



# Musconetcong River News

Spring 2019

Published quarterly by The Musconetcong Watershed Association

Asbury, New Jersey

## American Eels in the Musconetcong

*By Nancy Lawler,  
Water Quality Program Coordinator*

We often run into anglers when we are monitoring along the river. Anglers are frequently curious about what we are doing, and conversations with them are a great way to exchange information about river conditions. On a recent day ‘in the field’ an angler showed us his catch from the lower section of the river—a two-foot long American Eel which he was planning to use as bait at the shore.

American eels are common in our river and play an important role in river and watershed health. Like many fish, their diet consists of aquatic and insects and smaller fish. They also eat a lot of dead animal matter, digesting it so that bacteria can break it down further into nutrients that can be used by nearby trees and plants. Without American eels, the decomposition process takes longer and contributes to poor water quality.

As common as these creatures are, we are still learning about them. American Eels are a catadromous fish, meaning they hatch in salt water and migrate to freshwater for part of their life-cycle. American Eels start as transparent, leaf-shaped larvae in the Atlantic Ocean’s Sargasso Sea located near the Gulf Stream. They float on the Gulf Stream currents to the Atlantic coast, and then transform into the long slender shape we recognize. Young eels then make their way into lakes, ponds and streams, growing and maturing to a size of 3 to 5-feet long—over a period of 3 to 40 years. While we know that the adults must return to the Sargasso Sea to spawn and die, no one has ever observed any part of this process. It remains a mystery.



American Eel

Young eels can overcome seemingly impassable obstacles, and can even leave water for brief periods of time, but dams block and divide rivers in ways that limit their ability to reach historical eel habitat. While it is stunning to realize that American eels can make their way past a 37-foot high dam, the numbers we find upstream are far less than we find downstream of the Warren Glen dam. In the spring of 2018, our team caught 152 American eels downstream of the dam, but only 16 eels upstream of it.

We don’t know exactly when the Warren Glen dam will be removed, but we are hoping that this project will help restore American eel populations in the Musconetcong River. 🌀

### Register for Camp Musky

**2019 Camp Sessions are filling up fast!**

July 8-12: Explorers | Ages 5-6 | Half Day:  
9 am-1 pm

July 15-19: Stream Team | Ages 7-9 | Half Day:  
9 am-1 pm

July 22-26: Trailblazers | Ages 7-9 | Full Day:  
9 am-4 pm

REGISTRATION FULL - July 29-Aug 2: River  
Rangers | Ages 10-12 + | Full Day: 9 am-4 pm

Aug. 5-9: STEM Camp | Ages 8-12 + | Full Day:  
9 am-4 pm

 **Camp Musky**  
EXPLORE & DISCOVER



**MUSCONETCONG**  
**WATERSHED**  
**ASSOCIATION**

PO Box 113, 10 Maple Ave.  
Asbury, NJ 08802

**908-537-7060**

*www.musconetcong.org*

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**VOLUNTEER**  
*Spotlight*

**An Interview  
with Jeff  
Brenham**

Jeff Brenham has been involved with the MWA for many years. As a former Ground Steward and Water Quality intern he understands our organization and was happy to come on as a volunteer when we asked for help maintaining our native gardens at the River Resource Center.



***Q1: How did you first learn about the MWA?***

Growing up around here, I was vaguely aware of the MWA stewarding the river and [monitoring] water quality. It wasn't until later in college that I became interested in deepening my relationship with the forests, mountains, and rivers of my home. In researching this, I learned about the MWA and the other good folks engaged in the stewardship of North Jersey. When I returned home after college, I immediately jumped on board volunteering and attending events.

***Q2: What were some of your favorite MWA projects to work on? (Employee or volunteer work)***

One of my favorites for sure was working with Comcast. It was great to give local people a sense of ownership on a public space and educate them about what we do here. We also got to install benches and create nice spaces to sit and enjoy the river—which I frequently take advantage of.

***Q3: What made you want to come back and volunteer after your Ground Steward and interning terms had ended?***

Honestly, it was kind of a struggle to leave because I've built such a connection to the grounds and this stretch of river. I've learned a lot about the gardens and grounds over my three years, and I just wanted a way to bring that back to the organization. Organizations like these depend on volunteers who have a lot of passion, and I figured I fit that bill.

