school within our watershed.

I’m finding retirement bittersweet – time to spend with family, friends, and activities that are especially meaningful without the horrendous commute to New Brunswick. I do miss the research, connection to restoration projects, and interactions with municipalities, counties, and non-profits that the Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) established over the last eighteen years. However, I am not worried about the future of environmental education in the Hackensack River Watershed. Riverkeeper’s education programs and scholarship are preparing and encouraging the next generation of environmental scientists who will take my place.

Above Left: Junior Steward Arlenny, at Mill Creek Point in Secaucus, shows off her catch — a White perch. Above Right: Junior Steward Amanda with her catch — a Bonito, aboard a charter boat off Atlantic Highlands.

Top Far Right: Students looking for and finding a few Benthic Macroinvertebrates in their local water samples.

Below Right: Students enjoying an Eco-Cruise aboard the Geraldine Theresa in the Meadowlands with Captain Bill.
Better Know a Colleague: Thielke Arboretum

By Hugh M. Carola

Just over a century ago, Ridgewood, NJ physician Dr. Frederick W. Morris purchased an eleven-acre tract of land in neighboring Glen Rock on which he built a home. Dr. Morris loved trees and planted a large number of them – as well as many shrubs and herbaceous species – on the property as well.

In 1954, about ten years after Dr. Morris died (and after his property had passed through several owners); the Borough of Glen Rock purchased the site for $44,000 and declared it a park. Over the intervening years, members of the Glen Rock Garden Club walked the land and marveled over its wide diversity of plant species. Eventually the club recommended that the area become an arboretum – an area devoted to tree cultivation and enjoyment – as opposed to a typical “lawn and recreation” park. In May 1963 Glen Rock did just that and the Glen Rock Arboretum was begun.

In addition to continuing support from the garden club, the nonprofit Friends of the Glen Rock Arboretum (FOGRA) was founded to maintain the arboretum. Its mission is to “conserve, maintain and enhance the Arboretum” and in so doing, the property has come a long way from the early 1960s.

Today, the arboretum serves as a field laboratory for the Glen Rock Public Schools and hosts events for many local civic organizations. Countless visitors – including wedding parties – enjoy its grounds each year. Most of its recent development and programming – events like Nature Nerd Night and Summer Story Walk - have been led by the tireless efforts of Carol Thielke, a longtime Glen Rock resident. In 2009 the Arboretum was renamed in her honor.

According to our Nature Program Cooperative colleagues there’s always something happening at the Arboretum, so they invite you to stop by for a stroll on the garden path and around the pond to enjoy its hundreds of plants, trees, birds and other natural wonders. As they say, “Good things come in small (11-acre) packages”.

The Arboretum entrance is located on Doremus Avenue next to the municipal pool parking lot. FOGRA wants visitors to know that while there’s no parking in the Arboretum itself, there’s plenty of room in the lot or on Doremus Avenue. For more information, check out www.thielkearboretum.org.

35th Annual Winter Conference

Educating for a Just and Sustainable Future

Friday, January 24, 2020
w/ Preconference workshops on Thursday, 1/23

ANJEE presents a full day – and more – for environmental educators of every description at the Crowne Plaza Hotel & Conference Center in Plainsboro, NJ.

The conference features a wide variety of workshops, plenary sessions and exhibits designed to inspire classroom teachers and nonformal educators alike.

The event concludes with ANJEE’s annual Awards Reception. Hope to see you there!

For complete info, including conference schedule and registration link go to: www.anjee.org/winter-conference1.html
Announcing the Utzinger-Vellekamp Scholarship

By Hugh M. Carola

2020 marks the twentieth anniversary of our annual environmental scholarship award. In 2003 we renamed the then-two year old program to honor founding Trustee Ron Vellekamp, who had passed away the previous year. From then until 2019, the Ron Vellekamp Environmental Scholarship made awards totaling $17,000 to some of the most talented and environmentally literate high school graduates in our watershed. The generosity of Ron’s family helps keep this legacy of his alive.

Last year’s Fall/Winter issue of Tidelines included the story of another founding Trustee who passed away while actively serving our organization and its mission – Margaret Utzinger. In addition to helping Captain Bill found Hackensack Riverkeeper in 1997, Margaret was twice elected Board President, and served for twenty-one years until her death in August 2018. She was a friend and mentor to all of us.

