



Great Swamp Watershed Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Public Forum Will Focus On Local Community Response To Changing Climate, Worsening Weather

Multidisciplinary panel of experts from Montclair State University will share climate change perspectives at Somerset County Environmental Education Center, May 13.

Basking Ridge, NJ—A spate of unusual weather events, including hurricanes, flooding, drought, and unseasonable snowfalls, have focused New Jersey’s attention on the current and future consequences of global climate change.

While national debate in the U.S. lingers over abstract arguments about the existence or non-existence of global warming and other climate issues, local communities and individuals struggle to deal with new climate realities, such as the destruction wrought by Superstorm Sandy, frequent flooding along the Passaic River, and a wealth of predictions forecasting more and more-severe weather events.

Clearer information and a more complete message about the broad impact of ongoing climate change phenomena is needed if we expect ourselves to bounce back from intensifying natural disasters. The need is critical if we expect our communities and our social institutions to effectively adapt to protect us as the natural world we live in continues to change.

The Great Swamp Watershed Association, Somerset County Park Commission, and Montclair State University’s Passaic River Institute, will work together this spring to help local communities build a base of knowledge aimed at responding to local climate change issues and locating resources for estimating future effects on our region.

On May 13, the groups will convene a public panel discussion at the Somerset County Environmental Education Center titled, “The Challenges of Climate Change and Building Resilient Communities.”

The panel of presenters will include climate change experts drawn from several different academic departments at Montclair State University, including the Department of Anthropology, the Department of Biology and Molecular Biology, the Department of Earth and Environmental Studies, and the School of Business.

Short, topical presentations from each expert will address a wide range of local concerns, including the documented rise in average temperatures in New Jersey, the unprecedented increase in public awareness of weather phenomena, the connection between land development and flooding in New Jersey, the public health implications of post-traumatic stress in the wake of natural disasters, climate-

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change best practices for the business community, and the important, but often overlooked, role of human relationships in preparing for and recovering from severe climatic events.

Panel moderator Dr. Meyin Wu, director of the Passaic River Institute and professor of Biology and Molecular Biology at MSU, will open the forum for public discussion and questions from the audience following the completion of presentations.

This event will begin at **7:00 p.m.** and will conclude at or after **8:30 p.m.** The Somerset County Environmental Education Center is located at 190 Lord Stirling Road in Basking Ridge, NJ. Advanced registration is strongly recommended. Please register online at *GreatSwamp.org*, or call 973-538-3500 x22 to register by telephone. Registration is free of charge, but voluntary donations are gratefully accepted.

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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.

About the Somerset County Park Commission and the Environmental Education Center. The Somerset County Park Commission is committed to excellence in promoting stewardship of land and resources, providing outstanding recreation opportunities and leisure services, and fostering an environment which is service-oriented and responsive to public needs. The Somerset County Park Commission Environmental Education Center is located within Lord Stirling Park, in the Basking Ridge section of Bernards Township, and is nestled within 425 acres of the western portion of the Great Swamp Basin of the Passaic River. The variety of habitats of floodplains, swamps, rivers, intermittent streams, marshes, meadows, and natural and man-made ponds, fields, and forests provide homes for diverse plant and animal populations in this environmentally sensitive park. All are within walking distances of the multi-faceted building.

About the Passaic River Institute. The Passaic River Institute (PRI) conducts environmental research and education to help solve environmental problems, focusing on the Passaic River, its tributaries and surrounding watershed lands. PRI is actively working on building a scientific community, conducting cutting-edge research, providing environmental trainings and education programs, and promoting public awareness in watershed and sustainability sciences.