

2024 YEAR-IN-REVIEW

# RIVER-FRIENDLY REFLECTIONS

Official Newsletter of the NJ River-Friendly Programs



## A year in review

### A NOTE FROM THE COORDINATORS...

Thank you for another busy year for the NJ River-Friendly program! We appreciate the time you have invested towards this certification and have enjoyed getting to know you, your school, business, or golf course.

We wish you a restful holiday season, and look forward to keeping up the great work in 2025!

## The Numbers

**150** new RF residents

**4** new RF Certified Schools

**7** Pollinator projects installed



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## N.J. Drought Update

New Jersey is currently under a severe and extreme drought warning in northern and southern parts of the state.

We are grateful for the precipitation that has happened recently but we will need many more months of steady rain or snowmelt, not torrential rains, to get us out of drought conditions. In the meantime, we all can help avoid a drought emergency from being announced by practicing River-Friendly water conservation measures plus more suggestions from NJDEP below:

### 10 SIMPLE STEPS TO SAVE WATER THIS FALL



Reduce usage by 65% and use a commercial car wash instead of washing your car at home.

1



Install low-flow showerheads, faucets and toilets.

6



Postpone water intensive yard work, like reseeding your lawn, until conditions improve.

2



Take five-minute showers.

7



Sweep patios, driveways, and sidewalks. Never hose paved surfaces.

3



Turn off water while brushing teeth.

8



Fix leaks around your home and with your irrigation system.

4



Run your washing machine and dishwasher only when full.

9



If you are still watering your plants, lawns, gardens, they require less water in the fall, and use a rain barrel or watering can.

5



Raise lawnmower blades to at least three inches to promote deeper grass roots, which hold water better.

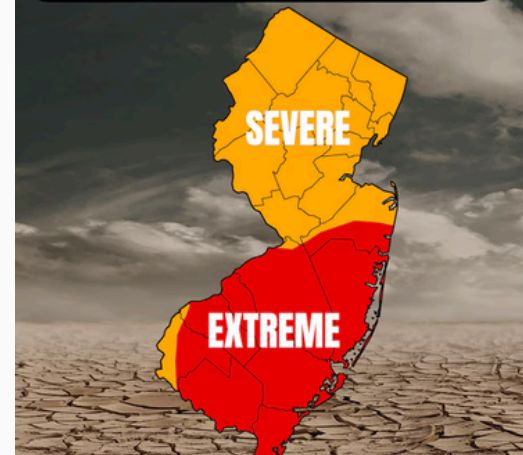
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The public is encouraged to follow these common-sense water conservation tips. For additional water conservation tips, visit [dep.nj.gov/conserves-water/](http://dep.nj.gov/conserves-water/)

For updated information about the status of New Jersey's water supplies, visit [dep.nj.gov/drought](http://dep.nj.gov/drought)



### N.J. DROUGHT STATUS



Source:

<https://droughtmonitor.unl.edu/>

# Congratulations New 2024 River-Friendly Schools!



## Alexander Elementary

**Baseline River-Friendly School certified**

The school led a successful River-Friendly campaign where 55 families were certified River-Friendly Residents. Students created videos to tell families what actions they could do to protect their environment.



## Carroll Robbins Elementary

**Baseline River-Friendly School certified**

Carroll Robbins Elementary students did a water audit of their school and made posters to inform their classmates actions they could do at home to conserve water.



## Christina Seix Academy

**Stream Level River-Friendly School certified**

Students learned how native plants are important for pollinators and local wildlife by planting native raspberry and blueberry bushes. In addition, students learned more about insect/plant relationships when they attended a field trip at the Watershed Institute's Kate Gorrie Butterfly House.



## Slackwood Elementary

**Baseline River-Friendly School certified**

Slackwood Elementary students explored their local Little Shabakunk stream's macroinvertebrate populations and learned how these creatures can indicate water quality.

## Featured River-Friendly Projects

These projects were funded graciously by a National Fish and Wildlife Federation Grant which focused on installing stormwater management or habitat enhancement projects at schools in the Delaware River Watershed.



### Bear Tavern Elementary School

The Watershed Institute staff and Bear Tavern students installed a 144 sq ft native plant pollinator garden (right photo).

In addition, students helped spread yarrow seed and plant golden ragwort in an area along their outdoor corridor that was heavily eroded and where little grass grew (left photo).



## Featured River-Friendly Projects

These projects were funded graciously by a National Fish and Wildlife Federation Grant which focused on installing stormwater management or habitat enhancement projects at schools in the Delaware River Watershed.



### Alexander Elementary School

The Watershed Institute staff and every Alexander Elementary student helped replant their rain garden which had lost many plants due to a flooding event. Every class came out to help plant over 300 plant plugs and learn about the stormwater management function of the garden.



## Featured River-Friendly Projects

These projects were funded graciously by a National Fish and Wildlife Federation Grant which focused on installing stormwater management or habitat enhancement projects at schools in the Delaware River Watershed.



