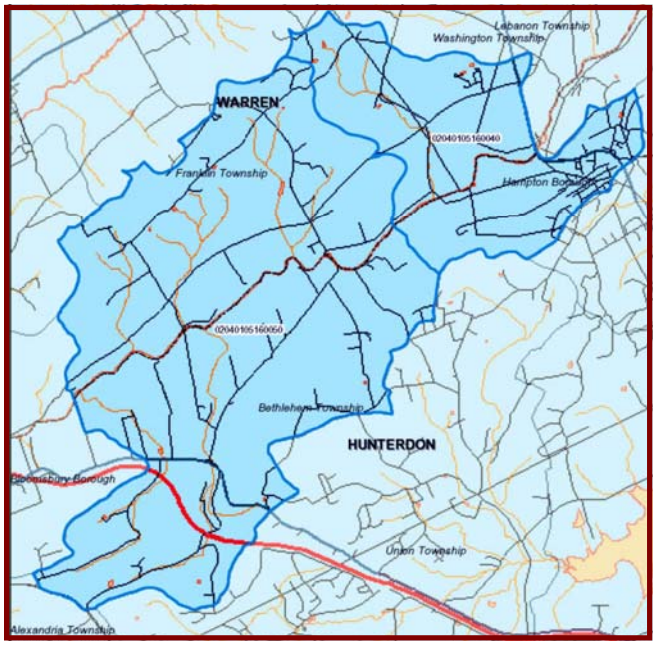
Musconetcong Watershed Protection & Restoration Plan (Hampton to Bethlehem)

2006– 2009



The Musconetcong River begins in Morris County and flows through Sussex and Morris Counties to Warren and Hunterdon Counties, where it discharges to the Delaware River. The entire Musconetcong River Watershed is 156 square miles. The lower portion of this river system has been designated as a priority for protection and restoration by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP). The Musconetcong Watershed priority segment extends from Route 31 in Hampton, beginning at the monitoring station AN0072, and concludes at the US Geological Survey (USGS) Station near Bloomsbury, 01457000. This subwatershed area is approximately 19.6 square miles in size and includes Lebanon Township, Hampton Borough and Bethlehem Township in Hunterdon County and Franklin and Washington Townships in Warren County. The Musconetcong River at the Route 31 USGS monitoring station is currently identified as not meeting surface water quality standards for aquatic life and at the downstream monitoring station near Bloomsbury has also been identified as not meeting water quality standards for fecal coliform and pH.

North Jersey Resource Conservation & Development (RC&D), Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program, and the Musconetcong Watershed Association have been contracted by the State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Watershed Management to evaluate the potential pollution sources within this watershed. This effort includes determining the sources of fecal coliform, and other pollutants that are contributing to the river's failing water quality and designing a plan for the watershed so that water quality standards may once again be met in the Musconetcong River. In beginning this effort, the project partners will conduct stream visual assessments of the river. The Musconetcong River and its tributaries will be evaluated based on the following physical characteristics – channel stability, access to floodplain, water appearance, nutrient enrichment, riparian buffer, and habitat availability. The process of characterizing a river based on these physical properties allows the river's morphology to be numerically rated, and therefore, easily sorted and organized. Data collected during this assessment will document existing stream conditions, define a baseline for future restoration efforts, and support our water quality monitoring effort in the Musconetcong Watershed. Guidance for this work is provided by the US Department of Agricultural (USDA) Stream Visual Assessment Protocol (SVAP). This protocol has been modified by the RCE Water Resources Program to better suit New Jersey water systems.

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Additionally, this project will include chemical and biological sampling of the Musconetcong River. Together, the collected data will aid in characterizing water quality and in identifying specific sources of pollutants impairing this river system. The project partners have communicated this effort with the five municipalities in the project area and will set up an Advisory Committee to guide this process. The final plan will define projects with the most cost-benefit advantage that will restore water quality to the Musconetcong River when implemented. The Watershed Restoration Plan will include Best Management Practices, both structural and nonstructural, that can be used to repair this ecosystem. Guidance from landowners in the watershed and support from the municipalities will ensure that the projects defined for this area are both welcomed by the community and in support of our common goal, an improved Musconetcong River.

North Jersey Resource Conservation and Development

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY RUTGERS COOPERATIVE EXTENSION New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

For more information about this project, please contact Grace Messinger of the North Jersey RC&D at (908) 735-0733 x110, Katie Buckley of the RCE, Water Resources Program at (732) 932-9011, or Beth Barry of the Musconetcong Watershed Association at (908) 537-7060. More information will soon be available at www.northjerseyrcd.org and www.water.rutgers.edu