

SUSSEX COUNTY WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT

POLICY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 12, 2013

The meeting was opened at 7:35 p.m. by Chairman Butz. The meeting was held in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-1 of 1975, as amended, and notice has been forwarded to the newspapers and posted on the bulletin board maintained at the Sussex County Administrative Center for public announcement.

**ROLL CALL:**

MEMBERS PRESENT: James Landrith, Andover Borough  
Jeffrey Butz, Vice-Chairman, Fredon Township  
Howard Baker, Hopatcong Borough  
David Muscalo, Lafayette Township  
Paul Baldwin, Town of Newton  
Eric Powell, Sparta Township  
Lisa Chammings, Stillwater Township  
Annette Stendor, Sussex Borough  
Michael Furrey, Vernon Township  
Richard Gottemoller, At-Large  
Kathy Little, At-Large

EXCUSED MEMBERS: Keith Gourlay, Hampton Township  
Carrine Kaufer, Hardyston Township  
Joe Pinzone, Sandyston Township  
Denise Webb, Wantage Township  
Joseph Lashendock, At-Large  
Eleanor Mensonides, At-Large  
John Nugent, At-Large

STAFF MEMBERS: Alice Brees, Principal Planner  
Antoinette Wasiewicz, Recording Secretary

ALSO PRESENT: Nathaniel Sajdak, Wallkill Watershed Management Group

**PRESENTATION:**

A. IMPLEMENTING THE UPPER PAULINS KILL WATERSHED RESTORATION PLAN, NATHANIEL SAJDAK, WALLKILL WATERSHED GROUP:

Nathaniel Sajdak said he has been talking about the Upper Paulins Kill Watershed and the efforts to develop a Watershed Restoration Plan for this particular sub-watershed for many years. They are now implementing the strategies and projects that were identified in the Restoration Plans.

Mr. Sajdak said the Upper Paulins Kill is an important basin within the Upper Delaware Watershed. It is also the largest tributary of that watershed. For the last five years he has been involved with watershed restoration planning efforts under the umbrella of the Sussex County MUA and the Wallkill River Watershed Management Group. They've been facilitating a 319 Non-Point Source Pollution Grant provided by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection for the Upper Paulins Kill basin. They are also actively involved with the Papakating Creek Watershed, the Clove Brook Watershed and the Wallkill Watershed.

The Upper Paulins Kill is referred to as the headwaters area. Mr. Sajdak said when you are trying to protect an overall watershed area, the opportunity to work within the headwaters area is extremely important. He said all of the headwater tributary streams come together right around Olde Lafayette Village. It is a complex watershed in that the flow patterns are unique.

The Upper Paulins Kill has had such a high level of importance placed on it with the historical significance that surrounds the watershed area. There are riparian corridors that are extremely healthy for long sections of waterway. There are State and Federal protected lands and recreational use trails.

In 2007 a grant was awarded to create a watershed restoration plan for the Upper Paulins Kill Watershed basin. The restoration plan determines the strategies and projects needed to restore the impaired waterways. The Restoration Plan looks at total phosphorous, fecal coliform or E-coli and benthic Macro invertebrates as indicators for overall watershed health. They are looking at a 33% reduction in total phosphorous, a 98% reduction in the fecal coliform and/or E-coli numbers and to restore the benthic macro invertebrate community.

The plan is done and has been submitted to DEP and was approved by DEP. They are in the stages of receiving from DEP approximately \$700,000 worth of funding to implement projects that are identified in the plan. The plan provided them the opportunity to work with conservation partners ranging from USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Nature Conservancy, Fish and Wildlife Service, NJ Audubon North Jersey RC&D, Rutgers Cooperative Extension, Sussex County Office of Engineering and Planning, Office of GIS, all local municipalities in the basin and residents and watershed stakeholders. These partners allow them to leverage their 319 funds with other federal and technical resources both financial and labor. They are about to enter into a contract agreement to implement three priority programs that

have been identified for this watershed: an Agricultural Outreach and Assistance Program, an Urban Stormwater Management Program and a Riparian Ecosystem Enhancement Program.