### Christina Seix Academy

Students helped plant three native raspberry and three high bush blueberry bushes on their campus (left photo). They learned how these plants will benefit wildlife for pollination and fruits for both the wild creatures and students.

In addition, the school created a sensory garden for their youngest Pre-K students and included native plants that would benefit pollinators plus provide a sensory interest (right photo).



## Featured River-Friendly Projects

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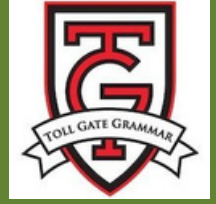
### Carroll Robbins Elementary School

Students revamped their two front raised beds with native plants and shrubs (left photo). In addition, the school received two raised planter beds for their asphalt play area and filled those with native plants as well that will provide beauty and an educational tool (right photo).



## Featured River-Friendly Projects

This project was funded by money raised by the Toll Gate Grammar School Green Team.



### Toll Gate Grammar School

Students helped replant a raised bed area above their existing rain garden that used to be full of weeds (left photo). They planted golden ragwort and yarrow. They also helped by spreading a native seed and annual grass mix in the rain garden to help fill in gaps in the garden (right photo).





## Featured River-Friendly Projects

This project was funded by Green Team fundraising efforts and plant donations from the New Jersey Water Supply Authority.



### Cedar Hill Preparatory School

The Green Team at Cedar Hill Prep School worked together to build a rain garden on the school grounds (right photo).

In addition, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority provided 100 live tree stakes, 24 plugs, and 4 pounds of seeds to the school, which were planted to strengthen a 185-foot stretch of the stream buffer along Cedar Grove Brook. This brook, a key tributary to the Delaware and Raritan Canal, flows through the rear of the school property (left photo).



## Featured River-Friendly Projects

This project was funded generously by the E.J. Grassmann Trust fund.



### Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve

An area along the driveway at Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve (Raritan Headwaters' headquarters) was suffering from erosion during storm events and snowmelt, resulting in loss of driveway substrate and turbidity in the Axle Brook downgrade of the driveway. To reduce erosion, RHA planted a native bioswale along the slope leading to the Axle Brook in the fall of 2024. Plants included winterberry holly, little bluestem, cardinal flower, and more native plants that will help hold the soil in place and provide valuable food and habitat for native wildlife.

**BEFORE**



**AFTER**



## NJ AmeriCorp Watershed Ambassadors Lend a Hand

On Wednesday, February 7, 2024, the New Jersey Water Supply Authority hosted the monthly meeting for the AmeriCorps New Jersey Watershed Ambassadors.

20 Ambassadors were split into three groups to tackle a variety of stewardship projects such as pollinator garden improvements (weeding and pruning the shrubs), cleaning out bird nest boxes, cutting down bamboo, and an invasive species removal along our peninsula. In a short amount of time, the ambassadors left an indelible mark on the New Jersey Water Supply Authority's campus.

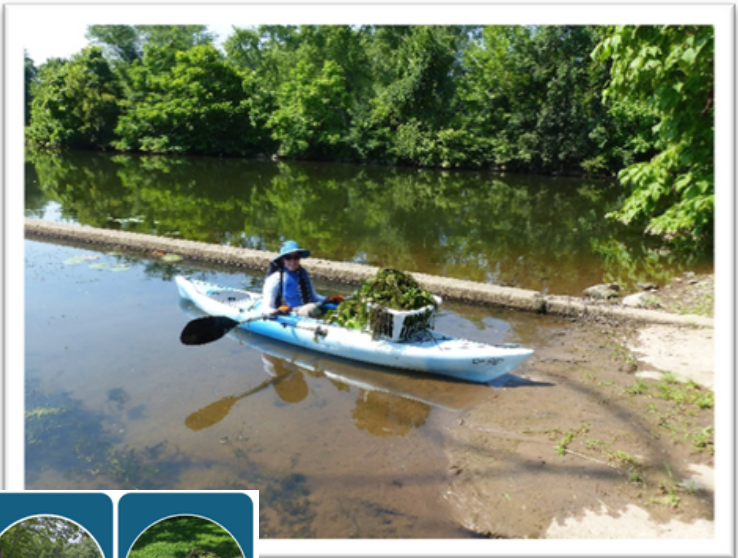




## Aquatic Plant Management: Water Chestnut

On July 16, NJWSA staff removed 93 pounds of water chestnut during the annual hand pull at the NJ Water Supply Authority’s South Branch Pumping Station intake pond. This year water chestnut was competing with dense native coontail, invasive Eurasian watermilfoil, and filamentous/floating mats of green algae (Oedogonium).

Dedicated annual pulls have resulted in reduced populations of water chestnut at this location. Water chestnut is an invasive plant that is known for rapid growth that outcompete native plants. They are detrimental to water ways because they deplete oxygen from the water when they die and decompose, making it less hospitable for creatures to live in. In addition, the water chestnut can create thick mats that hinder aquatic recreational activities.



Thanks for reading!

We hope for 2025 to be as eventful as this year!

Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!

