

River-Friendly Certification Programs: Businesses, Golf Courses, Residents, Schools and Farms

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New Jersey Water Supply Authority

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA, www.njwsa.org) was created in 1981 to operate existing water supply systems, and to develop future State water supply projects as recommended in the State Water Supply Master Plan. The Authority's Raritan Basin System consists of Spruce Run Reservoir, Round Valley Reservoir and the Delaware and Raritan Canal, and provides the basic source of water supply to several public and private water utilities serving more than 1,500,000 people in central New Jersey. The Manasquan Water Supply System serves more than 250,000 people in the Monmouth County area.

NJWSA's Watershed Protection Programs Division was formed in 1999, and served as project lead for the Raritan Basin Watershed Management Project, resulting in a comprehensive characterization and assessment report and management plan for the Raritan Basin. NJWSA established a customer-funded Source Water Protection Fund to provide support for projects that result in the protection of drinking water sources.

River-Friendly Certification Programs

The New Jersey Water Supply Authority (NJWSA, www.njwsa.org) implements a suite of River-Friendly programs in the North & South Branch Raritan and Lower Raritan River watersheds, focused on NJWSA's source water area. These programs are based on those developed by the Stony Brook-Millstone Watershed Association. Through the River-Friendly programs, NJWSA works with landowners and land managers to improve water quality by implementing actions in four categories:

- Water Quality Management & Nonpoint Source Pollution Management,
- Water Conservation,
- Native Habitat & Wildlife Enhancement, and
- Education & Outreach.

All of the River-Friendly programs are voluntary, and are a cooperative effort between the facility managers and NJWSA. Participation in the River-Friendly Golf Course, Business and School programs provides an opportunity for landowners and land managers to become local stewards, to showcase positive environmental actions they have already taken and to work with NJWSA to implement new practices. Participating facilities receive ongoing technical information, support and guidance for implementing environmental actions tailored to their unique location, resources and needs.

NJWSA is currently working with approximately 20 golf courses, schools and businesses in their project area. These programs are mutually beneficial and they often reduce the operational cost

of the facility, improve water quality conditions, and provide good public relation opportunities for the facility. Each facility makes an increment of improvement to their land management practices in order to better protect water resources.

The River-Friendly Resident Program focuses on landowner actions in the same four categories as the Business and Golf Course Programs. The Resident program has evolved over time to become a self-certification program in which residents complete a certain number of actions to receive certification.

The River-Friendly Farm program, administered by North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council, provides certification to farmers who manage their farms with environmental stewardship in mind. Farmers are all held to the same standard, as opposed to making an increment of improvement prior to certification.

Figure 1 shows the locations of River-Friendly Business, Golf Course, School and Farm participants in the NJWSA project area.

