

Watershed News

Lower Passaic and Saddle Rivers

Watershed Management Area 4

Volume 2, Issue 2



WATSESSING HEIGHTS NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By Jane Myers

It began small, informal, unheralded. A triad of neighbors on the Manhattan-bound train one morning expressed concerns about their neighborhood and spoke in terms of possibilities. A Sunday evening meeting with a handful of friends and acquaintances



Wigwam Brook, Watsessing Park

followed, with neighborhood image and future strength the primary topics. The time was early 1998...the outcome was the creation of the Watsessing Heights Neighborhood Association, Inc. (WHNA).

More than five years have now passed, and from all indications the WHNA is making a difference! Early on, it was observed that: "Neighbors in the Watsessing Park area have battled federal officials over a radioactive property cleanup plan, prodded the state to locate the source of pollution in Wigwam Brook, and cajoled Essex County to take better care of the park.

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WMA 4 Executive Committee:

- PAC Chair, Frank Moritz, Ridgewood Water
- PAC Vice Chair, Veronica Crow, Passaic Valley Sewerage Commissioners
- PAC Vice Chair, Mark Newell, Ramapo College
- TAC Chair, Russ Furnari, PSEG Services Corporation
- EOC Chair, Ellie Gruber, League of Women Voters
- OSC Chair, Paul Russo, Bloomfield College

Editor: Lisa Summers

Waterway Debris—Is the impact more than meets the eye?

Adapted from an article by Dr. Richard Pardi*

To anyone who has walked along the streams and rivers of New Jersey, it is shocking to see the quantity of garbage floating on and choking the waterways. Plastic bottles and styrofoam containers collect around fallen tree limbs, aluminum cans litter the shoreline, plastic

bags cling to logs in the current and, as everyone knows, the lower Passaic River is littered nearly bank to bank with old tires.

The debris is ugly, but its effects are more insidious than merely offending

(cont. on page 3)

Watsessing Neighborhood Assoc. (cont.)

Now they are demanding action from the Township.” (*Bloomfield Life*, 9/21/00) And the beat still goes on!

Membership in the Association currently ranges from “a-z”: aerospace engineer to zoning board member, and issues run the gamut from adaptive-reuse of former industrial sites to zoological health in our beloved Watsessing Park. Although every project and issue have been important, it is noteworthy that Watsessing Park was WHNA’s first (and ongoing) endeavor.



Cleanup Day at Watsessing Park

Begun in 1901 by the Olmsted Brothers (Frederick Law Olmsted is the “father” of American landscape architecture), Watsessing Park is part of the Essex County Park System, the oldest in the country. The park consists of 69.67 acres (including 3.53 acres of waterways) in Bloomfield and East Orange. Classic Olmstedian features such as open fields, natural-blended waterways, winding paths and overlooks are all evident and allow for respite and quiet contemplation in the midst of an urban setting. In addition, a bandstand, lawn bowling green, playgrounds and ball fields provide venues for active recreation.

Maintaining the health and vitality of Watsessing Park – an oasis in our neighborhood – has been, and continues to be, of paramount importance to the WHNA. Some of our past and current activities include:

- biannual park cleanups, involving neighborhood residents, local business owners, civic/social groups, and government agencies.
- partnership with Essex County for major park improvements, both capital and operational.

- submission of recommendations for the Essex County Park, Recreation and Open Space Master Plan, many of which were incorporated.
- planting (and maintenance) of barrel planters at each park entrance, as well as a “W” flower bed.
- landscaping a traffic island adjacent to the park.
- formation and incorporation of a sister organization – the Watsessing Park Conservancy – to champion park causes.
- feasibility study (in process) for inclusion of Watsessing Park on both the national and state registers of historic places.

The WHNA is also involved with many other aspects of our community. For example, we secured Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds for façade and streetscape improvements to two neighborhood business districts, and successfully lobbied for the adaptive-reuse of a historical industrial building to loft apartments. Also, we publish and distribute, free-of-charge, a bimonthly newsletter to keep everyone apprised of important happenings in our community and to encourage participation and support.

These are exciting and busy times in Watsessing Heights! The WHNA is proud to be involved and will continue to strive to make a difference!



“We are a group of concerned neighbors who have decided to join together and make a difference in our community. We value our safety, our children’s well-being and education, the care and upkeep of our streets and our property values. We are committed to the Watsessing Heights section of Bloomfield and the preservation and character of our neighborhood.”

Watsessing Heights Neighborhood Association Mission Statement

Watsessing Heights Neighborhood Association, Inc.
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Waterway Debris (cont.)

the eye. Plastics make up most of the marine litter worldwide with the majority from rivers and municipal drainage systems. Nearly half of all sea birds and almost all sea turtles have plastic particles in their gut. Marine mammals and fish frequently become ensnared in floating plastic debris.

