

Pequannock River Coalition Timeline and Achievements

In over 20 years of operation the Pequannock River Coalition has enjoyed unbelievable success. Working on a tiny budget, funded largely by contributions from its members, PRC has accomplished, time and again, what many said was impossible.

The West Milford Golf Course, Bloomingdale's Horse Farm, the Riverdale Glenburn Estate, the Weber Tract in Kinnelon; all these sites of proposed (and inappropriate) developments were "done deals" according to builders and officials. Yet, thanks to PRC and our allies, none of these sites is built today. In all, we have managed to halt or greatly modify more than 20 poor development projects, protecting our wildlife and water supplies, limiting flooding, and preserving our quality of life.

Today, most overdevelopment in our area is prevented by the Highlands Act. PRC was a key player in passage of the Act and in improving the Highlands Regional Master Plan. Our research, input, testimony at hearings, and our education and alerting of citizens and officials, made the resulting plan much stronger. No other group, large or small, was more vocal or more effective.

Beyond the Highlands Act, New Jersey laws increase protection for waterways that host a population of spawning trout. For example, wetlands that drain to these waterways get 3 times the protected buffer area of ordinary wetlands, and the actual trout streams and rivers can have their protective buffers expanded by a factor of 6.

Recognizing this, PRC worked diligently to identify populations of spawning trout in our region. The result was the upgrade of 8 different segments of our streams and rivers, including major portions of the Pequannock River and Wanaque River, and a host of their tributaries. No other organization statewide has ever accomplished anything like this. Yet, it is just a single example of our work - a record that also includes restoration, numerous assessments, and award-winning programs in youth education and water temperature monitoring.

Finally, by acting as watershed watchdogs, we often rang the alarm bell, halting and reversing violation of our environmental laws.

From our beginning in the 1990s, the record of PRC has been nothing less than stellar. Of course, we have been assisted and encouraged by many groups, individuals, and officials. In all, more than 1,200 people and organizations have donated time and money to PRC. Anyone who shared our goals has been welcomed.

Listed here are just some of the highlights. It is a fascinating trip through the years. Enjoy!

1995

- Pequannock River Coalition incorporated
- SRT Recycling center proposed on the banks of Pequannock River for West Milford – defeated.
- First Pequannock River fish kill occurs, caused by high water temperature. (West Milford/Jefferson)

1996

- First issue of our newsletter, the Pequannock Post, is published. This publication has been produced every other month, on time, without fail, for 20 years.
- Stream Care Guide published and distributed by PRC.
- First PRC river cleanup held in West Milford.
- Oak Ridge segment of Pequannock River upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.

1997

- Flows agreement (MOU) reached with City of Newark for the Oak Ridge segment of the Pequannock River.
- PRC sponsors Town Council Candidate's Night in West Milford.
- PRC granted 501(c)3 (non-profit) status.
- PRC temperature monitoring program begins at 4 sites.
- Stockholm segment of Pequannock River upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.
- First PRC river cleanup held in Bloomingdale.
- First PRC storm drain stenciling in Butler, Bloomingdale.

1998

- Physical monitoring and macroinvertebrate sample training seminars hosted by PRC.
- Terrace Lake (Butler) development approved over PRC objections.
- Proposal for 1,000-acre watershed land sale in West Milford defeated.

1999

- Amphitheater (West Milford) first proposed.
- Federal Hill / Meer (Bloomingdale) development proposed.
- Idylease (West Milford) development proposed.
- Betts Environmental in Bloomingdale damages riverbank – restoration won by PRC.
- Joint water monitoring workshop held with Skylands CLEAN

2000

- Flows/temperature dispute with Newark – MOU agreement upheld.
- PRC temperature monitoring expanded to 8 sites.
- Pompton Lakes flood plain development defeated.
- Idylease development (West Milford) defeated.
- Hamburg Mountain/Intrawest development proposal approved by Vernon.

2001

- PRC hike/tour program begins.
- West Milford Golf Course proposed.
- PRC licensed as state laboratory for temperature monitoring.
- PRC temperature data included for the first time in federal Integrated List.
- PRC temperature monitoring expands to 15 sites and moves into Wanaque River Watershed.
- Kanouse Mountain cell tower (West Milford) defeated.
- Macopin River below Echo Lake upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.
- Pequannock River from Charlotteburg Reservoir to Macopin Reservoir upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.
- Riverdale - 518-unit townhouse project approved over PRC objections. PRC files court appeal to halt construction and force improved stormwater management there.

- State agrees to repurchase Hamburg Mountain property in Vernon ending Intrawest development proposal.

2002

- Weber tract (Kinnelon) rezoning approved over PRC objections.
- Bloomingdale rezoning of Macopin Road area defeated.
- Greco tract (Glenburn Estate) development hearings begin in Riverdale.
- PRC Executive Director Ross Kushner named “Outstanding Grassroots Activist” by Highlands Coalition.
- PRC Greenway preservation program initiated.
- PRC creates first full-time paid staff position.

2003

- West Milford Golf Course proposal defeated.
- High-density development of Bloomingdale “Horse Farm” proposed. PRC works with residents and Skylands CLEAN, halting proposal.
- Strip mall proposal for Riverdale Glenburn Estate defeated. Property preservation begins.
- PRC sets important legal precedent for stormwater management at 518-unit townhouse project in Riverdale, strengthening requirements statewide.
- PRC wins EPA “Environmental Quality Award” and NJDEP “Environmental Excellence Award”.
- Kakeout Brook upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.
- Wanaque River upgraded to trout production by state/PRC.