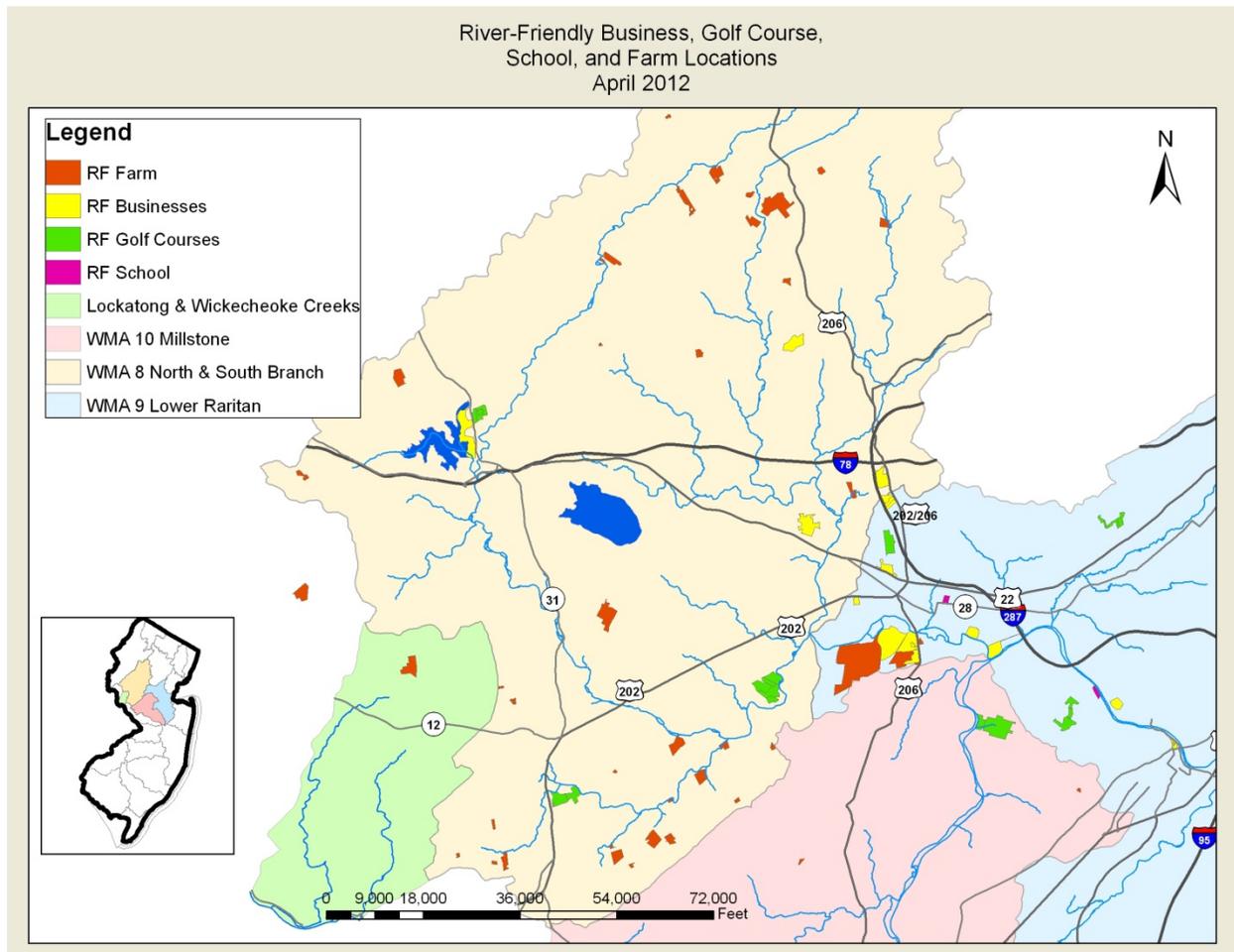


Figure 1. River-Friendly Business, Golf Course, School and Farm Locations - NJWSA Project Area



Figure 2. NJWSA Administration Facility

River-Friendly Business Program

The [River-Friendly Business Program](#) was designed for businesses who wish to have a leading role in conserving their community's environmental resources. The goal of the River-Friendly Business Program is to improve water quality by modifying land management techniques.

The River-Friendly Business Program holds all facilities to

a set of baseline standards and requires businesses to complete site-specific actions for certification. Benefits to participating businesses include public recognition of their achievements, healthier landscaping, lowered operating costs, and the opportunity to be a leader in environmental stewardship.



Figure 3. Native plantings at Raritan Valley Community College



Figure 4. Native grass planting at NJWSA Administration Facility

There are currently eleven participants in the River-Friendly Business program, covering more than 2,500 acres of land. Program participant accomplishments include the reduction of mowed lawn area by 24% (Raritan Valley Community College), reduction of irrigated lawn area by 33% (sanofi-aventis, U.S.), engaging employees in River-Friendly certification actions (Ethicon). Johnson and Johnson World Headquarters and I/T Services recently joined the program. For a complete list of participants, technical guidance materials, and further information about the River-Friendly Program, visit NJWSA's [website](#).

River-Friendly Golf Course Program



Figure 5. Neshanic Valley Golf Course



Figure 6. Reduced mow area at Neshanic Valley Golf Course

The voluntary River-Friendly Golf Course program is a cooperative effort between the golf course management staff and NJWSA. Participating golf courses receive ongoing technical information, support and guidance for implementing environmental actions tailored to their unique location, resources and needs.

Golf courses have the reputation of using large amounts of fertilizers and pesticides; one of the main requirements of the River-Friendly program is that each course implements an integrated pest management (IPM) plan. IPM plans help to determine exactly when and where landscape chemicals such as fertilizers and pesticides should be used, identifies what preventative

measures can be taken for common pests, and monitors applications of fertilizers and pesticides. Through this plan, trends can be identified, and overall usage can be reduced.

Golf courses also serve as wildlife corridors; therefore NJWSA works with courses to perform an inventory of species that utilize the course. The inventory can be used to help guide future management decisions for nuisance species such as deer and geese and beneficial species such as birds and pollinators.