***Q4: What advice would you give someone looking to volunteer in their community?***

Just start looking! Chances are that wherever you are, there are folks fighting to protect the land they love. We always need help. Sometimes it's just mulching garden beds; but in our instance, that serves as a tool to educate the public that native plants are both beautiful and support our ecosystem. And if you can't find people already doing the work that inspires you—be that person and make it happen.

# Welcome

## Christa Reeves!

I was born and raised in St. Petersburg, Florida and moved to Washington, NJ in 2011 to help my father-in-law with health issues. I always had an affinity for water and fell in love with the rivers in the area and went back to school to pursue a degree in science. I graduated from East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania in May with a BS in Environmental Studies with a focus on Stream Ecology and a minor in Geography with a focus in GIS. I have interned for the MWA for the last three and a half years before taking the position of Water Quality Field Specialist. I am also the Research Field Specialist in the northern part of PA and NJ with Stroud Water research center as part of the EnviroDIY sensor project in coordination with the DRWI. I am the VP of the newly-formed Lehigh Valley chapter of the PA Native Plant Society. I am eager to continue to focus on projects that address water quality in my new position.



## 19th Annual Run for the River a Success – Despite Weather



MWA's Run for the River event is a staple fundraiser to our organization and is approaching its platinum anniversary! We closed out this event's 'teen years' with one of the wettest runs ever, and despite nature's setback, it was a great day. Runner attendance was up from previous years and many walkers and spectators donned jackets and joined the festivities.

Congratulations to J. Daniel Ferguson and Morgan Hamler who finished Best Overall Male and Female this year!

All participants and volunteers were once again treated to bagels donated by Muheisen's Bagel & Deli in Washington, NJ and oranges donated by ShopRite of Hunterdon County. Entertainment by DW Wilson also kept the event feeling bright and lively.

MWA is grateful for the continued support of our local businesses!

We would also like to thank the 2019 sponsors who helped to make this legacy event live on. **Gold:** Asbury Farms, The Gullage Family, Hawk Pointe Golf Club, M&M Mars, Princeton Hydro, Unity Bank. **Silver:** Amy S. Greene Environmental Consultants, Asbury Village Farms, Aqua Pro-Tech Laboratories, Brewster & Judith Perkins, Brown & Brown, Emulsitone Chemicals, Engineering & Land Planning, Four Paws Playground, Frank Rymon & Sons, George's Plumbing, Hackettstown MUA, Holland Liquors, Mid Jersey Orthopedics, Dr. Sally Jorgensen, International Process Plants, Johnson Automotive Group, Mathnasium of Lopatcong, Musconetcong Sewerage Authority, Rick Allen's Auto Repair, RiverLogic Solutions, Rockefeller Group, Rossi Chevrolet Buick GMC, Schaible's Plumbing & Heating, SOS Woodstoves, Visions Federal Credit Union, Wells Fargo Advisors. **Supporters:** Asbury Coffee Mill, The Barry Family, Black Butterfly Painting Studio, The MacGonagle Family.

MWA's post-race raffle is also highly anticipated each year, and we would like to thank the local businesses who continue to donate gift certificates and items to it.

Next year's platinum anniversary event will be our most spectacular yet! We hope to see you there! If you would like to get involved early, please call our office or visit our website. 🌊



