

**Hamilton-Trenton-Bordentown Marsh
Public Meeting Comments from June 8, 15 & 16, 2009**

**Public Meeting #1
June 8, 2009: Hamilton Public Library**

What needs to be managed?

Invasive species, erosion.

Boating is not an issue; tides have much more effect.

Multiflora rose – is there a plan for controlling it? -- A disease is helping.

Enforcement of rules regarding recreation

What about local plans and zoning? Management Plan does not supercede local zoning. It's geared toward publicly owned land. Will not affect private landowners.

Concern about goal to increase visitors – “branding,” (i.e. identity?), nature center.

Protect area for the animals; don't increase people.

So many people live nearby and aren't aware. Goal is to help people understand and love nature.

Take nothing but pictures – leave nothing but footprints.

What is the funding for the nature center?

State Green Acres granted \$500,000 to the nature center. Mercer County matched amount. State Historic Trust funding for Abbott Farm Interpretive Plan.

Mercer County will own and maintain Nature Center; hope to create a non-profit to operate it.

Need operating / financial plan – “that's a problem”

Law enforcement in Marsh – state and park rangers are spread thin. “Who you gonna call?”

Surveillance camera in one area; municipalities are working on it.

Need for coordination among agencies and land managers.

Trespassing on private property a big issue.

Should have contacted the municipalities and asked them to contact all property owners about these meetings.

What happens to the updated management plan? Goes to public agencies; it will have recommendations for them; guidance for issues.

Involve hunters and fishers.

There is no threat of development in the Marsh.

Property owners at periphery do not want this group or plan regulating my life.

NJDEP regulates water quality but municipalities regulate development.

How to mitigate erosion? Enhancement of buffers – plantings along waterways; takes coordination of municipalities, watershed associations, etc.

The only thing you can do about the tide is riprap.

Soil conservation is a county function.

Issue: People landing boats on private property and letting their dogs mess without cleaning it up.

Dismay at idea of Marsh as tourist destination. Recreation is a slippery slope; people having fun get in trouble.

Let the plants grow freely.

Issue: Water/tide can be treacherous; people don't realize. Safety in general – not a place for those unfamiliar with the Marsh.

Importance / benefits of marsh:

Aquifer

Future of the marsh:

It is better now than it was ten years ago; water quality; birds, fish; this is due to DEP doing their job. No industry.

Less flotsam now, except after big floods.

Please build into this plan procedures for examining unintended consequences. For example, multiflora rose – introduced by the state to control erosion, now a problem. Periodically evaluate and measure any negative impacts of new strategies.

Committee is currently evaluating results of 1999 plan.

Ten years from now – would like Marsh to be (1) just like it is today; (2) unmolested.

Has always been used by the people who are truly interested.

Boardwalks – don't belong. Counter-productive.

Towpath along canal makes more sense.

Will the county, Nature Center, etc., have liability insurance for students?

Issue: creek drownings. Neighbors have been hit with lawsuits.

Friends for Marsh website has attacks on citizen who did clear-cutting on his own property and elsewhere. Be careful of photos of private property.

Issues: “persecution” on website; boats on private property; telling landowners what to plant; threats to docks; dogs.

Make sure plan is not adversarial to property owners.

Groups of kayakers, who don't need licenses – block residents with power boats, who do need licenses. Irresponsible.

People take photos of our private property – invades our privacy.

Problems between users. Some have an attitude.

Boat wake issue (or not) – hull speed – the faster they go, the LESS wake. Someone on Crosswicks Creek complained about wakes eroding her property; this is unlikely.

There's not enough room for speedboat racing.

END

Public Meeting #2
June 15, 2009: Bordentown Regional High School

Don't stop people from powerboating or fishing on Crosswicks Creek.

Keep the creek pristine.

Road salt from highway is destroying the creek.

Sewage plant has been a big problem.

There are federal penalties for oil and gas leaks (no need for additional controls on this).

Railroad trestle was built with creosote-treated timbers and that's a much bigger pollution problem than powerboats.

Hunters need access into marsh by powerboat.

We have the Constitutional right to go anywhere we want; Constitution guarantees freedom of movement – don't restrict anyone's Constitutional or God-given rights.

Don't take away our land.

Highway destroyed the swamp.

Any mention of land acquisition should specify non-residential.

Concern about amount of money involved and what that might lead to such as bringing in more people, etc.

1999 plan had statements regarding controlling what private residential landowners can do on their land – do not have this in new plan.

D&R Greenway does not own land in the marsh. Signs are only educational.

Who is hanging metal signs with nails into trees? Concerned about impact on trees.

Put 1999 plan on website and indicate every change being made.

If you [Friends for the Marsh] are going to be “managing,” we will be watching very closely.

If you are going to acquire land, who will own it?

The term “management” may be wrong or misleading; the plan is more about “coordination” and “cooperation”.

They don't limit powerboats to electric boats in the Everglades. Is the Marsh more sensitive than the Everglades?

State senate budget talks – the only person allowed access was the president of NJEA. Fear that Friends for the Marsh will acquire the same sense of power.

Fear that we will lose freedoms that are both Constitutionally and God-given.

Erosion is primarily from tides.

Stanton Avenue is an attractive nuisance. We are trying to close it. Who/how were two parking spaces obtained? D&R Canal Park was involved? This shows poor management skills; now the mischief needs to be undone.

Bordentown residents love the resources and have realized what a jewel the marsh is. We enjoy having visitors. Concerned about change and what that will mean.

Study on public access to Burlington riverfront – plan was endorsed by every community. State now mandates public access even on private land.

Concern about increased use of public boat launching facilities for people with no respect for boating community and no knowledge of boat handling, rules, etc. (canoers and kayakers). Yacht clubs are supporting the boat launches. Put into the plan education, registration, boat safety courses for canoes and kayaks.

Post all of our comments on D&R Greenway website.

Put in the plan that no personal rights will be discriminated against; no type of boat will be discriminated against; ensure freedom of movement.

END

Public Meeting #3

June 16, 2009: Roebling Park Marsh Nature & Interpretive Center

What are the values of the marsh?

Recreational value

Educational value, including research

Wildlife habitat value

What are your concerns and recommendations?

Too many signs now (along water trail), limit signage and use pamphlets instead

Educate visitors about the rules of the water re: power boats and canoes/kayaks: place instructional signage at boat launches and ensure that information is provided by canoe trip leaders; consider hosting mini-classes

Private property owners are concerned about liability and trespass

Add section of Plan that pertains to private property and include information about respecting private property in informational pamphlets

Reduce invasive species and promote native plants

Note in plan that agencies should provide early enough notice for mosquito spraying

Keep marsh as pristine as possible

Keep out dirt bikes and ATVs that damage trails and habitats

Friends and D&R Greenway have made the marsh safer and cleaner – there is less crime, drugs and prostitution and families can now visit the marsh with children

You can't leave things alone "as they are" without caring for the resources, you wouldn't do this at your own house. We need to be stewards of the marsh.

END