2004

- PRC forces reconstruction project in Butler to use bio-retention techniques for stormwater.
- Raceway Tract in Butler preserved.
- PRC initiates watershed awards program.
- Riverdale establishes Open Space Fund.
- PRC takes lead role in strengthening and enacting proposed Highlands Act.
- PRC identifies and corrects source of bacterial pollution in Macopin River.
- PRC performs study of temperature and tributary flows across watershed.
- At PRC urging, DEP drafts Newark permit modifications to require base flows and temperature control in Pequannock River.
- PRC’s “River in the Classroom” youth education program begins.
- Highlands Act is passed.

2005

- PRC conducts river restoration projects in Bloomingdale and Riverdale.
- Trawinski Tract in Butler preserved.
- Highlands Master Plan reviewed and debated, with PRC testimony and data.

2006

- PRC gains second laboratory license for dissolved oxygen monitoring.
- PRC reviews proposed Highlands zoning and informs the public.
- PRC forces substantial changes to Highlands Act “zone” mapping.

2007

- Highlands Master Plan adopted, ending proposed development of Bloomingdale Horse Farm and Kinnelon Weber Tract.
- Weber Tract preservation in Kinnelon begins.
- Dube property in Riverdale preserved for PRC Greenway.
- “River in the Classroom” expands to 5 school districts.
- PRC creates Natural Resource Inventory for Riverdale.

2008

- Federal Hill development in Bloomingdale approved, but reduced in size by 50%, moved off ridgetops, out of wetlands buffers, and all drainage shifted away from Pequannock River.
- R2Cross survey of river/stream flows completed by PRC.
- Siphon project on West Brook completed by PRC.
- Willow nursery created at Riverdale Glenburn Estate by PRC.
- Argonne Woods development in Butler approved over PRC objections. PRC forces wetlands improvements at this site.
- Second EPA Environmental Excellence Award received by PRC for “River in the Classroom” youth education.
- Three Rivers Canoe/Kayak Trail created on the Pequannock River, Ramapo River and Pompton River by PRC.

2009

- New permit for Newark watershed goes into effect, requiring minimum flows at Oak Ridge and Charlottesburg, and maximum water temperatures at Oak Ridge.
- Butler Environmental Resource Inventory created by PRC.
- Pequannock Environmental Resource Inventory updated by PRC.
- PRC restoration project halts erosion on Pequannock River tributary at Bloomingdale’s DeLazier Field.
- Weber Tract preservation in Kinnelon finalized.

2010

- PRC wins change in NJ Water Quality Standards, adding water temperature daily maximums.
- U.S. Geological Survey creates new online monitoring stations at several points in the Pequannock River Watershed to gauge compliance with new state permits.
- “River in the Classroom” adds second instructor (Denise Debernardi) in addition to Michelle Brook.
- PRC conducts Japanese knotweed removal in Riverdale’s Appelt Park.
- Several acres added to Pequannock River Greenway in Kakeout Brook area.

2011

- PRC presses successfully for changes in West Milford MUA.
- PRC gets attention for Lake Lookover problems caused by Tennessee Gas pipeline expansion.

- “River in the Classroom” expands to 6 school districts.
- PRC identifies major silt problems in Ringwood’s West Brook.
- Restoration replanting conducted at Macopin site in West Milford and Appelt Park in Riverdale.

2012

- “River in the Classroom” expanded into Wanaque River Watershed.
- PRC assumes lead role in debate over flooding, dam removal and dredging of Passaic, Pompton, Wanaque, and Pequannock Rivers.
- PRC gains formal monitoring protocol for Pequannock River by the City of Newark.

2013

- PRC initiates letter on flooding and flood control from alliance of regional environmental groups.
- PRC watchdogs river work in Pompton Lakes, opposing permit violations.
- PRC proposes additional improvements to Newark’s watershed permit, with supporting resolutions from local towns.

2014

- PRC gets action on “flood control” work through the Pompton Lakes area, including stop-work orders issued and violations finally acknowledged.

2015

- PRC achieves final permit changes for Newark's reservoir operations, completing this drive.
- Funding for USGS gauges on the Pequannock River restored.
- PRC continues opposition to Braemar development in West Milford. Finalized project has housing reduced by one third.
- PRC opposes re-zoning of Federal Hill for quarry.
- PRC reviews and comments on proposed Sparta Mountain plan.

2016

- PRC continues opposition to Bloomingdale quarry expansion, raising funding for legal work.

Awards

1995 Trout Unlimited Conservation Award

2002 Highlands Coalition Outstanding Grassroots Activism Award

2003 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Quality Award

2003 N.J. Department of Environmental Protection Environmental Excellence Award

2006 Riverdale Certificate of Appreciation for the Preservation of the Glenburn Estate

2007 Gene Rosenfeld Environmental Leadership Award

2007 Riverdale Certificate of Appreciation for the Creation of Natural Resource Inventory

2008 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Environmental Quality Award (our 2nd)

PRC Employees and Trustees from 1995 to Present

(* - current board and employees ** - charter board and employees)

John Ardan

Kathy Baker-Skafidas

Michelle Brook* (Educational Director)

Robert Burke

John Capozucca

Chuck Coronato*

Denise DeBernardi (Educational Consultant)

Maria Harkey

Bruce Hensdorf

John Houghtaling

Barbara Kushner**

Ross Kushner** (Executive Director)

Don Pruden

Carl Richko**

Tina Schevjda

Bernie Stapleton*

Wesley Stoskopf

Mary Tooman

Robert VanderPloeg

George Wilkinson*

Doug Williams*