# Update on the proposed Surface Water Quality Standards

By Alan R. Hunt, Ph.D.,  
Executive Director

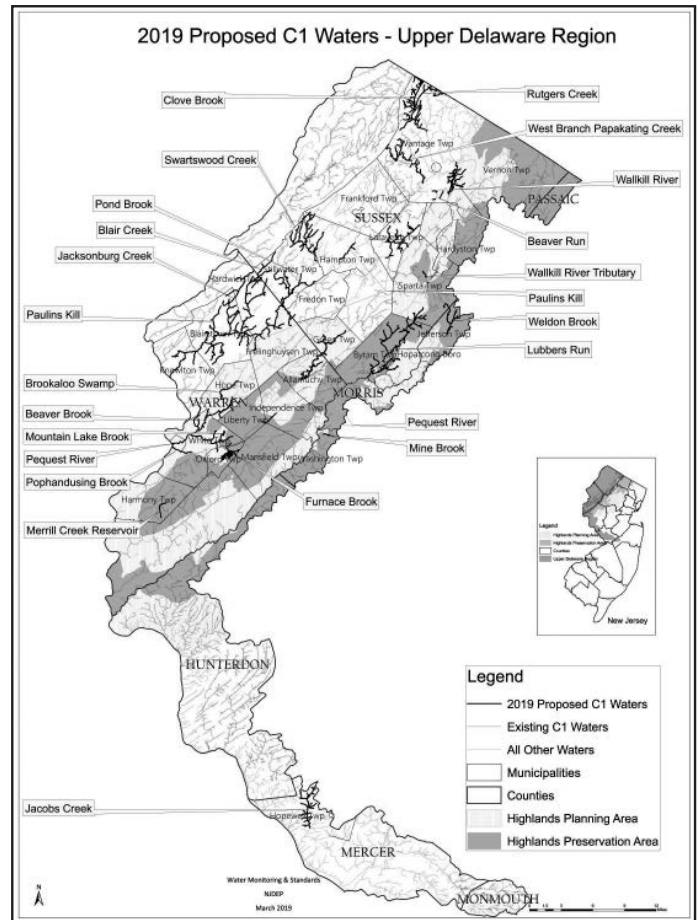
This spring the MWA participated in providing public comments on the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) Surface Water Quality Standards. They are an essential tool for designating a river's intended use, whether it be for drinking water, swimming, fishing, boating, or industrial uses. The Surface Water Quality Standards primarily focus on point source discharges to a water body, and do not affect the activities of homeowners, small business, or agriculture (unless they are making a discharge from a pipe that requires a permit).

The MWA has a mission of "protecting and improving the quality of the Musconetcong Watershed." These proposed Category One standards and trout habitat reclassifications recognize the high water quality of these tributaries, and sets a goal for that water quality to be maintained for the future. Improving degraded water is costlier than protecting water quality, "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Being in the river restoration business, we know first-hand the costs of improving water quality.

The last time the DEP significantly updated the Surface Water Quality Standards in the Musconetcong Watershed was in 2008, when the Musconetcong River, was designated Category One downstream from Saxton Falls, for its exceptional aquatic and fish habitat. This area also included the discharge point for the Hackettstown Municipal Utility Authority's waste water treatment plant. The new Category One designation means that existing and new discharges to the river and its tributary streams had to meet an "anti-degradation" standard. This meant that water quality needed to be maintained, and, if possible, improved over time.

In 2007, the prior year, the DEP implemented new Flood Hazard Area rules. They were designed to reduce both on-site and off-site damages from stormwater run-off and flooding from development near rivers, streams, and other water bodies. Since 1929 New Jersey has had state regulations restricting building encroachment in streams as a strategy to reduce and control flooding. The main idea in these new Flood Hazards Area rules was that natural, vegetated stream buffers could better absorb high waters and slow them down, mitigating a flood's harmful impacts. Those rules granted a 300' buffer, called a riparian zone (aka a floodplain), along Category One waters like the Musconetcong River and its tributaries. Homeowners and businesses significantly impacted by these rules have access to hardship waivers and exceptions to allow construction in the riparian zone, designed to avoid the "takings" of private property. These waivers became easier to access when DEP launched an online application process last year.

This year the DEP proposed several Musconetcong tributaries for Category One status: Lubbers Run, Cowboy Creek, Weldon Brook, and a small section of Mine Brook. Additionally, new fish habitat assessments were made for Scout Run and two unnamed tributaries near Stephensburg and Asbury (see our Winter 2019

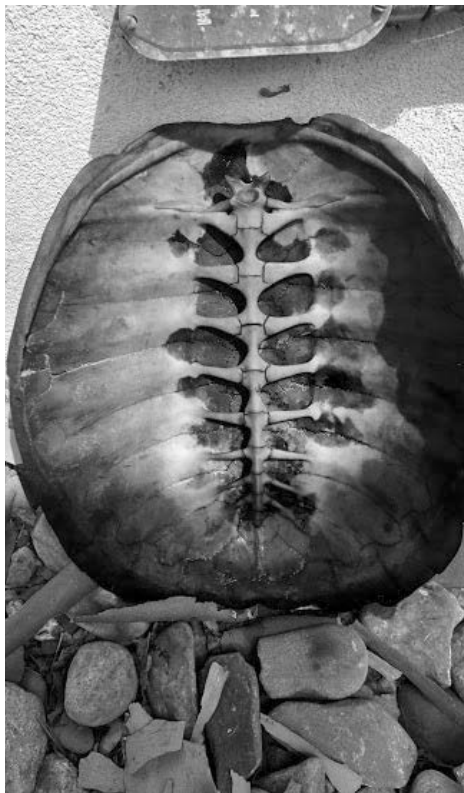


Newsletter). These tributaries had habitat suitable for trout production, indicating an improvement in their water quality.

