

Roots for Rivers Narrative

The Township is over 350 years old, consists of ten unincorporated towns, and encompasses approximately 24 square miles, including approximately 3,000 acres of regulated Special Flood Hazard Areas in tidal and fluvial floodplains. Coastal areas of utmost concern for flood risk and reforestation are located adjacent to the Woodbridge River, its tidal tributaries and the Arthur Kill. Areas of great concern for fluvial flooding and water quality pursuant to the proposed alternation associated with this project location is located primarily along a tributary of the South Branch Rahway River which crosses western segments of the Township, within the Colonia and Iselin sections.

With regard to the coastal floodplain surrounding the Woodbridge River, the Township has been extremely successful in removing people and structures from flood risk through the NJDEP Blue Acres Program, and restoring said areas to best ensure natural floodplain functions. To date over 160 structures have been removed from harm's way. In addition, the Township, in concert with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension program, has reengineered said Blue Acres buy-out areas through the installation of over 1,000 native trees and shrubs, removed two acres of impervious surface, and eradicated five acres of invasive species. These groundbreaking initiatives have enhanced ecological value and flood storage capacity, and led to the Township being awarded, by the New Jersey Association for Floodplain Management, for its outstanding programs focused on reducing flood risk and restoring natural functions. Despite these successful and on-going programs, many remaining degraded stream banks in the Colonia section of Woodbridge still face poor vegetative character, roadway run-off concerns from adjacent heavily traveled thoroughfares, such as, State Rt. 27, and lack the capacity to thrive as a biologically diverse open space. As such the proposed shift in planting locations from Pumpkin Patch Brook to Camel Creek (a Tributary of the South Branch Rahway River) located at Block 450.01 Lot 34 (approximately a 4.6 acre site) within the Rahway River Watershed is of primary concern with regard to these issues, and the Township feels as though it is of utmost priority to reforest.

The conservation goals of the project remain the same as previously denoted and focus on maximizing the use of 125 native trees and shrubs (plant species not to change in relation to the initial proposal) in order to increase the ecosystem services provided by the open space corridor within the project area. Further, the project seeks to enhance stream bank stabilization and flood storage capacity through the strategic establishment of said native plant material. In addition, the site is home to multiple Eagle Scout projects, of which include trail markers, a trail head, and an insect hotel, etc.

The planting initiative will aid in buffering the Camel Creek stream corridor (tributary of the South Branch Rahway River) by providing a sheltered environment for habitat, and better filtration of floodwaters. In addition, the project will help to regulate water temperatures in an area where barren soil and landscaped grasses are currently present. Further, the restoration efforts will take place near the newly installed trails and will help to provide a buffer (for water quality) from the nearby roadway.