In a fresh-water environment the dangers of floating debris are numerous. Wildlife will ingest debris even when it has no nutritional value. Because plastic doesn't break down in the gut, too much accumulation will lead to starvation. Floating debris can also lead to river flooding and the upset of delicate ecosystems. It can become a navigational hazard and threaten irrigation systems.

One of the worst consequences of a debris-contaminated waterway is that the public may come to view it more as a garbage dump than a natural system, leading to further abuses. This downward cycle is unacceptable. We must continue to raise consciousness by publicizing cleanups, adopting stream segments, enforcing litter laws and pushing for legislation that protects our waterways.

** For original article contact Dr. Richard Pardi of William Paterson University and the Hawthorne Environmental Commission: pardir@wpunj.edu*

Greenway Forum A Success

By Nancy Zimmerman

The Greenway Forum hosted by the Friends of Clark's Pond & Third River and the Bloomfield Third Riverbank Association (BTRA) at the college was a success! About 100 people were there to hear about the benefits and practicalities of developing a greenway along the Second and Third Rivers in Bloomfield. Guest speakers included Dr. Paul Mankiewicz, Greg Remaud, Kevin Moore, Karen Long and Robert Takash. One of the BTRA members presented a multimedia display about the area waterways and natural history of Bloomfield. Our town council members, mayor, county freeholder, county executive and state senator were all invited and all attended.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT: GOOSE DROPPINGS POLLUTE MORE THAN HORSES AND COWS

We all agree that the proliferation of Canada Geese droppings has been an unsightly problem. But, it's more than that. According to scientific studies the amount of fecal coliform in the droppings from one goose in one day is much worse than that of one cow or one horse per day. Hard to believe, but true.

We must decide on Best Management Practice to discourage geese from landing and staying on our neatly manicured corporate lawns with ponds, playing fields, golf courses and denuded riverbanks or paved

paths. Our shoes carry this into our homes; our children play on these fields. We created this situation, not the geese, so we must deal with the problem in a logical manner.

Armed with scientific research, we see that there is a real danger in having this waste in our public areas. Your DEP is working with the WMAs to figure out a solution. We are having monthly goose counts in our watershed. If your group wants to participate, we need you. All wildlife is precious, but we have leash laws for dogs, restrictions



for ownership of horses and cows. We must have better ways to deal with our feathered friends; it's a matter of health.

Animal	Organisms Fecal ColiformMatter Per Day
1 goose	49 trillion
1 horse	4.2 trillion
1 cow	5.4 trillion

Did You Know?

... Our watershed, WMA#4, is home to 66 towns within 5 counties. It is one of the largest in the State, with 180 square miles.

... The first submarine was launched in our watershed, in 1878, by John Holland, from Paterson. Named "Boat #1," this 14 foot, one-man vessel immediately sank because of the failure to plug the drains! After 5 design and launch failures, *The Holland* was successfully launched in Elizabethport in 1897. It was 53.3 feet long and could travel 7 mph. Mr. Holland left the New York harbor for Long Island because, as he wrote, "I was constantly torpedoed by heavy ship traffic, curious

navy vessels, and foreign spies" (excerpted from LI News-day).



... The Marine Mammal Stranding Center in Brigantine, NJ urges all residents to eliminate balloon launches. These helium-filled balloons travel long distances, ending up in our oceans and waterways. They are ingested by turtles (who mistake them for jellyfish), harbor seals, and even sperm whales. There are other ways to make your event a festive one.

For more information contact the Center at www.mmsc.org.



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Regular Meeting Schedule

Public Advisory Committee

Date: Second Thursday of each month

Location: Various, within WMA 4

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

For More Information: Frank Moritz 201-670-5521

Technical Advisory Committee

Date: Last Thursday of each month

Location: Oldham Pond Environmental Center, N. Haledon

Time: 6:30pm

For More Information: Russ Furnari 973-430-8848

Education and Outreach Committee

Date: Third Wednesday of each month

Location: Clifton Public Library, Allwood Branch, Clifton

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

For More Information: Veronica Craw 973-817-5958

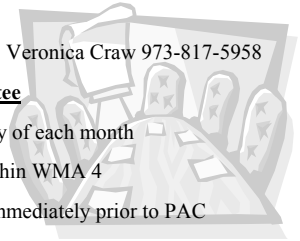
Open Space Committee

Date: Second Thursday of each month

Location: Various, within WMA 4

Time: 5:00-6:30pm, immediately prior to PAC

For More Information: Paul Russo 973-748-9000



Watershed Management Area 4

c/o New Jersey Department of
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Watershed Management
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