

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

Spring-Summer 2014

It's all about water

Alexauken Creek

The Jewel of West Amwell

Our Township has a special treasure – The Alexauken Creek!

Alexauken Creek is the principal surface water body in West Amwell, draining 15.12 square miles and including 28.64 stream miles and 52.31 lake acres.

The Alexauken is so special that in 2004, the NJDEP reclassified the Alexauken Creek as a Category 1 waterway. The Creek is protected by a 300 foot buffer adjacent to either bank on the main stem and all tributaries, and as such is afforded some of the greatest degrees of regulatory protection in the State.

WHAT THIS MEANS:

The Alexauken can support trout maintenance and is stocked with trout on Alexauken Creek Road from Hamp Road to Lambertville.

Fishing areas are
marked with

West Amwell signage

Get out those fishing poles!



WHAT THIS ALSO MEANS:

Since 2005, West Amwell has received 2 grants (319h) from the NJDEP to study the Alexauken and to help improve the quality of the water. Ongoing evaluations indicate that the water quality has been deteriorating.

The dam at the Alexauken Creek Wildlife Management Area is being decommissioned to provide for bank and temperature stabilization.

The grant has already provided for a rain garden in the detention basin at South Hunterdon Regional High School. The rain garden was planted in the fall of 2013. (See article in this issue on rain gardens)

Do you know what a Category 1 stream is?

According to the NJDEP these streams are defined as waters protected from any measurable changes in water quality because of their exceptional ecological function, habitat value, recreational opportunities, water supply significance, unique geology, exceptional fisheries resources, water supply significance and aesthetic beauty. And we have one! A treasure.

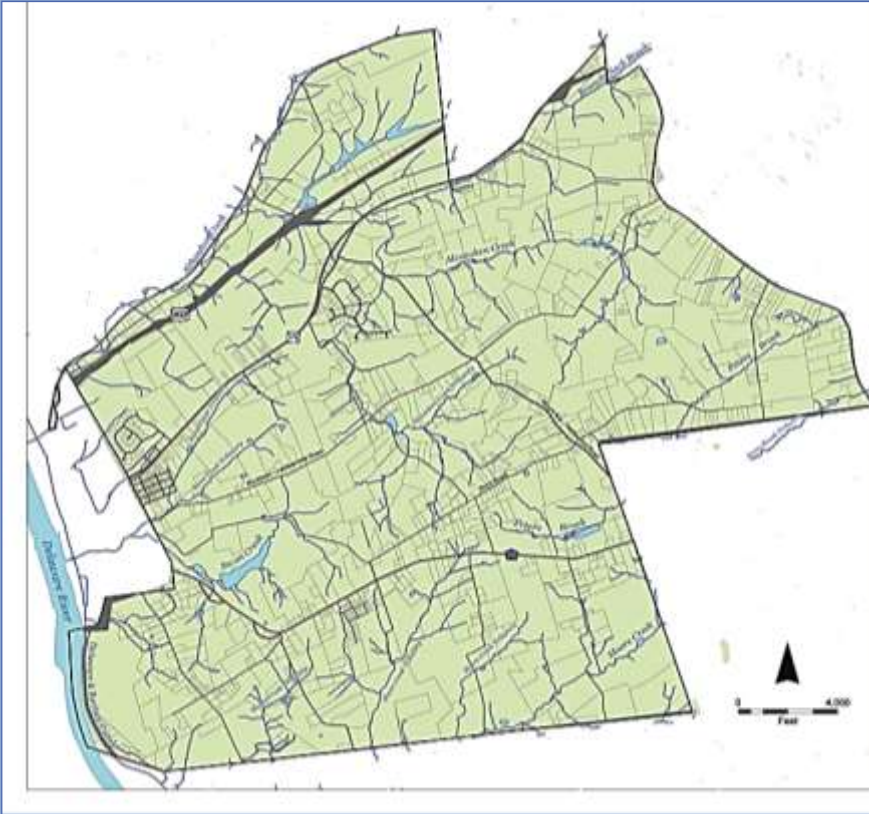


Alexauken Creek at the Fish and Wildlife Management Area
on Rocktown Lambertville Road

"Water is critical for sustainable development, including environmental integrity and the alleviation of poverty and hunger, and is indispensable for human health and well-being."

-United Nations

West Amwell Streams and Waterbodies



Please visit our municipal building or our website:
www.westamwelltp.org for a larger map.

RESIDENTS' CHECKLIST FOR CLEAN WATER

- ___ Convert part of your lawn into a garden or more groundcover (runoff over grass is almost the same as runoff over pavement).
- ___ Water your lawn only when necessary.
- ___ Minimize fertilizers, pesticides, chemical laundry detergents, etc.
- ___ Leave grass clippings after mowing or use a mulching mower.
- ___ Plant trees and keep mature trees, like willows. Willows love water and pollinators love willows.
- ___ Wash your car at a car wash, not on the driveway.
- ___ Dispose of pet waste in the trash not on your property.
- ___ Direct gutter downspouts away from pavement or to a rain barrel or a rain garden.
- ___ Check your driveway or garage for leaks from your car.
- ___ If on a septic system, pump your septic tank regularly.
- ___ Do not litter. Litter enters our storm drains and then our streams.
- ___ Plant ground covers or wild flowers on steep slopes.
- ___ Never dump used oil, gasoline or antifreeze down a storm drain.
- ___ Fence water bodies from horses and other grazing animals.
- ___ Consider sand as a less toxic alternative to salt for deicing.

