

**STILLWATER TOWNSHIP  
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION  
October 20, 2025  
Regular Meeting**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Branagan, Dr. Lippencott, Dr. Mattes, Mr. Szabo, Mrs. Tracey, Ms. Coriston

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Mrs. Emmetts

Chairperson Coriston called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. with the statement that this meeting is in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act. This was a scheduled meeting of the Stillwater Township Environmental Commission on the third Monday of the month due to a legal holiday. Regular meetings are held on the second Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m., at the Stillwater Township Municipal Building located in Middleville, New Jersey.

The flag was saluted and roll call taken.

**Minutes**

Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to approve the minutes of 9/8/25, as amended, seconded by Dr. Lippencott.

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Branagan, yes, Dr. Lippencott, yes, Dr. Mattes, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

**Bills**

Mrs. Tracey made a **motion** to approve the following bills, pending availability of funds, seconded by Dr. Lippencott:

Secretary: \$274.00

TREX Receptacle Bags: \$39.55

Environmental Congress Attendance – M. Coriston: \$115.00

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Branagan, yes, Dr. Lippencott, yes, Dr. Mattes, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

**At this point, this portion of the meeting was opened to the public at 7:09 p.m.**

**Christine Dunbar, Foodshed Alliance/Paulins Kill Watershed**

Ms. Dunbar reported the Fall Water Quality Monitoring has been completed with biological, physical and habitat data collected. The site tested in Stillwater is located at the base of the Paulins Kill River dam/spillway, results are forthcoming. The sampling was done slightly downstream of the road and black fly larvae was noted.

The group joined with the Stroud Institute to conduct a Salt Baseline Snapshot – sampling at Veterans Memorial Park (VMP was pristine. Winter salt monitoring will begin in December.

The group will also work in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy on the removal of tree shelters. A notice will be sent out shortly offering an opportunity to participate in native plant staking on 11/18 and 11/19 near the area of the Paulina Dam removal.

Mr. Branagan asked if the river is back to its normal flow since the Paulina Dam was removed. Ms. Dunbar stated it takes a while as shrubs and trees need to be established. Shad were in the river that is now free-flowing and they are also looking for American Eels.

Ms. Dunbar reported they partnered with Montclair State University monitoring for HABs just across the beach from the Paulins Kill spillway and also at the Swartswood Road end; and Plotts and Parsons Road. No HABs were noted.

They also held their 4<sup>th</sup> annual field trip with Stillwater School 5<sup>th</sup> graders along the Paulins Kill, noting unique things and doing activities.

**There being no one else from the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 7:17 p.m.**

**ANJEC 2025 Environmental Achievement Awards:** Stillwater Township Environmental Commission awarded Honorable Mention 2025

Ms. Coriston was humbled to accept the award on behalf of the EC and to sit as the Chair of the Commission. It is a testament to all who have worked on the water sampling in the past and present and to all those who have worked on the report. She thanked the EC and Dr. Lippencott for their hard work.

**Wild and Scenic River Project Update:** Tara Mezzanotte, Foodshed Alliance

Ms. Mezzanotte introduced herself, a resident of Knowlton Township and lead for the Paulins Kill Wild and Scenic River Project (WSR). She stated she attended the ANJEC Environmental Congress and was inspired by the Stillwater EC and their July presentation of their 40-Year Surface Water Quality Report. It prompted her to revisit establishing an EC in Knowlton which is now moving forward.

Ms. Mezzanotte provided an update on the WSR Project, stating she has completed Warren County and it is now time to ask municipalities to support the study bill request for their municipal segment of the river. She asked the EC if they would be willing to revisit their support for the project. Ms. Mezzanotte reported a meeting was held in August with New Jersey delegates to the Partnership WSR program. They asked for the Upper Raritan, Mullica and Paulins Kill river systems to have everything in order for a study request to be presented to Congress as a package. She explained this will not determine final designation. At the end of the study, communities and resident feedback will be provided and will influence whether or not a municipality would like to designate their segment as a WSR. She explained that with the Warren County package completed at this point, Congressman Kean can provide his support with moving forward. Ms. Mezzanotte is now asking municipalities to pass a resolution to endorse support for the study bill request. She asked if the EC would be interested in doing so, having a three-year federally funded study that they will be intimately involved in and no decisions to be made without a township representative.