The goal of the Agric. Outreach and Assistance Program is to work with the farmers on projects such as rotational grazing, fencing to keep animals out of a stream, a new manure collection system, riparian buffer programs or soil sampling programs. Mr. Sajdak said they joined forces with the USDA/NRCS.

Howard Baker asked about the typical cost. Mr. Sajdak said the cost varies greatly. He added that the size of the project will also differ in how much federal assistance they will receive from NRCS.

Alice Brees asked if they have to document improvements in water quality. Mr. Sajdak said there are projects that allow for water sampling and there are projects that involve known best management practices.

Howard Baker asked if these projects contribute to the farmer's ability to comply with DEP regulations. Mr. Sajdak said they did.

When asked what kind of water quality indicators are looked at for agriculture, Mr. Sajdak said impairments are for phosphorus and E-coli, and E-coli source is mostly from animal waste.

The second priority program they are going to implement is the Stormwater Outreach and Assistance Program, also referred to as Urban Stormwater Program. The target of this is impervious surface areas within the town of Newton, the most urban area in the Upper Paulins Kill Watershed. Partnerships have been created with Sussex County Community College (SCCC) and the Town of Newton. There are some unique infiltration stormwater collection projects that are designed to not only help reduce the loading amounts to the Paulins Kill during storm events, but also to try to help improve the infiltration into the basin. Impervious surfaces in the Town of Newton are a large contributor of stormwater loads to very small areas of waterway. The sediment that is eaten away during storm events ends up in Hyper Humus property. The ability for this wetland to function as a healthy ecosystem is being depleted. A lot of sediment in the soils is laden with phosphorous and nitrogen because of old historic land uses.

Their goal is to help reduce the stormwater loading that is occurring to the headwaters area by implementing various green infrastructure projects. SCCC has detention ponds and holding basins already in place. Students can participate in implementing simple projects and there is also an environmental club that is active and interested. These types of projects are not very expensive. They can be a simple planting project along the pond. The parking lot at the college is a cascade system but all the stormwater is coming into one channelized basin, ultimately into the detention pond. Mr. Sajdak said he would like to see the implementation of a green island structure. This would take the stormwater and put it into the green islands so that it is filtered into the ground instead of being discharged into the basin.

The third project is Riparian Restoration. The Paulins Kill basin provides an opportunity for floodplain restoration and floodplain storage. There are large sections of the Paulins Kill that were old farm grazing fields. These fields have not been grazed for 20-30 years but in a lot of these cases, these fields have not been able to naturally regenerate. They are not going back to a forested state and they are not going back to a healthy riparian corridor. Over the last couple of years, they have determined that there are sections of river that are impacted by invasive species like green canary grass. This is a vegetative grass that comes in every year and out-competes everything that is trying to grow. In 2012, the Jorritsma family at Ideal Farms allowed them to submit for funding to implement riparian restoration on their old fields. In the past two years, they joined forces with partners like the Nature Conservancy, Fish & Wildlife Service, DEP, the Pinchot Institute for Conservation, Parks and Forestry, NRCS and local landowners allowing them to go on their property. They have now initiated restoration on a two mile contiguous stretch of the Paulins Kill. They cut live stakes from willows and dogwoods that were out there and put them in the ground to germinate. Giving trees a head start over the green canary grass would be the key to success. Red dogwood stakes were cut from materials that were on the farm. US Fish and Wildlife Service did spraying with wetlands-safe herbicide to kill off areas of the green canary grass. This allowed them to bring volunteers to plant the materials. They added protective caging which is crucial to protect plants from deer and weed grub. There is a two- mile corridor that now has close to 6,500 plants throughout and 1,700 protective cages. The program has successfully planted on State property, farms and a commercial property. Bringing a flood plain area back to a riparian state will allow the area to serve as a healthier ecosystem service to the overall watershed.