Did you know that certain native wildflowers in West Amwell grow only in the moist areas near streams?

The first one to arrive in the spring is skunk cabbage. You will probably smell it before you see it! Skunk cabbage is important for bees and other pollinators.



Livestock Regulations and Protecting our Streams and our Drinking Water.

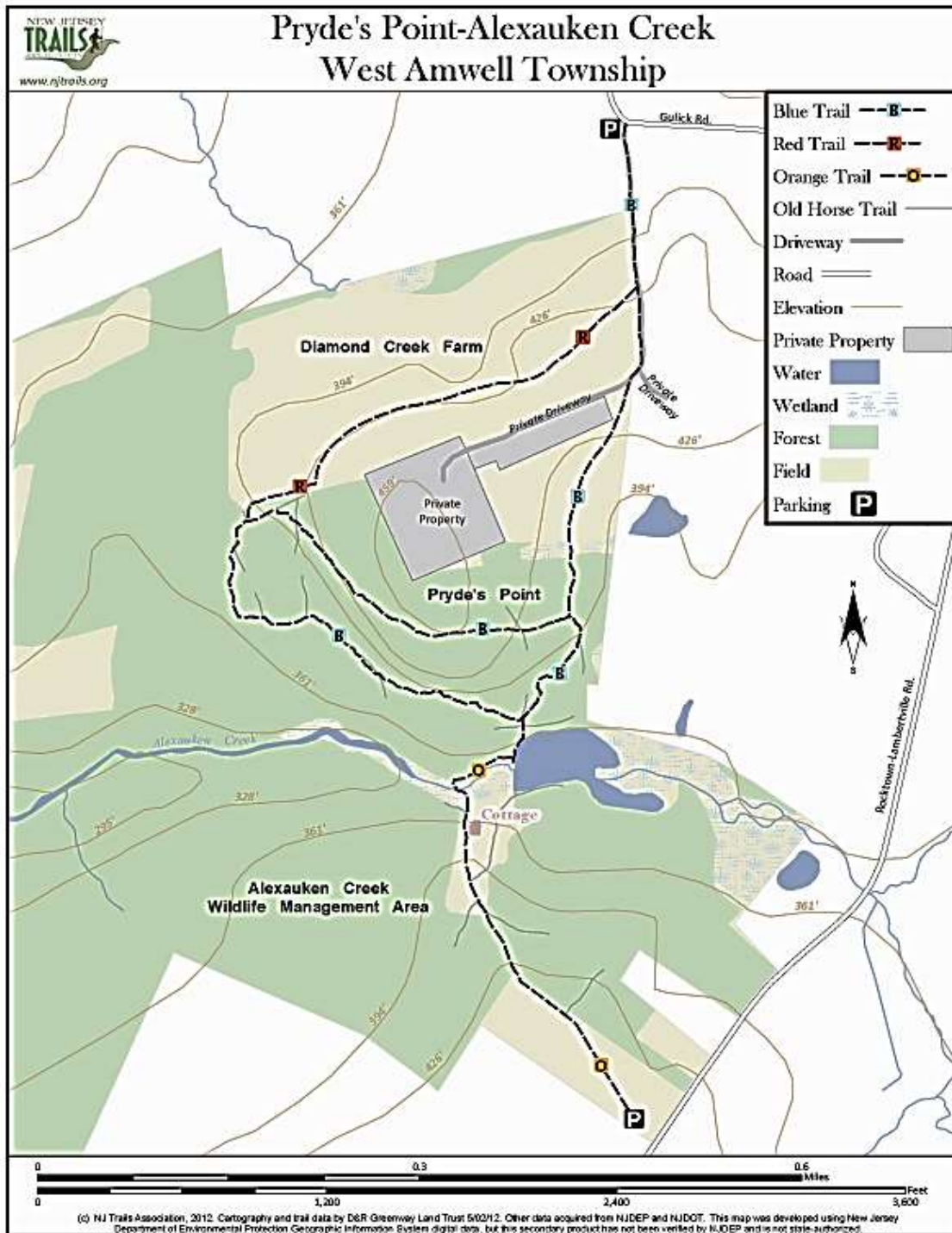
The New Jersey Department of Agriculture adopted regulations in March, 2009 that require all livestock farm owners to responsibly manage the manure generated on their operations – including those with horses, dairy cows, cattle, swine, goats, sheep, poultry and all other domesticated species defined as livestock. If you are unsure if your operation complies with the regulations or for assistance, contact Rutgers Cooperative Extension at 908-788-1339. Their website: njaes.rutgers.edu/animal-waste-management/



With proper fencing, we can avoid the erosion of the banks and the pollution of the water.
And our livestock can still drink from the stream.