Both the MWA and Musconetcong River Management Council developed and submitted public comments in support of the DEP's proposed Category One upgrades and trout reclassification assessments. Trout Unlimited and several other organizations had input on the comments. A key point MWA made in these comments was economic development and water resource protection can coexist. The last time the DEP significantly updated Surface Water Quality Standards in the Musconetcong Watershed was in 2008 when the Musconetcong River was designated Category One downstream from Saxton Falls for its exceptional aquatic and fish habitat. Category One designation means that existing and new discharges to the river and its tributary streams have to meet an anti-degradation standard. MWA, Trout Unlimited and other organizations were actively involved in promoting those standards in 2008. We also indicated that the standards promote economic growth by protecting the water quality that brings anglers, boaters, hikers, and birders to our region.

We thank the 164 people who added their support through an online petition co-hosted by MWA and the NJ League of Conservation Voters. The DEP will likely announce its final decisions on the Surface Water Quality Standards later this year. For more information on the proposal visit: [www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/swqs.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/wms/bears/swqs.htm).

# How to Avoid a Lightning Strike if Caught in a Forest



*Turtle shell found during last year's Camp Musky program.*

*By Tish Lascelle, MWA President*

*Do organic farmers take any precautions when they apply manure on organic farms?*

*How does a kayaker 'read' a river differently from a fisherman?*

Those are just some of the things included in MWA's fun new Adult Summer Camp program. We know you are all busy adults who can't come to a week-long camp, but we also hear feedback every year from Camp Musky parents that a) their kids are having a ball at our camps, and b) "I'd like to do what they do!" So we've created a program of 1-day camps spread out over the summer. Pick and choose one program or all eight (15% discount for three or more). You will be outdoors (most camps are at our River Resource Center in Asbury or right nearby); you will play and laugh, and you will learn in or near the beautiful Musconetcong River.

If you now feel left wondering how to avoid a lightning strike if you get caught in the forest during a storm, register for The Occasional Nature Warrior camp which will take place on Saturday, September 14.

Go to [www.musconetcong.org/adult-camp-musky](http://www.musconetcong.org/adult-camp-musky) for detailed camp descriptions and information on how to register. Registrations are limited so don't delay! These are the remaining camps:

- July 11** Farmer for a Day
- July 13** Huck Finn for a Day
- July 20** Where the Wild Things Are
- July 27** Geocaching
- Aug 6** Watercolor the Watershed!
- Sep 14** The Occasional Nature Warrior

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## River Cleanup



*Cub Scout Troop that cleaned up in Bloomsbury.*

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## Asbury Mill Update:



*The scaffolding is down on the north wall of the mill, and the exterior restoration is really taking shape!!*

# SAVE THESE DATES!

**Friday, June 14** *I Spy with My Camera Eye...* (Rain date June 15). 9 am – 4 pm. Part of our Adult Camp program, this camp weaves together nature and art; it will inspire you to be a “visual” ambassador in the watershed. Campers will discuss camera equipment and talk about how to move from ‘snapshots’ to ‘photographs’ with five guaranteed tips to improve your nature photography. Camp begins with a micro-universe exercise opening up all five senses and then the fun really begins with interactive photo scavenger hunts—each followed by instructive group discussion. This is \$45. To register, call (908) 537-7060.

**Saturday, June 22** *The Birds and the Bees for Adults.* (Rain date June 23). 8 am – 2 pm. Part of our Adult Camp program, through a variety of interactive hikes on MWA’s Education Trail and surrounding river environs, this camp explores the conservation of bees, butterflies and birds. There will be discussion about invasive and native plants and how you can encourage beneficial insects and birds in your yard. Campers will collect insect-friendly natural materials during their field time to construct and take home their own insect “hotel”. This is \$45. To register, call (908) 537-7060.

