

Watershed News

Lower Passaic and Saddle Rivers

Watershed Management Area 4

Volume 3, Issue 2



EARTH DAY PASSAIC RIVER PADDLE/CLEAN-UP A SUCCESS

The Education and Outreach Committee of WMA 4 hosted the First Annual Paddle/Clean-up on April 24, in honor of Earth Day. This was a “first hand” look at the Passaic River from the water to the shore. Our motto for the day: *“The best way to see the Passaic River is by being ON the River...Let’s all take pride in our River.”*

With financial support from the Passaic Valley Sewerage



Jared Eudell, Hackensack Riverkeeper Director of Canoe Project; Ellie Gruber, League of Women Voters, Ridgewood; Ken Klipstein, Director of Planning, DEP, Division of Watershed Management; Nancy Zimmerman, Friends of Clarks Pond; Pat Rector, DEP, Division of Watershed Management (Photo by Kathy King)

“The best way to see the Passaic River is by being On the River...”

Commissioners (PVSC), we rented canoes and kayaks from the Hackensack Riverkeeper Canoe Project, obtained all our permits and insurance, and advertised in local papers. Residents were asked to bring their own craft if possible.

We were lucky to have a glorious but windy day, with an abundance of sunshine. There were over 30 watercraft at the Paddle: canoes, kayaks, and motorboats. We started at the Elmwood Park Marina, where a few words of welcome and support were given by Elmwood Park Mayor Richard Mola and Deputy Mayor of Fair Lawn, Martin Etlar. The route was from Elmwood Park to the River Road Bridge in Fair Lawn.

Safety boats, provided by the Elmwood Park Fire Department and PVSC, accompanied the paddlers, who got a workout from the strong current. We had neighbors who brought their own craft, students from the local high schools, and a few spectators.

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WMA 4 Executive Committee:

- **PAC Chair**, Veronica Crow, PVSC
- **PAC 1st Vice Chair**, Mark Newell, Ramapo College
- **PAC 2nd Vice Chair**, Jerry Mitchell, CM Engineers
- **TAC Chair**, Russ Furnari, PSEG Services Corporation
- **EOC Chair**, Tom Pietrykoski, PVSC
- **OSC Chair**, Paul Russo, Bloomfield College

Editor: Lisa Summers

Earth Day (cont.)

At the same time, Laura Hilton, our Americorps intern, was leading a clean-up at the Wagaraw Road Bridge in Fair Lawn, where the banks and side of the road were cleaned by residents and visitors. A second clean-up, at the site of Marcal Paper in Elmwood Park, was organized by Waterwatch with the help of intern Kathy Quillinan. Since debris is piled high along the banks of the river, they vowed to schedule another clean-up in the near future.

Supervising all the clean-ups was Bob DeVita, from PVSC, who is the unsung hero of every cleanup in our area.



Bob DeVita of the PVSC (Photo by Kathy King)

We had dignitaries from the NJ Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) both attending and paddling:

Ken Klipstein, Bureau Chief of the Division of Watershed Management (DWM), and Pat Rector, Sr. Environmental Specialist, DWM. Also attending was Deborah MacMillan, President of the League of Women Voters of New Jersey and past president of the American Canoe Association, who took our DEP guests out in her red, white, and blue canoe.

Everyone had a great time! We definitely will do it again next year. The event sparked local interest in our beautiful but neglected river, which - we are convinced - can be revived with a little loving care.

WMA 4 welcomes two new Watershed Interns: Elizabeth Bell, Campus Organizer for NJ Community Waterwatch, headquartered at Montclair State University (montclair@waterwatchonline.org); and Cara Monkowski, Americorps Watershed Ambassador, headquartered at PVSC (cmonkowski@pvsc.com).

Both interns have many important ideas for our watershed. Clean-ups have already been scheduled along with school presentations. Please contact them if your school or area needs assistance.

Passaic River Walk In Hawthorne

Dr. Richard R. Pardi
Environmental Science Program
William Paterson University

Thanks to the efforts of Mary Ellen Lyons, Recycling Coordinator for the Borough of Hawthorne, and Bob DeVita, Passaic River Restoration Coordinator for PVSC, a stretch of the left (north) bank of the Passaic River in Hawthorne has been earmarked as a river walk park. Passaic Valley cleaned up the property, removed the undergrowth, cut a “boat ramp” and covered the walk with wood chips.



River walk along the Passaic River, Hawthorne, NJ

The riverfront property is part of a 99-year lease to the Borough of Hawthorne by Kohler Distributors who own the adjacent, newly constructed warehouse facility along Wagaraw Road in Hawthorne. The property also includes an area for the proposed construction of a ball field with the assistance of Passaic County Open Space funds.