**If you don't have access to the Alexauken Creek from your property,
here's a great place to visit:**

The Alexauken Creek Wildlife Management Area/Pryde's Point – public access with trails. Access is from Rocktown Lambertville Road, eastern portion. Parking available.



STORMWATER RUNOFF

How we use land directly affects the way stormwater flows. Under undisturbed conditions, over half of precipitation infiltrates the soil and only about 10 percent runs off the surface. The natural vegetation acts like a sponge and a filter, slowing the flow and cleaning the stormwater. Roads, pavement and buildings (impervious surfaces) reduce the area where stormwater can soak into the soils to replenish water supplies. This means less water recharges underground aquifers, making them unable to keep up with the amount wells pump out. The impervious surfaces also cause problems with our lakes, rivers and oceans. Less water infiltration means more water flowing on the surface. Roadways and storm sewers act like superhighways for stormwater, speeding its flow. So much water flowing more quickly results in greater and more frequent flooding. It causes erosion, eating away the banks of rivers and streams. Stormwater also carries pollution. As water flows across land, it picks up all sorts of contaminants - litter, pesticides, fertilizer, pet wastes, petroleum products, and road salts. The increased volume and speed of stormwater runoff from paved surfaces wash more of these pollutants into water bodies.

**Our Future
depends
on clean water.**

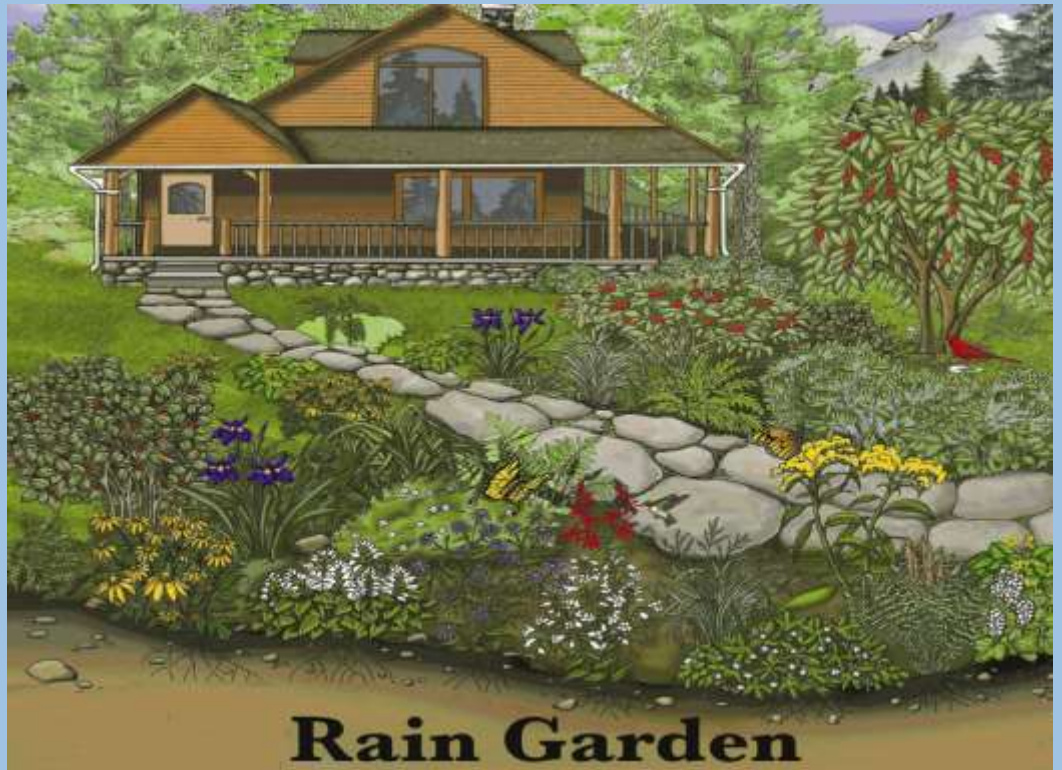
*When the well is dry, we know the
worth of water.*
BENJAMIN FRANKLIN,
(1706-1790)
Poor Richard's Almanac, 1746





No taxpayer money was used to produce or distribute this newsletter.
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- A rain garden is a landscaped, shallow depression that captures, filters, and infiltrates stormwater at the source before it becomes runoff.
- A rain garden should reduce runoff, recharge groundwater, and use native plants, such as purple coneflowers, bee balm, cardinal flowers and New England Asters.
- Native plants control erosion by stabilizing soils and increasing infiltration, leading to an overall improvement of water quality.
- Installing a rain garden is a simple way to save money and energy, while also preserving West Amwell's natural resources.



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON RAIN GARDENS, PLEASE VISIT:

[http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/downloads/NPS_NJRainGardenManual\(Pages1-24\).pdf](http://www.lowimpactdevelopment.org/raingarden_design/downloads/NPS_NJRainGardenManual(Pages1-24).pdf)

IF YOU PLANT A RAIN GARDEN, YOU ARE DOING YOUR PART TO REDUCE POLLUTION AND PRESERVE OUR WATER SYSTEMS.