Mr. Sajdak said the William Penn Foundation launched a massive watershed planning initiative for the entire Delaware River Corridor. The Wallkill Watershed Group was invited to participate in the planning opportunity with the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society and The Highlands Coalition. The partners came together to develop a restoration plan for the New Jersey Highlands area. One of the projects is a five mile restoration effort. In addition to the 319 funding from DEP, there is an active proposal to the William Penn Foundation to bring in additional funding to leverage resources.

When asked about the benefits of these restoration efforts, Mr. Sajdak said to improve water quality, they would like to bring tree overstory back to the river, lower water temperatures, stabilize the banks and reduce erosion, improve the trout habitat in the stream, improve the oxygen levels, and reduce phosphorous loading.

Mr. Sajdak said to watch for calls for volunteers and that these projects are a great learning environmental for people who are interested in this type of work. He thanked PAC for the opportunity to speak to them.

#### **MINUTES CORRECTION/APPROVAL:**

A motion was made by David Muscalo to approve the Minutes of July 11, 2013 as received. The motion was seconded by Howard Baker. All were in favor, with abstentions from Eric Powell and Michael Furrey. Motion carried.

**CORRESPONDENCE:**

Alice Brees reviewed the correspondence listed on the attached sheet and answered questions on Correspondence Numbers Three and Five.

**PLANNER'S REPORT:**

Alice Brees reported that most of her work for PAC this month was with the map and tables for existing sewer areas and infrastructure for the Wastewater Plan. There will be a meeting at DEP for the County Planners. DEP wants to discuss the current process and a deadline of January 2014 for site specific plan amendments.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

A. COUNTY WASTEWATER PLAN, EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE:

The Committee received a copy of the updated table of the NJPDES permits in the County, existing and proposed. Ms. Brees asked the members to look over the table for discrepancies. Eric Powell, from Sparta said the Helen Morgan school is never shown on the maps for Sparta. Ms. Brees also provided the Committee with a list of the existing sewer service areas. The next step is the build-out analysis. Ms. Brees said she and Eric Snyder have been working on the text portion of the plan. PAC should see that in the next month or two.

There is now a DEP funded study underway by Rutgers to better evaluate and rank potential habitat for threatened and endangered species. In the future, DEP might introduce another policy which would require "no net loss of habitat" and also rate the different habitats. These issues are tied in to where DEP will approve sewer service areas.

B. WATERSHED UPDATES: UPPER DELAWARE, WALLKILL:

Jeffrey Butz said he did not have anything to report on the Upper Delaware Watershed. Nathaniel Sajdak said they are working on implementing three separate programs in the Papakating and Clove Brook Watersheds: the Ag. Outreach Program, the Stormwater Management Program and the Riparian Restoration Program. Last year, they finished a big stream bank restoration project on the Clove Brook. They worked in partnership with NRCS to get additional funding in addition to the DEP funding. This project restored a section of the Clove Brook that was heavily damaged during Hurricane Irene and Tropical Storm Lee. This resulted in close to 500' of the Clove Brook being repaired.

Michael Furrey asked about the Black Creek Project in Vernon. Mr. Sajdak said a grant was awarded in the past for a Watershed Restoration Plan for that basin. There was some preliminary work done, but then the grant was closed out. Mr. Sajdak said he is not sure what happened, that was between the town and an engineering firm. He added that years ago he did receive a telephone call about the possibility of finishing the watershed restoration plan but then did not hear anything further about it.

Kathy Little said when Hurricane Sandy was coming through, there was a request or an order from DEP to lower the lakes. In Sussex Borough they opened up the sluice gate on a Thursday and, not knowing how long it would take to lower the lake, it was left open over the weekend until the lake ran dry. She said she told the Mayor that the Borough needs a mechanism to close the gate within Sussex Borough, not in Hardyston Township where it is now located. She asked if anyone knew whether DEP gives blanket orders like this. Michael Furrey said that the water industry is fighting rules that try to use reservoirs for flood control. The American Water Ways Association is actively lobbying the State legislature to stop this. They want reservoirs to be used only as water sources.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

None

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

None

**ADJOURNMENT:**

All business having been completed, a motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Howard Baker. The motion was seconded by Kathy Little and carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m.