The Raritan River: Using Education as a Tool to Promote Awareness and Activism

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IWL Statement

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program is a two-year selective, interdisciplinary certificate program that prepares Rutgers undergraduate women to be informed, innovative, and socially responsible leaders. Leadership Scholars design and implement social action projects to expand their understanding of issues and problems and to develop leadership skills. This project gives Scholars the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge they have gained about leadership, advocacy, and social change with the practical and experiential knowledge they have developed about a particular policy issue or problem through the field site placement. It also further develops leadership skills by giving undergraduates the opportunity to practice leadership through action.

To find out more please visit the Institute for Women’s Leadership’s website at http://iwl.rutgers.edu.
Goal Statement

This project aims to use education to promote much-needed environmental awareness and activism, focusing on the Raritan River. By arranging a trip along the Raritan aboard the R/V Rutgers, attendees will be allowed to learn about the river up close and with the guidance of Heather Fenyk, Board President and de facto Executive Director of the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership. Their experiences, along with pertinent information and a resource guide, will be compiled into a zine to be distributed.

After attending the boat trip or reading the zine, I hope individuals will have newfound knowledge about the Raritan River and be inspired to take action.
Area of Concern

➢ “The Raritan is still the 14th most polluted waterway in the nation, with 20 federal Superfund sites and 200 state-registered toxic sites along its banks and the banks of its tributaries” (Raritan Riverkeeper Program)

➢ “At all other monitoring sites [excluding South Amboy] bacteria concentrations exceeded the standard more than 75% of the time“ (LRWP 2020 Annual Report, 2020)

➢ “Researchers found that up to 35% of river miles in the Raritan Basin had a probability of *E. coli* impairment greater than 90% on the most polluted day of the study period“ (Money et al., 2009)

Examples like Heather Fenyk, Board President and *de facto* Executive Director of the Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership.
Timeline

Phase 1
Connect
Connected with Chip Haldeman (researcher and captain) and Heather Fenyk (LRWP).

Phase 2
Organize
Made arrangements for the trip with Chip and Heather. Recruited attendees.

Phase 3
Boat Trip
Trip aboard the R/V Rutgers took place October 28th.

Phase 4
Zine
Prepare Zine featuring trip aboard R/V Rutgers.
Partnerships

RUTGERS
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences
DEPARTMENT OF MARINE AND COASTAL SCIENCES

LRWP
Lower Raritan Watershed Partnership

RUTGERS
School of Communication and Information
Promotion

This poster was distributed through social media and by email.
Promotion of Zine

The zine will be distributed virtually and physically.
Product Materials

A Trip Along the Banks

Testimonials

Robin Scudder
Retired Advanced Practice Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. Hiker, kayaker, outdoor enthusiast
“The immersive experience of being on the river was wonderful. I loved the experience of being within the natural area, as opposed to peering in from the chaos of the Parkway Bridge.”

Michele Yusko
Interested Citizen
“I’ve lived on the Raritan all my life and used to canoe near my home. Being able to travel farther out and see the area surrounding the river was an eye opener. It made me sad to see how this treasure has been destroyed by industry. And yet I’m hopeful that organizations like LRWP, concerned citizens and students...can have a positive impact.”

Colin Sabol
Junior at the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences studying Marine Biology
“Prior to the trip I knew nothing about the Raritan. I never knew it faced nearly as many pollution issues as it does.” Rutgers students should absolutely be given the opportunity to learn about the Raritan River..."It is rooted in the history of both Rutgers and the city of New Brunswick.”

Kalina Totzeva
Graduate student at Rutgers University
“I loved going on the boat. I didn’t really know much about this topic so it gave me a chance to learn more and it gives me a chance to be more connected to the community. Clearly more has to be done to clean the river up, not just from a policy standpoint but also community and public wise. I think more of this has to be talked about in the classroom because it is such a landmark.”
Lessons Learned

Communication
Every aspect of this project required constant communication.

Flexibility
This project faced numerous obstacles, and being flexible was essential.

Creativity
How can I get Rutgers students to want to learn about the Raritan?
Acknowledgements

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Thank You

Please stay tuned for updates regarding the zine and short film.

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Bibliography


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