

TO: Cathy Marion, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service New Jersey Field Office
FROM: Mario Orlandi, Chair, Readington WaterWatch Advisory Committee
SUBJ: Cornell-Dubilier Draft Restoration Plan Comment

I am writing to comment on the Cornell-Dubilier Draft Restoration Plan on behalf of Readington Township's newly established WaterWatch Advisory Committee, on which I serve as Chair, and also in support of the comments already submitted by Readington's Open Space Advisory Board of which I am a member.

Readington's dedication to preserving clean water and promoting water-friendly policies is long-standing. With the formation of this new Committee, however, the Township's adherence to these principles has been raised to a new level. Among our newly adopted goals is the establishment of NJDEP C1 water quality standards across all the streams in our area which include: the Holland Brook, Pleasant Run, Prescott Brook, Chambers Brook, Lazy Brook, and Rockaway Creek plus significant sections of the Lamington River and the South Branch Raritan River. Each of these waterways is a primary source of clean drinking water for many of the NJ residents who live in the Readington section of the Raritan River watershed. Through the Committee's recent efforts, each of these surface waters now has a volunteer Stream Master who is developing a stewardship plan tailored to that stream. Broader efforts include community-wide projects such as well-testing, septic awareness, stream flora and fauna monitoring, and the creation of new hiking trails along sections of streams that adjoin public lands.

Dam removal along the South Branch Raritan River has been of interest to Readington environmentalists for a long time. In particular, the removal of the Rockafellows Mills Dam would open up this important Raritan-Readington section of the SBR to improvements in aquatic and plant life and overall sustainability resulting from significantly enhanced water flow and temperature regulation. This dam removal project is currently on the Plan's list among the options designated as Tier 2. In recognition of the importance of this project to the water quality of current and future generations living in our area, we respectfully recommend that it be considered for implementation.

When considered in conjunction with two of the Tier 1 dam removal projects on the Raritan mainstem (the Island Farm Wier and the Headgates), these three projects together would synergistically contribute to the health and resilience of our local waterways in ways that no single project could in isolation. We enthusiastically recommend this approach and commit the support and leadership of the Readington WaterWatch to promote and sustain the project through to its completion.

Please let me know if any other information about our Committee or its activities would be of interest.

Regards,

Mario Orlandi

Mario Orlandi, PhD, MPH
Chair, Readington WaterWatch