

River Council of the Great Egg Harbor National Scenic and Recreational River
Regular Bi-Monthly Meeting Minutes and Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association Annual
Trustee Meeting Minutes
December 18, 2024

Meeting Called to Order: at 6:39 PM by Greg Gregory, Chairperson.

Open Meetings Act: Greg Gregory stated that the meeting was advertised pursuant to the NJ Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 *et seq.* Notices were sent to official publications for the River Council – The Courier Post and The Press of Atlantic City. A copy of the notice was posted on the GEHWA website calendar.

Roll Call: by Brooke Fisher, River Administrator

Board Members in Attendance: Julie Akers (Buena Vista Twp.), Alison Stefanik (Corbin City), David Brown (Egg Harbor Twp.), Jim Owen (Estell Manor City), Greg Conway (Folsom Boro), Dick Colby (GEHWA), Bill Christman (Hamilton Twp.), John Keenan (Hammonton), Rick Coe (Monroe Twp.), Greg Gregory (Somers Point City), Clark Sprigman (Winslow Twp.)

Board Members Absent: Bill Handley (Upper Twp.), Ralph Bernard (Weymouth)

Quorum Present – Yes

Alternates in Attendance: Kathleen Federico (Corbin City), Daniel Patterson (Corbin City), Tom Baum (Egg Harbor Twp.), Paul Ludgate (GEHWA), Clay Emerson (GEHWA), Lynnee LoCicero (Hammonton)

Approval of the River Council Minutes: Bill Christman made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2024, meeting. Julie Akers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

GEHWA Trustees in Attendance: Julie Akers, Dick Colby, Clay Emerson, Paul Ludgate, Pat Sprigman, Clark Sprigman

Approval of Trustee Minutes: Dick Colby made a motion to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2023 meeting. Julie Akers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Others Present: Fred Akers (Operations Manager), Brooke Fishery (River Administrator), Paul Kenney (NPS), Lynn Maun (Coordinator), Kurt Cheng (NPS), Monica Cahill, Adina LoBiondo, Kimberly Spiegel (Program Manager, CU Maurice River), Morgan Crouch (Watershed Ambassador WMA15)

Election of GEHWA Officers and Appointments to RC for 2025:

Election of Officers for 2025 Conducted by Fred Akers, Operations Manager: The following slate of officers was presented by Fred Akers.

Current Slate: President, Julie Akers; **Vice President,** Paul Ludgate; **Treasurer,** Dick Colby; **Secretary,** Lynn Maun

Fred Akers stated if there is no objection, then the current slate of officers is elected by unanimous consent.

Appointments to the River Council Conducted by Fred Akers, Operations Manager: The following Appointments to the River Council were presented by Fred Akers.

Current Slate: Primary, Dick Colby; **Alternate #1** – Paul Ludgate, **Alternate, #2** – Clay Emerson, Fred Akers stated if there is no objection, then the current state of appointees to the River Council are elected by unanimous consent.

1. GEHWA’s Treasurer Report: The following reflect the balances in GEHWA’s accounts.

- Bank of America balance as of 12/18/2024, \$94,414.87.
- Truist Membership/Donations balance as of 12/18/2024, \$15,419.60.
- Green Acres balance as of 12/18/2024, \$1,092.50.
- GEHWA investment balance as of 12/18/2024 was \$3,353.34.

Public Portion: Kimberly Spiegel, Program Manager with CU Maurice River, resident of Folsom; Adina LoBiondo, new member who lives in Somers Point; Morgan Crouch, Watershed Ambassador for WMA15; Monica Cahill, Folsom resident.

Education & Outreach Coordinator Report (Lynn Maun)

In Schools, Nature Center, and Outdoor Classroom:

Jordan Road School at Kennedy Park: Approximately 125 fifth and sixth grade students from Jordan Road School participated in an outdoor classroom event at Kennedy Park on Friday, October 18, 2024. Each grade rotated between 5 stations.

St. Vincent De Paul School: Julie and Lynn led an elective course at St. Vincent De Paul school on Friday, November 15, 2024. Sixth, seventh and eighth grade students learned about water pollution from oil spills and explored different methods in cleaning up the spills.

Homeschool Group at Estell Manor Park: Julie taught and led an orienteering course for a homeschool group at Estell Manor Park on Monday, November 18, 2024. Lynn assisted Julie.

Events, Meetings and Continuing Education:

Hammonton’s 15th Annual Green Day Event: Hammonton’s 15th Annual Green Day Event was held on Saturday, November 2, 2024. Fred, Julie, Brooke and Lynn tabled at this event.

GEHWA’s Fall Foliage Kayak Event: Brooke led a kayak trip on the Tuckahoe River on Sunday, November 3, 2024.

Brandell Estates Care Facility in Linwood: Lynn provided a program for the residents of the Brandell Estates Care Facility in Linwood on Monday, November 19, 2024

GEHWA Member and Friends Meeting: GEHWA’s Member and Friends meeting was held on Tuesday, November 26, 2024 at 6:30PM at the Nature Center. Alexis Demitroff presented a program on composting outdoors, and indoors using red wiggler worms. Julie provided some worms for attendees to take home.

Upcoming Events:

GEHWA Member and Friends Meeting: The next GEHWA Member and Friends meeting will be a hybrid meeting held at the Nature Center on Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 6:30PM. Program details will be emailed later.

