

... published quarterly at the Hermia Lechner House

## Environmental Education Program Update

By Nicole Rahman, Program Director

Our environmental education program, the **Waterways Stewardship Project**, is currently being revised and expanded. All lessons are being cross-referenced in detail with the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards to give them an additional level of support in the local school districts within our watershed. During this process, the current lessons are being revised as a sixth through eighth grade program. When completed, these lessons will each include a packet of pre and post activities that participating teachers receive. If they use these activities along with the programming provided by us, they will automatically have a watershed curriculum unit. In March, development will begin on lessons for a fourth through fifth grade program. We also eventually plan to develop programming for first through third grades and high school as well. All programs will be focused on the standards for their grade levels. One-on-one meetings with local teachers are being held to collect their input and expertise for the development and implementation of these grade-specific programs. Generous support from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has made all of this possible. (See article on page 8 for more information about this grant.) We are very excited about this entire process. The outcome will benefit teachers and students as they learn more about their local watershed and what they can do to protect it. This will ultimately benefit their communities as well.

This past fall, Holland Brook School, located in Readington Township, had 12 fourth grade classes that participated in the Waterways Stewardship Project! Some of their adventures are described below and on page 7.



### Introduction to a Watershed at Holland Brook School

One part of the Waterways Stewardship Project in-school lesson teaches students all about watersheds. These students have made a 'paper mountain range' and used a bright washable marker to color in the ridge tops. Their teacher is bringing a "rain storm" along with her to rain on their mountains and wash the color down into the respective watersheds.

(Continued on page 7)

## VOLUME 45 No. 1 Winter 2005

### Inside This Issue

<i>A Season for Planning</i>	2
<i>Annual Meeting and Dinner</i>	3
<i>2004 Annual Wine Tasting Calendar</i>	3
<i>2004 Annual Wine Tasting</i>	4
<i>New SBWA Members</i>	5
<i>Special Thanks</i>	5
<i>Annual Spring River Clean-up</i>	5
<i>Meet Your New Staff Members</i>	6
<i>Wish List</i>	6
<i>Environmental Education Program Update, continued</i>	7
<i>A Season for Planning, continued</i>	7
<i>Dodge Foundation Grant</i>	8

Check out our web site at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).

After you read this newsletter, please pass it on to a friend or neighbor and ask them to join SBWA. Thank you.



## A Season for Planning

By Don Einhorn, Executive Director

The outside temperature dipped below 0°F this morning. From the relative warmth of the Lechner House, home of the SBWA, it seems like a good time to be indoors, and to make plans. Squirrels do it - stashing acorns for future needs - so why can't we. Others, like bears, hibernate and leave the planning for the future, if they do it at all. Driving around New Jersey one could make a pretty sound argument that we have been guilty of that approach; snoozing while the bulldozers run rampant, sowing fields of McMansions with little regard for the environmental havoc that they reap.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not suggesting that there haven't been efforts to balance natural resource needs with human-driven development needs. Many have attempted to include the voice of the environment in the cacophony that typically surrounds the planning process. That need for balance led to the creation of our Association in 1959. It led to the regional Natural Resource Inventories we helped create in the mid 1970s. And it drives our mission and programs today. Over the past year, it seems that the volume of the cacophony has risen to such a pitch that no one is hibernating this winter. And that's good. But how did this happen?

For one, the upper half of our watershed was recently located in the Highlands Region as defined by New Jersey's Highlands Water Protection and Planning Act ("Highlands Act"). It's not that our watershed moved; that hasn't happened since the last glacier receded approximately 20,000 years ago. Rather, the Legislature passed the Highlands Act and the Governor signed it into law. So what does this mean?

In the broadest sense, it means that there will finally be an official land use planning effort focused on the conservation of natural resources in our watershed as viewed from a regional (i.e. geographical) perspective. The logic behind this approach is so simple that it is often overlooked. Watersheds follow

*The development of the Highlands regional master plan and the participation by each municipality will both provide opportunities for public input. The best planning process is the one where everyone's voice is heard, including yours.*

geographical, not political, boundaries. Of course this doesn't change the equally fundamental principle, as stated by Tom Schueler of the Center for Watershed Protection, that "watershed management, while seen as a technical exercise, is primarily a political exercise." These two perspectives will most likely face off in the central portion of our watershed that the Highlands Act places in the

"Planning Area" as opposed to the "Preservation Area." Municipalities in the Planning Area will be encouraged, but not required, to comply with the regional master plan to be developed by the Highlands Council. Whereas in the Preservation Area, compliance will be mandatory. The development of the regional master plan will provide opportunities for public input. The best planning process is the one where everyone's voice is heard, including yours.

