

Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance

*Submitted by Margaret Grace and Laurie Seeman
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The Sparkill Creek Watershed covers an area of 11.1 square miles in in Rockland County, New York and Bergen County, New Jersey. The Creek itself runs 8 miles, beginning on top

of Clausland Mountain Park, part of the Palisades ridgeline on the western side of the Hudson River, in Blauvelt, NY. From there, it flows through parkland,

neighborhoods and urbanized areas, through Orangeburg, the historic center of Tappan, and briefly into Norwood, New Jersey, where it turns back into New York. It continues through the hamlets of Palisades and Sparkill, the village of Piermont and on out to the

Hudson River through the great Piermont Marsh.

The Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance (SCWA) is a community action group committed to promoting environmental awareness, partnerships and practices that restore and preserve the health of the Sparkill Creek and Watershed.



Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance members.

Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance (SCWA) members are the “boots on the ground and in the Creek.” SCWA has partnered with Riverkeeper the past four years by taking water samples at sixteen sites monthly during the

months of May to October. This partnership was the first tributary assessment citizen partnership undertaken by Riverkeeper, and has become a model for working with other watershed groups.



The first sample collected in 2010 with John Lipscomb of Riverkeeper and children present at the Strawtown Studio summer waterway program. (Credit: T. Brown)

In 2014, SCWA was awarded a \$25,000 grant from the New England Interstate Water Pollution Control Commission (NEIWPCC) in partnership with the U.S. EPA and the NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program. Four watershed groups were awarded these grants, two in New Jersey and two in New York. The purpose is to provide training by the EPA to develop Citizen Scientists. Training included data collection methods, use of a sond electronic measuring device to monitor the

Creek, and laboratory procedures to measure Enterococcus in water samples. SCWA members, in partnership with Rutgers University, collected samples on 15 days this past summer. SCWA prepared the gathered data to be included in a national data bank accessible by researchers. SCWA will give a presentation to the EPA and others in late November and later share its findings with the community.

The work on behalf of the Sparkill Creek is being furthered with science faculty from Dominican College and St. Thomas Aquinas College. They are analyzing the DNA of Enterococcus to determine the source, as well as measuring the nitrate and phosphate content in the creek. By partnering with students from Dominican and St. Thomas Aquinas Colleges, as well as from Rutgers, SCWA has the opportunity to share our developing information and practices with students who are interested to advance their studies in the context of the living environment, and community. This is all leading to growing citizen science and stream stewardship into future generations.

SCWA members are involved in many activities. This includes making recommendations for watershed-related Green Infrastructure projects, relative to the New York Thruway Authority's \$500,000 compensatory commitment because of construction of the New Tappan Zee Bridge.

Members have provided review and input on a Green Infrastructure code Review Report intended for the Town of Orangetown. Two SCWA members serve on the recently formed Rockland County Task Force on Water Resources Management that is

expected to have regional impact, as well two additional members serving on its committees.

SCWA's community outreach commitment means you will find us educating people at local libraries, street fairs and other community gatherings. Our "Trees for Tribs" State DEC partnership reaches out to homeowners and businesses, and our partnering with Keep Rockland Beautiful, cleans up our watershed. Members also reach out to other watersheds including participation in the Hudson River Eel Project of the DEC - taking us to the waters of the MINISCEONGO Creek.

As we bring to a close 2014, we are grateful for our active membership, our partners, inspiring us with their dedication to the health of Sparkill Creek, the Hudson River and its watersheds. By the way, we try to have fun along the way!



A music fundraiser for the Sparkill Creek Watershed Alliance with Billy Procida and Laurie Seeman. (Credit: L. Peek)

To Learn More:

Find out more about the Sparkill Creek at <http://www.sparkillcreek.org>, or visit the Rockland County Soil & Water Conservation District's Sparkill creek watershed report card at <http://rocklandgov.com/files/2513/5394/1881/Sparkill.pdf>

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