Dr. Lippencott provided the following documents for discussion:

- N.J.A.C. 7:7A Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, Sec. 6 (98-99); Sec. 13 (106)
- Wild and Scenic Rivers Frequently Asked Questions
- Scenic River Project (Reconnaissance Phase Map)

Dr. Lippencott stated he appreciated Ms. Mezzanotte's passion for the project and he reviewed the documents, making the following points: The WSR program is primarily to prevent dams from being constructed and to support free-flowing rivers. There is a water quality component to it but they reference the State Federal Clean Water Act and the State Water Quality Regulations as the primary sources of water quality jurisdiction. New Jersey owns the water and it is under the Clean Water Act. He understands the request is just for the study at this point, but he explained the study has consequences. The study area includes the entire township of Stillwater and all 28 square miles of its property. Under State Freshwater Wetlands Protection Act Rules, Section 7:7A-5.7 Conditions applicable to an authorization pursuant to a general permit by certification or general permit:

(b) The following conditions apply to all activities conducted under the authority of a general permit permit-by-certification or general permit:

(4) The activities will not occur in a component of either the Federal or State Wild and Scenic River System; nor in a river officially designated by Congress or the State Legislature as a "study river"

Dr. Lippencott explained what this means is that as soon as it becomes a study area the residents throughout the town cannot obtain a general permit for simple wetlands projects. This is a significant impact to the community.

Dr. Lippencott referred to the Federal WSR Act noting there is a great deal of authority given to the Secretary/authorized person who is going to be in charge of the whole area at the federal level. They have the authority to agree or disagree on any of the permits, taking the authority away from the State and local process. Dr. Lippencott stated he likes the idea of the WSR program and the water quality protection but feels we have the protection we need under the current regulations. He suggested pursuing another way to have a coalition to implement and build something similar to what we did with our study without having federal overlay that has control.

Ms. Mezzanotte appreciated the information Dr. Lippencott has provided and stated the process has been moving very quickly and she was not aware of the general permit indications. She will have to research the matter further before moving forward.

Ms. Mezzanotte stated dams and water quality are the focus of the WSR Act, however it is not the focus of the Partnership WSR program. Their focus is about creating the community envisioned, collaborating on much more than water quality and having them work together on community agreed goals for further protection and improvement of the waters.

Ms. Dunbar added the procedure for becoming WSR for some partnership rivers has started in various ways and one is for watershed towns and communities to come together and form their own management team/council that will periodically take a look at the watershed and ask what can be done to keep what we have so wonderful and pristine, including water quality, floodplains, nearby infrastructure etc. One segment of the watershed cannot be protected without all the segments being managed together taking a comprehensive look at it by a team of stakeholders and their vision for protection and improvement.

Mr. Szabo asked Ms. Mezzanotte if she would share the information provided by Dr. Lippencott with the other communities. She stated she will have to do so and research it further.

Dr. Lippencott stated our water report has indicated our water quality has not changed for 40 years. The water quality regulations he has referenced are our watershed basis and protection already. He would like to work together to make antidegradation mean something as he does not believe the other towns have our kind of data to establish what that means.

Dr. Lippencott referred to the WSR Act and the use of condemnation to acquire lands. Ms. Mezzanotte stated that has been amended and the Partnership WSR does not permit condemnation. She will provide the update to Dr. Lippencott. She stated every Partnership WSR amends the WSR Act to address their specific issues. Dr. Lippencott mentioned no hunting zones and Ms. Mezzanotte indicated that is related only to federal lands.

Ms. Dunbar suggested reaching out to the Musconetcong WSR group for more information.

Ms. Mezzanotte will research all the information provided by Dr. Lippencott and will keep the EC updated.

#### **Citizen Leadership Form to Serve on the EC:** Leona Kral

Ms. Kral was present and provided a brief description of her background. She had served on the EC in the past and due to work commitments had to resign. Ms. Kral is now retired and is interested in serving on the EC as she has more time to do so. Ms. Kral previously worked for Verizon as a Strategic Alliances Managed Partnership.

The EC welcomed her expertise to the board and Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to recommend the Township Committee appoint Leona Kral to the EC as an Alternate #1, term to begin January 1, 2026, seconded by Mr. Szabo.

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Branagan, yes, Dr. Lippencott, yes, Dr. Mattes, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

#### **Correspondence:**

-NJDEP Application Notice: YMCA Dam - rehabilitation of existing impoundment/spillway

-CFO Budget Report through 9/30/25

-CFO Budget Request Form 2026: The EC reviewed the budget request form and determined the line item for Brochures would be decreased by \$100.00 and the line item for Memberships would be increased by \$100, maintaining the same overall budget as 2025.