The Hunterdon County Planning Board recently facilitated meetings to develop recommended changes to the State Development and Redevelopment Plan ("The Plan"). The draft report is now available.

In the current version of "The Plan", the central portion of our watershed is identified as Planning Area 2 (Suburban). This essentially means that it is viewed as being suitable for "growth" and is based, in part, on existing or planned infrastructure, such as roads, public sewers and water supply systems. However, this designation is neither consistent with the vision of the municipalities that make up this

*(Continued on page 7)*



## Annual Meeting and Dinner for Members

All members of SBWA are invited to attend the 2005 Annual Dinner and Meeting. We encourage you to come out and celebrate our accomplishments from 2004 and hear about plans for 2005 and beyond! The special guest speaker will be Bruce E. Beans, a noted local author. Bruce will talk about the bald eagle.

Mr. Beans is the author of *Eagle's Plume: The Struggle to Preserve the Life and Haunts of America's Bald Eagle* (Scribner, University of Nebraska Press) and co-editor of *Endangered and Threatened Wildlife of New Jersey* (Rutgers University Press). The chief writer and editor for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Endangered and Nongame Species Program, he has closely watched the state's bald eagle population increase during the past two decades from just one pair to nearly 50 active nesting pairs. His environmental journalism has appeared in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, *Audubon* magazine and *New Jersey Monthly*. Autographed copies of *Eagle's Plume* will be available for purchase at the dinner.

For tickets to the dinner, please call Dee Ely at 908.782.0422, ext. 10.

## Fifth Annual Wine Tasting

The Fifth Annual Wine Tasting was held on October 10, 2004 at the Old Egg Auction in Flemington, NJ. This event is an opportunity to relax, sample an amazing variety of wines from over 30 vendors, nibble on hors d'oeuvres, and enjoy the atmosphere of the unique building. This event is a major fundraiser for the SBWA, and all proceeds benefit our environmental protection efforts.

There are pictures of happy participants on page 4. Because of the overwhelming positive feedback, the Sixth Annual Wine Tasting will be held on October 9, 2005!



### Dream Trip Raffle

SBWA also sponsored a Dream Trip Raffle to an exotic location. This year's trip was a cruise to the Caribbean. The cruise was donated by the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line.

SBWA Trustee Johannah Weinhofer (r.) is with the happy winners of the Caribbean cruise, Ronald and Martha Subber.

## MARK YOUR 2005 CALENDAR

**March 17, 8:00—10:00 am — Hunterdon County Green Table Forum** at Echo Hill Park Lodge

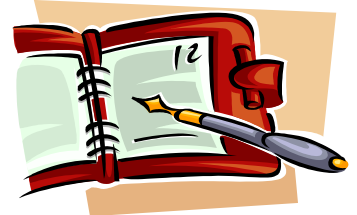
**March 18, 2005 — SBWA Annual Meeting and Dinner** See article above.

**Community Well Testing** (Check the SBWA web site at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org) for specific dates for your community.)

**April 16, 2005— Annual Spring River Clean Up** See article on page 5.

**Ride for the River Fundraiser — May 21** — Details will be in next newsletter.

Visit the Calendar page on the SBWA web site at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org) for dates of other meetings and events throughout the year.



Mark your day to volunteer at SBWA. Please look at the SBWA web site for a list of volunteer opportunities.



## Pictures from the 2004 Wine Tasting



A perfect day for a wine tasting at the Old Egg Auction building.



Some of the many happy participants



And the food was great, too.



Aaaaah! A wonderful bouquet!



People compared their notes and agreed that the wine tasting was a success.



SBWA Trustee Jim Hill helps award bottles to the lucky raffle winners.



**WELCOME NEW MEMBERS** *May through December 2004*

Kathleen Manetas Barca  
 Meagan Coy  
 James and Tammy DellaVella  
 James Fisher  
 Anup and Banani Hazra

Leopold Laitem  
 Robert and Patricia Meyer  
 Johanna Miele  
 Daniel and Ann Neuweiler  
 Denine Phillips

Josh and Karen Rich  
 Andrej and Lauren Suskavcevic  
 John and Pegi Zajac

It's always a pleasure to welcome new members and we hope that you will call us if you need information or have a concern about water quality or potential threats to our watershed. Also, please stop by our office to learn more about the dozen or more volunteer opportunities for you to help us continue our important work.