2024 Calendar Year Review: During 2024, GEHWA staff educated 7,582 students and 4,608 adults. Volunteers: Julie Akers and Tom Baum educated 2,521 students and 1,381 adults. Total outreach: 10,103 students and 5,989 adults.

Safe Water Drinking Act: The Safe Drinking Water Act was signed into law 50 years ago on December 16, 1974. Both Presidents Nixon and Ford acknowledged the need to protect the environment and in so doing, protect the health and well-being of humans.

NPS Report (Paul Kenney) & NPS Coastal Resiliency (Kurt Cheng):

1. Paul reported that the NPS has met with NJBII regarding the Tuckahoe Island project and are now looking for consultants and reviewing permit requirements. They are also reviewing the requirements for the National Environmental Policy Act.
2. Paul has sent 2 letters to NJDEP regarding the Sugar Hill Inn's unpermitted docks. To date he has not received a reply.
3. Kurt reported that NJ Bay Island Initiative (NJBII) would like to expand beyond Great Bay.

Old Business:

Other Old Business: None

New Business:

River Councilor Reports for each Municipality

Egg Harbor Twp.: (Alt. Tom Baum): Tom was buzzed by an Apache helicopter while on Gibson Creek. He also reported seeing many Bald Eagles.

Folsom: (Greg Conway): Greg reported that the Pinelands Golf Course is seeking a water allocation increase. The wells would now be permitted to withdraw 7,000,000 gallons per month (a 3.9 MGM increase) from groundwater at a maximum rate of 1000 gallons per minute (a 500 GPM increase). Although the increased water withdrawal still falls under the threshold for the Golf Course's water use registration, residents are concerned that increased pumping from the 85 to 100 foot deep wells will have a negative impact on their personal wells and potentially the surrounding environment. A DEP hearing is scheduled for January 15th. Also, the Folsom Environmental Commission held its 5th "Second Chance" toy drive where they distribute used toys.

Hamilton Twp.: (Bill Christman): Bill also reported seeing many bald eagles. He also reported seeing different species of fish upriver and asked if a survey could be done. Bill also reported that Hamilton Twp. Police have continued to put large logs around the preserve to block ORV traffic.

Somers Point: (Greg Gregory): Gregory reported that there is a woman living in a tent on the Broadway Tract in EHT. While hunting in Gravelly Run Natural Lands Trust Preserve, he saw lots of fresh ATV tracks.

Winslow: (Clark Sprigman): Clark reported that there is a lot of development taking place in Winslow. There is still no word back from the mayor about installation of the GEHR sign.

Estell Manor: (Jim Owen): Jim asked about research being done on establishing oysters.

Other New Business:

Administrator’s Report (Brooke Fisher) & Operations Manager’s (Fred Akers) Report:

1. Coastal Resiliency on Tuckahoe Island: GEHWA has spent a lot of time looking at Tuckahoe Island and assessing how sea level rise is impacting the island.

2. Restoration Explorer Mapping Tool: Rutgers has developed the Restoration Explorer. It is a useful mapping tool for coastal resiliency work.

3. NJ Bay Islands Initiative: GEHWA joined the NJ Bay Island Initiative (NJBII) which is a regional and coordinated approach to island restoration. Their focus is to restore natural habitats while also protecting neighborhoods and communities. Stockton University Coastal Research Center has developed a web-based planning tool to help with islands restoration projects called New Jersey Bay Islands Restoration Planner (NJBIRP). GEHWA is planning to join NJBIRP.

4. NJ Coastal Resilience Collaborative: GEHWA has also joined this group.

5. Beesley’s Point restoration Work: GEHWA and Princeton Hydro applied for a \$698,500 grant from the NJ Wetlands Mitigation Council to remove phragmites and replace it with native high marsh vegetation.

6. Somers Point Patcong Creek Project: Somers Point is proposing a new city park for low-impact recreational use.

7. Marine Debris Program Update: GEHWA contracted with Shamrock Towing to remove 2 boats from the marsh. There are still boats that need to be removed. Stockton Coastal Research Center may assist GEHWA in the removal of an abandoned work barge. Staff are working with Stockton to facilitate future projects. Stockton has funding to contribute to these project(s).

8. Coastal Marsh Sign Project: Staff are working with the Ocean City Yacht Club to do an interpretive Coastal Marsh sign for placement at the OC Visitors Center.

9. Great Egg Harbor River Annual Performance Report: Brooke sent out the Annual Report to RC and Trustee members.

10. Hammonton Council Meeting: Fred attended the 11/25/2024 Hammonton Council meeting. Fred thanked the Council for their 24 years of support for the RC and recommended that they re-appoint John Keenan and Lynnee LoCicero to the RC.

11. Rail Ties Dumping Update: NJDOT has started to remove the old railroad ties and is taking them to the ACUA for disposal. To date they are removing 1 dumpster load per week; Fred estimates at that rate it will take 60 weeks to remove all the RR ties.

12: PWSRs/NPS Vermont Meeting: Fred and Paul attended the bi-annual face-to-face meeting of the Partnership Wild and Scenic River partners and the NPS in Vermont. Fred was presented with the “River Legacy Award” at the meeting.

13. Other Items of Interest: None

Adjournment:

Upon motion by Julie Akers and second by Bill Christman, the meeting adjourned at 8:24 PM.