

NEWS

TOWNSHIP OF WOODBRIDGE



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Woodbridge Mayor McCormac & Public/Private Environmental Partnership Announce \$27,800 Federal EPA Grant to Fund Wetlands Restoration Education Project

WOODBIDGE – Mayor John E. McCormac today announced that Woodbridge Township continues to [Type a quote from the document or the summary of an interesting point. You can position the text box anywhere in the document. Use the Drawing Tools tab to change the formatting of the pull quote text box.]

set the pace in environmental and sustainable initiatives with the award of a \$27,800 grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that will fund a comprehensive Wetlands Restoration Education Project. The project partners with the Edison Wetlands Association, the Woodbridge Township School District, representatives of El Paso Corporation and the Brownfield Development Area Committee, and the Woodbridge Redevelopment Agency to establish and create a series of wetlands education seminars, programs, and tours coordinated by the Edison Wetlands Association in partnership with Woodbridge Township high school students, science faculty, and members of the Woodbridge Youth Leadership Council.

“The EPA grant provides the seed money needed to establish a long-term program geared to educate students, residents and visitors about wetlands restoration and the positive impacts that this type of project has on the local environment and the future of our community,” said Mayor McCormac. “This grant program is a perfect example of federal, state and local government, the school administration, business community, and nonprofit partnerships working together to maximize the use of our resources to address environmental issues. Equally important, students from our schools involved in the sciences and environmental initiatives will be afforded the opportunity to serve as environmental stewards, educators, and advisors on the importance of wetland remediation and the benefits to the entire region.”



Woodbridge Township Mayor John E. McCormac announces the award of a \$27,800 grant from the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that will fund a comprehensive Wetlands Restoration Education Project. Joining Mayor McCormac to announce the Wetlands Restoration Education Project were (l-r): Caroline Ehrlich, Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor and Executive Director, Woodbridge Redevelopment Agency; David Wheeler, Director of Operations, Edison Wetlands Association; Dr. John A. Crowe, Superintendent, Woodbridge Township School District; Lois Rotella, Assistant Superintendent, Woodbridge Township School District; and Robert Cornez, Project Manager, Environmental Remediation, El Paso Corp.

Joining Mayor McCormac to announce the Wetlands Restoration Education Project were Caroline Ehrlich, Chief-of-Staff and Executive Director, Woodbridge Redevelopment Agency, Dr. John A. Crowe,

Superintendent, Woodbridge Township School District, David Wheeler, Director of Operations, Edison Wetlands Association, Robert Cornez, Project Manager, Environmental Remediation, El Paso Corp., representatives of the Brownfield Development Area Steering Committee, and members of the Woodbridge Township Municipal Council.

"In densely populated Central New Jersey, many students never get the chance to experience the wonders of nature. This exciting environmental education partnership will enable Woodbridge Township students to learn about the great outdoors first-hand and understand our connection to our region's waterways," said David Wheeler, Director of Operations for the nonprofit Edison Wetlands Association. "Thanks to the leadership of Mayor McCormac, Woodbridge has taken the lead in restoring healthy ecosystems along the Raritan Riverfront in Keasbey. Now students can engage their senses and learn how restoring habitat will benefit residents while also helping bald eagles, beavers, egrets, and falcons continue to thrive in Woodbridge's nature areas."

"The EPA grant allows for a rare educational experience for selected high school students that will place them in the field, directly participating in a hands-on practicum of being in natural settings that have been restored to ecological health, of collecting water and examining the wildlife it contains and sustains in a wetlands setting, and is compelling in a way that simple classroom learning will never achieve," said Superintendent Crowe. "The goal is to train our best biology and science students in the environmental science of wetlands restoration and to then have them train fellow students and the community."

Mayor McCormac reported that Woodbridge Township high school students will receive wetlands education, training, and field-based seminars from the Edison Wetlands Association and explore local wetlands areas, including the Brownfield Development area and future Waterfront Park in Keasbey, the Woodbridge River Wetlands area, the Pin Oak Forest in Avenel, and the Raritan River waterfront area along the Bayshore Recycling property. Students participating in the seminars will be trained to conduct guided environmental tours, develop an educational and publicity campaign for the public, create a website, develop "Learning Trunks" for classroom use, learn about career possibilities in environmental science, and participate in planning for the Woodbridge Township Environmental Center and other community educational programming. After "graduating" from the field seminars run by Woodbridge Township and administered by EWA instructors, the students will attend Family Science Nights in 16 elementary schools and teach almost 800 elementary students, their families and elementary school teachers what they have learned at the seminars and actions they can take to clean up the town and protect the Raritan River.

"EPEC Polymers, Inc. is pleased to be participating with this stakeholder group in providing educational opportunities for local students in conjunction with our restoration of over 100 acres of wetlands at the former Nuodex site in Woodbridge Township," said Robert Cornez, Project Manager, Environmental Remediation, El Paso Corp.

The Wetlands Restoration Education Project stands as the engine that will drive public education on wetlands restoration and the work being done at various locations throughout Woodbridge Township to remediate long-abandoned industrial areas back to their natural state, while striking an environmental balance with the economic development of the region. Last October, the public/private environmental partnership announced the start of wetlands remediation and construction of the Woodbridge Waterfront Park at the former Nuodex property, the largest segment of the Brownfield Development Area (BDA) located in the Keasbey Redevelopment site in Woodbridge Township.

The wetlands remediation project includes restoration of the natural wetland habitat, the planting of more than two million native plants which will transform the site into a diverse, functioning ecosystem of tidal wetlands, freshwater wetlands, and enhanced upland areas. The future Woodbridge Waterfront Park will

allow direct public access to the Raritan River from Woodbridge - something that has not happened since before the turn-of-the-century. When completed, the Woodbridge Waterfront Park will include two miles of new hiking trails, boardwalks along the river and upland areas, bird blinds, scenic overlooks, ecological signage, and passive recreation areas.

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Woodbridge Township Wetlands Restoration Education Project

Future Woodbridge Waterfront Park
Keasbey



Woodbridge River Ecological Sanctuary
Woodbridge



Pin Oak Forest Ecological Preserve
Avenel



Mayor John E. McCormac