***Is your neighbor a member?***  
 Call Don at 908-782-0422, ext 11 to help you convince friends and neighbors that membership in SBWA means helping to preserve a healthy watershed for the future. We have membership kits for prospective members and will be glad to send one to your referral.

**Special Thanks To...**

- Danielle Donkersloot – presenting at our annual Volunteer Monitoring Conference
- Jim Kurtenbach – conducting habitat assessments of our monitoring sites
- Nancy Lawler and Antoinette Boccuzzi - helping to orient the new program director
- Merck & Co., Inc. – use of their facilities for our strategic planning retreat
- Emily LeGrand – continuing to input the library contents into a database
- Pat Stover – assistance in the office and with meetings and events
- Pam Tisza – stamping hand-outs, stuffing envelopes, and much more

**South Branch River Clean-up on April 16, 2005**

SBWA will hold its 15th Annual Spring River Clean-Up on Saturday, April 16th, from 9 am to 12 pm. Volunteers are needed to help clean up the river and surrounding land throughout the entire watershed from Budd Lake in Mount Olive to the confluence in Branchburg. Come join us and spend the morning giving back to your community!

Anyone can participate. Scout, school, church, and senior citizen groups are just some of the organizations that have participated in the past.

Last year, over 400 volunteers collected several tons of trash at 18 sites throughout the watershed. The Association needs your help to have a successful clean up again this year.

For more information or to volunteer, please contact Patrick Gallagher, Americorps Watershed Ambassador, at 908-782-0422, or visit the SBWA website at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).



### Meet Your New Staff Members

**Nicole Rahman** has joined the SBWA as its new *Program Director of Education and Outreach*. Nicole has six years of experience as an environmental educator. For the past four years she has worked at Kings Gap Environmental Education and Training Center (PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Bureau of State Parks), in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. There she led a wide variety of environmental education programs for all ages, including school groups, public programs, and teacher workshops. She received her undergraduate degree in both Biology and Environmental Studies from Gettysburg College.

When asked why she wanted to join the watershed team at SBWA, Nicole said, "I was impressed by the variety and quality of programs and projects that SBWA is currently involved with. I'm excited to be part of an organization so involved with making people aware of the importance of their local waterways and how they can become involved in their protection."

**Michael Rehman** (no relation to Nicole) is SBWA's new *Watershed Project Manager*. His primary responsibility will be working on the River Friendly project. Michael did extensive work on the NJDEP bog turtle project as a biologist working with the Conserve Wildlife Foundation. With the New Jersey Fish and Wildlife Service (in 2001), He worked on vernal pool mapping project, landscape project, restoration and habitat management of the federally endangered bog turtle, and the herpetological atlas project. Michael is a graduate of Cornell University, where he obtained a B.S. in Biological Sciences, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. As an undergraduate, he was part of a team that studied the stream ecology of the Cayuga Inlet, a tributary of Cayuga Lake. Michael has had some very interesting summer jobs: studying the pristine mountain streams in Grand Teton National Park; studying the impact of near shore environment on intertidal organisms on Appledore Island off the coast of Maine; tracking snow leopards in the Himalayan mountains!



#### Wish List...

- Computers - Pentium 3 equivalent or greater
- Copies of "A Guide to Common Freshwater Invertebrates of North America" by J. Reese Voshell, Jr., 2002, McDonald and Woodward Pub. Co., ISBN 0939923874
- Dictionary and Thesaurus – Hardcover – 1995 or newer
- LCD/Video projector for PowerPoint presentations
- Microsoft Windows 98, 2000, ME, or XP - original CD's with license (OEM only w/computer)
- Microsoft Office 2000, XP, or 2003 - original CD's with license
- Slide projector case, remote control, spare bulbs, and controller extension cord
- Toaster

*Please call first to see if our need has already been met. Thanks!*

**SBWA STAFF:** Don Einhorn, Executive Director; Nicole Rahman, Program Director; Michael Rehman, Watershed Project Manager; Dee Ely, Office Manager; and Mary Licetti, Accounting.