Funding for water testing would remain the same. Dr. Lippencott and Mr. Branagan had discussed purchasing equipment vs. renting; whether to have others take the sampling and also the purpose of the sampling. Our water quality report indicates the quality has been the same for 40 years and is good with no trends in either direction. He felt the EC can refocus the testing to a four-week period in July during the warm weather to obtain a handle on the question of E Coli and ammonia during the warmer weather months. He was unsure if \$3500 will cover the cost. Ms. Coriston noted funding within the budget can be adjusted as long as we do not exceed the overall approved budget. The EC needs to solidify the scope of the project and agreed to keep the line item the same. Mr. Branagan expressed concern with the expense of purchasing equipment and not budgeting adequately for it. Ms. Coriston stated the EC will pursue grant funding. Dr. Lippencott noted sampling is not required and the scope of such can be adjusted to meet the budget funding available.

Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to forward the EC approved budget request for 2026 to the CFO/Township Committee, seconded by Dr. Lippencott:

Advertising:	\$ 125.00
Forms & Books:	\$ 100.00
Office Supplies:	\$ 200.00
Memberships:	\$ 600.00
Stream Water Testing:	\$3500.00
Comm. Outreach/Events:	\$ 200.00
School Training/Seminars:	\$ 400.00
Brochures:	\$ 150.00
Printing:	\$ 200.00
Mileage Reimbursement:	<u>\$ 175.00</u>
Total:	\$5650.00

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Branagan, yes, Dr. Lippencott, yes, Dr. Mattes, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

### Old Business

**Swartwood State Park draft letter:** Ms. Coriston

Ms. Coriston provided a draft of the letter she composed regarding the issues and concerns at Swartwood State Park. EC members will review the letter and provide any input or comments to Ms. Coriston as soon as possible so she may update the letter for the November 10<sup>th</sup> EC meeting. This item will be added to the November agenda.

**ANJEC Environmental Congress:** Ms. Coriston

October 10, 2025, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. @ New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey  
Ms. Coriston provided the following report on her attendance:

#### 2025 Environmental Congress Notes:

(Full details and presentations will be available soon on the ANJEC website)

#### Working Together for Greater Environmental Impact:

Collaboration can significantly amplify environmental efforts. In this session, several NGOs will share how strategic partnerships have enabled them to achieve broader regional impact. Green Faith Circle of Southern NJ will discuss how they mobilized around a dozen faith communities to take action on environmental issues. The Nature Conservancy and Raritan Headwaters Association will highlight their efforts through the NJ Statewide Dam Removal Partnership, aimed at removing dams to restore river ecosystems. Pinelands Preservation Alliance will share how a campaign sparked a statewide partnership (Access Nature) to make natural areas more inclusive and accessible for people of all abilities.

#### Martin Levin: Program Coordinator, GreenFaith Circle of Southern NJ

Spoke about collaborative efforts of their chapter of the international organization, including marches, protests, event tabling, and local efforts to preserve and protect resources in South Jersey

Beth Styler Barry: Director of Freshwater Program, TNC

Robert Lucas: Restoration Coordinator, RHAS

Michelle DiBlasio: Freshwater Restoration Manager, TNC

Nature Conservancy – njdams.org

Offers training and resources for the Statewide Dam Removal Project, also an interactive map of the 1700 regulated dams in the state, of which 25% are municipally owned by towns (237) or counties (188).

Website also has a dam evaluation dashboard.

Discussed several case studies in the Raritan watershed that have opened up over 200 upstream miles – Weiss Mill Dam, Darts Mill Dam, Rockefeller's Mill Dam.

Removals resulted in:

- Lower costs
- Less flooding
- Increased resilience
- Fewer safety hazards
- Increased open water activities (fishing, kayaking, etc.)

- Fewer HABs

Voices of Dam Removal video series on YouTube: shared the Paulina Dam removal video.

<https://youtu.be/3rMfBb737zU?si=B4ehO0IX-NXuKH1r>

I also networked at lunchtime with Beth Styler Barry from the Nature Conservancy: she would like us to send her a “testimonial” statement and share photos from the spring and fall for proof of concept for the Paulina Dam removal. (email: [beth.stylerbarry@tnc.org](mailto:beth.stylerbarry@tnc.org))

Stephen Elliot: Director of Watershed Programs, PPA was unable to attend the conference.

### Acting Locally: Success Stories

Discover inspiring projects from across the state that are transforming communities and proving what’s possible when residents, municipalities, and regional partners work together. Learn how Lambertville is boosting pollinators, wildlife, and native plants, and how Saddle Brook is protecting habitat through the Dark Sky initiative. Find out how your town can join these efforts—and what resources are available to help you get started.

Mary Anne Borge, Team Leader, Lambertville Goes Wild; Chair, Parks & Recreation

Discussed reclamation and pocket park projects in Lambertville that allowed them to create pollinator habitat, flood plains, and recreational areas that earned them certification from the National Wildlife Federation in 2019. They are currently maintaining three of these parks spaces and working on a new initiative to change “lawn culture” by offering incentives to people who replace their grass with native plants.

