

Minutes for the Joint Meeting of the  
Science & Technology Committee and the Stream Team,  
Monday, January 11, 2010

Attendees: Kelley Curran, Hazel England, Roger Edwards, Stephen Gruber, Ann Campbell,  
Wesley Boyce, Frank Stillinger

The meeting was called to order at 6:40 pm.

This was the second meeting combining the Stream Team (ST) and the Science & Technology Committee (S&T) presentations and discussions. The first occurred on November 9, 2009. On this second occasion Kelley covered the principal ST concerns, starting with NJDEP's new Compendium of Standards (<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/standards/>), and their excellent water quality fact sheets (<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/wms/bwqsa/swqs.htm>). Kelley also distributed a tabulation sheet compiling populations and water supply sources for the ten towns in the Great Swamp watershed. A Great Brook sampling has been scheduled for Saturday, April 3. Possible dates for the 2010 stream cleanup in the Loantaka Brook Reservation are Saturday, April 24 or Sunday, April 25, although to avoid conflict with area events related to Earth Day (April 22), April 10 or 11 might be more suitable alternatives.

NJDEP will pursue the 0.4 mg/l phosphorus limit for the net contribution of sewage treatment plant dischargers in the Passaic basin as a whole, which would be an improvement over current practice. However, there is a delay in imposing any constraints on individual dischargers until permitting for all sewage treatment plants can be synchronized to ease the introduction of the new basin-wide standard. One result of this approach may be the trading of allocations whereby some dischargers could exceed the new limit if others achieve significantly lower values, which might meet the new TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) for the whole basin but could be an undesirable outcome for some streams.

Hazel mentioned a proposal to invite Charles Duhigg to present a water quality evening lecture at the GSWA headquarters. He is the author of a prominent series of front-page NY Times articles during the last few months that have captured substantial attention, the last one of which is entitled "That Tap Water is Legal but May be Unhealthy".

An earlier proposal to prepare a newsletter article about widespread use of the antibacterial/ antiviral disinfectant triclosan has yet to be completed. However an essay prepared by 2009 summer intern Kristin Vanderbilt concerning low impact development techniques (LID) is currently being edited for newsletter inclusion. Attendees at the joint meeting also discussed the possibility of creating an article about notorious invasive plant species and acceptable native plant replacements for them.

The gas and electric utility rights of way in the watershed formed an additional discussion subject. The central issue concerned the unnecessarily drastic vegetation control on those rights of way, specifically involving heavy herbicide application with negative wildlife impact. Aquatic species in particular are reported to be especially at risk from frequently used herbicides. Maps of the cleared utility corridors in the Great Swamp Watershed were distributed to the attendees. These corridors total at least 23 miles in length, and occupy approximately one-half square mile, while crossing or running close to many streams in the watershed.

Hazel discussed several Conservation Management Area (CMA) issues. One concerned the desirability to develop a more effective strategy to convince individual corporate volunteers about the long-term significance of GSWA's mission and activities, with the goal of recruiting new members. Also a Google spreadsheet will be established for other GSWA volunteers to enter information about their own contributed activities and times spent. Another issue was possible volunteer work in the disconnected Case portion of the CMA, specifically to establish a trail to and within that area. Also there may be opportunities to erect small fenced-in areas on Case to protect enclosed native plants. The deer-fence extension project at the LaBarre section of the CMA is only about half completed, but appears to be at least part of the reason that no deer tracks have recently been seen within that section. The recently constructed boardwalk into the Zimmer-section marsh (thanks to Eagle Scout Scott Hume and his family) generated some comments, including the possibility of erecting a blind at its endpoint. Various CMA maintenance projects were enumerated by the participants, including bird box repair and replacement, restoring the information sign at the entry-point foot bridge, and applying wood preservative to the bridges and benches.

The next scheduled meeting has been planned for Monday, March 8, again to involve jointly the ST and S&T members and activities.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 pm.

These minutes were drafted and have been edited by Frank Stillinger.