**Saturday, June 29** *Point Mountain Hike.* Meet at 10 am. Join MWA as we hike the Ridge Trail of Point Mountain Reserve. This is a good hike for beginners and expert hikers. The trail is diverse and challenging at times and includes a steep and rocky incline. Bring a snack and water to the gravel parking lot on Point Mountain Rd., 0.3 miles from Route 57. MWA members are free! Non-members are asked to donate \$3 per person (Not more than \$10/family). For more information or to register, email [kyle@musconetcong.org](mailto:kyle@musconetcong.org).

**Thursday, July 11** *Farmer for a Day.* (Rain date July 12). 10 am – 3 pm. Part of our Adult Camp program, summer provides rich moments at Comeback Farm, a 40-acre, certified organic farm located in the Musconetcong River Valley. Campers start with a morning farm walk, assessing the day’s tasks. Something is always ready to plant or harvest, and this hands-on experience may include planting, watering, weeding or harvesting. As you work (not that hard!), you will learn about composting, land stewardship, and the challenges and benefits of organic farming. The lunch you bring will be supplemented with a farm-to-table dish and you will leave with several favorite farm recipes. This is \$45. To register, call (908) 537-7060.

**Saturday, July 13** *Huck Finn for a Day.* (Rain date July 14). 9 am – 4 pm. Part of our Adult Camp program, Remember Huck Finn’s idyllic childhood? Living in a small town. Barefoot. Climbing Trees. Turning over rocks. And one grand float on the Mississippi River. This camp recreates that summer-time-is-forever feeling. Campers will have a carefree day exploring the banks—and the water—of the Mighty Musconetcong with the MWA’s story-filled Education Director. While playing in and along the river, you will learn how to recognize a healthy ecosystem and how to ‘read’ a river. The river adventure continues in kayaks, exploring the ecosystem in the calmer waters above the dam. This is \$45. Call (908) 537-7060 to register.

**Saturday, October 12** *Wine Tasting on the Musky.* From 2-5 pm. Join MWA for a scenic afternoon and sample fine wines, local beers, and live music. Check back for more updates on how to purchase tickets later this year.

## We’re Social! Follow us on:



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Association



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**Meetup**  
Musconetcong  
River Area  
Outdoor Activities

For more information or to register for any of these events, please email [info@musconetcong.org](mailto:info@musconetcong.org) or call (908) 537-7060, unless otherwise noted. MWA River Resource Center (RRC) is located at 10 Maple Avenue, Asbury, NJ.



## The Musconetcong Watershed Association

The Musconetcong River Valley is rich in scenery, history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. The river rises up in Lake Hopatcong - New Jersey's largest spring-fed lake - and is shadowed by 1,000-foot Highland ridges and slices through a deep, limestone river valley, flowing swiftly to the Delaware River. Along the way the "Musky" passes by state and county parks, bustling towns, vital industries, historic villages, and some of the most productive farmland in the state.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 to protect and enhance the Musconetcong River and its related resources through advocacy and environmental education programs, scientific research and river restoration projects. The MWA scope spans the 158 square-mile Musconetcong River Watershed, and includes portions of four counties, and all or portions of 26 municipalities. The Musconetcong River became part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 2006.

MWA members are part of a network of individuals, families and organizations who care about the Musconetcong River and its watershed. They are kept informed about issues concerning the river and its related resources by receiving quarterly issues of the Musconetcong River News.

## MWA Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Musconetcong Watershed Association in which I will receive membership benefits and publications. I have enclosed a check payable to MWA for the membership category listed below:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student         | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family          | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Steward   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter       | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Champion  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000+ Life Member |  |

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mail to:

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PO Box 113, Asbury, NJ 08802

- What's Inside Musconetcong River News:**
- ◆ American Eels in the Musconetcong
  - ◆ Volunteer Spotlight: An Interview with Jeff Brenham
  - ◆ Welcome Christa Reeves!
  - ◆ 19th Annual Run for the River A Success - Despite Weather
  - ◆ Register for Camp Musky!
  - ◆ Update: Proposed Truck Warehouse in Musconetcong Watershed
  - ◆ How to Avoid a Lightning Strike if Caught in a Forest

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