



Great Swamp Watershed Association

P.O. Box 300 • New Vernon, NJ 07976

(973) 538-3500 • www.GreatSwamp.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 9, 2014

Celebration Will Honor Longtime Great Swamp Refuge Manager Bill Koch

Great Swamp Watershed Association gala scheduled for October 29 in Morristown, NJ.

Morristown, NJ—The Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) is pleased to announce that its 2014 Gala Celebration will take place on October 29, 2014, at the Westin Governor Morris in Morristown, NJ.

With more than 300 people expected to attend, the event represents this year's largest gathering of advocates and boosters supporting the protection of water and land in New Jersey's Great Swamp region. Whether you live, work, or play in this special corner of the state, you are welcome to come and enjoy this evening of celebration. Festivities will include a cocktail hour, a dinner banquet, and an expansive silent auction.

Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen (NJ-11), a longtime supporter of Great Swamp preservation efforts, will serve as the honorary chair of this year's event.

Under his aegis, the gala will honor the 43-year career of U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Refuge Manager Bill Koch.

"I am delighted to be part of this year's Gala Celebration honoring Bill Koch," said Congressman Frelinghuysen.

"[Bill's] love for the Great Swamp, his fellow refuge employees, and the many volunteers has been a great mark of his service over his entire career. His stewardship at the Great Swamp will serve as a model for Wildlife Refuge managers across the country for many years to come."



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services Refuge Manager Bill Koch will be the guest of honor at the Great Swamp Watershed Association's 2014 Gala Celebration on October 29 in Morristown.

Bill Koch recently retired from a 34-year stint as manager of the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge where he won accolades for his work. Under his leadership, the Refuge became a model for similar institutions across the nation and won an Environmental Achievement Award from the U.S. Department of the Interior for the successful remediation of an old landfill on Refuge lands.

Koch also spearheaded the expansion of the Refuge's boundaries by acquiring several adjacent properties. One such acquisition eventually led to the establishment of the Helen C. Fenske Visitor Center. Located in a converted farmhouse near the main entrance to the Refuge, the Fenske Center uses interactive exhibits to teach important lessons about New Jersey's natural world. It also tells the story of activist Helen Fenske and other leaders from nearby communities who launched an unprecedented grassroots campaign to keep the Great Swamp from becoming a large Port Authority jetport in the 1950s and 60s.

The visual theme for this year's gala, which comprises a photo of an eastern bluebird taken by Mendham Township resident Ari Kaufman, is a direct acknowledgement of Koch's long-term effort to increase and revitalize open field and meadow habitat at the Refuge. These swift and magnificently attired songbirds require such areas in order to live and breed. Koch's work in this area has been so successful that the Refuge now boasts one of New Jersey's largest breeding populations of eastern bluebirds.

Tickets for the event begin at \$150 per person. Premium tickets, including tables for ten individuals, are also available. For more information, as well as online ticket sales and sponsorship opportunities, please visit *GreatSwamp.org*. Please direct all telephone inquiries, including ticket requests, to Debbie Rice at (973) 538-3500. x14.

Gala attendance is not required in order to participate in the silent auction. An auction catalogue, as well as instructions for mobile text bidding, will be made available at *GreatSwamp.org* beginning October 10. The silent auction will close at approximately 9:00 p.m. on October 29.

Proceeds from all ticket sales and auction purchases will go to support the environmental stewardship, education and advocacy programs of the Great Swamp Watershed Association.

Underwriting support for the Great Swamp Watershed Association's 2014 Gala Celebration has been generously provided by Investors Bank and PSEG.

###

Contact: Steve Reynolds
Director, Communications & Membership, GSWA
(973) 538-3500 x21
sreynolds@greatswamp.org

About the Great Swamp Watershed Association. Founded in 1981, the Great Swamp Watershed Association (GSWA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving and protecting the water and land of New Jersey's

36,000-acre Great Swamp Watershed region. GSWA works with stakeholders in Morris County and Somerset County municipalities to maintain the health and beauty of open spaces; to educate the public about regional environmental issues; and to monitor and safeguard the five headwater streams—Loantaka Brook, Great Brook, Primrose Brook, Black Brook, and the Upper Passaic—that feed the Great Swamp and the Passaic River.