



## Great Swamp Watershed Association

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **Accolades for Bernards High School Students Working Toward Cleaner Water**

*Advanced Placement projects benefit Great Swamp Watershed Association, win award from The Nature Conservancy*

**Bernardsville, NJ**—Bernards High School students in Karen DeTrolio's AP Environmental Studies class made a big splash with their year-end projects this June. Working in teams of 3 or 4, they examined their own relationships with water and turned their discoveries into practical information everyone can use to avoid pollution and conserve natural resources.

The 20 projects, which included everything from a review of the impact of common household chemicals on water supplies, to an explanation of the links

between clean water and healthy wildlife, were developed in partnership with the Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA).

Dedicated to protecting the waters and the land of New Jersey's 55-square-mile Great Swamp Watershed region, GSWA will incorporate the students' work into the organization's upcoming Watershed Friendly Homes program. GSWA Director of Education and Outreach Hazel England worked with DeTrolio to design the classroom collaboration and provided guidance and support to students as their research progressed.

"GSWA was excited to initiate this project and collaborate with students from a school within the watershed," said England. "Their work will form a cornerstone for future outreach to residents in Bernardsville and the nine other towns of the Great Swamp Watershed as GSWA launches its new Watershed Friendly Homes program aimed at changing water use behavior in the region."

Students were asked to present their final projects over the course of two days to an audience made up of their peers and several visiting environmental experts from GSWA and other local community groups. Visiting experts were asked to assess each group's presentation, and choose their favorites.



*Bernards High School AP Environmental Science students (from left) Matt Whitlock, Katie Hildebrandt, and Till Rosscamp with AP Environmental Sciences teacher Karen DeTrolio.*

***Protecting our waters and our land for more than 30 years***

Awards for excellence went to four groups of students. Seniors Lauren Thomann, Abby Parker, and Erin O'Brien chose to survey their peers and the surrounding Bernardsville community to learn more about local water use and what might keep people from engaging in more conservation-oriented behavior.

Senior Morgan Blain, senior Christian Torres, and junior Jon Carter explored the true cost of bottled water production and what it would take to convince consumers to replace boutique water brands with ordinary, clean tap water.

Seniors Bina Patel, Kathryn Levin, and Edi Lima ventured under the sink to discover more about the environmental effects of those household cleaning products we all use and wash down the drain when we are done with them.

Seniors Addie Clayton, Erin Doran, and Sophie Reddi documented the construction of a rain barrel they and their friends built from scratch. Their double-barrel rainwater collection system, which cost \$200 to construct, is already at work diverting rain from the roof of Bernards High School into a courtyard garden where it nourishes a multitude of watershed friendly native plants.

A fifth group, which included seniors Matt Whitlock, Katie Hildebrandt, and Till Rosscamp, went above and beyond their teacher's requirements and submitted their project to The Nature Conservancy for consideration in the environmental organization's *Show Us Your H2O* competition for school groups and civic organizations from New Jersey's Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Morris, and Somerset Counties. Structuring their research to meet stringent contest parameters, the trio created a presentation that carefully tracked the source of drinking water for the Borough of Bernardsville, and systematically analyzed the environmental risks facing that water supply.

Their hard work was repaid in full when they took top honors for their submission. As a reward, Matt, Katie, and Till will be acknowledged for their integral role in the placement of a new rain garden that The Nature Conservancy of New Jersey will construct free of charge on the grounds of Bernards High.

"I am so pleased with the success of the project for both the GSWA and for my students," said Bernards High teacher Karen DeTrolio. "It provided my classes with a meaningful project-based learning experience, and the GSWA with the building blocks for their Watershed Friendly Homes program. As a teacher, it was incredibly rewarding to watch my students apply what they learned throughout the year to a real-life situation."

Congratulations to all of the participating Bernards H.S. students for a job well done. Their work will appear online early this fall as part of GSWA's Watershed Friendly Homes program.

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*About the Great Swamp Watershed Association.* Founded in 1981, the Great Swamp Watershed Association is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the waters and land of the 36,000-acre watershed region in New Jersey's Morris and Somerset counties. We work to maintain the beauty and health of our open space, and to monitor and protect five streams: Loantaka Brook, Great Brook, Primrose Brook, Black Brook, and the Upper Passaic—which feed into the Passaic River and provide drinking water to more than a million people.