**2005 OFFICERS:** *President:* James Hill                      *Vice President:* Johannah Weinhofer  
*Secretary:* Patricia Stover                      *Treasurer:* Ken Jagel

**2005 TRUSTEES:** Raymond Drake, Karen Elbert, Oliver Elbert, Kenneth Fisher, Amy S. Greene, Dennis Kephart, Peter Kwiatek, Elizabeth (Tish) Plum, Fred Puelle, Kay Serebrakian, Sam Stothoff, and John Williamson

Contact SBWA at 908.782.0422 or e-mail us at [info@sbwa.org](mailto:info@sbwa.org).



## Environmental Education Program Update, continued from page 1

### Sandbar Measurements at Holland Brook School's River Site

Students conduct a river site assessment for half of the Waterways Stewardship Project's in-field lesson. Last year's 4<sup>th</sup> graders at Holland Brook School suggested that this year's 4<sup>th</sup> grade should take measurements of the unique sandbar that is at their site on the South Branch Raritan River as part of this site assessment. This way, they would be able to document the changes in the sandbar's size and location, and possibly figure out what is causing it. So, that's exactly what we did this year. This student is measuring the sandbar's width at the widest point.



### Picking Macroinvertebrates at Holland Brook School's River Site



Students perform biological sampling for benthic macroinvertebrates for the other half of the Waterways Stewardship Project in-field lesson. A good place to look for these "macros" is on the underside of rocks found on the river's bottom. These students are learning what to look for from one of South Branch Watershed Association's environmental educators.

### Identifying Macroinvertebrates

Once the students have collected the "macros," then they have to sort through the class sample and identify what they have found using a dichotomous key. On their worksheet, they check off what organisms they have found and then use this information to calculate the pollution tolerance index, which tells them the quality of the water. In this case, it was excellent!



## A Season for Planning, continued from page 2

region nor the environmental (or "green") infrastructure that exists here. The draft report recommends a designation that does not promote growth. The draft report is available at the County Planning Board office and is on their web site ([www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/planning.htm](http://www.co.hunterdon.nj.us/planning.htm)). The draft report's acknowledgment of the environmental sensitivity of this region and proposal to change the designation is good planning.

Finally, we are engaged in our own intensive process of planning for future watershed needs and what we need to do to best serve those needs. We began with an all day planning retreat for our board and staff in October. We are now developing strategies to accomplish the goals that we identified, and intend to have a three-year plan in place by the Spring. The next issue of this newsletter will have a full report.

This planning process is funded by a \$10,000 grant from the Watershed Institute at the Stony Brook Millstone Watershed Association. The Watershed Institute grant program is funded by the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation. Merck & Co., Inc. generously allowed us to use their facility for our planning retreat. I wish to thank these funders and sponsors for assisting us with this process, and thank you, our supporters and members, on whose behalf we are working everyday to make our watershed a better place for people and for nature. What could be a better plan than that?



## Dodge Foundation Helps Expand Waterways Stewardship Project

The SBWA has received a \$12,000 grant from the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation for support of our Waterways Stewardship Project.

The Waterways Stewardship Project provides in-class, in-field and computer based environmental education designed to foster students' appreciation for the natural world, from the tiniest "bug" that lives in the bottom of their neighborhood stream to the larger ecosystem supported by the watershed in which they live. Recognizing the need to establish a human connection with the natural world, the program provides students with the very tangible and personal experience of discovering "hidden" aquatic life while conducting in-field observations and experiments, the results of which can be used to form a hypothesis in a real life science project directly related to the community in which they live. This experience, coupled with the knowledge gained during their in-class sessions, promotes a sense of stewardship for the environment and an appreciation of the ways that human behavior can positively or negatively impact natural systems.

The mission of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation ([www.grdodge.org](http://www.grdodge.org)) is to support and encourage those educational, cultural, social and environmental values that contribute to making our society more humane and our world more livable.

The Dodge grant will enable SBWA to make improvements to the Waterways Stewardship Project by cross-referencing all Project parts with the current NJ Core Curriculum Content Standards, and expanding participation in the Project by bringing this important educational tool to more school districts, and students, in the watershed area. In doing so, the Association hopes to establish a legacy of effective environmental education by encouraging today's youth to examine, cherish and preserve our natural resources so that they may be passed on to future generations of environmental stewards.

If you are interested in signing up for the program or would like more information, please contact Nicole Rahman, Program Director, at 908-782-0422. There is more information about this project on our website at [www.sbwa.org](http://www.sbwa.org).



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