### Stephen Mariconda, MPH, Chair, Saddle Brook Green Team; Delegate: DarkSky NJ

This was pretty informative – he spoke about how too much artificial light can affect the circadian rhythms of humans and wildlife with the four “big bads” of:

- Disrupted light rhythms
- Glare
- Light trespass
- Skyglow

These can disrupt bird migration, tree life cycles, insect migration/pollination/predation, and the rest of the ecosystem around them, like bats, etc.

Suggests small actions such as better municipal lighting policies (as well as making small changes at home.) Things like using hooded lights, not allowing lights that shed above the natural horizon, etc.

The Dark Sky website has model municipal ordinances and suggestions on their website, and Dark Sky groups in NJ are following a pending state statute to reduce light pollution on future state construction projects, such as Dark Sky-friendly streetlights, etc.

### Meet your New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Meet and learn from various departments/programs in NJDEP. NJDEP staff will share their expertise, guidance, and updates on key environmental issues and regulations, permitting processes, and compliance requirements. The sessions will each provide an overview of the work currently in the focus areas and there will be ample time to mingle into other sessions to connect with NJDEP staff.

Programs represented are:

- Green Acres, Blue Acres, Public Lands Compliance

Blue Acres, state-funded buyout program that purchases properties in high-risk flood zones;

Environmental Justice, fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, concerning the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws; Green Acres, meeting New Jersey's growing recreation and conservation needs in rural, suburban, and urban areas; Public Lands Compliance, ensuring compliance for Green Acres-encumbered properties and other lands that are subject to permanent restrictions as a condition of NJDEP funding.

Larry Fink, Team Leader, Green Acres State Land Acquisition Program

Alvin Chin, Flood Hazard Mitigation Planner, Office of Climate Resilience-Blue Acres

Nancy Lawrence, Section Lead, Office of Transactions and Public Land Administration

Public Land Compliance (PLC) Section

I attended this session simply because this was a topic I don't have much knowledge in, so I wanted to pick up some basics. They mostly spoke about the CHANJ (Connecting Habitats Across NJ) initiative, a carbon sequestration initiative that's in its beginning phases, and how to maintain compliance on 'encumbered' preserved Green Acres. There was also a presentation on the Blue Acres flood buyout and land restoration.

I spoke directly with Commissioner LaTourette about the concerns at Swartswood. He asked me to send a memo to him personally, not his admin, so that we can set up time for him to come visit the area and meet with concerned residents. HUGE step. (email: Commissioner@dep.nj.gov)

I also networked with a woman named Sylvia Kay from South Jersey who represents her EC and the Sierra Club in the Skip the Stuff movement. Although it's not something that would really affect us in Stillwater, as we have very few restaurants/retail food establishments, I am going to have a phone call with her later this week to discuss their efforts to advocate for statewide Skip the Stuff legislation – the bill will need support from municipalities throughout NJ.

#### **40-Year Surface Water Quality Report (1984-2024): Dr. Lippencott**

This item was discussed under the Budget 2026 Request Form.

#### **TREX Program Update: Ms. Coriston**

Ms. Coriston reported the remainder of the summer collection was dropped off this week, which should put the collection over the 1,000-pound goal before the 11/14 deadline. The new challenge cycle will begin 12/1. To date, 3,197 pounds of plastic have been collected since the fall of 2021 as follows:

2021-22: 496 pounds

2022-23: 702 pounds

2023-24: 1,052 pounds

2024-25: 945 pounds to date

#### **Fishing Line Collection:**

All line is to be cleaned of litter/leaves, hooks and lead sinkers. Lead sinkers are to be provided at the meeting for recycling.

#### **New Business**

##### **Site Surveys (2):**

**Zoning Board:** - Block 307, Lot 8, Pepperidge Drive, construct new single-family dwelling  
- Block 2101, Lot 9, 907 Morningside Drive, approval to retain two existing sheds, boat patio, block wall, concrete patios, dock, platform and stairs

Dr. Lippencott reported there were no issues with the applications. He noted the site survey form has been updated to a digital format. Mr. Szabo commended Dr. Lippencott on the updated site survey inspection process and the use of the many resources and references. Mr. Szabo would like to work with Dr. Lippencott to include the references on the site survey form.

Ms. Coriston made a **motion** to accept the site surveys as listed, seconded by Mrs. Tracey.

