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**NFWF Grant Project:  
“Lower Delaware Regional Watershed Coordinating Council”  
2.23.06 Kick-Off Meeting, 7 – 8:30 pm  
MEETING SUMMARY**

In attendance:

Carol Hoffmann, Mayor, Alexandria Township  
Jim Gallos, Mayor, Milford Borough  
Sharon Maclean, NJ Office of Smart Growth and Delaware River Greenway Partnership  
Larry Herrighty, Planning Board, Kingwood Township  
Kristin McCarthy, Township Committee, Delaware Township  
Gregg Rackin, Mayor, Stockton Borough, Ron Sworen, Mayor, Frenchtown Borough  
Jessica Rittler Sanchez, Riverbasin Planner, Delaware River Basin Commission  
Caroline Armstrong, Special Projects Planner, Municipal Land Use Center

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After brief self-introductions, Caroline, Jessica and Gregg provided an overview of the National Fish & Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) grant-funded project that was the focus of this meeting. The grant application was entitled *Lower Delaware Regional Watershed Coordinating Council for Hunterdon County*. Conversations between Stockton Borough, Frenchtown Borough, DRBC and NFWF in the spring of 2005 resulted in the expansion of NFWF’s area of interest in which it funds projects. For the first time, it included not only the Estuary but also the northern reaches of the river, extending up to the Delaware Water Gap. Projects in Hunterdon County therefore became eligible for funding the first time.

Small, rural municipalities like Stockton welcome the opportunity to take advantage of grant funding in support of local planning needs. However, limited budgets preclude the necessary resources to not only prepare grant applications but also to manage grants. NFWF presented a unique opportunity because it allowed organizations like MLUC to apply for and manage a grant that would benefit municipalities. At the same time, it relieved the municipalities of these administrative responsibilities.

Stockton’s interest in applying for NFWF funding arose from earlier State Plan cross-acceptance discussions that took place in 2004 and 2005. At that time, several communities along the Delaware River had the opportunity to discuss regional issues. Among those identified was the importance of recognizing the Delaware River corridor as a unique and tremendous resource from an environmental standpoint and an ecotourism standpoint. Stockton believed that if the communities along the river improved regional coordination, they would be in a much better position to leverage resources at the state level and elsewhere to help protect the river corridor.

DRBC's interest in the *Lower Delaware Regional Watershed Coordinating Council* application was two-fold. First, it saw this as a model for effective regional coordination to protect the river. The Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River Management Committee serves this function in some important respects. However, its size (over 30 communities) and its interstate composition make effective regional efforts potentially unwieldy. Secondly, in 2005, DRBC imposed temporary regulations (Special Protection Waters) strengthening water quality protection of the Delaware River within the stretch corresponding to the Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River. While DRBC can effectively regulate point source discharges under these rules, it relies on municipalities to most effectively manage nonpoint source pollution. The Coordinating Council provides an opportunity to figure out the best way of accomplishing this.

After initial meetings between the Stockton Mayor, Frenchtown Mayor, DRBC, NFWF and others, MLUC was approached with the request to apply for a NFWF grant. MLUC submitted a grant proposal in the summer of 2005. Letters of support were received from a variety of entities, including all six municipalities that are now beneficiaries of the grant funding. In December, NFWF informed MLUC that it would be awarded \$30,000 of the \$35,000 for which it applied. In January, 2006, MLUC contacted the mayors, planning boards and environmental commissions of all six municipalities, relaying the information and arranging today's meeting.

The goal of the NFWF grant is to increase coordination and awareness of Delaware River watershed-related activities among the six participating communities. To accomplish this, MLUC will facilitate a year-long process in partnership with the municipalities that will accomplish the following:

- Invite representatives from various federal, state, regional and nonprofit entities to discuss the various projects underway that affect the river and its watershed within the boundaries of the participating communities
- Allow municipal representatives to share with each other local goals, issues, needs, and projects that affect the watershed and each other
- Compile existing and new mapped information (environmental and land use) in a manner that is useful for planning purposes
- Identify data gaps and needs
- Determine areas of consistency (master plans, regulations, etc) and areas where greater coordination would be helpful at the local, regional, state and federal levels
- Identify goals, policies and strategies to protect resources of concern collectively
- Consider the formation of a coordinating council consisting of representatives from each municipality that would continue to work collectively toward watershed protection and leverage resources toward that end.

The six participating municipalities were asked to serve on a steering committee to guide the project. The steering committee will likely meet between four and six times over the course of a year. Additionally, a technical advisory committee will be formed, consisting of the Delaware & Raritan Canal Commission, DRBC, American Water Resources Association – New Jersey Chapter, and New Jersey Water Supply Authority. Its primary responsibility will be to help guide the development of mapped data.

Among the discussion points raised after the presentation were the following:

- Communities need the resources to effectively manage growth and change.
- The steering committee must identify environmental, scenic, economic and other issues of particular importance. Each municipality should then share its local perspectives, goals and activities related to these issues.
- The reports that are produced through the year-long effort are intended to build the case both to the State and to local constituents that this region is unique and special, and present a series of actions that the six communities feel are needed to protect and manage it.

Participants briefly discussed the option of pursuing a smart growth grant from the Association of New Jersey Environmental Commission to leverage the \$30,000 NFWF grant. Gregg offered to discuss this further with

MLUC and to consider applying for the grant. In addition, there may be an opportunity to apply for a grant through the National Park Service which administers Lower Delaware Wild and Scenic River grants in conjunction with the Delaware River Greenway Partnership.

Caroline reviewed anticipated activities over the next two months. They include the following:

- MLUC is awaiting contracts from NFWF which will hopefully be in hand within the next month or two. It anticipates formally launching the project in the spring of 2006.
- Over the next several weeks, MLUC will make arrangements for a press conference to announce the grant. This will take place at a time and place of mutual convenience for all six municipalities. It should happen as soon as contracts are signed.
- MLUC will provide “talking points” to the municipal representatives that attend the press conference. It is important that they be the spokespeople articulating the importance of this project and how it will benefit the municipalities both individually and collectively.
- MLUC will email the municipalities with information about the Wild and Scenic River grants when they become available later this year.
- Future meetings of the steering committee will generally be arranged for the fourth Thursday of the month. The next meeting will be arranged once contracts are signed.

Caroline thanked everybody for attending the meeting. Discussion concluded at 8:30 pm.