Golf courses also provide a great opportunity to connect with the public. NJWSA provides each participating course with River-Friendly Tips brochures to give golfers ideas for River-Friendly actions to take at home. The River-Friendly Golf Course program provides an opportunity to showcase positive environmental actions golf courses have taken and makes them an ally in protecting water quality.



Figure 7. Native plantings at Raritan Valley Community College



Figure 8. Native grass planting at NJWSA Administration Facility

NJWSA is currently working with six golf courses covering approximately 1,400 acres within the project area. All of the Somerset County Park Commissions' Golf Courses are participating in the program, and Hunterdon County's Heron Glen Golf Course recently became the first Hunterdon County course to be certified. Significant accomplishments by the golf courses include the installation of wash pads at the Somerset County courses and a bioswale at Heron Glen GC. For a complete list of participants, technical guidance materials, and further information about the River-Friendly Program, visit NJWSA's [website](#).



River-Friendly Resident Program

The River-Friendly Resident program is based on a self-certification questionnaire to receive recognition as a River-Friendly Resident. The questionnaire includes questions about lawn management practices, water conservation and septic system management, and represents a resident's pledge to manage their property in a responsible manner to help protect drinking water resources and the environment. By filling out the questionnaire, or using it as a checklist, homeowners can become more aware of the impacts the management techniques they employ have on the watershed.

When a resident has completed a certain number of River-Friendly Resident actions, they can mail in their questionnaire or complete it online to receive River-Friendly recognition. NJWSA distributes the questionnaire through their website and at outreach events such as county 4H fairs and community days. Additionally, municipalities can have the questionnaire available at the municipal buildings, and other River-Friendly program participants, such as golf courses and businesses, can distribute it to their customers or employees.

River-Friendly School Program



Figure 9. Rain garden at Van Derveer Elementary School

The [River-Friendly School Program](#) is designed to provide Pre-K to 12 schools with the opportunity to implement projects that benefit water quality, promote water conservation, and improve wildlife habitat, while also creating real-life learning opportunities for students, staff, parents, and other visitors. The River-Friendly School Program is a tiered system, where schools can choose the level they would like to work towards. All schools are required to have at least one lesson in each category (Water Quality, Water Conservation, Wildlife and Habitat), and to share River-Friendly information with parents and the community.

This program is in the pilot phase with two

schools -Van Derveer Elementary School in Somerville and Rutgers Preparatory School in Somerset.

River-Friendly Farm Program



In 2005 North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development Council (RC&D) launched the River-Friendly Farm program to publicly recognize and reward producers who manage their farms in an economically and

environmentally sound way that protects and improves soil and water resources for future generations.

Farms are assessed against a set of five criteria, including nutrient management, pest management, riparian buffers, soil loss and irrigation water management, to assess their potential water quality impacts. Upon meeting all of the criteria, the farm is certified as River-Friendly, and receives recognition via signage, media, banquets and other means. A farm that does not yet meet the criteria is provided with technical assistance to implement any needed best management practices (conservation practices).

The River-Friendly Farm program is an incentive-based method for increasing adoption of conservation practices. An additional benefit is that the program, through the signage and media coverage, informs the general public about positive contributions farmers make to protect and improve our soil, water and related natural resources. Since the project's inception, North Jersey RC&D staff has worked with over 40 producers on 3,900 acres of land who are seeking certification.

Summary

NJWSA implements a suite of River-Friendly Programs, including those for golf courses, businesses, schools and residents, to work with landowners to make their land management practices more protective of water resources. North Jersey RC&D implements the River-Friendly Farm program, with similar objectives. After nearly ten years of implementation by NJWSA, they have worked with nearly 20 facilities, including public and private schools, pharmaceutical campuses and public golf courses. River-Friendly Resident questionnaires were received from more than 500 participants, and the River-Friendly Farm program has certified 16 farms. The physical practices that the participants have put into place are significant to protecting drinking water in the Raritan Basin; the education component of each program is just as important, as NJWSA and North Jersey RC&D staff educate participants regarding their role and their impact on drinking water supplies in the Raritan Basin. In addition, the programs enable participants to show the general public the contributions that they are making to water resource protection.

For more information on any of the River-Friendly Certification programs, visit:

www.raritanbasin.org

www.njriverfriendly.org

www.njriverfriendlyfarm.org