In many ways during Hackensack Riverkeeper’s early years, Margaret and Ron set the tone for our board and ensured its ongoing focus as Hackensack Riverkeeper’s fiduciary guardian. They were also good friends who cared about our mission – and our future – as much as anyone could. For those reasons, and with the blessings of the Vellekamp and Utzinger families, we are proud to rename our annual award the Utzinger-Vellekamp Scholarship in their shared honor. And it is my privilege to oversee it.

All information about the scholarship program, including eligibility and application criteria is available at Hackensack Riverkeeper.org or by calling me at 201-968-0808. Applications are being accepted between New Year’s Day and Earth Day (April 22), 2020.

Be a Friend of Hackensack Riverkeeper

Your help is urgently needed. Hackensack Riverkeeper® operates with assistance and contributions from concerned citizens such as yourself. Please show your support for environmental health and conservation within the Hackensack River Watershed by making a donation today. HRI is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Your donation is tax deductible.

Name ____________________________________________
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City, State, Zip_______________________________________
Phone # (required) (_____)_________________________________
Email ______________________________________________
_____$250   _____$100   _____$50   _____$35   $_______ (other)
_____Amex            _____Visa           _____MC         _____Discover
Card #__________________________________ V code_________
Signature: __________________________Exp. Date ___ /___ /___
____ My employer will match my gift. A form is enclosed.
____ Contact me about volunteering for Hackensack Riverkeeper®.
____ Please remove me from your mailing list.

Make checks payable to: Hackensack Riverkeeper, 231 Main Street, Hackensack, NJ 07601 or visit www.hackensackriverkeeper.org/donate.html to donate online.

WHERE YOUR DOLLARS GO

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<th>Management &amp; General Expenses</th>
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CSO Permits: Lessons Learned

continued from page 1

Among Supplemental Teams. Their approach is to actively engage attendees, rather than talk at them. This is not to say that permittees who hold meetings that are more information driven are wrong, just that there are Supplemental Team members with experience and knowledge that can add valuable input to the process if the permittees allow and encourage them to actively engage.

Another positive outcome has been a more accepting review of Green Infrastructure (GI) in some communities. While other communities were less embracing of GI than others - due mainly to concerns over cost, manpower to maintain and available space to allocate to GI – they nevertheless made the attempt to incorporate and understand GI and how it could benefit their communities.

As to the less-than-stellar aspects of the CSO permits, which are equally frustrating to advocates and permittees, the most common issue is public input and participation in the process. CSOs are not exciting to talk about, nor is the process under which they are being addressed. However, it is still vitally important that the communities affected by CSOs understand what they are, how they affect them, and how they can be a part of the solution process.

We are all struggling to find more opportunities for community involvement and public participation in the process. There is no single answer, but better communication to those affected via message boards, social media, and community groups announcing Supplemental Team meetings and disseminating educational materials is a start. Essentially, utilizing avenues of information that the public regularly use is preferable to less frequently accessed avenues buried deep in city webpages.

Holding some meetings at a time and place where the public can more easily attend is also important. It’s not necessary to hold every meeting this way, but two or three a year would be a great start. If the Supplemental Team meetings are all held on weekday mornings, at a location not accessible by public transit, then public participation is unfeasible. There are also many community members and partners with years, some decades, of experience in the areas affected by CSOs and who would gladly share their expertise with permittees if they would only listen. Better interaction with local attendees of Supplemental Team meetings and an effort to engage them is a benefit to all.

Going forward, we’ll be asking for a minimum number of meetings to be held at a time that the general public can attend and that the opportunity to do so be well-advertised. We’ll also be pushing for more specific and enforceable requirements on public outreach and input for permittees from the NJDEP. Also, incorporating the discussion on stormwater management and its impact on CSO issues will help inform decisions that will impact both issues and can help improve local policymaking around impervious cover and land use. Finally, we’ll be looking to expand the conversation on green versus grey infrastructure, including costs versus long term benefits, community involvement and collaboration, and the understanding that there is no one-size-fits-all solution when using GI.

Our next steps will revolve around taking the lessons learned over the last 5 years and applying them to a better version of CSO permits in 2020.