This first segment of the river walk is at present approximately 900 feet long, beginning upstream at Thomas Road (private roadway) and extending downstream, nearly to the railroad trestle over the Passaic River, between Hawthorne and Paterson. At the downstream end a drainage ditch prevents any extension of the walk at the present time. The park varies in width from a few tens of feet to a couple of hundred feet in spots.



Passaic River boat launch area in Hawthorne, NJ

Access to the river walk is through the proposed ball field site at the southern end of the Kohler Distributor’s parking lot, whose entrance is on Wagaraw Road opposite the Rag Shop center.

Ridgewood Boy Scouts Take On Stormwater Pollution

Education is the key to reducing pollutants that enter our waterways through storm drains. Motor oil, pet waste, litter, lawn chemicals, toxins and other forms of nonpoint source pollution* are currently the most significant threats to our rivers and streams. Each time it rains, water rushes into the storm drains, picking up many of these pollutants along the way. To make matters worse, some residents dump pollutants directly into the drains, thinking that they are connected to treatment systems.



In Ridgewood, Boy Scout troops are providing an invaluable community service by painting town storm drains with colorful markers that urge residents to refrain from dumping pollutants into the drains. They are also distributing educational materials that explain what the markers represent and why we all need to be part of the solution to stormwater pollution.

**To learn more, see: "What You Can Do To Prevent Nonpoint Source Pollution in the Lower Passaic Basin Watershed." Contact mandegruber@hotmail.com or vcraw@pjsc.com.*

The Broken Window Theory

Ellie Gruber

League of Women Voters, Ridgewood

There's a proven theory that when a building has many broken windows, one more doesn't matter because nobody cares. But if you fix up each window the building looks better, and people become invested in maintaining its improved condition. So if we start taking care of one small stretch of the Passaic River by removing the trash and keeping it clean, folks will notice. They'll be less likely to dump garbage in the water and more likely to help with cleanups. In time, other stretches of the Passaic could be improved as well.

The Education Outreach Committee is going to implement the "broken window" theory with the help of Americorps, Waterwatch, and volunteers from WMA #4 committees. We are convinced that our river and its banks can be restored to a beautiful state. The plan is to have a toll free number that residents can call when they see anyone dumping. Those hundreds of tires littering the river are not native to the Passaic! They are dumped by people who think that no one will care. Well, we *do* care. We welcome new neighbors and any one else who would like to be part of the Passaic River revival. **Stay Tuned...**

Mapping the Passaic River Walkways and Parks

The Passaic River has had a grand history, but today few people know that it offers many lovely paths to walk, historical points of interest, and parks where you can push off in a canoe or sit under a shady tree with your picnic lunch. A detailed walking map of the river could change this, so on a warm September day, a small group got together to walk part of the river and begin gathering information.

Mark Newell, professor at Ramapo College and First Vice Chair of the Public Advisory Committee, acted as guide, providing historical background as the group surveyed various points of interest along the Passaic River, stopping first in Little Falls and ending at the Great Falls in Paterson. The group included Michele Bakacs, DEP Coordinator for Watershed Management Areas 4, 5 and 7, Ellie Gruber, of the League of Women Voters, Lisa Summers, editor of this publication, and Jerry Willis from the National Park Service.

Mapping the Passaic will require a coordinated effort and any assistance would be appreciated. If you would like to get involved, have any historical information to share, or know of an interesting spot or activity along the river, please contact Michele.Bakacs@dep.state.nj.us.

“Luck Isn’t Enough: The Fight for Clean Water”

A Film by University of CT Cooperative Extension

The NEMO* project at the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension has produced an excellent, short video (running time: 12 minutes) that outlines specific steps that municipal office holders and citizens can take to improve the quality of our water.

Some of the suggestions to municipal office holders include:

- Limit impervious pavement
- Require undisturbed land buffers next to waterways
- Remove sediments from roadways before they end up in water runoff
- Adopt erosion control standards
- Establish strict regulations for storing road salts
- Require an environmental site design for new building projects

Citizens are encouraged to:

- Avoid chemical pesticides and consider companion plants that repel unwanted insects
- Use organic fertilizer or plant grass species that requires less fertilizer
- Check septic tanks regularly
- Compost organic waste and grass clippings
- Pick up after your dog

**Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials Project (860) 345-4511.*



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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: Veronica Craw 973-817-5958

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: Tom Pietrykoski 973-817-5735

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

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