**Roll Call Vote:** Mr. Branagan, yes, Dr. Lippencott, yes, Dr. Mattes, yes, Mr. Szabo, yes, Mrs. Tracey, yes, Ms. Coriston, yes

#### **Environmental Commission Volunteer Recognition:**

-Ms. Coriston for the TREX program.

-EC members for checking the fishing receptacles.

-Mr. Szabo and Dr. Lippencott for conducting the site survey inspections.

-Ms. Coriston for her attendance at the Environmental Congress.

-The EC for their ANJEC 2025 Environmental Achievement Award - Honorable Mention

#### **Endangered/Threatened Species Sightings:**

-Bobcats

Other sightings: Cooper and Red-tailed Hawks; Eagles

**At this point, this portion of the meeting was opened to the public at 8:45 p.m.**

**Richard Kelsky, Cedar Ridge Road, Stillwater**

Mr. Kelsky commended the EC on looking more carefully at the Wild and Scenic River Partnership before becoming involved. He stated he has preserved 130 acres of his property through the Nature Conservancy and Ridge and Valley for Bobcat Alley.

Mr. Kelsky spoke about the NJ PACT REAL rules, referring to Ms. Coriston's report on her attendance at the Environmental Congress. He stated there are many misconceptions with respect to the rules and it will affect Stillwater in terms of wetlands. He stated it covers the entire state and its wetlands, not just the coast. It affects what you can do on your wetlands and permitting. Mr. Kelsky stated he has testified at the public hearings and commented on the proposal because it also affects forestry activity. Mr. Kelsky encouraged the EC not to foster the idea that it only affects coasts and coastlines and they should be looking further into it. The proposal could be adopted by the end of the year.

Dr. Lippencott stated it is his understanding the regulations are to address sea-level rise, storm impact concerns and flooding. Mr. Kelsky stated it does have some focus on coastlines and coastal communities with respect to construction. It also affects anything basically wet such as buffer zones, permitting, no more exemptions, fence sizes in wetlands and many other things. Dr. Lippencott stated for Stillwater and inland areas, flood hazard areas along streams will be impacted as well as general permits. He questioned if the restrictions are based on worst case conditions leading to overly restrictive requirements.

Mr. Kelsky stated he is a member and Vice-President of the Board of New Jersey Forestry Association, but his statements have been made as a 30-year resident of Stillwater not on behalf of that position.

**There being no further members of the public wishing to speak, this portion of the meeting was closed at 8:52 p.m.**

**Planning Board (PB) Liaison Report:** Dr. Lippencott

**September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting:**

- A lot line adjustment application for property on Dove Island Road was approved.
- Approval of bills.
- The Planning Board continued their discussion on Air BNBs and short-term rentals, reviewing the existing B&B ordinance and other Air BNB ordinances. The intent is to require registration, stemming from issues and complaints.
- OSRP was reviewed in relation to the Fair Housing Plan.
- A discussion was held on re-establishing the Stillwater Economic Development Commission.

**Township Committee (TC) Liaison Report:** Mayor Chamblings

Mayor Chamblings reported the Fall Festival was held on October 11<sup>th</sup> and Mr. Szabo was honored as the oldest resident in Stillwater and "The Man of the Year."

Two markers were dedicated in the township at the following locations: Keen's Mill and at the Historical Society honoring Avis Dixon.

**October 7, 2025, TC Meeting:**

- A meeting will be held on October 21<sup>st</sup> between the Plymouth Lake Association and the Township Committee.
- Land Sale will be held in March 2026 offering larger lots for sale.
- Three ordinances were introduced as follows: Salary & Wages 2026; sale of an ambulance; and the sale of DPW equipment.

Mayor Chamblings referred to the last EC meeting discussion regarding Swartswood State Park. She stated she spoke with Tammie Horsfield of the SC Chamber of Commerce. She also spoke with Blanca Chevestt, Superintendent of Swartswood State Park, at a SC Trails Partnership Meeting. They discussed bringing business back to the park and the Mayor was advised that the campground had reopened on September 1, 2025.

The program itself spoke about trails throughout Sussex County and grant applications that will be before the County Commissioners for approval, followed by distribution to municipalities of what can be applied for and trail stewardship.

Ms. Coriston provided a brief recap of the meeting:

- EC members please email photos/videos of the Shad seen in Stillwater, dead or alive, to Mrs. Wunder.
- The Swartswood State Park letter will be emailed to the EC for their review and feedback to Ms. Coriston.
- Mr. Szabo and Dr. Lippencott will work on updating the site survey form.
- “Skip the Stuff” – Ms. Coriston will speak with the Coordinator.

With no further business to come before the Commission, Mr. Szabo made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m., seconded by Ms. Coriston. In a voice vote, all were in favor.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kathy Wunder, Secretary